

Tony Hardman JP 13 Flametree Court Ulladulla 2539 - [REDACTED]

Ms. Johanna Gash,
24 Berry Street,
NOWRA 2541

8TH August 2003

Dear Johanna,

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs	
Submission No:	1363
Date Received:	19-8-03
Secretary:	

re *Child Support/Child Welfare / The Roles of Separated Parents/Responsibilities etc.*

We have corresponded about these issues in the past. The 'maze' of issues seems to be coming more complex.

- The Family Law Court and the Child Support Agency outwardly have no contact whatsoever. Children suffer sometimes because one institution is not made aware of a decision that has been made by the other.
My suggestion – Reform is needed.

- Child Support payments are calculated on the gross earnings of the Payer and should be calculated on the Nett Income after Tax is deducted. Furthermore although children are Dependent upon the Payer no Income Tax deductions are permissible for any expenses in relation to dependent children. I do not know of any other payment which is calculated in this manner. I assume that there is a theory that the system gives the CSA first chop at the income source which puts the child in a stronger position.
The fact that Child Support Payments are calculated on Gross Income is not a widely known fact and people that I have acquainted are amazed that this is the case.
The current system is manageable with salary/wages income earners but the self employed find it difficult to budget and tend to loose their thriftiness and frugality as time goes by. Any increased income cannot be committed to improvement in lifestyle or starting another relationship.
The hopelessness of the plight of the individuals in this situation is demonstrated in the suicide rate in young males in the area. With the Building Industry buoyant in the Shoalhaven Region a large proportion of the younger male population are employed as Contractors and Sub Contractors whose income varies from year to year.
- My suggestion – CSA payments be fixed as are Government payments. The scale of payments to be moderated the same as Family Allowance payments and not be subject to any type of means test or income adjustment. Any income earned by the mother be off set against these CSA payments. Payers will be then inclined to make the payments as regular payments.
This will enable Payers to budget their finances and help eliminate arrears. Late and delayed payments also attract a fee which increases CSA debts and arrears.

- The Benefits System is abused on a widespread basis where mothers are financially better off to 'leave' their partners. The system does not encourage women to stay in relationships and let them stand the test of time.. In many cases I know of individuals receiving CSA,

Family Allowance , Supporting Mothers Pension and are living with a Partner who is fully employed under falsehood.

My suggestion- more rigorous controls by Government Agencies in following up claims made under false information.

- The word Counselling in relation to separation of Partners to the average Australian citizen means the two parties sitting down with an Independent Councillor in an attempt to resurrect the relationship.

In the new 'subculture' which is emerging , 'Counselling' means a separated mother representing herself to say the local Community Resources Centre and being advised on what she is entitled to in payments from the Government and from her Spouse/former Spouse.

Any skin blemishes can indicate domestic violence and in such cases payments can be backdated and paid immediately. There is no consideration of resurrecting the relationship.

My suggestion- the payments system needs to be more transparent and resources should be directed at a more professional system of resurrecting relationships rather than provision of an 'automatic' out for mothers. A system of discouragement of separation by partners would be more effective and less costly. A case by case approach needs to in place.

- Destination of Funds . Payers are less inclined to make payments as there are demonstrated cases where none of the payment made to the mother has actually provided a benefit for the child. This situation is rife where the mother has entered into another relationship and had more children to another partner.

My suggestion – that payers be able to nominate payments to such Institutions as Schools, Sporting Bodies and Clothing Retailers whose receipts will be evidence of full and sufficient discharge of the debt.

Johanna, these are all fairly emotive issues but I am sure that our society is developing a sub-culture where young women are being encouraged to bear children purely to improve their income position and without any consideration of the future of the children .We are producing a generation of dependent Welfare recipients.

I am involved in launching a Community Bank down here and establishing the West Ulladulla Sports Complex.

Sometime next year I hope to have time to help turn this around.

Only a few years ago I helped develop an Under 7 Rugby League team. Less than half of the kids came from 'normal homes' . The others from defacto relationships, second marriages, sole parents etc. and after only a few minutes of observation the difference in their concentration , learning abilities and social skills is evident.

Yours faithfully,


TONY HARDMAN.

