

Costello's pin-up girls

LAURA ANDERSON
LOUISE TRECCASI

WOMEN approaching 40 may have just become the new pin-up girls of federal Treasurer Peter Costello.

They have answered his call to raise the nation's fertility rate in

telling style.

For the first time, the birth rate for women aged in their mid-30s is greater than those aged in their early 20s.

A submission to the federal parliamentary inquiry into work/family balance says the fertility rate for women aged 35-39 reached 57.4 babies per 1000 of

population in 2004. This compares with 53.4 babies for women aged from 20 to 24 years.

Relationships Australia attributes the trend to more women undertaking tertiary studies, and to the cost of entering the housing market.

Continued Page 4

Costello's latest pin-up girls

From Page 1

In the 1950s and 1960s, unemployment was low and many of the jobs available to school-leavers did not require further education. "There was no need to delay entry into the workforce and delay starting a family for financial reasons," Relationships Australia Mary Mertin-Ryan said yesterday.

Higher unemployment, reduced job security and fewer low-skill jobs since the 1970s, have impacted on fertility levels.

"This has meant that young people need to invest more in higher education and often delay their entry into the job market if they want to secure quality jobs that will enable them to access the housing market and support a family," Ms Mertin-Ryan said.

Cath Pfeiffer, 38, gave

birth on Tuesday to her second daughter, Georgia, at Flinders Medical Centre. Her other daughter, Lucy, is 11 months old.

"I had my own small book-keeping business for three years and before that, I had other jobs and I did quite a bit of travelling," she said. "I had other priorities before I chose to settle down and start a family.

"I also wanted to ensure there was financial security before I had children."

Relationships Australia said there was a slight increase in the fertility rate, from 1.73 per 1000 women in 2002 to 1.77 in 2004. The importance of higher education in the job market, however, had put pressure on women to "delay marriage and the birth of their first child".



PACESETTER: Cath Pfeiffer with two-day-old daughter Georgia at the Flinders Medical Centre yesterday.

Picture: CAMPBELL BRODIE