

SUDDENLY SINGLE **WHERE TO FROM HERE?**



Are you recently separated?

Read on for helpful info for new solo mums . . .

Income Support

You may be entitled to some payments from Centrelink to help you to support yourself and your family. These might include: Family Tax Benefit A and B, Parenting Payment Single, Newstart Allowance, Austudy, Rent Assistance (if you are paying rent), Pharmaceutical Allowance, Childcare Allowance.



When you receive a payment from Centrelink you may also receive a Pensioner Concession card which entitles you to a range of concessions including travel and utilities discounts. If you are studying you may be eligible for additional payments to support you while you study. The amount of money you get from Centrelink will depend on how much other income you have, for instance any money you earn from a job or other income sources. Some payments will depend on if, and how much, Child Support you receive from your child's father.

If your youngest child is over eight years of age, you may be required to seek work, if you do not work already. Talk to Centrelink staff to see if you can meet this criteria and if not how they will support you to do so. You may be exempt from this 'activity test' for a variety of reasons – recent separation, domestic violence, disability, chronic illness, etc – talk to Centrelink staff to find out. If you have any problems regarding this process you should make an appointment to speak with a social worker at Centrelink to discuss your situation further.

Child Support

Child Support is money paid by a non-residential parent to the parent who has ongoing daily care of their child. If you are claiming payments from Centrelink then you must apply for a Child Support Assessment (otherwise, your payments may be reduced). You can do this at the Child Support Agency (CSA) by phone or by sending in the appropriate form. An assessment for the Child Support payment is made based on the father's taxable income. Once the assessment is made the payments can be made directly from the father to you, or the CSA can collect the money for you. If your child's father doesn't pay voluntarily the CSA may be able to take the money from his wages or from his tax return. Sometimes this process can take several months.

In some cases it will be far easier to receive Child Support than others. It is likely to be easier if the father is a PAYE taxpayer and/or he submits regular tax returns. If he is self employed, works for cash, or does not file regular tax returns then it may be more difficult for the CSA to assess his income accurately and to collect the money from him. If your child's father is receiving Centrelink payments he may have to pay only a minimal amount of Child Support.

If you have any problems regarding the Centrelink/CSA process you should make an appointment to talk to a social worker from Centrelink. In certain situations you may be exempt from applying for Child Support from your child's father. Dealing with Centrelink and the Child Support Agency can be difficult and time consuming. Making appointments and keeping records of all your contact with staff (phone calls, names, dates) can make life much easier.

Legal Matters

Advice and assistance from a family lawyer can be invaluable for issues such as making child support agreements and parenting orders (for residence and contact), as well as property and other financial matters. If you cannot afford to pay for a private lawyer, you can contact Legal Aid or your local Community Legal Centre. These services offer legal advice, assistance so you can represent yourself, help with legal documents and in some cases offer legal representation for free or low cost. Keep in mind that you and the father of your child cannot both be represented by the same legal firm or service, so you may want to register with the service of your choice as soon as possible.

Housing

The Department of Housing and Works may be able to assist you with bond assistance, public housing, or home-buying options for those on a low income. The *Sole Parent Family Home Loan Assistance Scheme* is a special scheme designed to assist sole parents and their kids stay in the family home following a relationship breakdown or the death of a partner. To find out more contact the Department (see contact details below)



Useful Contacts

Centrelink

Family Assistance Office: 13 61 50

Appointments: 13 10 21

www.centrelink.gov.au

www.familyassist.gov.au

We recommend that you make an appointment.

Child Support Agency

Information: 13 12 72

Complaints: 13 29 19

www.csa.gov.au

Legal Aid

Information line: 1300 650 579

Child Support Unit: (08) 9261 6253

www.legalaid.wa.gov.au

Legal advice and assistance. (Legal Aid can also refer you to a local community legal centre.)

Women's Law Centre

(08) 9272 8800

Telephone Access Line open Mon-Thurs 10 am-3 pm.

Advice and assistance with obtaining paternity tests, child support, and with other legal matters.

Family Court of WA

(08) 9224 8222

www.justice.wa.gov.au

Women's Information Service

(08) 9264 1900

www.wa.gov.au/wpdo

Information and referral on a range of women's issues.

Women's Health Service

(08) 9227 8122

www.whs.org.au

Clinical services , counselling, health, support and education for women.

Department of Housing and Works (Homeswest)

Head Office (08) 9222 4666

Keystart Home Loans (08) 9338 3208

www.dhw.wa.gov.au



For more information on this subject or any other **women's health** or **mental health issue** please contact us on (08) 9227 8122, or toll free on 1800 998 399

For information on issues specific to **Indigenous health** or for **drug and alcohol** related issues please contact us on (08) 9227 9032, or toll free on 1800 246 655