



Australian Government
Department of Human Services



Child Support–Program Plan 2009–2013

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The Child Support Program Plan 2009–13

The Department of Human Services provides a central policy and coordination role for the delivery of services across the Human Services Portfolio as well as being the delivery agency for child support and vocational rehabilitation services.

DHS administers the Child Support Program (CSP) on behalf of the Government. This is achieved through the provision of support to separated parents to help them provide the financial and emotional support necessary for their children's well being.

The Child Support Program provides assessment, registration, collection, enforcement and disbursement services taking into account their individual circumstances.

The Child Support Program Plan 2009–13 should be read together with the DHS Strategic Plan 2009–13.

This Plan establishes the strategic direction for the Child Support Program for the next four years. It outlines the strategies that will be adopted to address challenges in delivering the Child Support Scheme and to respond to opportunities to improve Child Support services. Reflecting the evolving environment in which CSP operates, the Plan is flexible and will be reviewed annually.

This plan is a key document for planning, and informs the development of annual business plans for the Child Support Program.



Our vision

‘Children can rely on their parents for the financial and emotional support necessary for their wellbeing.’

Our vision is an aspirational statement that reflects our connection to the broader Family Law System and our commitment to assisting parents to accept shared responsibility for the wellbeing of their children.

Our mission

‘To support separated parents to transfer payments for the benefit of their children.’

Our mission provides greater definition of our role to support separated parents in providing for their children’s financial needs through the transfer of payments. Our mission also recognises our role in building shared parental responsibility for financial support, not simply the collection of money.

Our Strategic Direction

Our Vision

Children can rely on their parents for the financial and emotional support necessary for their well being.

Our Mission

To support separated parents to transfer payments for the benefit of their children.



Improved collection



Customer service excellence



Effective stakeholder engagement and customer referrals



Informed staff, customers and community



Excellence in service delivery capability

Our goals

Our five goals are the rationale for everything we do. Our goals shape our strategic priorities, measures and strategies which in turn inform the planning, consultation, delivery, monitoring, evaluation and improvement of processes for all our work.

Goal 1: Improved collection is fundamental to supporting our customers to resolve their financial and emotional issues. This goal is premised on a procedurally fair and informed assessment and a commitment to work with customers. A focus on improved collection also supports the application of debt reduction strategies and enforced compliance to customers who do not accept their child support responsibility and are not willing to pay.

Goal 2: Customer service excellence reflects a strong focus on the provision of high quality service with an emphasis on supplying customers with consistent seamless service. It is about treating people as people and providing a service that is timely and balanced and that corresponds to the preferred channels and requirements of customers, both internal and external.

Goal 3: Effective stakeholder engagement and customer referrals involves connecting separated families to the services and support they need. This is achieved through strong, collaborative partnerships with child support customers and stakeholders, including other government agencies, community organisations, employers, industry groups, researchers and the legal sector.

Goal 4: Informed staff, customers and community is our focus to ensure separated families and child support staff have high levels of awareness and understanding of child support and the Family Law System. We aim to deliver accurate, consistent information in the right form, at the right time, delivered through trusted sources. It seeks to empower parents to make informed decisions and take action to provide financial and emotional support for their children.

Goal 5: Excellence in service delivery capability reflects a strong belief that we can only be successful in our other goals if our people have access to appropriate systems, processes, technical advice and resources and are supported, led and engaged. This goal also reflects the importance of effective planning, implementation and ongoing evaluation to maintain a high level of excellence.



Strategies to achieve our goals

Goal 1: Improved collection

Improved collection is premised on having informed customers, maintaining correct assessments, connecting customers effectively across services, and early intervention to reduce outstanding payments.

We are committed to:

- **Improving the accuracy and timeliness of child support assessments**—through a strong focus on effective communication with new and existing customers, we aim to ensure all child support assessments are accurate according to the information provided by parents and reflect parents' capacity to support their children.
- **Achieving a sustainable approach to reducing outstanding child support payments**—through the development of a holistic approach to the reduction of international and domestic debt, we will contribute to stopping the growth, and thereby reducing outstanding child support payments.
- **Support more parents to make voluntary child support payments**—we have a preferred approach to separated parents—one of service and support to help them meet their responsibilities. This includes encouraging shared parental responsibility and voluntary commitment to raising their children including payment of child support.
- **Advancing an integrated approach to compliance and enforcement across the Human Services portfolio**—to ensure the integrity of the Child Support Scheme, we will work with portfolio agencies to develop more responsive and strategic approaches to managing fraud, non-compliance and collecting outstanding child support payments.

Goal 2: Customer service excellence

To improve outcomes for separated and separating families it is essential that the Child Support Program implement a nationally consistent customer service experience.

We will achieve this by:

- **Fostering a customer service culture**—building on the strong foundation established through the introduction of the Customer Service Commitment and Customer Service Principles, we will develop specific performance/outcome measures that foster a customer service culture. This includes measures for the customer experience, enhanced business processes from the customer’s perspective and expectations, effective service quality approaches. The Department provides all of our staff tools, skills development and support so that our people are able to deliver quality customer service.
- **Being a gateway for customers to connect with services within and external to the Child Support Program, including effective referrals**—we aim to be a gateway for separated parents to child support services and other services within the Family Law System. Processes that create inconsistency in services delivered or limit a holistic approach to the customers’ experience will be removed.
- **Reviewing, refining and implementing a service delivery model to better deliver quality customer service outcomes**—we will continue to focus on implementation of a best practice service delivery model in line with the Government’s service delivery and policy reform agenda. We are aware of the need to ensure that each customer is provided with the same service regardless of the state, territory or office the service is delivered from.

To cement our commitment to providing a nationally consistent customer service experience, the Child Support Program will develop national strategies that allow us to manage service delivery workloads more effectively, and identify and apply best-practice.

Goal 3: Effective stakeholder engagement and customer referrals

To support our customers to transfer payments and provide for the wellbeing of their children, we must effectively engage our stakeholders to partner with us in delivering the services and the support parents need.

We will:

- **Embed the Child Support Stakeholder Engagement Plan**— we will continue to engage with our stakeholders, including community organisations, employers, industry groups, researchers, the legal sector and other government agencies. This will ensure their concerns and challenges are considered in the development and implementation of child support and other Family Law System services.
- **Develop and implement *Connecting Locally* Plans**— we will focus on *Connecting Locally* to work with customers and stakeholders in a nationally coordinated way while being flexible to the needs of separating and separated families in particular communities.
- **Build effective formal partnerships with local, state and national organisations to support separated families**— we will establish targeted partnerships with organisations that also work to support the needs of separated families. These partnerships will assist us and our partner organisations to better achieve our goals.
- **Collaborate with our stakeholders and customers in new ways to enable them to contribute to the design of child support service delivery and parent support services**— we will seek stakeholder and customer views, and where possible partner with stakeholders, on the design and delivery of child support and parent support services.





Goal 4: Informed staff, customers and community

The Child Support Program recognise that well informed staff and community are better able to support separated families to meet their financial and emotional responsibilities.

We will:

- **Further increase customer awareness, knowledge and understanding of the child support system and support services available to customers and parents—we will do this by:**
 - updating parents about ongoing changes to the Child Support Scheme enabling them to make informed choices about their child support responsibilities
 - developing and distributing high-quality self-help communication tools to provide separated families with the advice they need, at the time they need it
 - promoting to separated families the availability of existing and new service options, including CSAOnline, and
 - improving customers' ability to meet their child support responsibilities by explaining our compliance approach.
- **Maintain community confidence in the Child Support Scheme and the Child Support Program through a proactive media strategy—a proactive media plan to increase customer and community awareness and understanding of child support.**

Goal 5: Excellence in service delivery capability

The Department of Human Services acknowledges the need to invest in all of the people, systems, processes and resources.

We are committed to:

- **Building improved technical, leadership and decision making capability**—the provision of regular personal and professional development for our people at all levels will provide them with the skills and knowledge required to effectively perform their roles as well as prepare for future career aspirations. A supportive induction process and tailored training opportunities addressing other capability areas will equip our people with the skills to provide quality customer services in a range of roles. The implementation of tailored opportunities will support the maintenance and ongoing development of a sustainable and capable workforce with a strong foundation of leadership.
- **Encouraging innovative approaches to support tools, systems and process development**—we will investigate opportunities to improve support tools, systems and processes to reflect changing community expectations and enable our people to provide excellent customer service in a timely, appropriate and resource efficient manner.
- **Leading, supporting and engaging with our people**—reflecting the important role that our people fulfil in delivering customer services, we are committed to fostering a workplace that promotes:
 - Respect: we respect others' perspectives and behave professionally in all of our dealings.
 - Collaboration: we work together with our colleagues across the Portfolio, by sharing our expertise and information to achieve agreed outcomes.
 - Results: we strive to deliver results for government that improve service delivery outcomes for the Australian community, and accept responsibility for our work.
 - Innovation: we constructively challenge ourselves and others, and support creative, smart and cost-effective innovations that lead to continuous performance improvement.
 - Support for people and performance: we provide leadership, tools and support for learning so our people can do good work. We encourage work/life balance, so our efforts are sustainable.
 - Customer service: we commit to continuing our high level of service to our customers by learning from best practice approaches.
- **Making better use of feedback to improve staff understanding and systems and processes**—we will understand the needs and expectations of customers and the community by embedding this knowledge into processes and practices and conveying it to our people. Information will continue to be collected through a variety of mechanisms including customer and stakeholder feedback, independent reviews, reference groups, input from our people and market research.



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