



773-1230.

**The Hon Jenny Macklin MP**  
**Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**  
**Minister for Disability Reform**

Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Telephone: (02) 6277 7560  
Facsimile: (02) 6273 4122

MC13-006463

The Hon John Murphy MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

02 JUL 2013

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 27 May 2013 about a recent petition (773/1230) submitted for consideration by the Standing Committee on Petitions, regarding a proposed amendment to the child support legislation. The petition suggested that child support payments be quarantined for the purchase of essential items such as food, clothing and education.

The majority of receiving parents spend their child support payments appropriately. The objects of the Child Support Scheme intend that the level of financial support to a child be provided in accordance with both parents' capacity to provide financial support. The Scheme is designed to be non-intrusive and allow parents some flexibility in how child support payments are managed. An approach along the lines of that proposed in the petition would be intrusive for parents and therefore not consistent with the Scheme's intention.

Paying parents who are concerned about the way the other parent spends child support payments may be able to receive credit towards their child support liability for money spent on items such as essential school and medical fees. These payments, known as prescribed Non-Agency Payments, are credited at 30 per cent of the monthly liability when the remaining 70 per cent of the liability is paid. Prescribed Non-Agency Payments can be credited without the receiving parent's agreement that the payment was in lieu of child support. Further information about these provisions can be found in chapter 5.3.1 of The Guide, the online policy guide to the administration of the Child Support Scheme, which can be accessed online at [www.guide.csa.gov.au](http://www.guide.csa.gov.au).

Alternatively, parents may wish to enter into a Child Support Agreement which specifies the payment of certain goods or services in lieu of or in addition to regular child support payments. For example, parents may agree that a certain percentage of child support payments are spent on extra-curricular activities for the children. Information about the different types of agreements that parents can enter into can also be found in The Guide at chapter 2.7.

If a parent has serious concerns about the welfare of their children due to the misuse of child support payments or for other reasons, they should contact the relevant child welfare authority in their state.

I thank the Committee for bringing this petition to my attention. The effects of the child support legislation are continually monitored by my Department and the suggestions raised within the petition make an important contribution to this monitoring process.

Thank you again for writing.

Yours sincerely

**JENNY MACKLIN MP**