



Feature blog

World Childless Week

9/12/2025

World Childless Week 2025 takes place from 15-21 September. Our Melbourne colleague [REDACTED] tells us more to help raise awareness of the Childless Not by Choice community.

‘You’re lucky you don’t have kids!’

Ever made this remark to a childless friend or colleague? You may have unintentionally stepped on a landmine of grief and loss for the person on the receiving end.

There is a broad trend towards increased childlessness in more economically developed countries. Various research indicates around 1 in 5 women in these countries not having a child by the time they reach 45 – in some countries it's as high as 1 in 4 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, [OECD 2024](#)).

Of these childless women, 90 percent are childless not by choice, according to a [2010 study by Dutch academic Prof Renske Keiser](#). For some, it’s through infertility but for the greater part, it’s by ‘circumstance’, also known as ‘social infertility’. This refers to social or structural situations beyond one’s control, such as being single or in a same-sex relationship, or being unable to access fertility treatment due to financial or legal barriers.

There are similar numbers of childless men and non-binary people too.

A silent cohort

Despite the high numbers of childless not by choice – which may come as a surprise to many – the experience of the involuntary childlessness can be a silent one, shrouded in taboo and shame. Too often, we childless folk are complicit in the silence, simply because that's what society expects of us. To not talk about it, to just get on with it and be grateful for the lives we've got, with our long sleep-ins, regular dining out and exotic travels.

Yet, for a childless person such as myself, this is a very real, living loss. With every milestone for others – the first day of school, a graduation, weddings, becoming grandparents – comes the reminders of a life missed, a life dearly wanted.

It's what is known as a form of 'disenfranchised grief', where the loss is neither witnessed, heard or acknowledged by the communities we live in. One that is ever-present at some level, even after years have passed.

Impacting relationships

As if navigating this loss is not hard enough, there's society's judgment of us. The assumptions that we are selfish, career-oriented and don't like children. The idea that we are not contributing to society and that, somehow, we are not as worthy as parents. The preface 'as a mother ...', so often heard, not only excludes us but assumes our opinions and experiences don't count.

It's also the changes in relationships that come with childlessness. From the feeling of isolation among parent friends, who gravitate to others with children, to the exclusion experienced in everyday conversations.

It can be profoundly felt in the workplace, too. It can be challenging to navigate environments where parental conversations and photos dominate Teams chats, or where social events are centred around colleagues taking parental leave. There can also be assumptions, however unintentional, that we're more available to work late or through the school holidays because we are childless.

Finding our voice

But we the childless are coming together, seeking to bring about a cultural shift in the way society views and treats us. We are realising that if we are to change this narrative, we must tell our stories.

[All around the world](#), we are coming together to support each other, bring awareness to our experiences, break the silence around childlessness, and show and inspire by example that life can be happy and meaningful without children.

In Australia, [The Full Stop](#) online community provides support to individuals who are

childless not by choice. Through their monthly podcast, [Full Stop](#), they share personal stories and insights to raise awareness and foster understanding around childlessness.

Building community internationally



Another powerful initiative is the [World Childless Week \(WCW\)](#), taking place this year from 15-21 September. Now in its ninth year, this online international event reaches 97 countries. It's an opportunity for all of us who wanted children but for various reasons, didn't, to take part and meet others in the same position. A chance to find support and strength in a community who 'get it'.

Throughout the week, each day focuses on a dedicated theme. This year's event covers topics such as why we dread the 'Have You Got Kids?' question and why it's inappropriate to ask (or assume) it, and 'Childless Health Care' and why we find some jokes and terminology used by the medical profession insensitive and what needs to change. There are many [webinars and events you can attend online](#) during the week.

Building our own community

We will be holding an online chat and support for **the childless not by choice among us at the ACMA and eSafety at 3pm to 4pm on Friday 19 September**. For those interested in joining, contact the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group via [REDACTED] or contact me directly at [REDACTED] and I will respond when I return from leave.

Involuntary childlessness can be a devastating experience. If you're unsure about someone's situation, it's always kind to pause before asking or commenting.

[REDACTED] works in the Regulatory Research, Markets and International team at the ACMA. She is childless not by choice and is an active member of the [Childless Collective](#), an international gathering place for those who dreamt of parenthood but it never came. The Childless Collective is active throughout Australia and organises monthly get-togethers – you

can reach out to [REDACTED] to find out more.

This article has been organised as part of [our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#). If you would like to become involved in the D&I Working Group, contact [REDACTED].