



Australian Government

Child Support Agency



ATTORNEY-
GENERAL'S
DEPARTMENT

Child Support Scheme

Facts

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Figures

2002-03

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Comments on this paper

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Child Support Scheme - Key Facts and Figures

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Support for Children			
Child Support transfers:			
CSA Collect	\$619.4m	\$636.4m	\$672.0
Private Collect	\$780.7m	\$814.2m	\$1,272.0
Total	\$1,400.1m	\$1,450.6m	\$1,944.0
CSA collection performance since inception:	87.5%	87.7%	87.9%
Total Collections	\$4,698.4m	\$5,392.9m	\$6,113.1m
Total Liabilities	\$5,368.1m	\$6,151.7m	\$6,957.2m
Average weekly liabilities per case:			
Stage 1 CSA Collect	\$56.37	\$52.37	\$54.75
Stage 1 Private Collect	\$49.56	\$49.28	\$47.58
Stage 2 CSA Collect	\$47.01	\$48.89	\$48.53
Stage 2 Private Collect	\$80.52	\$81.32	\$83.05
Support for Parents			
CSA Caseload:	612,332	657,332	685,969
% CSA Collect	52.3%	50.6%	49.4%
% Private Collect	47.7%	49.4%	50.6%
% Stage 1 Court Orders	5.7%	4.7%	3.2%
% Stage 2 Formula Assessment	94.3%	95.3%	96.8%
Children who are eligible for child support payments (Eligible Children — Stage 2 Cases only)	901,356	1,002,663	1,034,593
CSA client numbers:			
Payers	582,315	610,230	630,701
Payees	582,518	606,941	626,739
Total	1,164,833	1,217,171	1,257,440
Legal Services Funding	\$7.8m	\$5.3m	\$5.5m
CSS Savings & Costs to Government			
Total savings to Government outlays	\$380.4m	\$423.0m	\$433.5m
Scheme costs by agency:			
CSA	\$203.7m	\$214.0m	\$233.2m
FaCS	\$3.0m	\$2.3m	\$1.4m
A-GD	\$7.8m	\$5.3m	\$5.5m
Dollars collected by CSA for each dollar spent.	\$6.85	\$6.78	\$8.30
CSA cost to collect each dollar.	14.6 cents	14.7 cents	12.0 cents

Introduction

This report is the seventh edition of *Child Support Scheme Facts and Figures* and is the second edition to be released since the implementation of the CSA's new computer system CUBA (named after the Roman goddess of children). The implementation of the new computer system has given the Agency the opportunity to capture a wider range of more accurate data.

Facts and Figures is an annual publication released jointly by the Agencies and Commonwealth Departments with responsibilities under the Child Support Scheme.

1.0 A Brief Overview and History of the Australian Child Support Scheme

1.1 The Aims of the Child Support Scheme

The Australian Child Support Scheme was introduced in 1988 to: 'strike a fairer balance between public and private forms of support [for children] to alleviate the poverty of sole parent families.'¹ The Scheme aims to ensure that:

- parents share in the cost of supporting their children according to their capacity;
- adequate support is available to all children not living with both parents;
- Commonwealth involvement and expenditure is limited to the minimum necessary for ensuring children's needs are met;
- work incentives for both parents to participate in the labour force are not impaired; and

- the overall arrangements are non-intrusive to personal privacy and are simple, flexible and efficient.²

1.2 A Brief History of the Child Support Scheme

Prior to the introduction of the Child Support Scheme, child support could only be obtained by the parents reaching an agreement or by seeking an order from a court. This meant that child support was effectively denied to those parents who could not reach an agreement with their former partner and could not afford to take court action.

During the 1970s and 1980s there was a rapid growth in the number of single parents with day-to-day care and responsibility for the children of a former marriage or relationship. There was community concern and criticism about the prevailing child maintenance system. Three issues were of particular concern:

- the non-payment of maintenance;
- the low levels of maintenance payments; and
- reliance on social welfare payments.

A number of reviews and studies resulted in the government deciding to establish a child support system to overcome these problems. The government published *Child Support – A discussion paper on child maintenance* in 1986 and, after extensive consultation with external parties, it implemented the Child Support Scheme in two stages.

Stage 1 was introduced by the *Child Support (Registration and Collection) Act 1988*. This Act gave the Commissioner of Taxation, as Child

¹ Cabinet Sub-Committee on Maintenance, *Child Support: discussion paper on child maintenance* (1986), p. 14.

² *An examination of the operation and effectiveness of the Child Support Scheme, Government Response to the Report by the Joint Select Committee on Certain Family Law Issues*, November 1997, p. 3.

Support Registrar, the responsibility for collecting child support payments in respect of court orders and court-registered agreements. This collection is undertaken on application from the parent entitled to receive child support.

Stage 2 was introduced by the *Child Support (Assessment) Act 1989*. This Act established a further responsibility on the Child Support Registrar to administratively assess child support using a formula based on the income of both parents, and therefore their capacity to pay. Stage 2 applies only to parents who separated on or after 1 October 1989, or who have a child born on or after that date.

1.3. The Child Support Formula

CSA uses a legislative formula to calculate the amount of child support to be paid. The formula is applied to the liable parent's taxable income (which, for CSA purposes, includes rental losses, exempt foreign employment income and Reportable Fringe Benefits):

1. Less an allowance for living expenses and for each natural or adopted dependent child living with the liable parent;
2. Less half the resident parent's excess income over average weekly earnings.

After making the above deductions, a percentage of the remaining income is paid as support. The percentage varies according to the number of children:

No. of Children	1	2	3	4	5 or more
Child Support	18%	27%	32%	34%	36%

The basic formula used to assess the annual rate of child support is:

$$\{ (A - B) - (C / 2) \} \times D = E$$

Where:

- A is the child support income amount (taxable income)
- B is the exempted income amount
- C is the amount of payee income above the disregarded income amount
- D is the child support percentage
- E is the amount payable by the payer

Taxable income used in the child support formula is the income shown on the payer's tax return for the last financial year. For child support purposes the maximum taxable income used in the formula from January 2003 was \$119,470.

A payer's exempt income is an allowance for living expenses and is deducted before the child support percentage is applied (see Table 1.2).

	Exempt Income 1.1.2002-31.12.2002	Exempt Income 1.1.2003-31.12.2003
No natural or adopted children	\$11,740	\$12,315
With natural or adopted children ¹	\$19,597	\$20,557
Allowance for child under 13	\$2,169	\$2,235
Allowance for child 13-15	\$3,025	\$3,119
Allowance for child 16-17	\$4,454	\$4,672

Source: Relevant FaCS Pension Rates 2002-03, CCH Court Handbook.

If a payee's child support income amount³ exceeds the disregarded income amount, then the payer's income is reduced by 50 per cent of the payee's excess income for the period concerned (the annual rate of the child support amount cannot be reduced below 25 per cent of the rate that would have been payable if the payee had less than the disregarded income amount). The payee's disregarded income amount is that part of the payee's income below Average Weekly Earnings of all employees (\$36,213 for 1.1.2003 to 31.12.2003).

If either parent's income has decreased by 15 per cent or more since the previous year of income, they could apply for the assessment to be varied to reflect their current income.

³ The "disregarded income amount" recognises that the carer makes a significant contribution to the care of the children covered by the assessment. See Appendix 2 for more details.

1.4 Administrative Arrangements between the Child Support Agency, the Department of Family and Community Services and the Attorney-General's Department

Until October 1998 the Child Support Scheme was administered by the Child Support Agency as part of the Australian Taxation Office, the Department of Social Security and the Attorney-General's Department.

In October 1998 CSA became part of the new Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS). The Scheme partners are the Department of Family and Community Services, incorporating CSA, and the Attorney-General's Department.

1.4.1 The Role of the Child Support Agency in the Department of Family and Community Services

CSA was created to administer the *Child Support (Registration and Collection) Act 1988* and the *Child Support (Assessment) Act 1989*.

The role of CSA is to:

- register cases;
- assess child support payable (Stage 2 cases only);
- collect payments where requested; and
- provide an information service for parents on child support matters.

These activities are undertaken in Branch Offices (currently 16) around Australia. CSA also has Regional Service Centres located in 20 Centrelink offices and one ATO Office (Darwin) in regional Australia.⁴

CSA has access to taxation information to enable efficient assessment and collection of child support.

1.4.2 The Role of the Department of Family and Community Services

The Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) has a general responsibility to advise the government on matters relating to income support and social welfare policy, including child support. In addition to CSA, there are three further roles in the administration of the Child Support Scheme:

- strategic policy development, analysis and research;
- ensuring appropriate linkages between income support and child support; and
- reporting to Government and Parliament.

1.4.3 The Role of Centrelink

Centrelink is the primary service delivery agency for the FaCS portfolio and delivers a range of Government assistance programs, including family payments. Centrelink's primary role in terms of the Child Support Scheme is:

- ensuring applicants for more than the minimum rate of Family Tax Benefit take reasonable action to obtain child support; and
- adjusting family allowance payments to individuals in receipt of child support payments.

Centrelink has 457 customer service and call centres across Australia. It services over 6.4 million customers.⁵

⁴ "More child support services for Regional Australia", Media Release, Hon. Larry Anthony, Minister for Community Services, 31 August 1999.

⁵ *Centrelink Information*. A guide to payments and services, 2002-03, July 2003, p.2.

1.4.4 The Role of the Attorney-General's Department

The Attorney-General's Department (AGD) has a general responsibility to advise the Government on matters relating to family law. The Department also provides Legal Aid support to eligible parents under the Child Support Scheme.

1.5 How the Child Support Scheme works

Australian families may make child support arrangements in one of three ways:

- Self-Administration: an entirely private arrangement between the parents, which includes cases where child support is not sought;
- Private Collect: registration with the Child Support Agency but with payment made directly between the parents; or
- CSA Collect: registration and collection by the Child Support Agency.

Registration with CSA can proceed on the application of either parent. The application can be to register a court order, a child support agreement or for CSA to issue an administrative assessment.

Payers can make payments directly to CSA where CSA collection is required. Alternatively, child support can be deducted from a payer's salary or wages in much the same way that income tax is deducted.

Where a payment is not made, and CSA is unable to come to a voluntary payment arrangement with the payer, the Registrar has a range of administrative enforcement powers available, including:

- deduction from salary and wages;
- interception of income tax refunds;
- collection of monies owed to the defaulting parent from third parties under Section 72A, e.g. accessing funds in savings accounts, superannuation funds and solicitors' trust accounts.

In addition, debts can be pursued through the courts to seek orders for sale of assets and property, or debts can be pursued by instituting bankruptcy proceedings.

2.0 Reasonable Action to Obtain Child Support

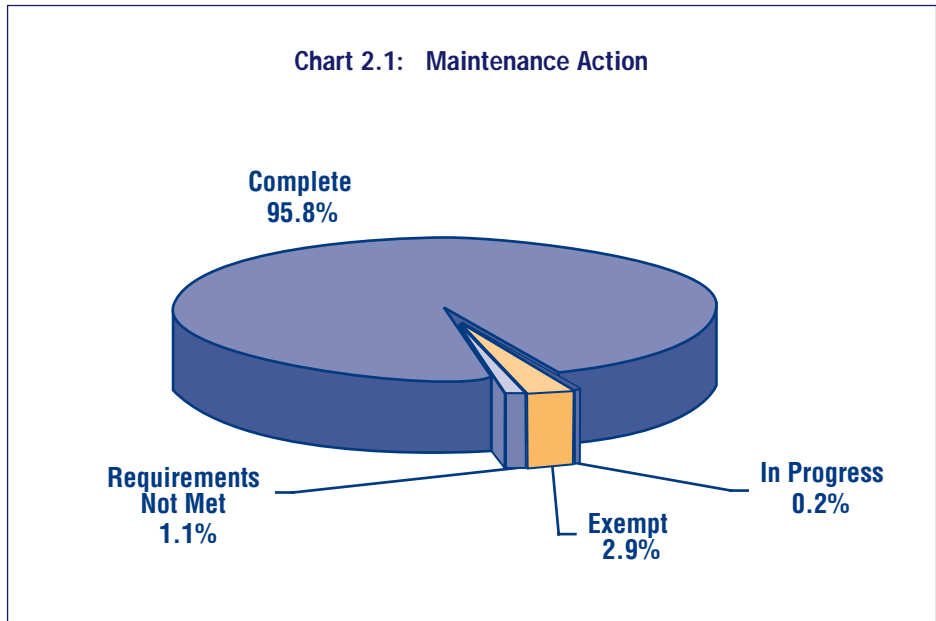
2.1 Child Support Customers

Centrelink and CSA have mutual clients primarily as a result of the Maintenance Action Test. As mentioned in section 1.4.3, Family Tax Benefit Part A customers who have children from a previous relationship must take reasonable action to obtain child support. A high proportion of applications for registration with CSA, therefore, come from Centrelink. Reasonable action for Stage 2 customers means lodging an application for assessment under the child support formula and either:

- having the payments collected by CSA; or
- privately collecting 100 per cent of the assessed amount; or
- lodging a child support agreement that meets 100 per cent of the assessed amount.

Maintenance Action	Number of Children	%
Complete	1,029,953	95.8
In Progress	2,391	0.2
Exempt	30,874	2.9
Requirements Not Met	12,019	1.1
Total	1,075,237	100.0

Source: FaCS, November 2003.
 Note: Percentages may not add due to rounding.



Source: Family and Children Branch, FaCS, November 2003.

2.2 Maintenance Action being taken by FaCS Child Support Customers

Maintenance action is recorded by Centrelink for each child because a parent may have different maintenance action in progress for different children e.g. where the children have different fathers.

The following is a summary of maintenance action being taken on behalf of children of FTB Part A customers. By June 2003:

- a total of 95.8 per cent of children of FTB Part A customers had maintenance action completed on their behalf. This means these cases were registered with CSA or an application had been lodged;

- another 2.9 per cent of children of FTB Part A customers were granted an exemption; and
- the remaining 1.3 per cent of children of FTB Part A customers at that time did not have reasonable maintenance action requirements met on their behalf or their application was still in progress.

Based on the figures in Table 2.1 and the chart above, it can be seen that reasonable maintenance action requirements have been met for almost 99 per cent of children (95.8 per cent “complete” plus 2.9 per cent “exempted”) of FaCS child support customers. In fact, at June 2002, only 1.3 per cent of children did not have reasonable maintenance action requirements met on their behalf or their application was still in progress.

3.0 Caseload

3.1 Active Caseload⁶

As at June 2003 there were 685,969 active cases. Some 3.2 per cent (or 22,235 cases) were Stage 1 active cases, and 96.8 per cent (or 663,734 cases) were Stage 2 active cases.⁷ Each case has two CSA clients; the payer (the parent who pays the child support) and the payee (the parent who receives the child support). There are fewer payer and payee clients than active cases as some payers and payees are involved in more than one case. As a result, CSA had almost 1.3 million payers and payees by June 2003.

3.2 Caseload by Stage and Payment Arrangement

The Stage 1 active caseload has been declining since 1993. This will continue as the children in Stage 1 move out of the child support eligible population. The trends in both Stage 1 and Stage 2 caseloads are reflected in Table 3.1 and Chart 3.1.

30 June	Stage 1 Number	%	Stage 2 Number	%	Total
1991	62,758	60.9	40,348	39.1	103,106
1992	70,787	50.7	68,865	49.3	139,652
1993	73,819	34.9	137,762	65.1	211,581
1994	61,082	22.0	217,103	78.0	278,185
1995	60,226	17.9	276,091	82.1	336,317
1996	58,442	14.8	336,466	85.2	394,908
1997	54,645	12.2	393,400	87.8	448,045
1998	50,935	10.3	443,599	89.7	494,534
1999	45,986	8.6	489,583	91.4	535,569
2000	40,664	7.1	529,046	92.9	569,710
2001	34,650	5.7	577,682	94.3	612,332
2002	30,626	4.7	626,706	95.3	657,332 ²
2003	22,235	3.2	663,734	96.8	685,969 ³

Source: Child Support Agency, June 2003.

Note: 1. Active caseload figures for Stage 1 in this table include "processing not finalised", "registered and collecting", "elections not to collect" and "keyed court orders/no applications". Active caseload figures for Stage 2 in this table include "processing not finalised", "total assessed, registered and collecting" and "total assessed but not collecting".

2. The FaCS Annual Report 2001-02 reports 667,957 cases, which is higher than the figure recorded in this table and elsewhere in this report. The higher figure in the annual report includes cases that had ended with arrears, whereas this table only counts cases with a current liability (nil and above nil liabilities).

3. The FaCS Annual Report 2002-03 reports 711,541 cases, which includes cases that had ended with arrears, whereas this table only counts cases with a current liability (nil and above nil liabilities).

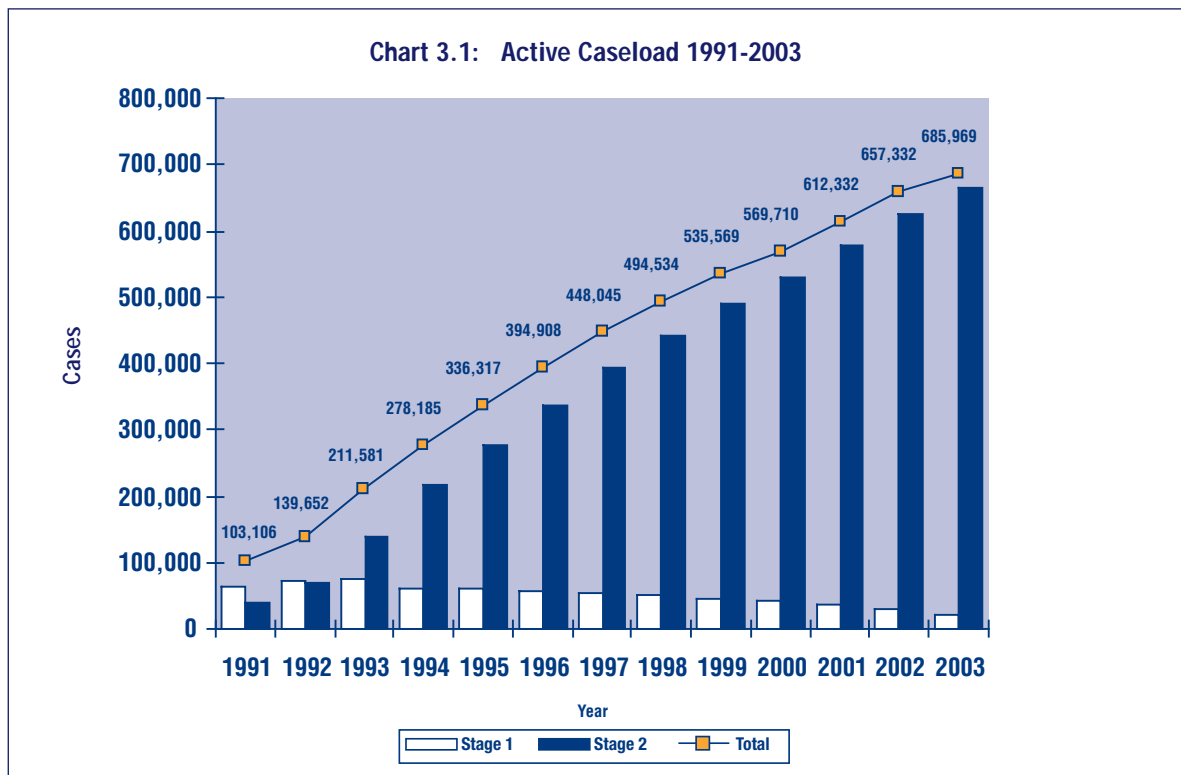
Percentages may not add due to rounding.

⁶ "Active Cases" include Stage 1 and Stage 2 cases that are registered and have a current liability collected, where processing is not finalised, and cases that have been assessed but where the liability is being collected privately.

⁷ Child Support Agency Monthly Performance Report for June 2003 (CS5), p. 9.

Chart 3.1 shows growth in active cases has increased slightly after having slowed over the past five years. Between 1993 and 1994 the caseload grew by an average of 5,550 cases per

month. This compares with an increase of 3,750 cases per month between June 2001 and June 2002 and 2,386 cases between June 2002 and June 2003.



Source: Client Research Unit, CSA, June 2003.

The increase in the percentage of Private Collect cases to 50.6 per cent of all cases (see Table 3.2 and Charts 3.2 and 3.3 below) is consistent with

the Government's aim to ensure arrangements are non-intrusive to personal privacy.

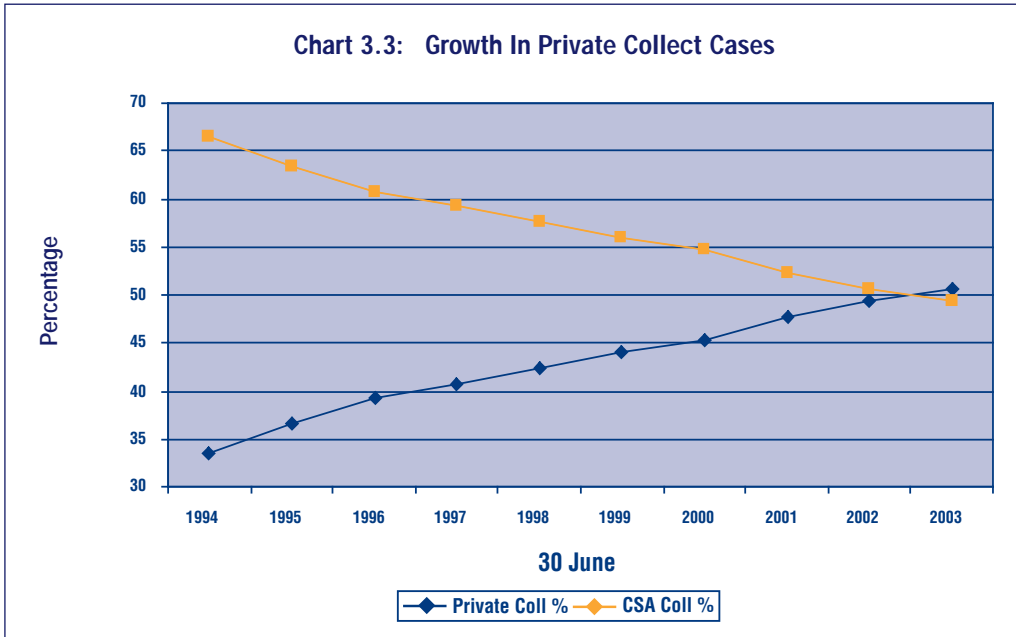
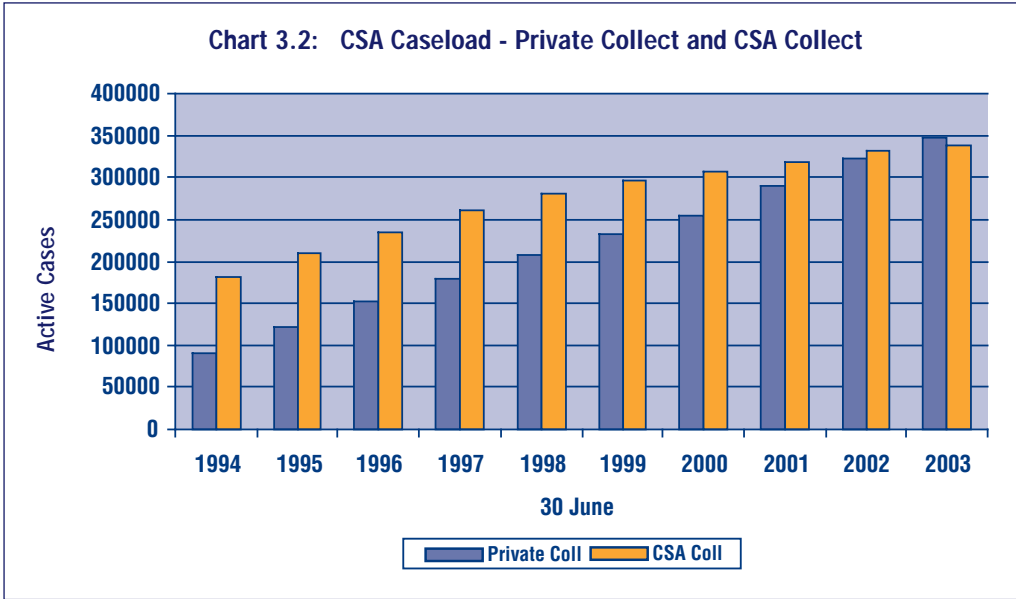
Table 3.2: Caseload by Payment Arrangement¹

End June	Private Collect		CSA Collect		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
1994	91,468	33.6	180,581	66.4	272,049
1995	121,514	36.7	209,477	63.3	330,991
1996	152,018	39.3	235,008	60.7	387,026
1997	179,241	40.7	261,000	59.3	440,241
1998	207,569	42.4	281,473	57.6	489,042
1999	232,064	44.0	295,290	56.0	527,354
2000	254,237	45.2	308,047	54.8	562,284
2001	289,443	47.7	317,724	52.3	607,167
2002	323,234	49.4	331,202	50.6	654,436
2003 ²	346,815	50.6	338,055	49.4	684,870

Source: Child Support Agency, June 2002.

Notes: 1. The active caseload numbers in this table exclude cases where processing has not been finalised and therefore does not agree with caseload figures elsewhere in this publication.
2. The CSA Collect total for June 2003 includes 1,051 cases where the payee resides overseas.

Percentages may not add due to rounding.



3.3 Assessment Type

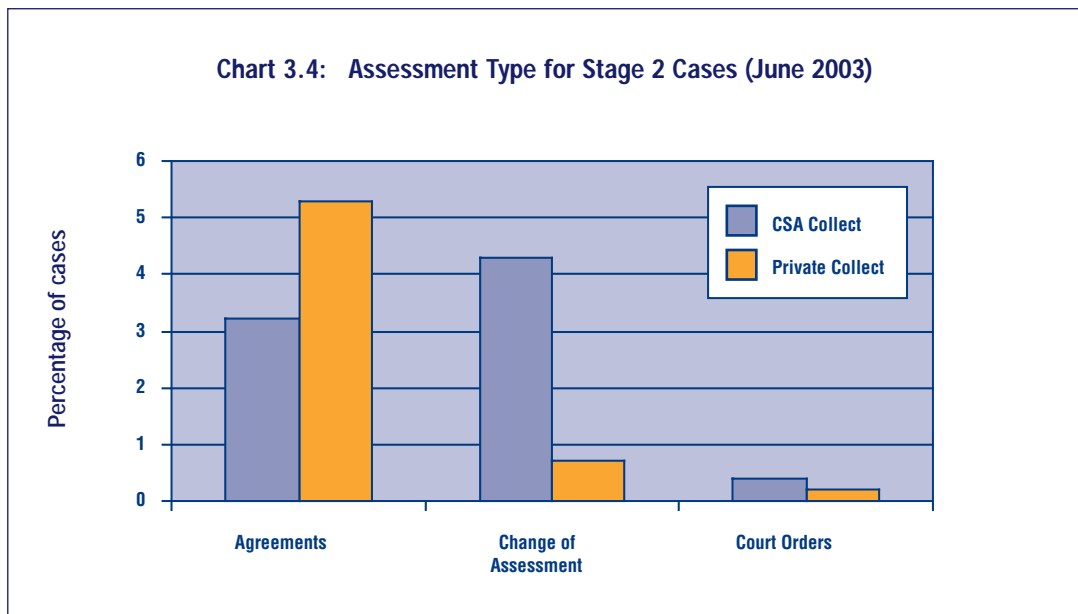
Table 3.3 and Chart 3.4 show the assessment types by CSA Collect and Private Collect arrangements. The majority of assessments are formula based. Private Collect arrangements are

more likely to be based on agreements than CSA Collect arrangements (5.3 per cent as opposed to 3.2 per cent). CSA Collect cases are more than 6 times more likely to have a liability that is based on a change of assessment from the formula than Private Collect cases (4.3 per cent to 0.7 per cent).

Table 3.3: Stage 2 Caseload by Assessment Type and Payment Arrangement, June 2003¹

Assessment Type	CSA Collect		Private Collect		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Formula	293,414	92.1	312,856	93.8	606,270	93.0
Agreements	10,283	3.2	17,790	5.3	28,073	4.3
Change of Assessment	13,595	4.3	2,177	0.7	15,772	2.4
Court Orders	1,403	0.4	540	0.2	1,943	0.3
Total	318,965	100.0	333,363	100.0	652,058	100.0

Source: Child Support Agency, June 2003.
Notes: 1. Excludes cases where processing was not finalised.
Percentages may not add due to rounding.



Source: Client Research Unit, CSA, June 2003

3.4 Change of Assessment

In 1992 a change was introduced to allow parents to apply to CSA for a departure from a formula assessment of child support. Prior to that, an application had to be made to the Court. Since 1992 there have been more than 200,000 applications. For the 12 months ending June 2003, 80 per cent of applications were accepted, and of these, 55 per cent have resulted in the assessment being varied.

Change of Assessment applications have been declining as a percentage of the active Stage 2 caseload, being 8.3 per cent in 1997-98, 6.4 per cent in 1998-99, 5.8 per cent in 1999-2000, 5.5 per cent in 2000-01 and 4.8 per cent in 2002-03. This comparison could not be drawn for the 2001-02 year as Change of Assessment data was only available for the period 1 July 2001 to 1 March 2002.

Table 3.4: Change of Assessment – Stage 2 Only, 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003

	Payer Initiated		Payee Initiated		Registrar Initiated		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Applications accepted								
Assessment varied	8,216	45.9	9,641	65.0	207	90.4	18,064	54.8
Assessment not varied	3,998	22.3	2,321	15.6	12	5.2	6,331	19.2
Refused to make decision	1,571	8.8	303	2.0	0	0	1,874	5.7
Client Agreement	23	0.1	25	0.2	3	1.3	51	0.2
Total	13,808	77.1	12,290	82.8	222	96.9	26,320	79.8
Applications not accepted								
Withdrawn	1,133	6.3	882	5.9	1	0.4	2,016	6.1
Incomplete	2,471	13.8	1,355	9.1	4	1.8	3,830	11.6
Ineligible	493	2.8	315	2.1	2	0.9	810	2.5
Total	4,097	22.9	2,552	17.2	7	3.1	6,656	20.2
Applications finalised	17,905	100.0	14,842	100.0	229	100.0	32,976	100.0

Note: Percentages may not add due to rounding.

3.5 Type of Care Arrangement

The table indicates that care arrangements other than “sole” (where the child spends more than 70 per cent of the nights with one parent) are a small

minority of cases in both groups. Private Collect percentages for cases with “substantial”, “shared” and “major” care, however, are more than twice that of CSA Collect cases.

Table 3.5: Stage 2 Caseload by Care Code (June 2003)

Time children spend with payee Care Code	% of Nights	CSA Collect		Private Collect		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No	%
Substantial	30.0-39.9	949	0.3	2,099	0.6	3,048	0.5
Shared	40.0-59.9	6,262	2.0	20,399	6.1	26,661	4.1
Major	60.0-69.9	5,579	1.8	10,529	3.2	16,108	2.5
Sole	70.0 and over	305,905	96.0	300,336	90.1	606,241	93.0
Total		318,695	100.0	333,363	100.0	652,058	100.0

Source: Client Research Dataset, CSA, June 2003.

Notes: Percentages may not add due to rounding.

4.0 Client Overview by Payment Arrangement and Stage

4.1 Number of Clients

As at June 2003 there were 685,969 active cases

recorded on the Child Support System. However, a number of clients are involved in more than one case, meaning that there are fewer payees or payers than there are cases. The number of payers and payees involved in multiple cases are recorded in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below.

Table 4.1: Payers by Number of Cases and Payment Arrangement, June 2003

Number of Cases	CSA Collect		Private Collect		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	278,071	91.2	312,550	96.0	590,621	93.6
2	24,910	8.2	12,437	3.8	37,347	5.9
3	1,900	0.6	612	0.2	2,512	0.4
4	148	0.0	42	0.0	190	0.0
5 and over	26	0.0	5	0.0	31	0.0
Total	305,055	100.0	325,646	100.0	630,701¹	100.0

Source: Child Support Agency, June 2003.

Note: 1. This payer total is slightly lower than the total reported elsewhere as this table does not include cases for which processing has not been finalised.

Percentages may not add due to rounding.

Table 4.2: Payees by Number of Cases and Payment Arrangement, June 2003

Number of Cases	CSA Collect		Private Collect		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	276,338	90.8	306,000	94.9	582,338	92.9
2	26,180	8.6	15,722	4.9	41,902	6.7
3	1,731	0.6	637	0.2	2,368	0.4
4 and over	106	0.0	25	0.0	131	0.0
Total	304,355	100.0	322,384	100.0	626,739	100.0

Source: Child Support Agency, June 2003.

Notes: Percentages may not add due to rounding.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show that around 93 per cent of payers and payees are involved in just one case. About 7 per cent of payers and payees are

involved in two cases, while just 0.4 per cent of all payers and payees are involved in three or more cases.

4.2 Number of Children

The following sections record the number of “eligible children” and the number of “relevant dependent children” under Stage 2 of the Child Support Scheme.

4.2.1 Children Covered by Child Support Assessments (Stage 2)

Cases registered with CSA as at 30 June 2003 accounted for a total of 1,034,593 children. Children who are eligible to be included in a formula assessment are:

1. children who were born on or after 1 October 1989; or
2. children whose parents separated on or after 1 October 1989; or

3. children who have a sibling born on or after 1 October 1989. The child must also be under 18, not married or in a de facto relationship, not adopted by someone else and either an Australian citizen or resident or present in Australia on the day of application.

Table 4.3 records the number of children covered by child support assessments by CSA Collect and Private Collect groups. There is little difference in the distribution of eligible children between CSA Collect and Private Collect cases. For example, 60 per cent of Stage 2 CSA Collect cases have one eligible child, while almost 54 per cent of Stage 2 Private Collect cases have one eligible child. There are up to two eligible children in 89 per cent of CSA Collect cases and 87 per cent in Private Collect cases. There are up to three children in about 97 per cent of cases in both CSA Collect and Private Collect categories.

Table 4.3: Eligible Children per Case – Stage 2 cases only, June 2003

No. of Children Per Case	CSA Collect			Private Collect			Total		
	Cases	Children	% of Cases	Cases	Children	% of Cases	Cases	Children	% of Cases
1	191,650	191,650	60.1	179,510	179,510	53.8	371,160	371,160	56.9
2	93,094	186,188	29.2	109,850	219,700	33.0	202,944	405,888	31.1
3	26,078	78,234	8.2	33,777	101,331	10.1	59,855	179,565	9.2
4	6,079	24,316	1.9	7,951	31,804	2.4	14,030	56,120	2.2
5	1,291	6,455	0.4	1,656	8,280	0.5	2,947	14,735	0.5
6	368	2,208	0.1	478	2,868	0.1	846	5,076	0.1
7	97	679	0.0	93	651	0.0	190	1,330	0.0
8 or more	38	317	0.0	48	402	0.0	86	719	0.0
Total	318,695	490,047	100.0	333,363	544,546	100.0	652,058	1,034,593	100.0

Source: Child Support Agency, July 2003.

Notes: Percentages may not add due to rounding.

4.2.2 Payers' Subsequent Families

Formula assessments make allowance for 'relevant dependent children' of the payer. These are children under the age of 18 years who are the natural or adopted child of a parent and that parent is the sole or principal provider of ongoing daily care for the child, or has major care of the child.

The impact of the presence of relevant dependent children is to increase the payer's exempt income amount. More than 6 per cent of all assessments are adjusted for relevant children as shown in Table 4.4.

Number of Children	CSA Collect		Private Collect		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	16,392	5.1	8,562	2.6	24,954	3.8
2	9,153	2.9	3,578	1.1	12,731	2.0
3	2,581	0.8	809	0.2	3,390	0.5
4	777	0.2	180	0.1	957	0.1
5 or more	284	0.1	79	0.0	363	0.1
Total cases with relevant dependent children	29,187	9.2	13,208	4.0	42,395	6.5
Total Stage 2 cases	318,695	100.0	333,363	100.0	652,058	100.0

Source: Child Support Agency, June 2003.
Notes: Percentages may not add due to rounding.

4.3 Number and Gender of Payers and Payees

Table 4.5 shows that 90.9 per cent of CSA Collect payers are male and 8.9 per cent are female.

Furthermore, 88.1 per cent of all Private Collect payers are male and 11.6 per cent are female.

	CSA Collect		Private Collect		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Male	303,977	90.9	299,066	88.1	603,043	89.5
Female	29,763	8.9	39,351	11.6	69,114	10.3
Total¹	334,318	100.0	339,453	100.0	673,771	100.0

Source: Client Research Unit, CSA, June 2003.
Notes: 1. The 'total' figure includes 1,614 cases where the gender of the payer could not be identified from data held on the Child Support System (578 CSA Collect and 1,036 Private Collect).
Percentages may not add due to rounding, and due to the exclusion of cases where payer gender could not be determined from data held on the Child Support computer system.

⁸ Caseload figures exclude "processing not finalised" cases.

Table 4.6: Payee Gender by Payment Arrangement, June 2003

	CSA Collect		Private Collect		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Male	28,976	8.7	38,838	11.4	67,814	10.1
Female	304,780	91.2	299,740	88.3	604,520	89.7
Total¹	334,318	100.0	339,453	100.0	673,771	100.0

Source: Client Research Unit, CSA, June 2003.

Notes: 1. The 'total' figure includes 1,437 cases where the gender of the payee could not be identified from data held on the Child Support System (562 CSA Collect and 875 Private Collect).

Percentages may not add due to rounding and due to the exclusion of cases where payer gender could not be determined from data held on the Child Support computer system.

Table 4.6 shows that 8.7 per cent of CSA Collect payees are male and 91.2 per cent of CSA Collect payees are female. Furthermore, 11.4 per cent of

Private Collect payees are male and 88.3 per cent are female.

4.4 Age of Cases

Table 4.7 breaks the caseload into age of cases by Stage.⁸ Age data relates to the year that the case

was first registered. Almost 76 per cent of Stage 1 cases are aged 11 years and over while nearly 70 per cent of Stage 2 cases are 8 years old and under.

Table 4.7: Age of Cases by Stage, June 2003

Case Age in Years. ¹	Stage 1		Stage 2		Total Cases by Age	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1 2003 ²	93	0.5	34,106	5.2	34,199	5.1
2 2002	473	2.3	68,472	10.5	68,945	10.2
3 2001	412	2.0	74,098	11.4	74,510	11.1
4 2000	432	2.1	67,918	10.4	68,350	10.2
5 1999	397	1.9	54,510	8.4	54,907	8.2
6 1998	499	2.4	50,412	7.7	50,911	7.6
7 1997	603	2.9	54,229	8.3	54,832	8.2
8 1996	639	3.1	49,582	7.6	50,221	7.5
9 1995	692	3.3	45,688	7.0	46,380	6.9
10 1994	818	4.0	45,639	7.0	46,457	6.9
11 1993	1,189	5.8	48,259	7.4	49,448	7.4
12 1992	1,724	8.3	28,391	4.4	30,115	4.5
13 1991	2,598	12.6	17,615	2.7	20,213	3.0
14 1990	4,019	19.4	12,462	1.9	16,481	2.4
15 1989	4,652	22.5	577	0.1	5,229	0.8
16 1988	1,424	6.9	74 ³	0.0	1,498	0.2
Totals	20,664	100.0	652,032	100.0	672,696	100.0⁴

Source: Child Support Agency, June 2003.

Notes: 1. Data relates to the year the case was registered.

2. The 2003 data is for the half year to 30 June.

3. These are cases that began as Stage 1 cases but are now Stage 2 cases.

4. Percentages may not add due to rounding.

⁸ Caseload figures exclude "processing not finalised" cases.

4.5 Income of Payers and Payees

Tables 4.8, 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11 show payer and payee incomes by CSA Collect and Private Collect arrangements from two sources: the Tax Returns Data Base (TRDB) and the Child Support System (CSS). The data from the TRDB is for all parents

who have lodged a tax return, and is the taxable income, i.e. after taxable deductions have been made. The data from the Child Support System includes the TRDB information but also includes estimated or derived income amounts for parents who have not lodged a tax return.

Tables 4.8 to 4.11 show that payer median taxable

Payers	CSA Collect	Private Collect	Totals
Total number	334,318	339,453	673,771
Median	\$18,274	\$24,228	\$21,407
Maximum	\$8,316,543	\$4,689,331	\$8,316,543

Source: Child Support System of the Child Support Agency, June 2003.
 Note: 1. These incomes include cases with nil liabilities (zero incomes).

Payers ¹	CSA Collect	Private Collect	Totals
Total number	161,970	214,948	376,918
Median	\$29,716	\$33,212	\$31,688
Maximum	\$8,316,543	\$4,689,331	\$8,316,543

Source: Tax Returns Database and Child Support System of the Child Support Agency, June 2003.
 Notes: 1. There were 296,853 payers who were non-lodgers (172,348 CSA Collect and 124,505 Private Collect).

Payees	CSA Collect	Private Collect	Totals
Total number	334,317	339,452	673,769
Median ¹	\$10,553	\$10,514	\$10,529
Maximum	\$845,026	\$3,011,534	\$3,011,534

Source: Child Support System of the Child Support Agency, June 2003.
 Note: 1. Child Support Median Income recorded in this table does not include many of the benefits paid to resident parents by Centrelink.

Payees ¹	CSA Collect	Private Collect	Totals
Total number	158,457	172,710	331,167
Median	\$20,190	\$19,588	\$19,885
Maximum	\$2,092,878	\$1,023,708	\$2,092,878

Source: Tax Returns Database and Child Support System of the Child Support Agency, June 2003.
 Notes: 1. There were 342,602 payees who were non-lodgers (175,860 CSA Collect and 166,742 Private Collect).

incomes are significantly greater than the median taxable income of payees. Family Tax Benefit payments are not included in the incomes shown. Payees from Private Collect and CSA Collect

payment arrangements have similar median incomes but payers in Private Collect arrangements have significantly higher median child support incomes than those in CSA Collect arrangements.

4.6 Income Sources of CSA Payers who lodge Tax Returns

Table 4.12 shows the source of income for payers who lodged tax returns. It shows the numbers of payers who earned some or all of their income from these different sources. One payer may have earned income from a number of these sources.

The most common source of income for payers who lodged tax returns was salary and wages,

with almost 87 per cent of all payers deriving some or all of their income from this source. By comparison just over 18 per cent of payers who lodged tax returns received some or all of their income from Government benefits and allowances.

For those payers with an income the source with the highest average earnings was Salary and Wages (\$36,688) followed by Net Income or Loss for Business (\$20,726) and Partnerships and Trusts (\$17,301).

Table 4.12: Income Sources of CSA Payers Who Lodge Tax Returns, June 2003³

Top 10 Income Sources	Number	%	Average Earnings (\$)
Salary and Wages	327,007	86.8	36,688
Allowance, Director's Fees	92,834	24.6	2,340
Gross Interest	62,986	16.7	545
Government Benefits and Allowances	68,659	18.2	4,103
Net Income or Loss From Business	36,670	9.7	20,726
Dividends	48,385	12.8	2,503
Gross Rent	30,373	8.1	8,744
Partnerships and Trusts	24,447	6.5	17,301
Eligible Termination Payments	14,308	3.8	9,681
Lump Sum Payments	9,131	2.4	7,360
Total for CSA Payers¹	376,918		35,785²

Note: 1. This total differs from the sum of the main income sources because payers can earn income from more than one source
 2. This is the average income for all payers who lodged a tax return. Therefore it is not the sum of the average incomes
 3. The results in this table are derived from the Tax Return Data Base (TRDB) of the ATO and only include those CSA payers who lodged tax returns for the 2001-02 financial year. For this reason the number of payers in receipt of benefits is particularly affected and under reports the number of payers in receipt of government benefits. Centrelink data suggests that as at 30 June 2003 there were 200,760 payers in receipt of the following benefit types: Newstart Allowance, Parenting Payment Single, and various pension types.

5.0 Program Outcomes

5.1 Liabilities

The following liability statistics are broken down into CSA Collect and Private Collect categories.

5.1.1 Liabilities by CSA and Private Collect

Until 30 June 1999 payers were not required to pay child support if their liability calculated under the formula was less than \$260 per year. From 1 July 1999, however, a minimum liability of \$260 per year now applies to most parents.

There are a number of reasons why a parent is not required to pay child support, including the following:

- Stage 1 court orders can have a clause that the payer will not have to pay child maintenance during periods of unemployment or in other circumstances;
- A Stage 1 payer can apply to CSA not to enforce the court order during periods of unemployment;
- Where parents have an Agreement that the liability be nil; and
- Where the parents share the care of their child and their incomes are equal.

Table 5.1: Liability by Payment Arrangement, June 2003

Liability	CSA Collect		Private Collect		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Over \$260	180,761	54.1	226,047	66.6	406,808	60.4
\$260	110,263	33.0	67,806	20.0	178,069	26.4
\$1 to \$259	26,015	7.8	10,039	3.0	36,054	5.4
Nil	17,279	5.2	35,561	10.5	52,840	7.8
Total	334,318	100.0	339,453	100.0	673,771	100.0

Source: Client Research Unit, Child Support Agency, June 2003.
 Note: Percentages may not add due to rounding.

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 show the percentage of CSA Collect payers and Private Collect payers within specified liability ranges, while Chart 5.1 plots those percentages. The table and chart demonstrate that:

- a smaller proportion of CSA Collect cases have nil liabilities than Private Collect cases;
- a higher proportion of CSA Collect cases have \$260 minimum liabilities than Private Collect cases;
- a higher proportion of CSA Collect payers have liabilities under \$4,000; and
- a higher proportion of Private Collect payers have liabilities of between \$4,000 and \$14,000, which is in line with the data presented in Tables 4.8 and 4.9, indicating that payers' median incomes are significantly higher in Private Collect cases.

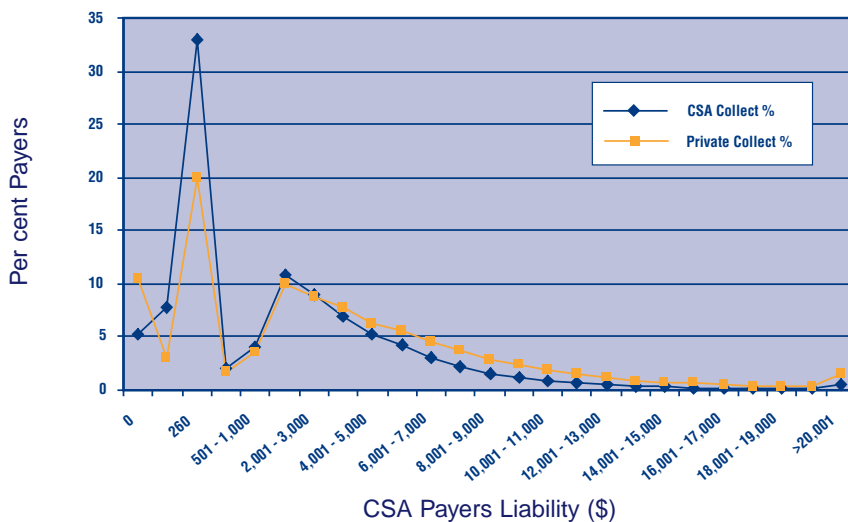
Table 5.2: Liability by Payment Arrangement, June 2003

Annual Payer Liability (\$)	CSA Collect		Private Collect		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0	17,279	5.2	35,561	10.5	52,840	7.8
1-259	26,015	7.8	10,039	3.0	36,054	5.4
260	110,263	33.0	67,806	20.0	178,069	26.4
261-500	7,034	2.1	5,811	1.7	12,845	1.9
501-1,000	13,362	4.0	11,722	3.5	25,084	3.7
1,001-2,000	36,036	10.8	33,789	10.0	69,825	10.4
2,001-3,000	29,981	9.0	29,796	8.8	59,777	8.9
3,001-4,000	23,127	6.9	25,992	7.7	49,119	7.3
4,001-5,000	17,263	5.2	21,261	6.3	38,524	5.7
5,001-6,000	13,929	4.2	18,919	5.6	32,848	4.9
6,001-7,000	9,899	3.0	15,309	4.5	25,208	3.7
7,001-8,000	7,322	2.2	12,470	3.7	19,792	2.9
8,001-9,000	5,260	1.6	9,668	2.8	14,928	2.2
9,001-10,000	3,800	1.1	7,786	2.3	11,586	1.7
10,001-11,000	2,996	0.9	6,383	1.9	9,379	1.4
11,001-12,000	2,145	0.6	4,925	1.5	7,070	1.0
12,001-13,000	1,680	0.5	3,973	1.2	5,653	0.8
13,001-14,000	1,354	0.4	3,208	0.9	4,562	0.7
14,001-15,000	1,037	0.3	2,461	0.7	3,498	0.5
15,001-16,000	817	0.2	2,054	0.6	2,871	0.4
16,001-17,000	680	0.2	1,684	0.5	2,364	0.4
17,001-18,000	566	0.2	1,349	0.4	1,915	0.3
18,001-19,000	511	0.2	1,419	0.4	1,930	0.3
19,001-20,000	387	0.1	1,040	0.3	1,427	0.2
>20,001	1,575	0.5	5,028	1.5	6,603	1.0
Total	334,318	100.0	339,453	100.0	673,771	100.0

Source: Child Support Agency, June 2003.

Note: Percentages may not add due to rounding.

Chart 5.1: CSA Payer Liability by Payment Arrangement (June 2003)



5.1.2 Average Child Support Liabilities

Table 5.3 records the average daily and weekly child support for each Stage and payment arrangement. There are two sets of averages: one set includes all cases and the other excludes cases where the assessment is \$260 a year or less. In Stage 2 cases, where liabilities of \$260 or

less have been excluded, there is a difference of \$26.37 per week between the average Stage 2 CSA Collect liability (\$84.43 per week) and the average Private Collect liability (\$110.80 per week). Where all cases have been included, the difference between the Stage 2 CSA Collect and Stage 2 Private Collect average liability figures is \$34.52 per week.

Stage	Payment Arrangement	Average Liabilities (all cases)		Average Liabilities (Liability more than \$260)	
		Weekly \$	Annual ¹ \$	Weekly \$	Annual ¹ \$
Stage 1	CSA	54.75	2,854.94	55.41	2,889.16
	Private	47.58	2,480.78	48.98	2,554.06
	Total	52.61	2,743.46	53.48	2,788.77
Stage 2	CSA	48.53	2,530.63	84.43	4,402.59
	Private	83.05	4,330.39	110.80	5,777.56
	Total	65.62	3,421.79	99.42	5,184.24
All	CSA	48.77	2,543.00	82.46	4,299.90
	Private	82.45	4,299.19	109.38	5,703.15
	Total	65.26	3,402.98	97.45	5,081.43

Source: Data obtained from the Client Research Unit dataset, June 2003.
Notes: 1. The annual rate is divided by 52.14 weeks to arrive at the weekly rate in the first column.

Table 5.4 outlines the total average weekly liability for Stage 2 CSA Collect and Private Collect cases based upon the number of eligible children. In all

cases the average liabilities of the Private Collect cases are higher than the average liabilities for Stage 2 CSA Collect cases.

Eligible Children	CSA Collect		Private Collect		Total	
	Number	Average \$	Number	Average \$	Number	Average \$
1	183,092	38.46	158,834	58.31	341,926	47.68
2	88,840	62.66	99,297	107.03	188,137	86.08
3	24,644	70.68	30,529	126.31	55,173	101.46
4	5,713	65.31	7,092	118.15	12,805	94.58
5	1,200	54.74	1,451	99.97	2,651	79.49
6	350	56.13	428	82.77	778	70.78
7	84	40.98	83	54.12	167	47.51
8	27	30.99	34	71.34	61	53.48
Total ²	303,959	48.74	297,756	83.19	601,715	65.79

Source: Child Support Agency, June 2003.
Note: 1. Nil liability cases have been excluded from this table.
2. Cases with more than 8 Eligible Children have been excluded from this table for privacy reasons because of the small numbers involved. A total of 17 cases have been excluded.

5.2 Payments

5.2.1 Total Credits and Liabilities

Table 5.5 shows total liabilities and all credits since 1988. As at June 1991 a total of \$283 million in liabilities had been registered for payers, and

\$185 million had actually been collected. In other words CSA collections represented 65 per cent of all liabilities. By June 2003 CSA Collect cumulative liabilities had risen to \$6,957.2 million and cumulative credits were up to \$6,113.1 million. This resulted in an 87.9 per cent collection rate.

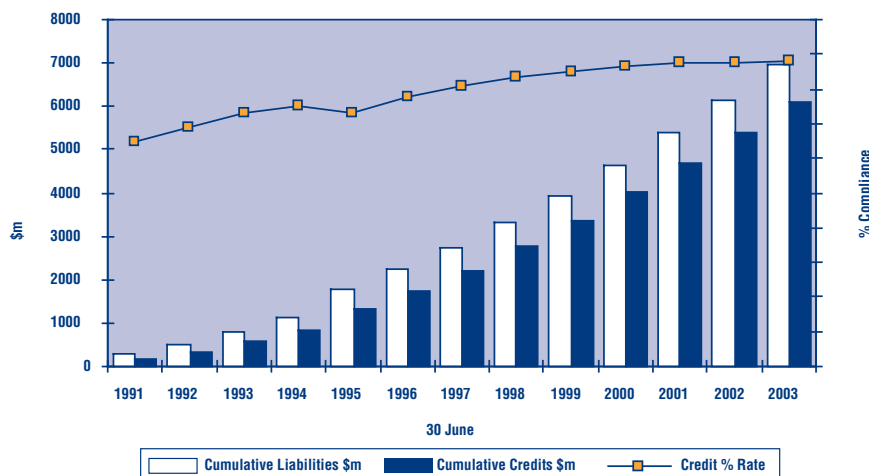
Table 5.5: Cumulative Credits and Liabilities for CSA Collect Cases, June 2003¹

End June	Cumulative Liabilities \$m	Cumulative Credits \$m	Collection Rate %
1988-1991 ²	283.0	185.0	65.0
1988-1992	505.1	346.4	69.0
1988-1993	784.9	569.4	73.0
1988-1994	1,131.3	848.2	75.0
1988-1995	1,795.8	1,315.8	73.3
1988-1996	2,228.4	1,729.1	77.6
1988-1997	2,725.7	2,209.1	81.0
1988-1998	3,305.6	2,761.3	83.5
1988-1999	3,940.4	3,357.5	85.2
1988-2000	4,645.2	4,010.5	86.3
1988-2001	5,368.1	4,698.4	87.5
1988-2002	6,151.7	5,392.9	87.7
1988-2003	6,957.2	6,113.1	87.9

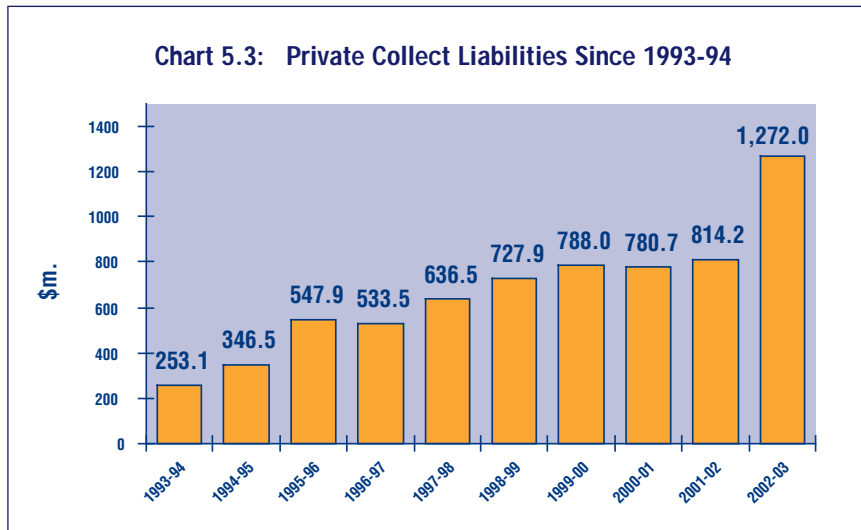
Source: Child Support Agency, June 2003.

Notes: 1. The difference between the "All Liabilities" figures and the "All Credits" figures are the Gross Maintenance Debt figures, not Net Maintenance Debt figures reported elsewhere in this publication. Net Maintenance Debt figures exclude Write Off amounts.
2. The 1991 credit and liability totals include amounts for 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Chart 5.2: Cumulative Liabilities and Collections (CSA Collect Cases) since 1991



Source: CS5 Report, Child Support Agency, June 2003.



Source: CS5 Report, Child Support Agency, June 2003

Note: The large increase in liabilities in 2002-03 can be mainly attributed to more accurate reports on Private Collect liabilities due to the introduction of CSA's new computer system (CUBA).

The liabilities and collections in Table 5.5 are also depicted in Chart 5.2. Total liabilities are represented by the white bars, while the credits are recorded in the blue bars. Running across the top of the chart are the credit amounts as a percentage of all liabilities.

Chart 5.3 shows the total Private Collect liabilities for 1993-94 to 2002-03. The CSA assumes that the collection rate for privately collected child support is 100 per cent as payees are able to request collection by the CSA where the payer fails to meet their obligation.

94 per cent of all (Private Collect and CSA collect cases combined) child support has been paid. This is over 13 billion since 1988.

5.2.2 Child Support Transferred

"Transfers" are child support liabilities that have been collected by CSA (CSA Collect), as well as payments that have been paid directly between parents but where the eligible carers are registered with CSA (Private Collect arrangements). The total amount of child support transferred in 2002-03 was \$1,944.0 million, including \$1,272.0 million in

Table 5.6: Transfers (\$m.)

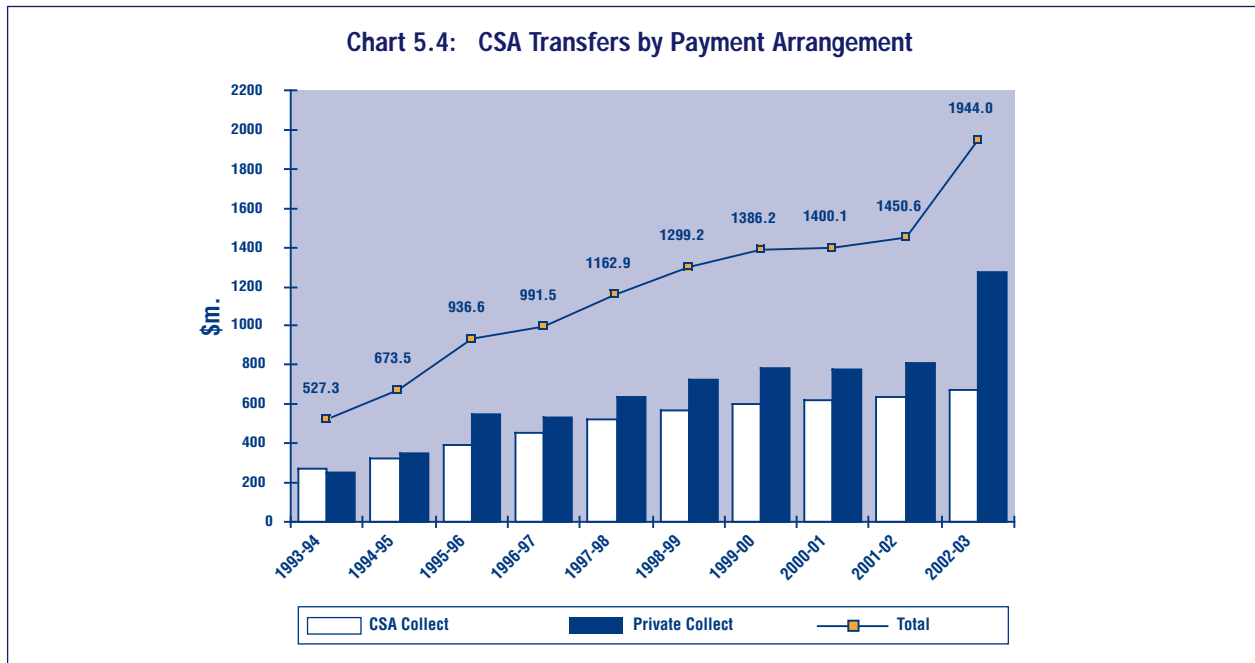
	CSA Collect ¹		Private Collect ²		Total
1994	274.2	52.0	253.1	48.0	527.3
1995	327.0	48.6	346.5	51.4	673.5
1996	388.7	41.5	547.9	58.5	936.6
1997	458.0	46.2	533.5	53.8	991.5
1998	526.4	45.3	636.5	54.7	1,162.9
1999	571.3	44.0	727.9	56.0	1,299.2
2000	598.2	43.2	788.0	56.8	1,386.2
2001	619.4	44.2	780.7	55.8	1,400.1
2002	636.4	43.9	814.2	56.1	1,450.6
2003	672.0	34.6	1,272.0	65.4	1,944.0

Source: CS5 Report, CSA, June 2003.

Notes: 1. The CSA Collect figures include amounts for Interim Disbursement, Final Disbursement, Emergency Disbursement and Non-Agency Payments (NAPs).

2. Private Collect totals assume 100 per cent of privately paid child support is transferred. Where this is not so, the payee is entitled to ask the CSA to collect the liability.

3. The large increase in credits in 2002-03 can be mainly attributed to more accurate reports on Private Collect credits due to the introduction of CSA's new computer system (CUBA).



Source: Child Support Agency Monthly Performance Report, (CS5), CSA June 2003.

private collections and \$672.0 million in funds collected by the CSA. This is a \$493.4 million (34.0 per cent) increase on the 'transfers' total of \$1,450.6 million reported in 2001-02 (see Table 5.6 and Chart 5.4).

5.2.3 Collections - CSA Collect Cases

Child support payments can be received by CSA in a number of ways:

- Employer Withholding: these are monies withheld by the parent's employer and paid directly to CSA by the employer on the employee's behalf;
- Cash: monies paid by the parent directly to CSA by cheque or money order;

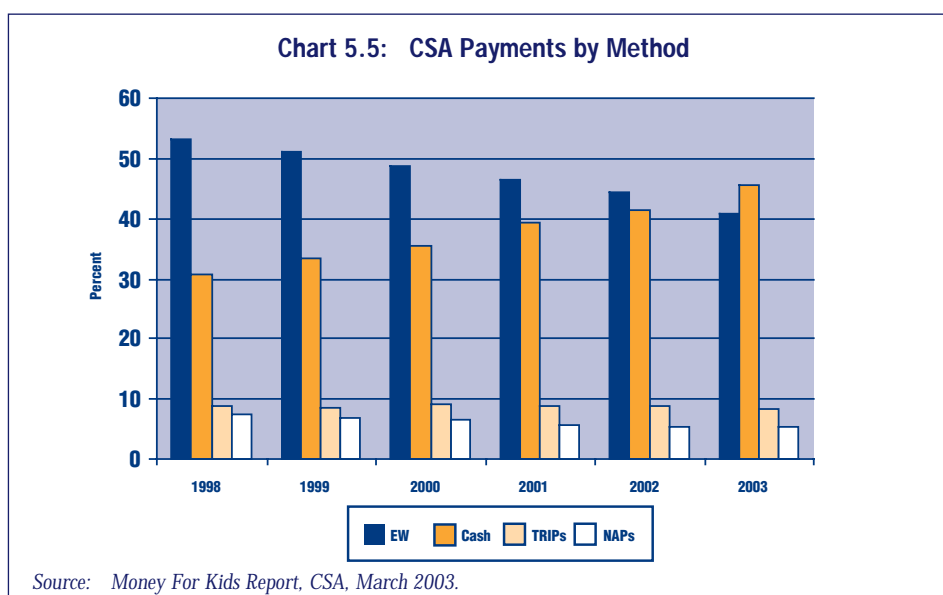
- Tax Refund Intercept Payments (TRIPs): these are monies intercepted from a payers tax refund by CSA; or
- Non-Agency Payments (NAPs): these are payments made directly to the payee or a third party by the payer instead of to CSA. These payments are made in lieu of child support and might include money or the payment of medical bills, school fees etc.

Table 5.7 and Chart 5.5 show that the cash component, as a percentage of child support payments, is increasing while Employer Withholding and NAPs are decreasing. The percentage amount collected through TRIPs has been relatively stable.

30 June	Employer Withholding	Cash ²	TRIPs	NAPs
1998	53.1	30.6	8.9	7.4
1999	51.1	33.4	8.5	6.9
2000	48.8	35.6	9.1	6.5
2001	46.4	39.2	8.8	5.7
2002 ¹	44.4	41.3	8.9	5.3
2003	40.9	45.4	8.2	5.4

Source: Money for Kids Report, Child Support Agency, March 2003.

Notes: 1. The data for 2001-02 relates to the period up to the end February 2002. Data was not available for the remainder of the financial year due to the redevelopment of the CSA's computer system (CUBA).
2. Cash in this table includes cheques, Australia Post Billpay, BPay, and s72A enforcement payments.



5.2.4 Liabilities and Debt – CSA Collect Cases

Table 5.8 shows the number of payers in each income range by the size of gross maintenance debt (GMD) attributable to both current liability cases and ended cases. The table shows that only 2.9 per cent of payers have a maintenance debt greater than \$10,000. The debt associated with these payers, however, comprises 46.6 per cent of the total debt.

5.2.5 Debt – CSA Collect Cases

Table 5.9 and Chart 5.6 record Scheme arrears amounts as at the end of the past seven financial years. Column A in Table 5.9 records Cumulative Net Maintenance Debt (NMD). Column B records

write-off amounts (debt deemed to be uncollectible) while Column C reports Cumulative Gross Maintenance Debt (GMD), which is calculated by adding NMD and write-off together. Cumulative GMD associated with overseas cases is recorded in Column E, while Column F expresses the Cumulative GMD associated with overseas cases as a percentage of all GMD.

CSA research indicates that GMD is increasing as a result of three factors: the dramatic increase in the number of overseas cases that have come to Australia with large debts; the increase in debt associated with cases that have a \$260 p.a. minimum liability; and because of the unexpected rate of growth in the total caseload, including ended cases with debt.

Table 5.8: Payer Gross Maintenance Debt by Payer Child Support Income, June 2003
(including CSA Collect and Private Collect cases that have ended with arrears)

Maint. Debt (\$)	\$0-12,000		\$12-20,000		\$20-50,000		\$50,000+		Total			
	No.	Sum \$m	No.	Sum \$m	No.	Sum \$m	No.	Sum \$m	No.	Sum %		
0	126,865	0.0	45,659	0.0	196,208	0.0	67,442	0.0	436,174	61.3	0.0	0.0
1-260	47,158	4.8	7,695	0.8	15,293	1.7	2,938	0.3	73,084	10.3	7.6	0.9
261-500	18,573	6.9	3,286	1.2	7,903	3.0	1,347	0.5	31,109	4.4	11.6	1.4
501-1K	19,744	14.2	4,398	3.2	11,233	8.3	1,794	1.3	37,169	5.2	27.0	3.2
1,001-2K	16,423	23.1	4,363	6.2	14,495	21.1	1,946	2.8	37,227	5.2	53.3	6.3
2,001-5K	19,076	61.4	5,720	18.7	21,100	68.9	2,580	8.4	48,476	6.8	157.3	18.6
5,001-10K	9,729	68.1	3,121	21.9	13,020	92.2	1,712	12.5	27,582	3.9	194.4	23.0
10,000+	6,974	140.1	2,204	40.9	9,537	169.7	2,005	42.4	20,720	2.9	393.0	46.6
Total	264,542	318.5	76,446	92.9	288,789	364.8	81,764	67.9	711,541	100.0	844.1	100.0

Source: Child Support Agency, June 2003.

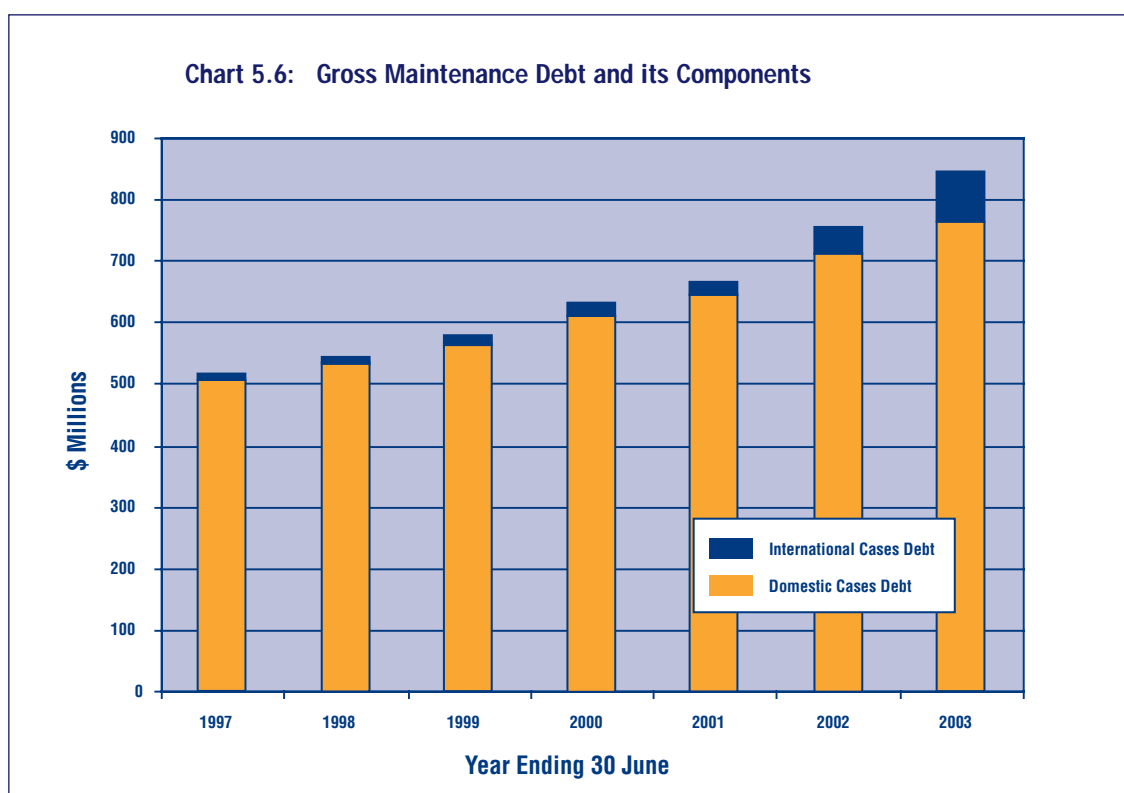
Note: This table records Gross Maintenance Debt by all cases, including those with a current liability (active cases) and those that have ended with arrears. Totals may not add due to rounding.

30 June	A. Cumulative Net Maintenance Debt (\$m.)	B. Write-Off (\$m.)	C. Cumulative Gross Maintenance Debt (GMD) (\$m.)	D. Cumulative GMD on Domestic Cases (\$m.)	E. Cumulative GMD on Overseas Cases (\$m.)	F. Cumulative GMD on Overseas Cases as % of Total GMD
1997	458.4	58.2	516.6	506.7	9.9	1.9
1998	450.3	94.0	544.3	532.2	12.1	2.2
1999	455.6	127.2	582.8	564.2	18.6	3.2
2000	542.6	92.2	634.7	613.8	20.9	3.3
2001	595.9	73.7	669.7	645.8	23.9	3.6
2002	673.7	85.1	758.7	714.2	44.5	5.9
2003	762.0	82.1	844.1	765.4	78.7	9.3

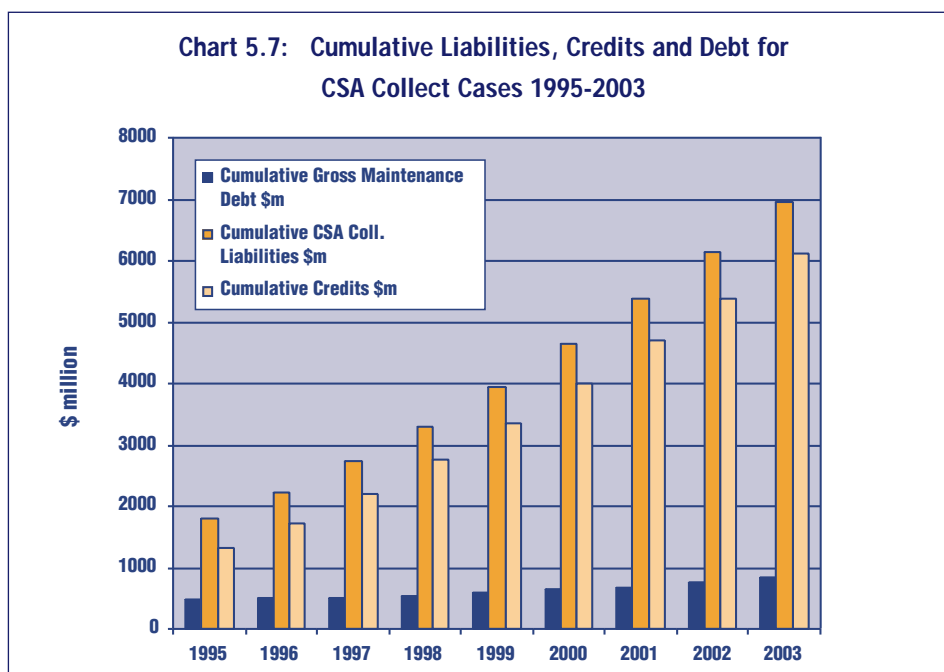
Source: Child Support Agency Monthly Performance Report, (CS5).

Since June 2003 (to November 2003) Gross Maintenance Debt has decreased to \$837.9 million and is expected to continue to decrease for the

remainder of 2003-04. Of note is the decrease in Domestic Debt from \$765.4 million to \$746.8 million.



Source: Child Support Agency Monthly Performance Report, (CS5).



Source: Child Support Agency Monthly Performance Report, (CS5).

6.0 Legal Services Overview

6.1 Background

The Child Support Scheme Legal Services Program aims to provide information to low income parents (particularly Department of Family and Community Services customers) about their rights and responsibilities under the Child Support Scheme. These legal services assist with legal advice, information, minor assistance, and, when appropriate, legal representation to ensure that children with separated parents benefit from the Child Support Scheme.

Legal Aid Commissions in each State and Territory, and thirteen specialist Community Legal Services located throughout Australia, provide services to parents eligible to receive child support (carer parents) and parents responsible for paying child support (liable parents).

The following activities are undertaken by legal services on behalf of carer parents:

- assistance in preparing and completing legal documents;
- obtaining court orders;
- advising self-representing clients about what is involved in attending court;
- assistance with establishing proof of parentage;
- assisting clients interpret child support documents from other government bodies;
- assisting stage 2 clients understand the change of assessment process; and
- court representation as appropriate.

In addition to the above activities for carer parents, a number of specific activities are undertaken on behalf of liable parents including:

- assisting clients understand their rights of appeal under the change of assessment arrangements;
- assisting clients interpret their child support obligations;

- assisting with preparing and completing legal documents;
- advising self-representing clients about what is involved in attending court;
- court representation as appropriate.

The Child Support Agency also actively supports clients by liaising directly with the legal service providers to resolve child support issues. The Child Support Agency also refers clients to independent legal services as appropriate, to ensure that clients are fully informed and have access to legal advice and information.

Legal aid commissions expend funds on child support matters in accordance with Commonwealth priorities and guidelines.

The legal aid agreements for 2000-01 to 2003-04 incorporate an outputs-based reporting framework which identifies expenditure on particular categories of service delivery, including child support. The legal aid agreements require legal aid commissions to report performance information on a quarterly basis. The report addresses financial performance, service delivery, quarterly performance data, including actual performance against budget and estimated workload for each service output.

In addition, provisions in the agreement require legal aid commissions to provide statistical information on a monthly basis.

The Department meets with each commission 3 times per year to discuss performance. Monitoring of performance will be undertaken on an ongoing basis through the examination of information and data provided by commissions in accordance with the agreements.

Commonwealth funding for child support matters is also administered through the Community Legal Services Program to 13 centres in Australia who provide specialist child support legal services to clients. In the 2002-03 financial year, the total allocation was \$1,303,355.

6.2 Statistics and Advice Work Types

6.2.1 Legal Aid Commission Statistics

During 2002-03 community legal services funding specifically to provide child support services recorded the following number of activities: (Activity type for problem type)

• Advice	4928
• Information	1,940
• Community Legal Education	27
• Cases Opened	1,113
• Cases Closed	871

6.2.2 Community Legal Services Statistics

During 2001-02 community legal services funding specifically to provide child support services recorded the following number of activities: (Activity type for problem type)

• Advice	3,639
• Information	1,413
• Community Legal Education	0
• Cases Opened	967
• Cases Closed	1,167

6.3 Additional Child Support Information Collected by Community Legal Services Relating to Child Support Activities for 2002-03

Parent/Case Type:	Number
Carer (only)	1,252
Liabe (only)	428
Both carer and liabe	0
Stages:	
Stage 1	156
Stage 2	1,435
Parentage:	
Not disputed	1,180
Other proof sought	87
Test required	160
Test positive	16
Test negative	4

Age of Client:

Less than 26 years	582
26-35 years	1,679
36-45 years	2,128
over 45 years	833

Income Source:

Employed full-time	991
Employed part-time	682
Self employed	156
Centrelink benefit	2,711
Other Government benefit	127
No income	191
Employed temporarily	5
Student allowance	5
Community development employment program	1
Other	188

7.0 Savings and Costs

7.1 Savings

Savings to Government outlays are achieved as a result of the application of the maintenance income test to payments of more than base rate Family Tax Benefit (FTB) Part A. As at June 2003, payments of more than the minimum rate Family Tax Benefit are reduced by 50 cents for each dollar of maintenance received above \$1,127.85 per annum for a parent with one child from a previous relationship. The threshold is increased where there are additional children or if there is a couple with both partners receiving maintenance.

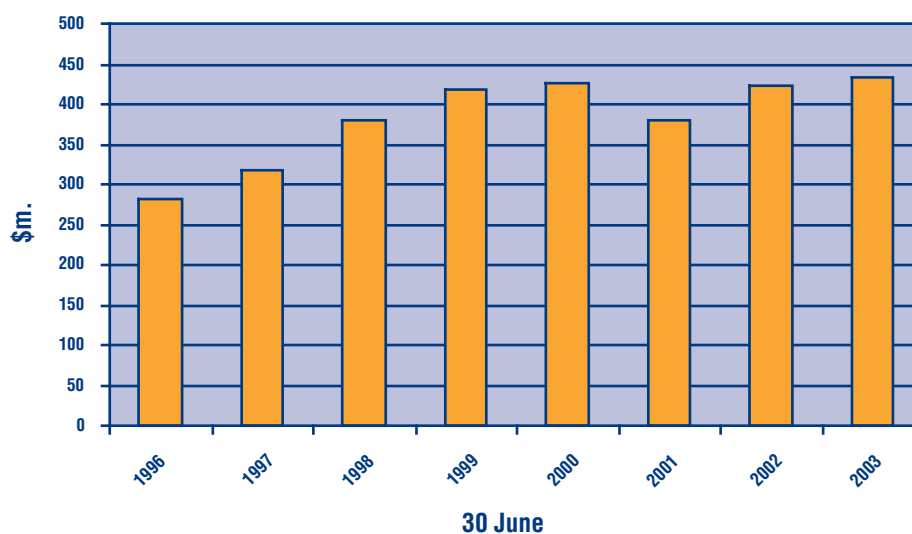
Table 7.1: Net Savings Assigned to the Child Support Scheme

1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m
283	318	378.3	419.2	425.0 ¹	380.4	423.0	433.5

Source: Department of Family and Community Services, June 2003.

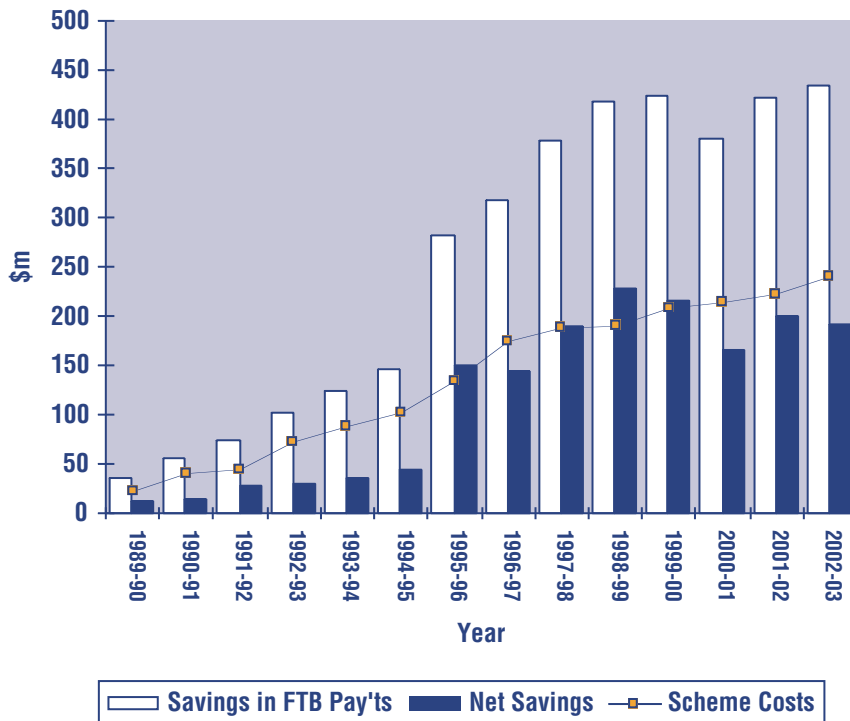
Notes: 1. This figure was revised from the \$594.4m reported by FaCS in July 2000.

Chart 7.1: Net Savings Attributable to the Child Support Scheme



Source: Department of Family and Community Services, June 2003.

Chart 7.2: Savings and Costs of the Child Support Scheme



Source: Child Support Agency Monthly Performance Report (CS5), CSA, June 2003.

7.2 Scheme Costs

Table 7.2: Savings and Costs of the Child Support Scheme^{1,2,3}

Agency/Dept	95-96 \$m	96-97 \$m	97-98 \$m	98-99 \$m	99-2000 \$m	2000-01 \$m	2001-02 \$m	2002-03 \$m
CSA	114.8	160.6	169.7	108.1	198.2	203.7	214.0	233.2
FaCS	12.4	8.6	10.4	2.7 ⁴	3.0	2.3	2.3	1.4
AGD	4.3	4.7	7.5	7.8	7.8	7.8	5.3 ⁵	5.5 ⁵
Scheme Costs	131.6	173.9	187.7	190.6	209.0	213.8	221.6	240.1
Savings in FaCS								
pay't (net)	283	318	378	419	425	380	423	433.5
Net Savings ⁶	151	144	191	228	216	166	201	193

Source: Child Support Agency, Department of Family and Community Services and Attorney-General's Department.

- Notes:
- The 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99 CSA costs figures are not directly comparable with the 1995-96 figure of \$114.85 million. The later figures are accrued cost estimates which include, for example, all CSA costs for salaries, administrative costs, leave, IT redevelopment, internal user charges (IUCs) etc.
 - The 1999-2000 savings attributable to the Child Support Scheme are not comparable with data for earlier years. The increase in savings reflects steps taken by Centrelink to streamline the process for private collection customers.
 - Attorney-General's Department 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99 costs for its responsibilities within the Child Support Scheme are not comparable with data for earlier years. The 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99 figures are the actual amounts that A-G's spent administering its child support work: earlier figures are amounts that were allocated by the Department of Finance for those CSS responsibilities.
 - With the creation of the Department of Family and Community Services in the 1998-99 year and the establishment of Centrelink as an entity separate to FaCS, a decision was taken by FaCS to remove Centrelink costs in relation to the Child Support Scheme.
 - Expenditure by Legal Aid Commissions on Commonwealth matters is undertaken by Commissions in accordance with Commonwealth legal aid priorities. As such the Attorney-General's Department does not set funding levels to be expended by Legal Aid Commissions on particular areas of law. In 2002-03, Legal Aid Commissions (excluding Tasmania, ACT and NT) expended \$4.169 million on child support representation. Expenditure excludes resources dedicated to the provision of advice/information for child support matters. In addition, Community Legal Centres expended \$1.303 million on the provision of services for child support matters.
 - Net Savings equals Net Savings to Government outlays minus Scheme Costs.

7.3 Comparisons with Overseas Agencies

The Australian Child Support Agency has conducted preliminary research into how broad

cost-effectiveness indicators of the Australian Child Support Scheme compare with other child support organisations.

Table 7.3: Comparative Statistics for Australian and Overseas Child Support Programs (1998-99)^{1,2}

Country		Total A\$m. Collected or Transferred	Program Costs A\$m.	A\$ Collected for each \$1 Spent	Cost of Collecting \$1	Caseload	Agency Staff Numbers (FTEs)	Cost A\$ per Agency FTE	Arrears A\$
Australia	1997-98	1,162.9	169.7	6.85	14.6 cents	494,534	2,587	65,597	450.3
	1998-99	1,299.2	180.1	7.21	13.9 cents	535,569	2,663	67,634	455.6
	1999-00	1,386.2	198.2	6.99	14.3 cents	569,710	2,714	75,055	542.6
Canada ³	1998-99	1,225.6	n/a	n/a	n/a	389,273	1,590	62,830	1,746.6
New Zealand	1997-98	153.2	33.7	4.55	22.0 cents	131,750	509	66,220	224.9
	1998-99	160.2	36.4	4.40	22.7 cents	132,500	475	76,571	259.1
United Kingdom	1998-99	1,686.7	589.3	2.86	35.0 cents	923,960	9,299	63,372	n/a
United States ⁴	1996-97	22,673.9	5,815.8	3.90	25.6 cents	19,057,164	52,483	110,987	75,703.8
	1997-98	24,342.9	6,082.4	4.00	25.0 cents	19,419,449	56,212	n/a	n/a

Notes: 1. Currency amounts in this table are A\$ and were converted using the exchange rate quoted in *The Australian Financial Review*, 7 July 2000. These topline results do not necessarily reflect different policy aims and administrative arrangements between agencies.
2. Australian staff numbers in this table are Average Staffing Level (ASL). There was also a small number of FaCS staff dedicated to the Child Support Scheme, and a small number of staff in the Attorney-General's Department who had child support responsibilities.

The reader should note that these figures have not been standardised using agreed definitions, although an international project is continuing to develop such standards between the Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and UK child support

organisations. Given the lack of standardisation between the information for each jurisdiction, close comparisons between these data is inadvisable. Surveyed agencies define collections in different ways.⁹

7.4 CSA Staff

Table 7.4 records staffing levels for CSA at June 2003. The table also notes the gender breakdown by classification levels.

At the end of June 2003 there were 2,873 FTE

staff in the CSA. Of that number 2,062 were females (72 per cent) and 811 were males (28 per cent). At levels ASO 1-6 (and equivalents) 73 per cent of all officers were female but at the Senior Officer levels males accounted for 43 per cent of CSA staff.

⁹ The reader is referred to the paper *Child Support Schemes: Australia and Comparisons*, Client Research Unit, Child Support Agency, March 2001.

Table 7.4: CSA Total Staff by Gender and Classifications, June 2003^{1, 2, 3, 4}

	Male	%	Female	%	Total Staff
APS 1-6	735	27.3	1,956	72.7	2,691
SOG/EL1-2	73	41.7	102	58.3	175
SES	3	42.9	4	57.1	7
Total	811	28.2	2,062	71.8	2,873

Source: Child Support Agency, June 2003.

Notes: 1. Numbers are Actual Full Time Equivalent (FTE) which include staff on unpaid leave. Unpaid categories include staff who are on leave without pay, unpaid maternity leave, and compensation.

2. Staff on Higher Duties Allowance (HDA) are recorded at HDA level rather than their nominal classification.

3. The bulk of Scheme staff are employed by the CSA. There is also a small number of staff employed in other areas of FaCS, and the Attorney-General's Department, both of which also have administrative responsibilities under the Child Support Scheme.

Percentages may not add due to rounding.

7.5 CSA Telephone Performance

Research has established that CSA clients prefer communicating by telephone. Recognising this

fact, the CSA has allocated considerable time and funding to improving its telephone system. This effort is reflected in the telephone performance statistics in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5: CSA Telephone Statistics

End June	Main Queue ¹ (calls per day)	Response Time ²	IVR Calls per day ³	Total Phone Traffic (queue and IVR total) ⁴
1994	5,000	n/a	n/a	5,000
1995	9,000	80% in 3 mins	n/a	9,000
1996	6,000	80% in 2 mins	n/a	6,000
1997	8,000	90% in 2 mins	2,308	10,300
1998	8,500	93.3% in 2 mins 83.5% in 30 secs	4,154	12,700
1999	8,500	86% in 2 mins	4,681	13,200
2000	8,450	87% in 2 mins	6,287	14,700
2001	9,371	95.5% in 2 mins	5,753	15,124
2002	8,679	88.5% in 2 mins 79.3% in 30 secs	5,177	13,856
2003	9,332	93.8% in 2 mins 85.3% in 30 secs	6,499	15,831

Source: CSA, as at 30 June for the years in question.

Notes: 1. Main Queue includes public calls, which have been logged on to the CSA phone system. The total excludes Change of Assessment (COA) and Complaints calls.

2. Response time is calculated on calls logged in to the Main Queue.

3. IVR (Interactive Voice Response) was introduced by the CSA during 1995-96. An IVR traffic figure for that year is not available. The calls to the Main Queue decreased during that year as a result of the introduction of the IVR. IVR calls are counted on a monthly basis given that the system operates 7 days per week. In this instance, however, calls have been calculated on a daily basis using the following method. In 2000-01 there were 113,159 IVR calls per month or 1.5 million for the year. This figure was then divided by 260, which is the number of days in a working year, to produce the result of 5,753. This makes the IVR calls per day consistent with the way the calls per day are measured for the Main Queue.

4. The totals in this column include all Main Queue calls and IVR calls calculated on a daily basis using the method described in note 3 above.

Appendix 1: Contact Details

Parents are able to obtain information from CSA, Centrelink and legal service providers on the following numbers.

Child Support Agency

- General Enquiries Phone 131 272
- CSA Info Service (IVR automated service for quick account enquiries and general information) Phone 131 107
- Child Support Change of Assessment Phone 131 141
- CSA Complaints Phone 132 919
- Web Site www.csa.gov.au

Centrelink

- Pensions Information Phone 132 300
- Family Payments Phone 136 150
- Enquiries in languages other than English Phone 131 202
- Appointments Phone 131 021

Family Assistance Office

- General Enquiries Phone 136 150

Family Court of Australia

- Web Site: www.familycourt.gov.au

- Adelaide (08) 8205 2666
- Brisbane (07) 3248 2200
- Canberra (02) 6267 0511
- Dandenong (03) 9767 6200
- Darwin (08) 8981 1488
- Hobart (03) 6232 1725
- Melbourne (03) 860 03777
- Newcastle (02) 4926 1255
- Parramatta (02) 9893 5555
- Sydney (02) 9217 7111
- Townsville (07) 4722 9333
- Family Court WA (08) 9224 8222

Federal Magistrates Service

- Phone: 1300 367 110
- Web Site: www.fms.gov.au

Other Support Services

Family Relationship Services

- Centacare: 1300 138 070
- Family Services Australia: 1300 365 859
- Relationships Australia: 1300 364 277
- Telephone Interpreting Service: 131 450

Financial counselling services are available in each state:

- NSW 1800 808 488
- Vic. (03) 9614 5433
- Qld (07) 3257 1957
- SA (08) 8202 5182
- Tas. (03) 6223 4595
- WA (08) 9221 9411
- ACT (02) 6257 1788
- NT (08) 8932 6111

- Family Law Hotline: 1800 050 321
(Toll free information line)

Carer Parent Services

Child Support Scheme

If you require assistance to understand your rights and responsibilities under the Child Support Scheme, a number of Legal Aid related agencies throughout Australia provide specialised independent services. For more information or advice about how the Scheme applies to you, please contact one of the services listed below.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Legal Aid Office (ACT)

Phone: (02) 6243 3411

Advice Line: 1300 654 314

NEW SOUTH WALES

Legal Aid Commission of NSW

Phone: (02) 9744 3833

Phone: 1800 451 784 Toll Free

Macarthur Legal Centre

Phone: (02) 4628 2042

Illawarra Legal Centre Inc.

Phone: (02) 4276 1939

Southwest Sydney Legal Centre

Phone: (02) 9601 7777

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Legal Service Commission of South Australia

Child Support Section

Phone: (08) 8463 3576

1300 366 424

Southern County Justice Centre

Phone: (08) 8384 5222

Westside Community Lawyers

Phone: (08) 8243 5521

Para District Legal Service

Phone: (08) 8281 6911

TASMANIA*

Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania

Hobart

Phone: (03) 6233 8383

Launceston

Phone: (03) 6336 2050

Hobart Community Legal Service

Phone: (03) 6223 2500

* Carer parents in the south of the state should contact the Hobart Community Legal Service. Carers in the north and northwest of the state should contact the Legal Aid Commission.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

Family Law Advice Sessions

Phone: (08) 8999 3000

Advice Line

Phone: 1800 019 343

QUEENSLAND

Legal Aid Queensland

Child Support Unit

Phone: 1300 651 188 (Toll Free)

Fax: (07) 3238 3545

Caxton Legal Centre Inc.

Phone: (07) 3254 1811

VICTORIA

Victoria Legal Aid

Phone: (03) 9269 0408

1800 677 402

Peninsula Community Legal Centre Inc.

Phone: (03) 9783 3600

Geelong Community Legal Service Inc.

Phone: (03) 5229 0775

Springvale Monash Legal Service

Phone: (03) 9562 3144

Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau Inc.

Phone: (03) 9546 5255

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Legal Aid Western Australia

Child Support Legal Unit

Carer parents

Phone: (08) 9261 6253

1300 650 579

Bunbury Community Legal Centre

Phone: (08) 9791 3206

Gosnells Community Centre

Phone (08) 9398 1455

Liabie Parent Services

Child Support Scheme

If you require assistance to understand your rights and responsibilities under the Child Support Scheme, a number of Legal Aid related agencies throughout Australia provide specialised independent services. These services may be able to assist you to purchase a self-help kit, attend an information session or receive telephone information and/or advice. For more information or advice about how the Scheme applies to you, please contact one of the services listed below.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Legal Aid Office (ACT)

Phone: (02) 6243 3411

Advice Line: 1300 654 314

NEW SOUTH WALES

Legal Aid Commission of NSW Child Support Service

Phone: (02) 9744 3833

1800 451 784 Toll-Free

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Legal Services Commission of South Australia
Child Support Section

Phone: (08) 8463 3576

1300 366 424

Southern Community Justice Centre

Phone: (08) 8384 5222

Westside Community Lawyers

Phone: (08) 8243 5521

TASMANIA

Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania Child Support Information Sessions
Launceston Office

Phone: (03) 6336 2050

Hobart Office

Phone: (03) 6233 8383

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Legal Aid Western Australia
Child Support Legal Unit
Liabie Parent Forums

Phone: (08) 9261 6318

Phone: 1800 199 363

Bunbury Community Legal Centre

Phone: (08) 9791 3206

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission
Family Law Advice Sessions

Phone: (08) 8999 3000

1800 019 343

QUEENSLAND

Legal Aid Queensland Child Support Unit
(Liabie Parent Project)

Phone: 1300 651 188 Toll-Free

Fax: (07) 3238 3545

Caxton Legal Centre

Phone: (07) 3254 1811

VICTORIA

Victoria Legal Aid

Liabie Parents Information Service

Phone: (03) 9269 0408

1800 677 402

Peninsula Community Legal Service

Phone: (03) 9783 3600

1800 064 784 (0359 area only)

Geelong Community Legal Service

Liabie Parent Child Support Worker

Phone: (03) 5221 4744

Springvale Legal Service

Phone: (03) 9562 3144

Springvale Monash Community Aid and Advice Bureau

Phone: (03) 9546 5255

Appendix 2

Amounts Used in Child Support Assessments

Child Support Year

	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Liabe Parent's exempted income amount	7,959	8,221	8,362	8,733	9,006	9,043	10,219	10,482	11,271	11,740	12,315
Single yearly rate of pension (no relevant dependents)	13,276	13,712	13,946	14,570	15,023	15,085	17,051	17,498	18,813	19,597	20,557
Twice married pension rate (with relevant dependents)	1,609	1,669	1,747	1,830	1,888	1,895	1,958	2,018	2,049	2,169	2,235
Additional amount for child under 13 at end of child support year	2,272	2,356	2,447	2,558	2,639	2,649	2,733	2,813	2,857	3,025	3,119
Additional amount for child 13-15 at end of child support year	3,319	3,428	3,487	3,643	3,756	3,771	3,875	3,977	4,276	4,454	4,672
Source: Social Security Act 1991											
Resident Parents disregarded income amount											
Yearly equivalent of average weekly earnings	32,063	33,259	34,549	36,130	37,424	38,787	31,351	31,699	33,717	35,012	36,213
Additional amount for first child under 6 as at start of c.s. year	3,687	3,825	3,973	4,155	4,304	4,461	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Additional amount for each other child under 6 as at start of c.s. year	802	831	864	903	936	970	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Additional amount for child 6 or over and under 12 as at start of c.s. year	1,603	1,663	1,727	1,807	1,871	1,939	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other amounts											
Yearly equivalent of 2.5 times AWE	80,158	83,148	86,373	90,325	93,560	96,968	101,153	103,103	108,732	113,542	119,470
Inflation factor	1.035	1.020	1.035	1.040	1.045	1.040	1.040	1.0375	1.0375	1.0375	1.0375
Weekly Protected Earnings Rate (for the period 1 Jan. to 31 Dec.)	191.48	197.78	201.15	210.15	216.68	217.58	218.85	221.03	237.3	246.68	253.58

Notes 1. The values recorded for the years 1994-95 to 1998-99 cover financial years i.e. 1 July to 30 June for those years.

2. The 1999 values apply to the period 1 July 1999 to 31 December 1999.

3. The 2000, 2001 and 2002 values are for the calendar years – 1 January to 31 December.

