

April Newsletter



It has been a busy time for us at Sole Parents' Union, and the next couple of months looks like the pace will continue to pick up.

For those people who are new to us, let us take this opportunity to explain who we are and what our aims are.

VISION AND MISSION

Sole Parents' Union is a non-profit community advocacy organisation that works on behalf of all sole parents, representing their views and issues to government. We work on behalf of both female and male sole parents, share-care parents, and children.

Our vision is

To have sole parent families recognised as valid family types, and not ones in need of "fixing"

Our mission is

To improve outcomes for sole parent families and improve recognition of the issues inherent in parenting alone or across multiple households

How we do it

We do this through working with government to improve policy for sole parent families, including in family law, social security, child support, tax and any other issues affecting families. We also work with the media to raise awareness of issues surrounding sole parenting, and improve the profile of sole parents in the media and the community.

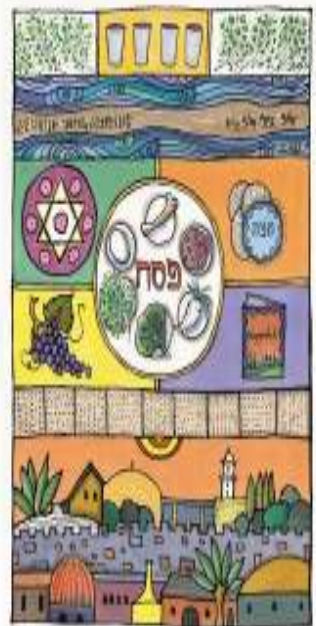
We are represented on a number of government advisory panels, and make submissions and appear before enquiries on all matters that affect sole parent families.

Please visit our website: <http://www.soleparentsunion.org.au>

Passover and Easter are fast approaching as are school holidays. For NSW, WA, SA public school holiday dates are: 2 April - 18 April 2010 ; for Queensland NT and TAS: 2 April - 11 April 2010; ACT: 10 April - 26 April 2010; Victoria: 27 March - 11 April. We wish everybody a safe and happy break.



Sole Parents'
UNION



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Message from the President:

It's been a very busy time for the Sole Parents' Union since the last newsletter. Not only have we had Christmas, Easter and school holidays to contend with, but there have been a lot of policy announcements at the federal government level. So much that it's hard to know where to start. So let's begin with **Child Support**.

First - I attended the CSA's Child Support National Stakeholder Engagement Group meeting in Canberra in March. This is the CSA's community advisory body, and the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, was present for a short while. High on the agenda was the reviews the CSA is undertaking of its processes. There is more information on these reviews in our section on Child Support.

Next – **family law**. The 2006 Family Law reforms which emphasised shared parenting and equal or substantial time have now been reviewed. The Australian Institute of Family Studies (<http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/file/index.html>) was commissioned by the government to review the changes. In addition to this, both the 'Family Courts Violence Review', conducted by Professor Richard Chisholm AM, and 'Improving Responses to Family Violence in the Family Law System', conducted by the Family Law Council, examines the effectiveness of legislation as well as court practices and procedures in cases involving family violence. The news from all three reports was as we expected – women and children are being put at risk from the changes. Copies of the reports are available on the Attorney-General's Department website at www.ag.gov.au. Sole Parents' Union will continue to work with the government to improve outcomes for everybody involved in family law, particularly children.

Finally – **income management**. The government has announced that it will extend income management across Australia. This means that everybody on social security who falls into certain categories will have half of their income quarantined, and be given a card which they can use to buy only certain goods from certain shops. You could be subject to this if you are:

15-24 years of age and receiving one of the following payments for at least 13 out of the last 26 weeks:

- o Youth Allowance
- o Newstart Allowance
- o Special Benefit, or Parenting Payment.

25 years of age or older and receiving one of the following payments for at least 52 out of the past 104 weeks:

- o Youth Allowance
- o Newstart Allowance

- o Special Benefit
- o Parenting Payment
- o referred for income management by child protection authorities, or assessed by Centrelink social workers as requiring income management for reasons including vulnerability to financial crisis, domestic violence or economic abuse.

Of if you live in a suburb which the government decides is disadvantaged.

This could be you!

We will continue to work to stop this insulting and discriminatory policy from being passed through parliament.

If you have any stories or feedback for us on any of the above issues, please contact us on admin@soleparentsunion.org.au or through our website at www.soleparentsunion.org.au.

Until next time
Kathleen Swinbourne
President
Sole Parents' Union



Say No 4 Kids **Petition**

Petition to the Standing Committee of Attorneys General (SCAG) Censorship Ministers and whom-ever else it may concern:

As citizens concerned about the wellbeing of children, we object to the display of pornographic publications (including magazines such as People and The Picture) in front of minors in milk bars, service stations, newsagents, supermarkets, etc.

We strongly oppose the law that allows pornographic material to be placed in front of children. We request that you amend the law to support our view that pornography should not be displayed amongst general publications (such as newspapers, women's & children's magazines, etc), and that children MUST be protected from exposure to all pornographic publications by ensuring this material is placed out of children's access and view.

To sign this petition go to:

[Online petition - Remove Pornography from Children's View](http://www.gopetition.com.au/online/29705.html)

Child Support

The Australian Institute of Family Studies has published a Journal of Family Studies dedicated solely to child support issues. This issue of the journal has been edited by Bruce Smyth, a researcher at the Australian National University. Bruce has conducted a lot of research into child support and other issues of importance to sole parents. The journal can be found at

www.familystudiesjournal.com.

The independent review of the Child Support Agency's decision making processes has been completed. David Richmond produced an extensive report *Delivery Quality Outcomes: Consistency, Continuity and Confidence*. There are a large number of recommendations in the report to improve the way the CSA operates, and the Agency is working its way through them. The full report can be found at the Child Support Agency's publications page <http://www.csa.gov.au/publications/index.aspx>

The CSA is also in the middle of a pilot project aimed at improving the way it conducts change of assessments. They are trialling a case management model, which will put the

decision-maker at the front of the process. This means that the person you speak to at the beginning of the process when you apply for a change of assessment is the same one who will make the final decision. This will hopefully save you time and stress in telling your story to different people, and make the whole process simpler and faster.

Sole Parents' Union is involved in providing advice and feedback for this project. We will give you more information on the outcomes of the trial when it has been completed.

In addition, the Agency is looking at the factors that encourage people to pay child support, and how it can improve compliance. This is extremely important as at the end of June 2008, the total amount of outstanding debt stood at over \$1b, with domestic debt at \$825.3m.

Finally, the CSA is reviewing its forms to make them easier to understand and complete. If you have any stories about completing CSA forms please let us know so we can pass it on.

BEWARE OF IDENTITY THEFT THIS EASTER



NATIONAL COMPACT FOR THE THIRD SECTOR

Working Together was launched on 17th March by the Prime Minister and Senator Ursula Stephens. The compact is part of the government's social inclusion agenda. There are ten principles which underpin the compact between the Australian Government and the Third sector. Some of the principles that are included are: trust and respect for each other, listening to each other; celebrating diversity and measuring our successes. The Third Sector includes charities, churches, temples and mosques, clubs and associations, unions and other groups of people working together with common goals.

One of the most important elements of the compact is the agreement to protect the freedom of Third Sector organisations to contribute to public debate without impacting on their funding or status. Also welcome is the endeavour to reduce red tape and streamline reporting.

In signing the compact, the sector's right to advocacy is protected. It also acknowledges that there will be a joint action to improve paid and unpaid workforce issues. The government's preparedness to support the ASU test case to Fair Work Australia is a sign of the seriousness of its commitment and recognition that the Third Sector deserves increased financial support.

The Federal Government's response to a positive outcome from the test case is anticipated. An increase in pay rates from a new streamlined award will require a substantial increase in budget outlays. Whether the compact is just fine sentiment will then be measured by the government's generosity and the speed in its response to the new award's implementation. More information and a copy of the National Compact can be found at www.nationalcompact.gov.au



SEND A KISS TO JULIA GILLARD

“No More Lip Service to Equal Pay” is the tag line for the Australian Services Union (ASU) campaign for community sector workers. These workers, most of whom are women, are undervalued and underpaid. Their wages have been depressed as a result. The ASU is coordinating a Federal Government,

ACTU and unions test case to Fair Work, Australia using the new Equal Remuneration provisions embedded in the Fair Work Act. The outcome of the test case will affect 200,000 community workers, most of whom are in the not-for-profit sector. It is proposed that 37 awards will be streamlined into one. The pay increase for Queensland workers in this sector will be used as the basis for this case. The support of the government is significant because a huge proportion of this sector's funding comes from government allocations. If you would like to send a kiss to Julia Gillard in support of the campaign and fair remuneration for community services workers, go to www.payup.org.au





Daylight Saving

Daylight Saving Ends ACT New South Wales South Australia Tasmania Victoria
Sunday 4 April 2010, at 3:00 am summer time when **clocks are put back one hour.**

Daylight Saving Commences ACT New South Wales South Australia Tasmania Victoria
Sunday 3 October 2010, at 2:00 am
when clocks are put forward one hour.

**Smoke alarms save
lives - Change Your
Clock, Change Your
Smoke Alarm Battery**



Dates for Sydney Royal Easter Show 01-14 April 2010



Kid's Day – Wednesday 14 April The last day of the Show is an action-packed event, and for just \$11 admission price.

For all Easter Show ticketing enquiries call 1300 730 631. For general customer enquiries ring the information line on 02 9704 1000.