



Child Support inquiry begins public hearings

The Federal Parliamentary inquiry into the Child Support Program begins its program of public hearings this week. The inquiry is examining a range of issues to do with the administration of the Child Support program, in particular payment and enforcement options, flexibility, mediation and links with the Family Court. The Chair George Christensen and the Deputy Chair Sharon Claydon have recorded a **You-Tube clip** on the progress of the inquiry and upcoming public hearings.

Hearings will take place over the next two months in a number of metropolitan and regional areas across Australia, and the Committee is also conducting an online questionnaire to allow individuals to contribute their experiences to the inquiry. Early results from the questionnaire have just been published.

The first hearing is in **Canberra at 9:45 – 11am on Thursday 26 June** with the National Council of Single Mothers and their Children.

The second hearing is in **Sydney on Friday 27 June from 10am to 3:45**. The Committee will hold a day of hearings with witnesses such as Law Society of NSW, Women’s Legal Services NSW, Equal Parenting (the Non-Custodial Parents Party) and Professor Patrick Parkinson, who led a Ministerial review of the Child Support system in 2005.

This hearing includes two community statement sessions which will give individuals affected by the system the chance to tell their stories.

Returning to **Canberra at 9:45-11am Thursday 17 July** the Committee will hear from the Lone Fathers Association (Australia).

Hearing programs and future hearing dates are available on the website www.aph.gov.au/childsupport.

“The Child Support program should be about fairness and ensuring the best outcomes for children, but we are hearing many stories about added stress, confusion, and financial hardship”, said Mr Christensen Chair of the Committee. “We are looking forward to hearing from groups representing parents and children engaged in the system, and the stories individuals have to tell us. In particular”, he added, “We want to know how the system can be improved and how it can communicate better with clients in achieving the best outcomes for children”.

As part of the inquiry, a range of responses to the inquiry’s questionnaire are being published in a series of **Snapshots**. The second of these Snapshots, addressing the responsiveness of the Child Support program to client’s changing circumstances, has just been released.

The You-Tube clip, programs for the inquiry’s public hearings, ‘Snapshots’ of questionnaire responses, the online questionnaire, inquiry submissions, and further information about the inquiry, can be found on the inquiry website at www.aph.gov.au/childsupport.

For media comment – please contact Lynn Bonanno in the Chair’s office on (07) 4944 0662.

For inquiry information – please contact the Secretariat:

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