

Changes coming for separated families

The Child Support Agency (CSA) is calling for the assistance of Community Service Providers to help separated families adjust to the changes to the Child Support Scheme coming into effect on 1 July 2008.

In Queensland, the CSA supports approximately 19,000* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander separated families to transfer child support payments that benefit their children's wellbeing.

The new Scheme will better balance the interests of both parents and focus more on the needs and costs of the children based on Australian research.

Changes to the Scheme also aim to reduce conflict between parents about parenting arrangements, support shared parental responsibility, and ensure child support is paid in full and on time.

CSA General Manager Mr Matt Miller said the Agency has a high focus on informing all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander separated families that the changes are coming.

"The CSA is reassessing all cases in the lead up to the new Scheme, and child support customers will be mailed new assessments between March and May this year," Mr Miller said.

"Customers will be asked to check if the details on their assessment are correct. We are encouraging



CSA Indigenous Customer Services Officers
Lolita Pitt and Connie Sully

customers to call us if the details are incorrect as they may end up paying or receiving the wrong amount of child support."

Customers receiving family assistance payments from Centrelink should check if they are a child support customer. If their child support assessment is incorrect they may not receive the family assistance they are entitled to.

"A child support and family assistance estimator is now available online to allow separated parents to estimate how much they will be paying or receiving under the new Scheme," Mr Miller said.

"Community service providers and other groups that deal with separated parents can find more comprehensive information about the changes on the CSA website at www.csa.gov.au.

"Community organisations can use this information to help separated families understand the changes to the Scheme and how they affect the

To order a copy of CSA's brochure for Indigenous separated families, please call 1800 040 972 or download a copy online from:

www.csa.gov.au

For further information:

Child Support Agency

Phone: 1300 885 437

Web: www.csa.gov.au/schemereforms

amount of child support they pay or receive.

"They can also encourage separated parents to keep their contact details up to date with CSA so they don't miss important information, and to contact CSA if they think their new assessment is wrong when they get it."

Australia-wide, the CSA has 1.5 million customers including approximately 81,000 Indigenous customers.

"We have tailored a component of our advertising to inform Indigenous parents about the changes, and we will soon be visiting a selection of communities to talk to parents and distribute information materials they can take home," Mr Miller said.

* This data is provided by CSA customers on a voluntary basis and through information gathered by other government agencies where CSA has data sharing arrangements for mutual customers. The figures provided may be lower than actual as not all customers may provide CSA with information on indigenous status. Therefore the figures should be used as a guide only and flagged as approximate.

