

The Child Support Scheme was introduced in 1989 to ensure parents who no longer live with their children continue to provide them with financial support. The Child Support Agency was set up at the same time to administer these arrangements. The amount to be paid is based on a formula and, until recently, non-resident parents on low incomes, including recipients of income support, were exempt from paying any child support.

In July 1999, a minimum child support payment of \$5 per week (\$260 per year) was introduced to ensure that even these low income parents meet the principle of providing support to their children.

This paper provides preliminary results of research evaluating the impacts of the introduction of a minimum child support assessment on resident parents (payees receiving child support) and non-resident parents (payers of child support). Major findings of the evaluation include the extensive support for the measure, including by those assessed to make the payment, the vastly different perceptions by child support payers and payees on a range of parenting issues, and the extent of disadvantage faced by some people in the payment and collection of the minimum assessment.

Low income parents paying child

Evaluation of the introduction of a \$260 minimum child support assessment

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In 1994, a Parliamentary Joint Select Committee recommended that a minimum child support assessment of \$260 per annum be introduced. The introduction of this minimum assessment was considered to be consistent with the principles of the Child Support Scheme – namely, that parents share in the cost of supporting their children, and that parents have a primary duty to maintain their children.

The Committee considered that there may be special circumstances where it would be inequitable to apply the minimum payment, but suggested these instances would be rare and should be dealt with by the Child Support Registrar.

The Government introduced a minimum payment of \$260 per annum to take effect from 1 July 1999. Minimum assessments currently affect all child support payers with incomes between \$260 per year and \$12,000 (for a payer with one child and no other natural or adopted children in his or her care). As at 16 May 2000, there were 149,404 child support cases with assessments ranging from between \$1 and \$260 per year¹, with the Child Support Agency responsible for collection in 101,174 cases (68 per cent), while parents made their own collection arrangements in the remaining 48,230 cases (32 per cent).

The national evaluation project reported here comprised a number of research components, undertaken eight to ten months after the introduc-

tion of the initiative. These included telephone interviews with (an intended) 1250 payers and 750 payees, focus groups with Child Support Agency staff, and semi-structured interviews with representatives from the community sector.

The evaluation project was designed to evaluate implementation of the policy initiative to introduce a minimum child support assessment. As part of the project, the researchers also sought to:

- identify specific payer groups (for example, by source of income, ethnicity, current family composition, nature of employment, payment arrangement, geographical location, contact with children);
- identify specific payee groups (for example, by source of income, ethnicity, current family composition, payment arrangement);
- assess its positive or negative impacts on different client groups;
- investigate its impact on the general community and community sector;
- determine whether it has had any effect on care arrangements of children, proportion of private collect cases, or non-agency payments;
- identify where it is working and where it is not; and
- identify any problems in collection.



A minimum of six attempts were made to contact each client in the sample and attempts were made to locate them through the White Pages where contact details were outdated.

Payee responses

Of the 2000 payees randomly selected to participate in the survey, 766 interviews were completed, with 171 respondents ineligible to participate and 736 unreachable. There was, therefore a response rate of 70 per cent (de Vaus 1991: 107).

Payer responses

A proportionately higher sample of payers were drawn than payees to complete the desired number of interviews (750 payees and 1250 payers), as there was an expectation that payers may be more difficult to contact and may have a higher refusal rate than payees. However, even though the response rate was lower for payers, the number contacted was much higher than expected. A decision was taken to continue interviewing payers until the sample was exhausted, as it was felt that to not do so may introduce bias into the results. As a result, 1500 interviews were conducted with payers.

As 505 respondents were ineligible for the study and a further 4808 respondents were unreachable, a response rate of 56 per cent was achieved (de Vaus 1991: 107).

An extensive methodology was employed, encompassing Child Support Agency staff, community sector organisations, and a national survey of clients. More specifically, the components of the study comprised:

- focus groups with staff, including specialist officers;
- discussions/focus groups with community sector organisations across a whole spectrum of services such as legal aid, correctional services and prisoners' support organisations, payee organisations, payer organisations, emergency relief providers, and welfare lobby groups; and
- a telephone survey of 2266 clients, comprising 1500 payers and 766 payees, drawn from a random sample of 8000 payers and 2000 payees.

Client survey response rate

A total of 10,000 Child Support Agency clients were randomly selected for participation in the survey. These comprised 8000 payers and 2000 payees, who had child support assessments for \$260 per year. These included cases registered for collection by the Agency, as well as those with their own collection arrangements in place.

Current details of each client in the sample were updated with current Centrelink records wherever possible. Initial letters were sent to each client providing information about the study and inviting them to participate. A form was enclosed, together with a reply paid envelope, so clients could update their details and nominate suitable times for telephone contact.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research clearly showed that there was broad support for the principle of applying a minimum assessment to child support cases. There was little dissenting opinion on this issue, with the greatest negativity coming from payers surveyed, where 30 per cent thought that it was not reasonable to pay \$5 or more a week in child support. Further, the quantitative research showed that there was a general acceptance of the measure and that most clients were able to meet their obligations. The qualitative research complemented these findings, by identifying issues that had a significant impact on those clients who had the greatest difficulties.

Client survey results

Payee composition

Interviews were conducted with 673 female respondents (88 per cent) and 93 male respondents (12 per cent), which gave a slightly higher representation of males to females than in the overall Child Support Agency population (92 per cent and 8 per cent). There were also four respondents who were not the natural parents of any of the children in their care.

A total of 4 per cent of respondents were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin and 12 per cent were born in a non-English-speaking country.

Most respondents (73 per cent) had one or two children living with them, while 18 per cent of respondents had three children in their care and

9 per cent had four or more children. The mean number of children per respondent was 2.08.

There was very little difference in family size between male and female payees, with the mean family size for males slightly less (2.04 children) than for females (2.08 children). Families were also slightly larger in indigenous families (2.79 children compared to 2.05 for other respondents) and in families with non-English-speaking backgrounds (2.11 compared to 1.85 children)

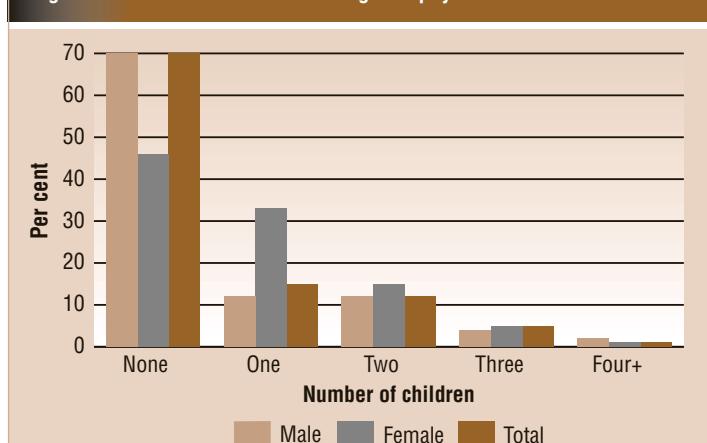
In 28 per cent of cases where respondents had more than one child, there was more than one other parent of the children in the respondent's care. As shown in Table 1, this was true for 19 per cent of female respondents, but only 3 per cent of male

Table 1 Number of parents other than respondent

	Male payees % (n = 93)	Female payees % (n = 673)	Total % (n = 766)
One child only	40	37	37
One other parent	57	44	46
Two other parents	3	17	15
Three/four other parents	0	2	2
Total	100	100	100

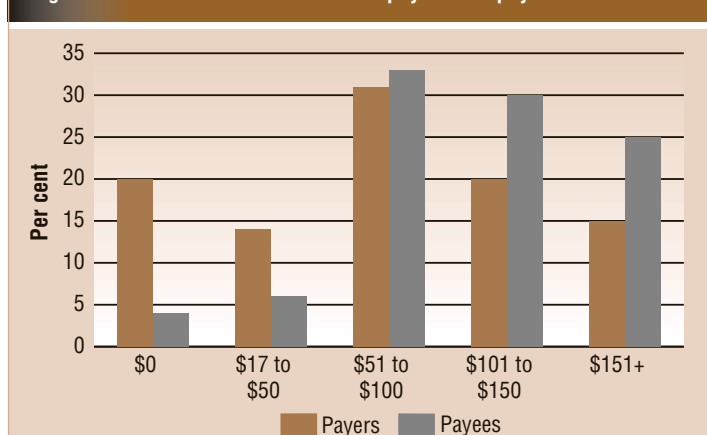
Source: Client Research Unit, Child Support Agency, 2000.

Figure 1 Number of children living with payer



Source: Client Research Unit, Child Support Agency, 2000.

Figure 2 Cost of accommodation for payees and payers



Source: Client Research Unit, Child Support Agency, 2000.

respondents. Most of these cases involved two other parents (15 per cent of all cases, or 88 per cent of those with more than one other parent). There was a higher likelihood of having only one other parent in families with non-English-speaking backgrounds (90 per cent compared to 70 per cent) and of having more than one other parent in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander families (48 per cent compared to 27 per cent).

Most payees were sole parents (72 per cent), while 17 per cent were living with a new partner as well as their natural children, and 2 per cent were living with a new partner, their natural children and their partners' natural children. The balance of payees had other living arrangements including living with their parents or other relatives.

Payer composition

Payers were telephoned from a random sample of 10,000 clients Australia-wide with a minimum child support assessment. This resulted in interviews with 1500 payers, responsible for paying child support to 2593 children. As 505 people in the sample were out of scope of the survey and 4808 prospective respondents could not be contacted, there was a response rate of 54 per cent.

A total of 1275 male respondents (85 per cent) and 225 female respondents (15 per cent) participated in the survey. This considerably over-represents females compared to the overall Child Support Agency client population (92 per cent of all payers are male). Therefore, to assist in the interpretation of the data, most of the findings presented give breakdown of sex, as well as any other relevant variables.

As with payees, 4 per cent of respondents were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, with a slightly lower proportion of 10 per cent born in a non-English-speaking country.

Eighty-five per cent of respondents had one or two children not living with them, 12 per cent had three children not living with them and 3 per cent had four or more. The mean number of children was 1.73. There was virtually no difference between female and male payers. In addition, 16 per cent of payers had more than one child support case, with men (17 per cent) more likely than women (13 per cent) to have multiple cases. This is a much higher representation than the 4 per cent of clients with multiple cases indicated in Child Support Agency data (FaCS, CSA, AG, 1999: 16-17).

Figure 1 shows that 34 per cent of payers had repartnered, and had natural and/or stepchildren in their care, with women far more likely than men to be in this position (54 per cent compared to 30 per cent).

Payee and payer income and housing status

A total of 52 per cent of all payees, and 64 per cent of sole-parent child support payees, identified the single rate of Parenting Payment as their main source of income, while for 32 per cent of payees, and 28 per cent of sole parent payees, wages, salaries or self-employment was the main source of income.

The main source of income support payment for child support payers was Newstart Allowance (34 per cent). However, 40 per cent of payers (also) derived income from wages, salaries or self-employment.

Payees were slightly more likely to live in their own home (35 per cent) than payers (28 per cent) and twice as likely to be living in public housing (20 per cent compared to 10 per cent). Payers were far more likely to board with relatives or friends (19 per cent) than payees (7 per cent). Private rental was comparable for both payees and payers (37 and 38 per cent respectively).

However, payees had higher housing costs than payers, as shown in Figure 2, with 34 per cent of payers spending \$50 a week or less on accommodation compared to 10 per cent of payees, and 15 per cent of payers spending in excess of \$150 per week, compared to 23 per cent of payees. Female payers spent more on accommodation than male payers, with 23 per cent of females, compared to 36 per cent of males, spending \$50 a week or less and 44 per cent of females, compared to 33 per cent of males, spending over \$100 per week.

Payees contact with the Agency

Around half of all payees said they had contact with the Child Support Agency in the 12 months preceding the interview. However, the results indicate that there are barriers for people of diverse linguistic backgrounds, with 50 per cent of respondents where the main language spoken at home was English having contacted the Agency, compared to only 26 per cent of respondents where another language was mainly spoken.

Further, payee respondents who mainly spoke a language other than English at home were less likely to have their issue resolved, with 57 per cent saying that no action was taken by the Agency, compared to 20 per cent of English-speaking respondents.

Of those who had contacted the Agency in the preceding twelve months, the highest proportion wanted it to collect payments from the other parent (32 per cent) or to find out if payments had been received (27 per cent). Only 6 per cent of payees who called said they wanted to register with the Agency and only 1 per cent wanted to change their arrangements to collect child support themselves.

Compliance with minimum child support assessment

Payees

It has proven difficult to determine compliance from the payee survey, as a total of 89 per cent of payees initially said they were receiving child support payments, but a later question on the timeliness of payments resulted in response that payment was never received in 40 per cent of child support cases. Only 28 per cent of payees reported always receiving payments on time.

Results of the payee survey show that sole parents were far more likely to receive child support payments than payees who had new partners. Ninety-seven per cent of sole-parent respondents said they were receiving support, compared to just 58 per cent of repartnered respondents. On the question of timeliness of payments, Figure 3 shows that 32 per cent of sole parents always received their payments on time and 40 per cent never

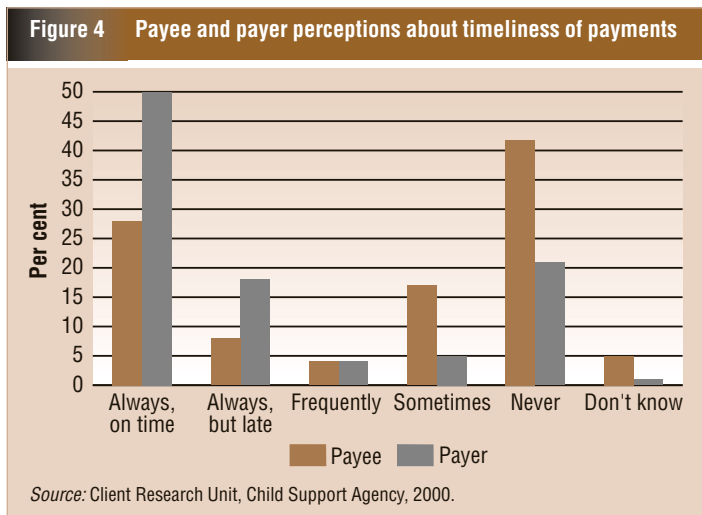
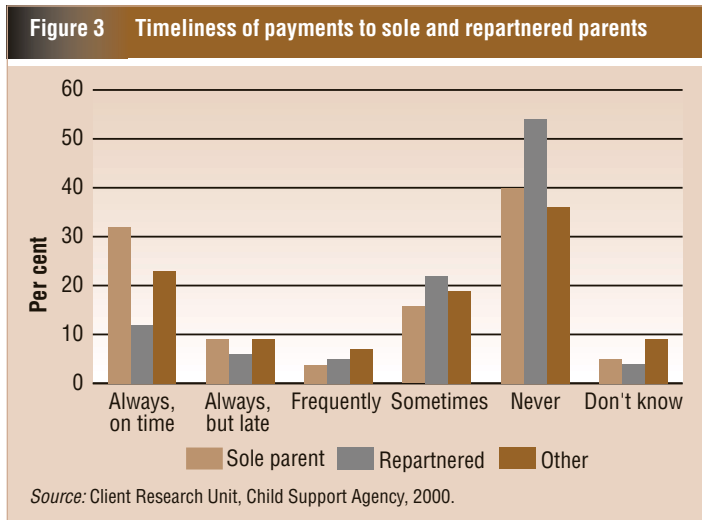
received payments. This compared to 12 per cent of repartnered payers who always received payments on time and 54 per cent who never received payments.

Payers

In contrast to payees, only 21 per cent of payers admitted to never paying child support, while half of all payers said they made all child support payments on time. Figure 4 shows the different perceptions of timeliness of payments between payees and payers.

According to Child Support Agency National Debt Recovery data, of the 91,723 payers with a minimum assessment collected and distributed by the Agency, 60,233 payers (66 per cent) did not make any payments in June 2000. It would be expected that a proportion of the 34 per cent who did make a payment was for arrears, so that the percentage of Agency collect clients making their payments in full and on time may be less.

There was some difference between male and female payers, with female payers less likely to say they always made payments on time (47 per cent compared to 51 per cent) and more likely to never make child support payments (26 per cent compared to 21 per cent). Forty-three per cent of those female payers said it was because they could not afford to make the payments.



CASE STUDY ONE

Lila and Vinnie have one child, Sam (aged five). Vinnie has always tried to put \$10.00 per week into a trust fund for Sam. He also contributes to buying Sam clothes and other necessities. Initially there was some confusion when the minimum liability was introduced, because Vinnie thought he may have to pay the minimum liability as well. Lila arranged for her child support to be made privately collectable, and Vinnie continues to provide support as he has always done.

CASE STUDY TWO

Manuel and Sofia have two children, Marco (aged 16) and Ricky (aged 18). Ricky, who has just started university, lives with Sofia. Because Ricky is now eighteen, Manuel is no longer required to pay child support for him. Sofia's only source of income is Austudy, and she is assessed to pay the minimum amount to Manuel for Marco. Manuel receives an income of around \$50,000 and his new wife earns approximately \$35,000. Sofia feels that it is unfair that she has to provide for Ricky, and pay child support to Manuel.

Note: Sofia may apply to the Family Court for an order for child support in respect of Ricky.

Payers who had a new partner were far more likely than others to say they paid child support always and on time (60 per cent compared to 51, and 52 per cent for single or sole-parent payers) but least likely to fully comply when they had a new partner and children or stepchildren (47 per cent).

The only other influencing factor on timeliness for payees was the number of children living with the payee, with 55 per cent of payees with more than three children never receiving payments, compared to between 39 per cent and 41 per cent of payees with one to three children.

Payment arrangements

Payment arrangements varied considerably among payers. The most interesting findings were that, in total, 63 per cent of complying payers paid money to the Child Support Agency. Only 13 per cent of complying payers said that they had the minimum assessment automatically deducted from their Centrelink payments. Agency data show a much higher figure, with 20 per cent of all payers with a minimum assessment, and 59 per cent of payers who had made a payment in June 2000, paying through automatic Centrelink deductions.

Eight per cent of payee respondents said they were receiving other contributions instead of cash child support in the form of non-Agency or in-kind payments, while 18 per cent of payees said they

were receiving both child support payments and other contributions. Most of these were in the form of non-Agency payments (77 per cent of these respondents).² This was quite different from payers, with only 2 per cent of complying payers responding that they did so in the form of non-Agency payments and 1 per cent in the form of in-kind arrangements.

While payees with four or more children in their care were less likely than others to receive cash payments of child support, having more children increased the likelihood of receiving other contributions, with this occurring for 10 per cent of payees with one child, 21 per cent of payees with two or three children, and 28 per cent of payees with four or more children.

Payers' affordability of child support

A total of 30 per cent of payers reported that they could not afford to pay child support without cutting back on necessities, with no difference between male and female respondents. However, there was a strong correlation between the payer's main source of income and affordability of child support. Payers receiving income support, particularly Disability Support Pension (43 per cent), the single rate of Parenting Payment (35 per cent), and Newstart Allowance (33 per cent), faced the greatest difficulties.

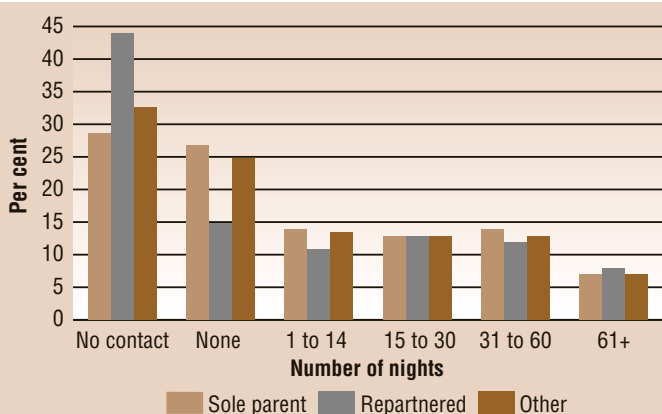
Of those payers who did not pay child support, the biggest reason given (by far) was that they could not afford to pay – 43 per cent. The affordability gap was greatest between single payers and sole-parent payers, with 47 per cent of the former and 32 per cent of the latter giving this as the reason for non-payment.

Within the group of payers who had to cut back on the cost of necessities, 25 per cent had sought assistance from an emergency relief provider in the preceding year.

Of parents who paid their child support, only 41 per cent said they could do so without reducing expenditure on other items. A total of 25 per cent of complying parents cut back on food expenditure.

Concerns that parents may not be able to purchase all their necessary medication or reduce the amount of contact they had with their children did not eventuate to the extent that had arisen from anecdotal evidence, with one per cent of respondents falling into each of these categories.

Figure 5 Payee responses: contact between children and payers



Source: Client Research Unit, Child Support Agency, 2000.

Contact between paying parents and their children

As shown in Figure 5, 68 per cent of the 1456 children included in the payee survey had contact with their other parent. However, 34 per cent of these children did not stay overnight with the payer, and children of payees who had repartnered were far less likely to have contact with their other parent.

As with other survey findings, there were huge differences between payees and payers in perceptions of the amount of contact child support children had with payer parents. Figure 6 indicates almost four times the proportion of payer to payee respondents said they had 61 nights or more care of their children (23 per cent compared to 6 per cent), and a smaller proportion of payers with no contact (24 per cent compared to 32 per cent for payees). The Figure shows that payers who repartnered were less likely to maintain contact with their children than single or sole parent payers and, that when they did, the children were likely to spend fewer nights in their care.

Contact between parents from non-English-speaking countries and their children

Payees responded that contact was higher for children who lived with a resident parent born in a non-English-speaking country. As shown in Table 2, 81 per cent of these children had some contact with their other parent, compared to only 66 per cent of children in families where the payee was born in an English-speaking country. However, children who lived with a parent born in an English-speaking country were more likely to have overnight contact with their other parent (43 per cent compared to 35 per cent).

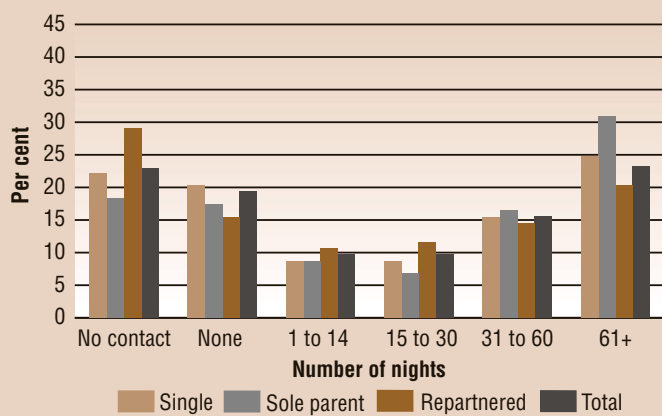
In contrast, payer responses indicated that there was very little difference in the contact arrangements between those born in English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries. However, there was a muted confirmation of the payee data, which showed that parents from non-English-speaking countries were less likely to have overnight contact with their child support children.

Changes in contact since the introduction of the minimum assessment

Levels of contact remained stable for most children (according to 80 per cent of payees and 81 per cent of payers). Of the 19 per cent of children for whom contact had changed in the preceding six months, 61 per cent had reduced levels of contact.

Where the level of contact had reduced in the preceding six months, payers nominated payees withholding or refusing any or more contact as the main reason, while payees nominated the payer not wanting as much or any contact as the second

Figure 6 Payer responses: contact between children and payers



Source: Client Research Unit, Child Support Agency, 2000.

Table 2 Children of payee respondents who had contact with their other parent

	Payees		Payers	
	Born English-speaking country (n = 1 296) %	Born non-English-speaking country (n = 160) %	Born English-speaking country (n = 2343) %	Born non-English-speaking country (n = 250) %
No contact	34	19	24	21
No nights	21	43	18	27
1 to 14 nights	12	8	8	10
15 to 30 nights	13	7	9	7
31 to 60 nights	12	16	15	14
61 or more nights	6	4	23	20
Don't know	2	3	3	1
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Client Research Unit, Child Support Agency, 2000.

greatest issue. Distance was the single biggest reason for payees and the second biggest issue for payers for reduced levels of contact. The third main reason for both payees and payers was the child's own wishes or work or study commitments. Domestic violence was also an issue for payees. A small number of payers nominated the inability to afford (more) contact.

Supporting the principle of a minimum assessment

Payees

Payees were equally divided on the question of whether or not it was reasonable for the other parent to pay \$5 a week in child support (47 per cent thought it was, while 49 per cent thought not).

CASE STUDY THREE

Abdul lives in Whyalla. He has three children who live in Adelaide with their mother. Driving to pick them up and return them costs Abdul approximately \$200 per trip, which he attempts four times a year. He has already had to give up a couple of access visits because he cannot afford it. Paying the extra \$10 per fortnight in child support means that saving money for these trips is even harder, and the other access visits may have to be dropped as well.

CASE STUDY FOUR

Svetlana has two children aged four and six. Andrew is assessed to pay the minimum amount of child support, and is having the payments deducted from his Newstart Allowance. Andrew did not pay voluntarily and is angry that payment has been enforced. Several times he has approached Svetlana to demand the money back. Svetlana feels that she would gladly give up the \$5.00 per week in child support if Andrew would leave her and the children alone.

CASE STUDY FIVE

When Aung was assessed to pay \$10.00 per fortnight to Christine for their daughter, Charley, he was worried that he would find it difficult to pay that amount out of his Newstart pension. So Aung and Christine decided that Aung could contribute in other ways. Aung is trained as a mechanic, so now he repairs and services Christine's car. Aung occasionally provides other services such as mowing the lawn, or doing household repairs.

However, most of those who thought it was not reasonable (77 per cent), believed the amount should be higher.

This means that almost 85 per cent of all payee respondents believed that there should be a minimum assessment of \$5 per week or more. Less than one per cent of respondents thought that the payer could not afford to pay child support or that it would result in less contact with the children.

Payers

Payers, too, were generally supportive of the principle, with 65 per cent agreeing outright, and a further 8 per cent of those who did not agree believing that it should be more. This resulted in 68 per cent of payers, overall, agreeing that there should be a minimum assessment of \$5 per week or more.

Payers' attitudes to the minimum assessment were related to how easily they could afford to pay \$5 per week. As Table 3 shows, 81 per cent of payers who could easily or just afford the payment supported the measure, while this was true for only 47 per cent of payers who could not afford to pay child support without cutting back on necessities.

For payers who thought the imposition of a minimum assessment unreasonable, more than one-third (38 per cent) reported that this was because they could not afford it. This was the case for 36 per cent of male payers and 27 per cent of female payers. While family situation had very little impact on whether or not payers thought the minimum assessment was reasonable, of those who thought it was unreasonable, 47 per cent of single payers believed they could not afford the payment, while only 15 per cent of sole-parent payers expressed the

same view. For those who had repartnered, with or without children, affordability was a reason for 33 per cent of those who thought the assessment unreasonable. Only 3 per cent of payers thought the minimum assessment would affect the amount of contact they could have with their children.

Further analysis of the data will be required to determine the correlation between compliance and support for the measure.

Qualitative analysis

The qualitative research, comprising focus groups and discussions with community organisations and staff, identified the concerns for Child Support Agency clients who faced difficulties as a result of the measure.

Concerns for payers

There were a number of issues that were identified as affecting payers' responsibility to meet the minimum child support assessment. These included:

- payers in prison receiving a small daily allowance or payers residing in nursing homes due to severe illness and disability and paying 85 per cent of their income support payments to the residence;
- payers who have high medical costs;
- payers who have contact with their children, particularly where there are high costs involved. Recent court cases that have reduced assessments to nil in circumstances where these costs may have had the result of reduced or discontinued contact (the researchers were advised of these outcomes by Legal Aid officers involved in the cases);
- situations where the payee and/or child support child are "high" income earners;
- young payers whose only source of income is from part-time work outside school hours (such as a paper round) or pocket money from their parents; and
- payers whose only income is from a small one off payment or discontinued income – for example, a tax return from a previous financial year (on which they may have already paid child support), lost Centrelink benefits due to repartnering part way through a financial year, or serving a

Table 3 Ability to pay child support by agreement with whether or not minimum payment is reasonable

	Easily afford (n = 302) %	Just afford (n = 384) %	Have to cut necessities (n = 209) %	Don't pay (n = 54) %	Don't know (n = 20) %
Reasonable	81	81	47	32	56
Not reasonable	18	17	52	62	28
Don't know	1	2	1	6	16
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Client Research Unit, Child Support Agency, 2000.

Centrelink two-year waiting period for new residents, where the payer may get some intermittent low paid work.

Meeting payee needs

Some of the concerns raised that affected payees included:

- fears of (renewed) domestic violence, intimidation or other forms of control as a result of the minimum assessment;
- apprehension about long forgotten former partners renewing contact with them and/or their children; and
- apportionment of small amounts of child support where there are multiple cases and pre-existing debts in one of those cases. This has resulted in cases where, for example, one payee is receiving up to \$4.80 per week, while a second payee is only receiving \$0.20.

How the Agency can help

The process of the evaluation also identified ways in which reforms to the Child Support Scheme might be better implemented – for example, by providing more comprehensive information to community sector organisations about the operations of new measures.

Some innovative approaches to implementation of the minimum assessment were also identified. For example, the Townsville office of the Child Support Agency has a number of dedicated officers implementing the minimum assessment. This has proven to be the most promising example of how the measure can be implemented in a way that meets its objective and, at the same time, improves relationships between all parties (including parents with each other, their children and the Agency).

Three staff members, who were selected on the basis of their communication and negotiation skills, have been assisting payers and payees to make arrangements to meet their minimum liabilities. They have been in the forefront of brokering arrangements, such as in-kind payments of the assessment. These include the payer providing services to the payee, such as regular lawn mowing, household maintenance, car repairs and babysitting the children. Where negotiated, these arrangements have been largely successful and have proven to be beneficial to the children, both because of increased contact with the payer and improvements in the relationship between the parents. Another innovation proven to be extremely successful has been the instigation of regular visits to State prisons by specialist Brisbane Agency officers.

Where to from here?

It is clear from this initial analysis of the client survey component of the study that only a small percentage of minimum assessment cases result in unforeseen adverse outcomes for clients. It is those

situations that, although few in number, have severe impacts on those they affect. Therefore, the outcomes of greatest concern are those raised in focus groups with Child Support Agency staff and community-based organisations.

The Agency has already begun the process of examining some of the more obvious issues that have arisen to improve the policy and administration of the measure. Legislation is currently being considered by Parliament, which would enable the Child Support Agency to create administrative guidelines to exempt payers from assessments in particular circumstances. These may be applied, for example, to prisoners and nursing home residents.

The data obtained through each component of the evaluation is being analysed in more detail and is likely to provide opportunities to develop further recommendations for both improving administrative procedures and making legislative changes.

Notes

The case studies presented in this paper have been altered, and the names changed, to protect individual clients. The case studies used were identified in the various components of the study and the cases presented with the client survey results were not necessarily collected as part of the quantitative research.

- 1 Assessments below \$260 per year may result where care of children is shared or where parents have responsibility for at least one child each.
- 2 Payments made to third parties, rather than through the Child Support Agency or directly to the payee, are called non-agency payments. Examples include meeting rent or mortgage costs, health care costs, payment of school fees, purchase of clothes and payments of bills. Parents can agree to this form of payment up to 100 per cent of the value of child support, or where agreement cannot be reached, the payer can make these types of payments up to 25 per cent of the value of child support on a range of specified items. In-kind payments are non-monetary items to a value agreed by both parents up to 100 per cent of the value of child support, and may include such things as household or car maintenance and repairs, babysitting and mowing the lawn.

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