

THE
Daily Telegraph

Friday, April 27, 2007

\$1 inc. GST CF



Options . . . Kathryn MacMillan and (inset) Dolly. *Picture: KRISTI MILLER*

Inflexible working hours harming industry: expert

By ANDREW CARSWELL

IT MIGHT be feasible for Dolly Parton, but working nine to five is simply not an option for most mothers returning to the workforce.

It is a reality ambitious mothers learn when they find they cannot juggle home life with rigid working hours.

However, according to entrepreneur Kathryn MacMillan, it is not only the mothers who are missing out. Employers are passing up valuable, experienced and wise staff by not providing flexible working hours.

With her husband Ross, Ms MacMillan has spent four years setting up Nine2Three, a company focused on returning skilled mothers to the workforce.

Nine2Three seeks out employers willing to provide a flexible work environment suitable for mothers and based around the 9am to 3pm school timetable.

Ms MacMillan believes many mothers offer a wealth of knowledge and experience that employers discount because of rigid working hours.

With the continuing skills shortage hampering recruitment, Nine2Three and similar

employment services are offering an alternative database to mainstream job hunters.

"Today's mothers tend to have more pre-family career experience, making them very desirable job candidates. It's a labour force that's highly motivated and highly trained," she said. Sutherland Council is currently working with Nine2Three to attract skilled mothers back to the workforce.

The council's human resources manager Peter Evans said returning mothers brought enormous experience and maturity into the workplace.