



or the past 40 years, the total fertility rate in Australia has fluctuated within a narrow range of 1.73 and 1.96 births per woman, not far below the replacement level of about 2.1 births per woman. Fertility has remained at this level while the Government has introduced, modified, and in some cases withdrawn, a range of programmes to benefit families with children. With fertility sustained at a moderate level, population policy today is limited to policy on immigration, which is primarily related to labour demand.

Total fertility rate, Australia, 1921 2013

The system of family support schemes in Australia is complicated and tends to change frequently, particularly as

can build up future leave credits. Parents often use flextime credits to cover the longer leave required during school holidays. More broadly, it has been common in Australia for decades for workers, especially parents, to negotiate with their employers about specific work hours on an individual basis. Finally, Australia has relatively low tax rates that have the effect of placing money in the hands of parents to apply to the costs of raising children.

In 1983, an income-tested Child Care Allowance was introduced to help working families pay for the costs of childcare. Eligibility for this allowance was later