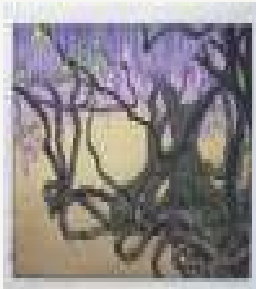


## Spring Newsletter



It has, as usual, been a busy time for us at Sole Parents' Union, and the pace will continue to pick up. We are excited by the new projects ahead of us. (See page two for more about the current projects.)

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>

School holidays are fast approaching again. For public schools holiday dates are: **NSW, SA; 27<sup>th</sup> September - 11<sup>th</sup> October**; **NT 27<sup>th</sup> September - 1<sup>st</sup> October**; **VIC 17<sup>th</sup> September - 4<sup>th</sup> October**; **WA 27<sup>th</sup> September - 12<sup>th</sup> October**; **TAS 3<sup>rd</sup> September - 20<sup>th</sup> September**; **QLD 20<sup>th</sup> September - 4<sup>th</sup> October 2010**. We wish everybody a safe and happy break.



**Sole Parents'  
UNION**



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## **Child Support Project**

Sole Parents' Union has received funding from the Federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) to provide them with policy advice on child support.

To do this, we want to get beyond the statistics. We want to find out how child support affects your daily life, your relationships, and your children.

We've been travelling around NSW talking to groups of parents to get their stories.

If you can organise a group of sole parents to get together in your area we'd be happy to come out to see you. You don't have to still be a sole parent. Even if you've re-partnered you can still take part, as long as you are or should be receiving child support we want to hear from you.

But you do need to be in NSW, southern Queensland or country Victoria. Unfortunately our funding doesn't stretch to travelling all over Australia, much as we'd love to.

If we can't get out to see you, don't worry, you can still contribute.

Our website has a survey on child support that you can complete, or you can just log on and tell us your story. The more stories we get the more we can contribute to making better policy that provides good outcomes for sole parent families.

All information is kept strictly confidential and won't be used in any way that can identify anybody.

For further information, or to organise a date contact us on [admin@soleparentsunion.org.au](mailto:admin@soleparentsunion.org.au) or 02 80868 2858.

## **Creating partnerships that work for you**

Sole Parents' Union wants to make sure that we represent the views and actual experiences of sole parents in our submissions and other work with the government. To make sure we do this, Sole Parents' Union would like to create real partnerships with the organisations who work directly with parents.

It is important to us (and I'm sure to you) that this doesn't mean any extra work for you. We all know what it is like trying to do everything, with very few resources. To us, a partnership with you means trying to stretch your resources.

As we work directly with the government, we are involved in discussions on policy and administration matters. We want to share this information with you through our newsletter, website and other means. We are happy to come and visit you and talk to your agency networks or directly with groups of parents you work with. In return all we want is feedback from you on what you want to know and what your parents are telling or asking you. You can do this however, and as often, as you like. If somebody asks you a question you don't know the answer to, ask us. If we don't know the answer we'll use our networks and contacts to try to find out. Or if you can't find something on our website, let us know. That is our primary means of communication with sole parents themselves, so we want to make it as user friendly, with as much relevant information, as possible.

If something comes up for you, odds are somebody else wants to know as well. We can share interesting information in our updates to try to keep everybody informed.

If there are any other organisations, or sole parents, in your area who would like to be kept informed, give them our web address. They can sign up to our newsletter, with no obligations to have to do anything else.

## What's news?

**Families are Changing** - At the time Australian Institute of Family Studies commenced operations in 1980, the marriage rate was declining, and although the vast majority of couples were married, increasing proportions were cohabiting (i.e., in a de facto marriage). The divorce rate had peaked when the *Family Law Act 1975* came into force in 1976 - the same year in which the fertility rate had fallen to below replacement level for the first time. By 1980, the divorce rate had subsided but was well above pre-1976 rates, while the fertility rate had continued its downward slide. Alarm bells were ringing about where the family was heading and whether it would even survive.

[NSW Adoption Law Change A Boost For Same-Sex Families](#)

### Could this be the year of the modern family?

The gay adoption legislation in NSW is an historic advance. *Photo: Jo Gay*



### WHAT does it mean to make history?

While much of Australia was preoccupied with forming a minority federal government, history of another kind was being made in NSW. The passing of the Adoption Amendment (Same-Sex Cou-

ples) Bill ushered in an end to direct legislative discrimination against same-sex couples in NSW.

### [Family violence: Key findings from the Evaluation of the 2006 Family Law Reforms](#)

The Australian Institute of Family Studies' (AIFS) Evaluation of the 2006 Family Law Reforms (Kaspiew et al., 2009) found that one of the central challenges facing the family law system is family violence. A substantial minority of separated parents reported having experienced physical violence, and over half reported having experienced emotional or physical violence. The data collected as part of the AIFS evaluation highlighted the difficulties faced by those working in the family law system (service system professionals, lawyers, court staff and judicial officers) when working with families affected by family violence. This article summarises the main points that arose from the evaluation. Challenging issues include identifying whether there is family violence, the nature of the violence, whether it is ongoing and the most appropriate responses. Dealing with family violence in the family law context is difficult because of its prevalence in separating families, combined with the fact that there is often little or no evidence because most family violence occurs behind "closed doors", without witnesses. It is also difficult because a parent may be too frightened of their ex-partner to tell anyone about the violence, let alone a court.

# Parenting Orders in Doubt After High Court Ruling

Joel Gibson

Sydney Morning Herald, September 14, 2010

Thousands of family court orders could be invalid after a landmark High Court decision, and the federal government has revealed it is drafting urgent legislation to avoid mass confusion among parents.

In the high-profile case of "Rosa v Rosa", a mother had been forced to remain in a Mount Isa caravan park, depressed and relying on welfare payments, after she moved there from Sydney for her husband's mining career and they separated.

The High Court found unanimously that the decision was wrong and ordered a fresh hearing in March, saying the Family Court cannot order that children spend equal or substantial and significant time with both parents unless the arrangement is "reasonably practicable".

But the decision means that "a cloud now hangs" over the status of thousands of parenting and consent orders granted by family courts, which have not addressed the question of "reasonable practicality", Patrick Parkinson and Richard Chisholm write in a forthcoming article in the *Australian Journal of Family Law*.

The affected orders include not only relocation orders but parenting orders and consent orders that parties have entered into using a popular kit provided by the court.

As the architect of the 2006 family law reforms and the author of a government-commissioned review of them, respectively, professors Parkinson and Chisholm have criticised the High Court decision, describing it as a "misunderstanding" of the laws that is difficult to reconcile with Parliament's intention when it passed them.

"Such uncertainty could lead to expense and delay

as lawyers and courts struggle to work through the implications of the High Court's decision," they said.

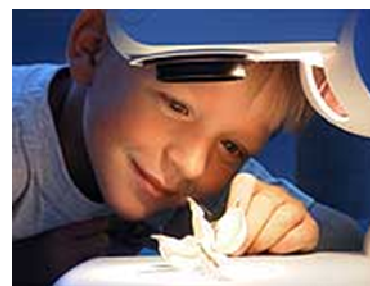
A spokesman for the Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, said the government is preparing priority legislation to clarify the validity of existing parenting orders.

But professors Parkinson and Chisholm also say the federal government should go further and simplify and clarify the law of shared care.

A string of recent reviews - including one by Professor Chisholm, who is a former Family Court judge, and others by the Family Law Council of Australia and the Australian Institute of Family Studies - have recommended changes to the laws to better protect children from abusive parents, and to make the law clearer for parents and judges.

The reports have received a lukewarm response from the government, which is reportedly anxious to avoid upsetting men's groups that welcomed the changes

## Enjoy your school holidays at CSIRO Discovery



Explore science with CSIRO.

CSIRO Discovery Centre in Canberra is home to a range of educational fun for your whole family every school holidays

[Enjoy your school holidays at CSIRO Discovery \(Acton, 27 September 2010 - 8 October 2010\)](#)Sourced from [http://](http://www.its.csiro.au/events/School-holidays-at-CSIRO.html)

[www.its.csiro.au/events/School-holidays-at-CSIRO.html](http://www.its.csiro.au/events/School-holidays-at-CSIRO.html)



## Parents' Guides



<http://www.kidsholidayactivities.com.au>

# Encouraging Your Kids to Help With Day-to Day Chores

It is a well-documented fact that children thrive on routine and parts of a household's routine are the daily chores that go on to keep the household running smoothly. There are a few things to consider when deciding whether to get your children involved in completing these chores.

## How Old Should They Be?

Even children as young as three or four can help with simple tasks around the house. A good thing to start with is teaching them to pack away the things they have played with as soon as they are capable. This could be from as young as two years old. When they are young they can help with simple tasks such as feeding a pet, keeping their bedroom tidy or helping to set or clear the table before and after meals. When they get a little bit older they can progress to things like making their own beds, making their lunch for school, taking the garbage out or helping dad clean the car. If you start teaching them these skills young they will become a part of your child's daily life and routine.

## To Pay or Not To Pay

Another thing parents ask is about paying their child for completing their chores. Should you pay them or should they simply complete their chores because they are part of the family and everyone has to do their bit? We can consider the fact that as adults and whether we are self-employed, an employee, or a business owner we go to work and we get paid for our work. It is a good incentive for the children to be paid and be able to buy some things for

themselves. This can also be beneficial to them in teaching them the value of money and how to save for things. It can teach them that everything isn't just there waiting on a silver platter for them, and that some things have to be worked for and earned. We also need to teach them that they shouldn't do things for monetary reward only. We need to teach them to use their initiative and good judgement and to do things sometimes simply because they can see it needs doing. Of course this issue cannot be addressed until they are a little older as young children will not understand something needs to be done unless they are told.

## Benefits

Setting a list of chores for your child and encouraging them to complete them teaches your children a number of things. It teaches them responsibility. They have a list of chores and they are expected to complete those chores, they are the one responsible for making sure those things get done. It teaches them teamwork. They are part of the team that is the family; each person has their tasks they need to complete within the team to make sure everything runs smoothly. It teaches them independence. They learn how to do

day-to-day tasks that will help them when they leave home and have to fend for

themselves. And it encourages self-worth. They can learn to be proud of their achievements, of knowing that they have completed their tasks each week and that those particular tasks have been completed solely because of them.



**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.

## Daylight Saving



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

### School holiday ideas for Dad

Holiday time can be a rare bonding time for many fathers and their children. So which school holiday activities can help dads to get the most out of those few precious weeks?

Every Dad is different! The key is adapting your own passions and hobbies into a child-friendly activity. When you're having fun, it's a lot easier to keep the kids' excitement levels up.

#### *Sporty Dads*

Do you have a passion for sport and outdoor activities? That keeps things nice and simple. Ten-pin bowling, one-on-one basketball at the local park, kick-to-kick in the back yard, hiring a tennis court for an hour... Or for something different you could try indoor rock climbing and learn the ropes together.

If you are a golfing fanatic, how about practising your skills at the local mini golf centre or driving range with the kids? For dads who

used to be skaters back in the day, why not pull out the old board and take your kids to the local skate ramp with their scooters? Or you can throw on your rollerblades and head to a rollerskating rink... guaranteed to fill you with nostalgia while giving your kid a great day out.

#### *Muso Dads*

Age-appropriate music concerts can work well if your child has the right temperament. But if sitting still isn't an option, drumming lessons are a great outlet for youthful energy!

Having a jam session at home can entertain everyone for hours. Pull out your guitar and get your child to accompany you on a tambourine, triangle or bongos.

#### *Arty Dads*

A day at the art gallery or an art workshop can be a great way to share your artistic bent with your kids.

Do an internet search to see if there is a botanic gardens near your home with a 'sculpture' sec-

tion. These can be a very relaxing place to explore together.

You can also create your own art workshop at home! Most kids' eyes will light up when you produce a bunch of ceramic Easter eggs or foam Christmas tree baubles that need decorating. You can get art and craft supplies at stores like Spotlight, or your local \$2 shop.

#### *Lazy options*

A day at the movies is an old favourite for dads who need some time out while they're in charge of the kids.

If you need your morning coffee – grab a colouring book and some leggo and head to your favourite café together. This can be a fun outing and a great chance to chat and get to know more about each other.

If your child definitely won't sit still in a café – you can get your caffeine fix at your nearest indoor play centre while junior jumps amongst the pool of plastic balls.

Sourced from: <http://www.schoolholidaydirectory.com.au>