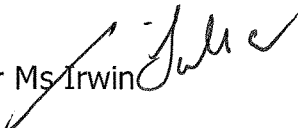


**The Hon Chris Bowen MP
Minister for Human Services**

Minister for Financial Services, Superannuation and Corporate Law

C09/5723

**Ms Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600**

Dear Ms Irwin 

Thank you for your letter of 19 August 2009 to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, regarding a submission to the Standing Committee on Petitions. As the petition relates to child support service delivery matters, your letter was forwarded to me as the Minister responsible for the Child Support Agency (CSA).

The petition writer expresses concern over the increase in the amount of child support they are required to pay to the CSA and requests an immediate reduction in the amount collected. Having received advice from the CSA, I can provide you with a general response to the issues raised in the petition.

The principle of the Child Support Scheme is to ensure that children continue to be supported following the event of their parents' separation. The CSA has a responsibility to collect child support for the benefit of the children in accordance with their parents' financial capacity. I assure you, it is not the CSA's intention to cause any parent undue financial hardship in administering the Scheme.

When a parent has overdue child support, the CSA will attempt to negotiate voluntary arrangements with the parent in the first instance. Where this is not possible, the CSA will seek to enforce the collection of the outstanding child support based on the parent's particular circumstances.

In enforcing the collection of outstanding child support, the CSA will seek information from the parent, as well as from third parties, such as employers, financial institutions or other government departments, to determine the parent's capacity to pay. Once the CSA has an understanding of the parent's true financial capacity to pay child support, it will make a decision on the most appropriate amount of child support payable.

The CSA recognises that parent's circumstances can change. If the petition writer's circumstances have changed significantly since the CSA's decision I encourage them to write directly to the CSA to provide sufficient information to substantiate their claim of financial hardship.

Alternatively, if the Committee would like more specific information about this matter, they can contact Mr James Sorahan from my office on (02) 6277 7200.

Once again, thank you for your letter. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours ^Asincerely

CHRIS BOWEN

28 OCT 2009