



Media backgrounder

CSA Optical Surveillance Trial 2008-09

- The Child Support Agency (CSA) will start a 12 month optical surveillance trial on 1 July 2008, with the aim of gathering visual evidence to help investigate a limited number of serious cases where there is a strong suspicion that a customer has committed an offence under child support legislation, such as providing false information in relation to their child support case.
- This trial will be extremely useful where a separated parent may have knowingly and falsely told the CSA that they don't earn an income and can't pay their child support, but there is evidence to indicate otherwise.
- The optical evidence gathered can tell a very different story and, for example it can reveal the person earning an income by working cash-in-hand, or show evidence of collusion with an employer to hide income.
- The CSA piloted optical surveillance last year.
- In one case, a dad claimed to have no income, however, video surveillance operations revealed him working cash in hand. The evidence obtained assisted the investigating officer in having the man finally pay some of the \$12,000 of outstanding child support and enter into an agreement to pay the receiving parent approximately \$800 per month in ongoing child support.
- The optical surveillance trial, as part of the CSA's wide ranging enforcement powers, sends a clear message to all separated parents that they must do the right thing by their children, and when they don't they'll be caught out.
- The CSA will only use optical surveillance on a limited number of serious cases to investigate offences where using conventional desk based investigations and other forms of investigation have been considered but are either unsuitable or have been found to be inconclusive.
- This type of investigation is not new to the Australian Government, with agencies such as Centrelink also conducting surveillance operations to investigate fraud and other offences against Commonwealth legislation.