

Ross Charles Mitchell

Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100 Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Terms of Reference

The Committee invites you to provide a written submission addressing issues that may be of relevance to you.

To the Committee Secretary,

Dissenting Response To NCSMC Submission (7)

In 2002/3 whilst working full time, I completed with distinctions Certificate II in Information Technology via the OTEN scheme. In 2004/5 I completed Certificate III in Information Technology whilst working part time and sharing the care of my children. In the 2006 Calendar year I commenced Certificate IV in Website Design. I submit that Ms McInnes and her members are not informing the committee of what a parent is capable of when they put their mind into committing to achieve something (other than more money for their children). I could not let this committee see the NCSMC's views without submitting an alternative and logical dissenting view.

I further submit that nothing in the NCSMC's submission looks at the positives of outcomes where children have the benefit of both parents being involved in their lives, and the reduced time that mothers will be spending if the children are spending more time with their fathers. In the real world the mums that I speak to would enjoy that extra time, they actually want the fathers to spend more time with the children.

Lets look realistically at what they submit, lets look at home ownership firstly, no mortgage provider in their right mind would lend 200,000 to someone on the PPS, who isn't working and has children. Those mothers that are prepared to work, can easily get a mortgage. That's why there is such a large discrepancy between the general population and single parents, single parents on a welfare payment simply wont get financing. Don't you find it rather intriguing that the NCSMC are quite happy to compare general population to CSA clients for mortgage or housing rates, yet they don't disclose the same comparison for DV rates.

DV, or domestic violence if you please, judging from the ABS's recent Personal Safety Survey, affect about 5 to 8% of the general population (male and female),

yet in separating figures, the NCSMC fail to mention that the figure increases to around 50%. Some recent FLC cases that are up on the FCA website have shown that allegations are taken seriously by the courts in determining child welfare, even to the extent of saying that Parental Alienation is child abuse, having one mother that refused to abide by court orders when it was found that the father was not a risk to the child, jailed, and another has had custody arrangements reversed for falsely accusing the father of sexually abusing his daughter.

The FCA deals very well with the issues of welfare, including financial arrangements post separation for both parties when their assets are split at divorce. For the NCSMC to submit that "Mothers fleeing domestic violence are often unable to safely pursue any action to obtain their property interests (Sheehan and Smyth 2000)" is just ludicrous as I am sure Dianna Bryant CJ of the FCA, and the Attorney General, the Hon Phillip Ruddock would agree. I am sure if the research was conducted by the government instead of Sheehan and Smyth and was not 7 years old it would tell of a far different outcome.

The NCSMC submit that both parents have re-establishment costs, this is undeniable but the simple fact that for the first few years (in the majority of cases) you are assessed on incomes that the ex spouse and children have had the benefit of, equates to two factors. Firstly, that paying parents are denied that re-establishment ability, and that a "proper assessment" for the taxpayer funded welfare system is not possible. It has long been known that CS has since its inception been inclusive of some factor of spousal allowance, though this committee might deny it, which is in direct contradiction to the basis of the scheme, that "parents" (not singular or father) provide financially for their children.

The NCSMC submission is negative towards all aspects of the changes to the CS scheme, the Parental Responsibility Bill, the "welfare to work" changes, the changes to FTB's, yet they do not propose any single method of rectifying the scheme. Their submission, as it is needs critiquing, they fail to mention that whilst under these changes some 60% of single "parents" who are under the scheme at 01 July 07 may be receiving slightly less in CSA, they should be working the minimum 15 hours requirement of the "welfare to work" scheme to overcome that slight reduction. Those entering the scheme from that date won't be any worse off, and by 2018, less than 10% of all CSA cases will involve clients who would have been covered by the current assessment method.

This leads into the ever increasing divorce rate, Government policies and the policies of all the main political parties actively support "No Fault Divorce" and fail to see that these policies support what I see as a form of child abuse. When a parent cheats on their spouse, they are also cheating on their children. Cheating them out of a meaningful relationship with both parents. With the ever increasing divorce rate and population growth the CSA clientele base could double by 2018.

By 2018 my 12 and 15 year old daughters could be a single parents. From a very young age, my father taught me that we are responsible for our own action, the thing about "No Fault Divorce" that really angers me is that these policies negate that responsibility for a parent that cheats on their spouse and children. The child support acts and policies and the family law act also negate that responsibility where children are concerned.

Children are the main victims in divorce, and yet as a responsible parent I cant even say to them, this was your mothers choice, I had no say in it, so to over ride this, I have actively worked towards being fully involved in their lives, and remained "sui juris", except where child support is concerned and I have no say because of the antiquated authoritarian scheme currently in place.

That is the crux of the problem with CS, the government is telling parents how much their children cost, how much they have to pass off to the other parent, and as I have said before, the scheme simply does not apply to intact families. There is no alternative, no "opt out", until both parents stop utilising the benefits provided by the taxpayer to support their children, so the only conclusion is that the clawback of welfare is the sole purpose of the scheme, and not the reasons given under s3 of the assessment act.

Perhaps we should also note here that those parents who were recipients of the PP (single or partnered) as at 01 Jan 07 remain on the PP and are not expected to go onto Jobstart when their children reach school age if they are fulfilling the min 15 hours per week. That minimum should see an increase in family budget that the NCSMC fail to acknowledge in their calculations. If a parent applies for the PP after that date, and has school aged children and is fulfilling the minimum 15 hours, they will get the PP and not Jobstart.

I once again implore you to discard these fundamentally flawed legislative instruments, I am quite happy to appear before this committee and present alternatives that will reduce the accumulation of debt for paying parents, as outlined in my first submission. The government has budgeted some \$140m au to chase up negligent payers, yet no one has asked why are these payers are not paying, the simple answer is for most of them, that they would go bankrupt if they did and they would then not be able to support any child.