

Submission No: 1160

Date Received: 5-8-03

Secretary: S AUS 0009

From: Jeff Trahair [REDACTED]  
Sent: Tuesday, 5 August 2003 1:40 PM  
To: Committee, FCA (REPS)  
Subject: (no subject)

I write now, not to enter the debate about the issues of shared parenting. I have been pursuing shared care arrangements for 7 months now, before I knew anything about being of like mind, or even that the systems (social and administrative) already have a particular way of working.

It is a steep and painful learning curve to discover that shared parenting is not the norm, far from it. There are systematic biases inherent in just about every activity that needs to be negotiated with another person.

I have some very practical issues. I think they are important. The agents of advisory/administrative bodies (legal aid, welfare rights, Centrelink administrators, CSA case managers) I have had discussions with have ALL said "what unusual circumstances". Perhaps they are unusual, perhaps not, I am on the receiving end, not the policy/admin end:

Shared care will need (already needs?) to filter down through CSA and Centrelink policies:

I applied for FTB lump sum for the period prior to separation, on a date after separation. My wife had already claimed the FTB (lump sum) and it was paid to her. Centrelink says this is correct. I think it is unfair. Centrelink recognizes shared care for FTB after separation, and pays FTB for non-separated couples via a wide range of (flexible) arrangements to either party (fortnightly, tax reductions, lump sum and combinations of each of these) - why should only one person be able to keep all the FTB, when the other objects to this?

Youth allowance is paid to only ONE parent of a dependent child (16-18 year old) who is in shared care. This is unfair.

The youth allowance paid to that parent, although it is actually the child's income, is received ON THE UNDERSTANDING that it is for the maintenance of the dependent child. From CSA's perspective it is not counted as income for child maintenance for the receiving parent. This is unfair.

In CSA collect (agency collect) situations, arrears in maintenance pre-agency collect period will be collected by CSA, but arrears overpayment will not be collected. Arrears overpayment can easily come about because of a reassessment by either objection or changed circumstance. The amount can be great, because it can take months for CSA to reach a decision, blowing out even further because of the waiting periods for objections. It seems that CSA will collect to benefit the payee, but is not interested in the situation for the payer, even though they may have had an instrumental role in creating the overpayment.

I think there are probably many other anomalies like this....

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