

Child Support Matters



Australian Government

Child Support Agency

The latest
information
from the Child
Support Agency

Issue 7 | May/June 2008

62,800 parents now using CSAonline

CSAonline, our secure Internet service, is now two years old and around 62,800 parents are now using the service.

Since the service went live in April 2006, more parents are choosing to do business with us electronically and enjoying the flexibility of receiving their correspondence, checking child support information and lodging online, when and where it suits them.

In the lead up to the new Scheme, it's especially important for you to keep your details up to date and ensure you don't miss important information. CSAonline is a quick and easy way to do this.

To log in or register for CSAonline visit www.csa.gov.au

Have your details changed?

If so, let us know via our secure online service CSAonline. You can also update your details by calling us on **1300 885 437**.

More information about the changes

More detailed information about changes to the Scheme is now available on the Scheme Reforms section of our website. For these details plus copies of our newsletters, fact sheets, brochures, news and updates visit www.csa.gov.au

For more information on changes to Family Assistance visit www.familyassist.gov.au

Have your say about our newsletter – email feedback to comms@csa.gov.au

Paying child support through your employer

Paying parents whose child support is deducted from their salary, wage or contract payments and paid to CSA do not need to notify their employer about their new child support assessment.

We have already started informing employers about changes to the Scheme and how it will affect employees. From May this year, employers will receive a new deduction schedule detailing each paying parent for whom they make payments to CSA.

Paying parents who transfer payments to the receiving parent without our involvement (private collect), but do this through their employer, will need to update their own child support deductions with their employers or banking institution once they receive a new assessment.



More money for more kids

More than ever before parents are working together after separation to financially and emotionally support their children. We calculate child support for 52.4 per cent of parents who then transfer payments without our involvement. Assuming 100% of these private collect customers transfer at least the amount of the assessment, in 2006-07, 633,648 paying parents contributed an average of \$4,026 in child support for the year – that's about \$77 a week.

Of those, almost 29 per cent transferred more than \$100 a week; another 35 per cent transferred between \$10 and \$100 a week; 30 per cent transferred less than \$10 per week; and only 5 per cent did not contribute anything in the last 12 months.

This is up on 2005-06 where 628,330 paying parents contributed an average of \$3,901 in child support for the year, which is about \$75 a week.

Parents who transfer child support privately and are unhappy with the outcome can ask CSA to manage the transfers again in most circumstances.

New Child Support Scheme info

The Child Support – Family Assistance online estimator and detailed information about the changes to the Child Support Scheme were released online in February 2008. This information includes useful tables, worksheets and examples to help you understand the changes and how they will affect you from 1 July 2008. To view this information, go to www.csa.gov.au/schemereforms

If you don't have internet access you can order a free detailed booklet called The new Child Support Scheme and changes to Family Assistance by calling **1800 040 972**.

For more information on changes to Family Assistance go to www.familyassist.gov.au



Supporting our diverse customers

Customers from a multicultural background who need information on the new Child Support Scheme can access translated fact sheets in Spanish, Turkish, Arabic, Chinese and Vietnamese at www.csa.gov.au

We recently conducted research, working with these different multicultural customer groups as well as Indigenous customers, to understand how we can improve our information and services.

In the next few months we will visit regions around Australia to meet with Indigenous and multicultural customers and answer questions about the new Child Support Scheme. Check our website for event details.

A Dad's story - marriage break up is not a family break up

It is nearly ten years since I broke up with my wife.

It was the toughest and most heartbreaking time of my life. We had young girls and not being able to see them whenever I wanted to was almost too hard to comprehend.

I still miss my girls when they aren't with me, but I see them one night during the week and every second weekend. We also talk regularly on the phone. I am very involved in their upbringing and schooling and we share holidays.

My ex-wife and I make sure our kids see us getting along, and I try to have one-on-one time with each of them to talk about their issues and feelings. Separation involves change and sadness for the kids too, moving from house to house, remembering schoolbooks, clothes, and things they need to have at both houses.

I believe forming a solid business-like relationship with your ex-partner helps you move on and makes it easier on the children. You have to put the emotional and personal reasons for your divorce behind you for the sake of your kids.

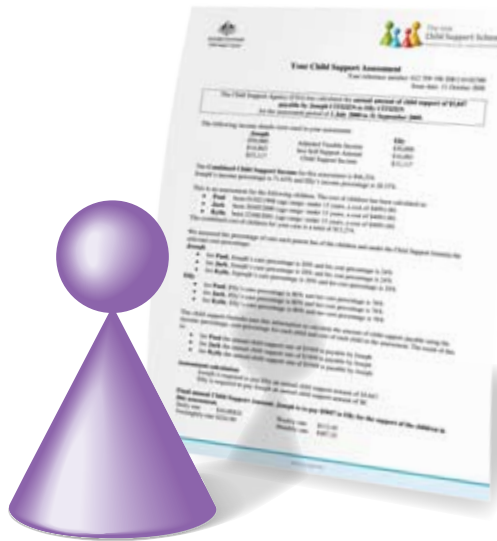
My wife and I came to an agreement a few years ago about child support. I pay a set monthly amount to help support our kids. The Child Support Agency isn't involved and this works well for us.

Early on in our separation when the girls were very young, their mum came up with an idea that if they were at mum's and missing me they could send me a rainbow and vice versa. The rainbow went from house to house. To this day, years later, we still send rainbows.

Everyone's story is different and in research parents asked us to present positive stories about post-separated families. In August 2007, an independent survey reported 46 per cent of paying parents and 41 per cent of receiving parents had a co-operative relationship with the other parent.

The new Child Support Scheme

Your next assessment will be based on a new formula.



This will affect the amount of child support you receive or pay.

From 1 July 2008 a new formula will be used to calculate all child support payments. It is quite different from the current one. It ensures a more balanced and flexible way of working out child support to better reflect families today.

The new formula:

- Is based on independent research into the costs of raising children of different ages
- Considers the incomes of both parents
- Provides both parents with the same self-support amount from their incomes before child support is worked out
- Takes into account the amount of time you care for your children
- Treats first and subsequent families in a similar way

When you get your new assessment, you should check your information to make sure it's right and let CSA know if it isn't. This is important because you could receive or pay the wrong amount when the new Child Support Scheme starts on 1 July. This could also affect your family assistance payment.

Please contact us if...

- The information in your new assessment needs updating so we can issue you with a new one
- You haven't received your new assessment yet

You can contact us on
1300 885 437.

For information about the new Scheme, the new formula and how it will affect you, visit
www.csa.gov.au/schemereforms



The new
Child Support Scheme
A better balance for separated families



Australian Government

Your new Child Support assessment

From 1 July 2008, the Australian Child Support Scheme and some aspects of Family Assistance will change. All parents who pay or receive child support will be affected, even if you work out your own private payment arrangements.

You should have received your new Child Support assessment in the mail (in a blue envelope) or in your CSAonline inbox, between March and mid-May 2008.

Your new Child Support assessment is based on the new child support formula, that treats both parents' incomes the same and leaves both with the same self-support amount, considers the costs of raising children and first and second families, and takes into account the care details we confirmed with you when we wrote to you in October-November 2007.

We covered the formula in issues five and six of the newsletter.

To ensure you pay or receive the correct amount of child support and family assistance, please check that your new child support assessment is right and call us on **1300 885 437** if any information is wrong.

If you have not received your new child support assessment and we have not contacted you by phone or mail, we may not have your current contact details. Call us on **1300 885 437** so we can issue your new assessment.

Visit www.csa.gov.au for information about the new formula and how your new assessment has been calculated.



CSA...supporting separated families.

The child support 'cap' and the costs of children

From 1 July 2008, the way we calculate the maximum amount of child support payable, also known as the cap, will change. Under the current Scheme the cap is based on the income of the paying parent. Independent research into the costs of children found that while a parent's income may increase, the cost of raising the children does not increase much after a certain amount of income is earned.

From 1 July 2008, the cap will apply to the costs of children, which is based on the combined child support income of both parents and calculated using the Costs of Children table, (available on the CSA website). The maximum amount of child support payable will now be capped once parents' combined child support income reaches about \$136,000.

More information about the costs of children is available at www.csa.gov.au (search 'costs').

Giving your relationship another go?

Under the new Scheme if you and the other parent decide to get back together we can suspend your child support payments for up to six months. No child support will be payable, unless there is unpaid child support. If you are still together after six months, CSA will automatically end the assessment.

If you are a Centrelink customer and have a child support assessment, you need to tell both us and the Family Assistance Office if you're getting back together, or if you separate again. The Family Assistance Office will need to know your new income details and any other changes in your circumstances to reassess your family assistance and/or income support.

If you and the other parent are thinking about getting back together more information is available at www.csa.gov.au (search 'reconciliation')