

Inquiry into the Child Support program

Snapshot 2 – Responsiveness to change

Compiled on 24 June 2014.

Responsiveness: this snapshot compiles some responses about how well the Child Support program responds to changes in people's lives. The questionnaire has been online for about six weeks, and in that time we have received more than 10 000 responses. It takes about 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire, which means that people have contributed a total of about 3 000 hours to the inquiry through the questionnaire.

The questionnaire asks individuals if the Child Support program is responsive to changes in their lives. Of those who responded with a single word, only about **25% said 'YES'**, while **75% said 'NO'**. The major ways that people's lives have changed include their jobs, their incomes, and how much time they spend caring for their children. Some of the longer responses are provided below.

Some responses report positive experiences:

- Care percentages change fairly regularly and the system is very responsive to these changes
- The child support arrangements changed significantly a number of times. The child support program was reasonably responsive to these changes
- I had a reduction in wages and my payments were reduced accordingly
- I had a Change of Assessment. The original Assessment did not take into account my ex-partner's current income at the time. The process was quick and painless
- We went from a private arrangement to having CSA arrange payments. CSA was helpful in this matter
- When my pay changed CSA were quick and responsive to my informing them of these changes
- They were helpful and responsive
- There were a few changes of income on my part due to illness and child support were very helpful. I also found it easy to change care levels when appropriate.
- The CSA responded well to any changing circumstances

Others report serious problems:

- NIGHTMARE! Hours and hours of time talking to people who would always give different information and no results
- Very difficult to make changes
- They have not changed and won't unless I go to court

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- They have been an absolute nightmare to deal with and this is compounded by never speaking to the same person twice
- Not at all responsive. They shrugged me off after having me on hold for half a day
- The arrangements have had to change on many occasions and on none of these occasions has the process been simple or seemingly fair - the agency has caused ... a lot of stress and sleepless nights

Some responses found the system too slow or inflexible:

- Took several months to action a court ordered variation
- Way too slow. It is a very cumbersome and inflexible system
- They have been responsive, however I find the system far too regimented
- Case worker was good but he has rules and laws to follow. He was unable to do anything for me except sympathise
- Inflexible and only able to work within set check lists
- Long delays in having adjustments made
- A very cumbersome, drawn out process

And some responses had suggestions for change:

- I earned more money, CSA updated my assessment and demanded more money from employer with an embarrassing letter. This really hurts. Can this please be done in a nicer way? Happy to pay more, talk to us fathers, don't demand from our employers with horrible letters
- Government services (Child support, Centrelink, Housing etc) should be talking to each other more

Thanks to everyone who has completed the Questionnaire.

We will publish further snapshots online in coming weeks.

For inquiry information, and to complete the Questionnaire,
please visit our website: www.aph.gov.au/childsupport