



Australian Government
Child Support Agency



CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY

COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSION

ATTENDED BY

<MP OR SENATOR NAME>

<MEMBER OF / SENATOR FOR ELECTORATE/STATE>

ON

<DATE>

<TIME>

AT

<VENUE>

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Australian Government

Child Support Agency

Community Information Session Brief

**<MP or Senator Name (i.e. The Hon John Smith MP – please check titles)>
<Member for / Senator for Electorate /State>**

Purpose:

To provide information in relation to the Child Support Agency (CSA) Community Information Session (CIS) to be held in <town> at <venue> at <time> on <date>. This CIS is in an 'expo' style, and there will be no formal presentations.

Background:

- CSA Community Information Sessions provide parents with information and services about child support and separated parenting.
- The CSA has been conducting these sessions for almost ten years and holds approximately 60 sessions across Australia each year, with an emphasis on remote and rural areas.
- Parents who attend these sessions can have their child support questions answered, meet people from Government and community services that help separated parents, and pick up a range of free, useful products in an informal and friendly setting.
- They can also get information about upcoming changes to the Child Support Scheme, starting 1 July 2008. These changes affect all separated parents, even if they work out their child support arrangements privately.
- The CSA encourages community service providers and other Government agencies to attend so parents can conveniently access local services and support relevant to them.

Child Support Agency information relevant to the electorate of <electorate name>:

There are approximately <number> CSA customers in the electorate (comprising x paying parents and y receiving parents).

The CSA has identified approximately <number> customers in and around this area who might be interested in attending. The CSA has posted information about the Community Information Session to these parents.

Details of the Community Information Session

Date	Arial 10 point bold
Venue	Arial 10 point bold
Time	Arial 10 point bold
Phone	Venue phone number Arial 10 point bold and contact officer
Fax	Venue Fax Arial 10 point bold

CSA Representatives

Date	Position
John Smith	State Manager
Jane O'Brien	External Relations Officer
John Grahame	Customer Service Officer

Order of Events

Customers have been invited to attend the CIS anytime between the hours of XXpm and XXpm.

Invitation List

<e.g.> The CSA has sent XXXX invitations to customers in the <electorate name> electorate. This includes customers in the surrounding suburbs of Belconnen, Bruce, Gungahlin, Aranda, Cook and Macquarie.

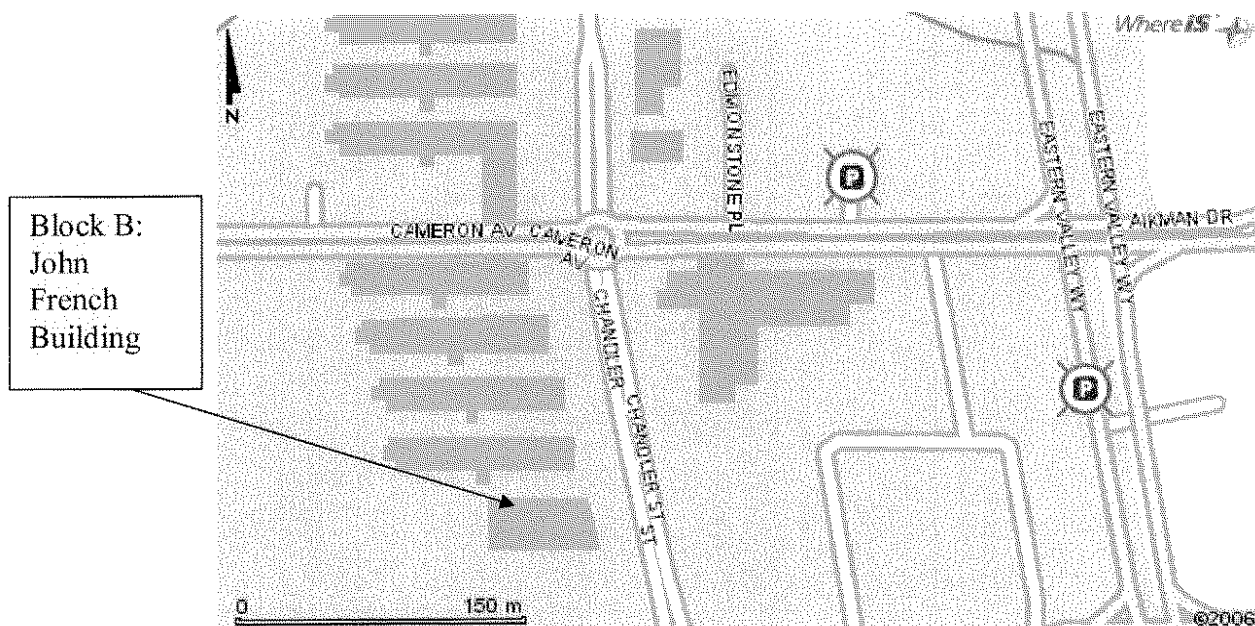
The Community Service Providers that have been invited to attend are:

Organisation	Representative Name/s	Organisation Role
e.g Nowra Community Legal Service		e.g. Provides free legal advice and ongoing assistance to people on low incomes who live on the South Coast of NSW.

Location Details

Venue Name	<e.g. Holiday Inn Pelican Point>
Address	<Address>
Parking	available <on site / close by on street name>
Meet and Greet Arrangements	<person who will be meeting/greeting the MP or Senator, where / time & mobile number >
Description of Location:	<i.e. RSL club, Community Centre etc>

Local Map: (for example - from www.whereis.com.au or google maps)



Local Issues

<Anything the MP or Senator needs to know before attending the event – ie if there are any local issues that might arise, if there were any problems at previous CISs, if there has been any negative CSA publicity in the past that might come up, if a CIS has not been held in the area for a long time, what major CSA events have occurred recently that may be of interest ie assessment letters>

Advertising / Promotion

Medium	Outlet	Type	Date(s)	Frequency

Print Advertising



Do you have child support questions?

Come along to our community information session and have your questions answered.

Meet people from a range of government and community services who support separated families. Receive general information about upcoming changes to the Child Support Scheme.

When: [Date]
[Time]

Where: [Venue name]
[Street address]

After the information session, CSA customers can arrange a future date for a confidential one-on-one chat with CSA staff.

Can't make it to an information session? Visit our office!

You can always visit your nearest CSA office. Our CSA staff can support you with helpful booklets and tools, information about local community service organisations, as well as applications, calculations and payments.

Your nearest CSA office is at:

[Building name]
[Street address]

Monday to Friday,
[X.XXam] to [X.XXpm]

Call 131 272 to make an appointment.

CSA... supporting separated families.

www.csa.gov.au

Radio Advertising

The shell script for CSA Community Information Session advertising is as follows:

- The **CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY** will hold a Community Information Session tonight in <TOWN>.

- You are welcome to learn about Child Support, Family Tax Benefit, Family Law, and Support Services available to separated parents.

- Centrelink, Legal Aid, the Family Court, and other community service providers have been invited.

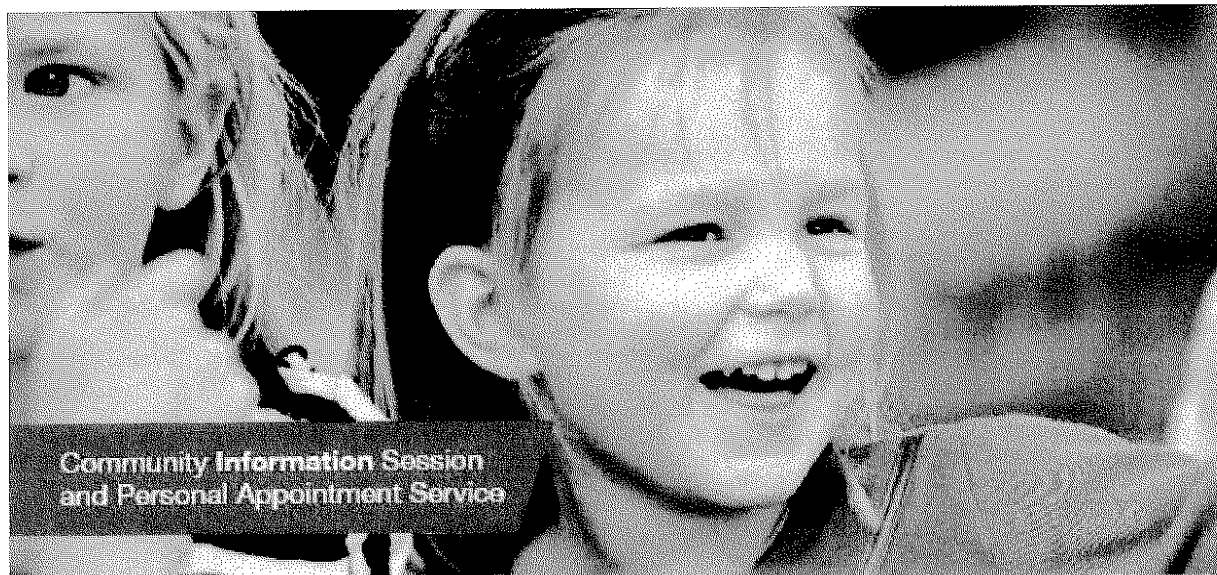
- Or make a one-on-one confidential appointment.

Come along to the CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY'S Community Information Session <e.g. tonight from 7:00pm at the TAFE Gawler Campus, 43 High Street, Gawler.>

- For more information call **131 272**.

Invite To CSA Customers

Location specific text is printed in the blank space on the template. This text is on the next page.



If you'd like more information about the Child Support Scheme or the Child Support Agency and want to find out about the different options available to you and your family—come along to hear a presentation or talk to a CSA team member. You can also pick up a range of free helpful tools for parents.

Are you online?

CSAonline is a secure Internet service where you can view and update your child support information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To enrol, go to www.csa.gov.au



CSA Customer Service Officers
Arbony and Alena



Australian Government
Child Support Agency

CSA196

CSA ... supporting separated families

Invite Text

The Child Support Agency invites you to a free information session, attended by.

TITLE FIRST NAME SECOND NAME
Federal Member for XXXXX or
Senator for STATE

Where: XXXXX

When: BETWEEN and, DAY DATE MONTH,
YEAR

Come along to an informal expo - you can drop in any time during the session.

You can also talk to representatives from:
LIST ORGANISATIONS

Light refreshments will be available

For more information contact the Child Support Agency on **131 272** or visit the web site at www.csa.gov.au

[OPTIONAL:]

You can also make a personal appointment between TIME DAY DATE. When you call (131 272) please quote your customer reference number.

Children are welcome accompanied by a supervising adult.

Between March and mid-May 2008 the CSA will send you a new assessment notice explaining what you will pay or receive under the new Child Support Scheme, starting 1 July 2008. Information is available now at www.csa.gov.au and you will receive more details in the mail in early 2008. This information session will cover general information rather than specific personal information about your payments under the new Scheme.



<DATE>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPARATED PARENTS CAN LEARN ABOUT CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES AT THE <LOCATION> COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSION

Separated parents can learn more about child support and the services available by dropping in at any during the Child Support Agency’s free Community Information Session on <DATE> between <TIME> and <TIME> in <LOCATION>.

Parents will be able to talk to CSA staff and pick up a range of free helpful tools for parents.

Representatives from <NAMES OF ORGANISATIONS> and other local community service providers have also been invited.

Personal appointments will also be available, <EARLIER IN THE DAY/DATE> between <TIME> to <TIME> and parents should call **131 272** to arrange an appointment.

Parents will also be able to find out about major changes to the Child Support Scheme, which come into effect on 1 July 2008. If parents are unable to attend the information session, they can view details about the new Scheme on the CSA website www.csa.gov.au/schemereforms

For more information on the information session parents should call **131 272** and ask to speak to someone about <LOCATION> Community Information Session or go to the CSA website at www.csa.gov.au.

FREE PARENT INFORMATION SESSION

Date XXXXXX
 Time XXXXXX
 Venue XXXXXX
 XXXXXX
 XXXXXX

PERSONAL APPOINTMENT SESSION

Date XXXXXX
 Time XXXXXX
 Venue XXXXXX
 XXXXXX
 XXXXXX

Media enquiries, including requests for interviews about child support (including the new scheme): email - media@csa.gov.au phone - 02 XXXX XXXX

Media Release Shell for Attending MP or Senator

MEDIA RELEASE

<name> *encourages separated parents to attend information session in <location>*

<name>, the **Member/Senator** for **<Electorate/State>** will be attending a Child Support Agency (CSA) Community Information Session at **<time>** at **<location>** on **<date>**.

<name> said there were 1.5 million separated parents and 1.1 million children in the child support system at the start of this year.

"In fact, the CSA has **<MORE THAN/ALMOST>** **<NUMBER>** separated parents registered in **<LOCATION>** and surrounding areas," **<NAME>** said.

<MP Name> said the information session includes an opportunity for parents to discuss their situation with CSA staff, as part of a longstanding customer service initiative designed to allow face-to-face contact between agency staff and customers.

"It's important to ensure that separated parents are fully informed of all their options and the support that is available, running information sessions like the one coming up in **<location>** certainly helps do that," **<Member/Senator name>** said.

"Personal appointments will also be available and parents should call **131 272** to arrange an appointment.

"Separated parents can also pick up the CSA's well respected range of free booklets available to support families dealing with separation, budgeting and repartnering."

The Child Support Agency's free booklets are also available from the CSA website www.csa.gov.au or by calling the publications order line **1800 040 972**.

Parents will also be able to find out about major changes to the Child Support Scheme, which come into effect on 1 July 2008. If parents are unable to attend the information session, they can view details about the new Scheme on the CSA website www.csa.gov.au/schemereforms Parents can visit the CSA website or call **131 272** for more information on their nearest Community Information Session. These sessions are free and everyone is welcome.

Media Enquiries:

Frequently Asked Questions

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q: I pay child support but how do I know that it goes to my children?

A: If you feel the child support payments you are making are not being spent to support your children in a way you deem appropriate, you may like to consider the option of making Non-Agency Payments.

Q: What is a Non-Agency Payment (NAP)?

A: You can ask CSA to recognise payments made directly to the other parent or a third party as child support payments, if CSA is collecting your child support. These payments are known as non-agency payments (NAPs), and may be in the form of cash or items or services agreed to by both parents (such as children's clothes or car repayments). Either parent can advise CSA that a NAP has been made. CSA will ask the receiving parent to confirm that the payment, or the value of goods or services, was intended as child support.

If you often use these sorts of payments to meet your child support liability, and both parents agree, it may be easier for you to make a child support agreement or private collect arrangement, rather than reporting the NAP each time.

CSA doesn't require the other parent's approval to accept some types of NAPs, known as prescribed payments, made for essential matters like school fees, essential medical costs and the receiving parent's accommodation or housing costs. Up to 30% of the monthly child support liability can be recognised this way if the remaining 70% of the monthly child support is paid.

For more information on making payments other than directly to your partner, please read the Fact Sheet on Non Agency Payments (PDF 550k). Detailed information about the changes to child support and family assistance, including tables, worksheets and examples, is also now available online.

You may also wish to discuss this directly with your ex partner. This could include exploring other options such as you paying your child support commitments directly to third parties (e.g. school fees).

If you need assistance or advice on how to raise these issues with your ex partner you may wish to contact the Family Relationship Advice Line who will assist you mediate a positive outcome for the benefit of your children. They can be contacted on **1800 050 321** Monday to Friday 8.00 am to 8.00 pm and Saturday 10.00 am to 4.00 pm.

Q. Why should I pay child support when I don't get to see my kids?

It can be incredibly tough when you can't see your children, yet they still need your financial support for their day-to-day care and wellbeing – no matter where they live or how often you see them.

Contact with your children is a matter for you and the other parent to decide and there are more counselling and median services now available to help parents resolve these issues (contact the Family Relationship Advice Line on xxxxx).

Some relationships will always be challenging, parents report that their relationship with the other parent improves with time and perspective.

Q. Does the Child Support Agency get a cut of the money I pay?

No. The CSA transfers the full amount of child support paid from one parent to the other. Any penalties for late payment of child support are paid into Government Revenue, not to CSA. They are not paid to the other parent.

Q. What if the other parent tries to hide their real income?

Some receiving parents underestimate their income to maximise their child support and family payments and CSA is now balancing its approach to enforcement action to cover both receiving and paying parents.

Most parents pay their child support regularly. However, some parents will attempt to avoid paying child support, including minimizing their income or hiding assets. In these cases CSA will investigate where sufficient evidence is available. You can help by providing advice to CSA that will enable investigations to be undertaken – ie the place where the parent works, information about their assets or spending habits, vehicles they drive, etc

If you believe that the paying parent has a greater earning capacity than they are assessed to have, contact CSA to discuss your options. You may be eligible to apply for a change of assessment.

When parents don't pay CSA will:

- Attempt to negotiate a repayment arrangement
- Use administrative and legal tools to enforce payment.

SCHEME REFORM RELATED QUESTIONS

Q: What if I disagree with my new assessment when I receive it?

A: When you receive your new child support assessment, between March and May, please check it carefully. If you don't agree with the details CSA has used in calculating your new assessment, call us and we can discuss these with you and update your assessment if necessary.

If you then don't agree with the assessed amount you have to pay or will receive, you may have the right to object to CSA and seek a review of the decision. If after objecting you still feel that CSA's decision is wrong, you can appeal to the Social Security Appeals Tribunal.

Detailed information about your objection rights following a CSA decision and other changes to the Child Support Scheme are now available online. Make sure you check your new assessment as soon as you receive it, as you will need to object within 28 days of getting the letter.

If you want to estimate what your new child support or family assistance payments, you may be able to use the Child Support - Family Assistance Online estimator.

Q: How much will I pay or receive when the new formula is introduced?

A: You will receive your new child support assessment between March and May 2008, in advance of the new formula starting.

Detailed information about the changes to child support and family assistance, including tables, worksheets and examples, and an online tool to provide estimates of child support and family assistance, are now available online from www.csa.gov.au or www.centrelink.gov.au

If any of your details and or circumstances have changed let us know via our secure online service CSAonline. You can also update your details by calling us on **1300 88 5437**.

Detailed information about the changes to child support and family assistance, including tables, worksheets and examples, is now available online.

Q: I've heard the new Scheme is based on the costs of children - who decided what children cost?

A: In 2005, an independent Child Support Taskforce and Reference Group reviewed research into the costs of children in Australia and recommended a new way of calculating child support payments based on their findings. This new formula will replace the current formula that uses fixed percentages of income.

Taskforce and Reference Group members had expertise in a variety of areas, including social and economic policy, family law, post-separation parenting and relationships. Some members also represented child support customers.

The Taskforce conducted new Australian research, and reviewed Australian and overseas research into the costs of raising children, and considered other factors such as households with different income levels, different numbers of children and children of different ages and reached the best and most up-to-date estimates for the costs of children.

More information about the research into the costs of children is available at: [In the Best Interests of Children - Reforming the Child Support Scheme - summary](#) / [In the Best Interests of Children - Reforming the Child Support Scheme - full report \(PDF 282k\)](#)

Detailed information about the changes to child support and family assistance, including tables, worksheets and examples, is now available online.

Q: How will my payments be affected by the level of care I give?

A: Child support payments calculated under the new formula will reflect each parent's level of care and how much it costs parents to care for their children.

Under the new formula, the 109 night (30 per cent) threshold has been removed. From 1 July 2008, where a parent has care of the child for between 14 and 34 per cent of the nights of the year, 24 per cent of the cost of the child will be taken to be met through the provision of that care. This will reduce the possibility of payments changing as a result of small changes in care, and help to remove incentives for a parent to restrict contact with the other parent.

Where parents have care for at least 35 per cent of the time, a sliding scale will increase the direct cost percentage (reflects the costs you incur when you provide care for your child) as care increases, from 25 per cent up to 50 per cent. So, a parent will be recognised as meeting 50 per cent of the costs of children if their care percentage is between 48 to 52 per cent (equal to 176-189 nights per year).

It's up to parents to manage care arrangements that are in the best interests of the children. Under the new Scheme, the child support formula will recognise the care each parent has of their children, and small changes will not affect payments as much as they do under the current formula.

Detailed information about the changes to child support and family assistance, including tables, worksheets and examples, is now available online.

Q: Do these changes affect my family assistance payments?

A: Child Support and Family Assistance are linked. The amount of child support you receive can affect the amount of Family Assistance you are entitled to receive.

If we don't have your up to date details, your child support assessment may be incorrect, which could also mean you do not receive the family assistance that you and your children are entitled to.

If you have a child support agreement with the other parent that starts on or after 1 July 2008, your family assistance payment will be calculated based on the amount of child support you'd receive if

you were using the child support formula (notional assessment). Therefore if you are working out a new child support agreement now but the agreement will only start after 1 July 2008 - or you are renegotiating an agreement - you should keep these changes in mind.

As long as we can contact you to get the information we need to work out your new assessment, we can work with the Family Assistance Office (FAO) to ensure you receive the family assistance you're entitled to.

If your personal or financial circumstances change, please let Centrelink know by calling 13 6150 or visiting your nearest Centrelink Customer Service Centre or Medicare office or online at www.centrelink.gov.au or www.familyassist.gov.au.

Detailed information about the changes to child support and family assistance, including tables, worksheets and examples, is also available online.

Q: How will the new formula affect second families / treat first and second families?

A: The new Child Support Scheme uses a more balanced formula to calculate child support. It reflects today's real costs of raising children, including the higher costs of raising teenagers.

The new formula will treat the children of first and second families as equally as possible by using the Costs of Children table to work out the cost of the children from the second family in determining the child support payable (rather than a flat increase to the paying parent's exempt income).

Also from 1 July 2008, there will be a new ground for a Change of Assessment that will allow some parents who have care of a resident child, who is not a biological or adopted child of the parent, to be able to have that resident child taken into account in the child support assessment.

You can access further information about the scheme changes on this website.

Detailed information about the changes to child support and family assistance, including tables, worksheets and examples, is now available online.

As we progress, the CSA will write to you to inform you of the impact of any changes to your child support case(s). If any of your details and or circumstances have changed let us know via our secure CSAonline online service that you can access via this website. You can also update your details and/or advise of a change in your circumstance by calling us on **1300 88 5437**.

Q: It says that if you have care for less than 35% you don't receive family assistance for that child anymore. How is that right when these parents still have to meet costs for those children?

A: The new way of working out child support payments will recognise the expenses of non-resident parents who have contact with their children.

From 1 July 2008, a parent who has care of a child for less than 35% of the time will not be eligible for the child related components of Family Tax Benefit. Instead of receiving Family Tax Benefit, a parent who has care of a child between 14% to less than 35% of the time will have the costs of the child taken into account in working out how much child support the parent will pay. This level of care is called 'regular care' and will be counted as meeting 24% of the costs of the child for child support purposes. For most child support payers, this will reduce the amount paid. A parent with regular care of a child will continue to be eligible for the rent assistance component of Family Tax Benefit Part A and certain other government benefits.

As long as we can contact you to get the information we need to work out your new assessment, the Family Assistance Office can make sure you receive the family assistance you're entitled to.

Detailed information about the impact of the child support changes on family assistance is now available at www.familyassist.gov.au.