REPORT NO. 1

BACKGROUND, SCOPE, STUDY DESIGN AND PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

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Stage I of Australia's new Child Support Scheme, implemented in April and June 1988, encourages the courts to award larger child maintenance payments, creates a Child Support Agency with the power in certain cases to ensure the automatic collection of court enforceable maintenance payments through the use of the Australian taxation system and, while set up in part to increase financial support of custodial parents and their children, is also designed to reduce the Commonwealth's financial burden by income testing maintenance payments for the purpose of determining pension and benefit entitlements.

Stage II, to be implemented in 1989, will augment Stage I by requiring the application of a formula for the assessment of maintenance liabilities and providing for the administrative assessment of such liabilities.

Given the significant scope for the direct financial impact of the changes already made and the potential indirect effects on child rearing, repartnering, opportunities for custodial parents to re-enter the workforce, etc., the Government has asked the Australian Institute of Family Studies to conduct a wide-ranging assessment of the effects of the introduction of Stage I. Reports of this evaluation are to be provided to the Child Support Consultative Group chaired by Mr. Justice Fogarty, set up inter alia 'to monitor the impact of Stage I'. (The Hon. Brian Howe, Minister for Social Security, Parliamentary Statement, 24 March 1987)
While this evaluation will incorporate secondary analysis of data already held by the Institute and the examination of court orders and court registered agreements, its primary data base will be developed from a series of mail questionnaires. The present report, No. 1 of a proposed series of preliminary papers, is designed to put this part of the evaluation into a proper historical and legislative perspective, outline the major areas of inquiry and of comparison, describe its sampling base, and present preliminary findings from the first, limited, set of questionnaires.

BACKGROUND

'Less than 30% of non-custodial parents in Australia pay regular child maintenance [McDonald and Weston, 1986] and this contributes to the poverty of children living in sole parent families. Between 1974 and 1987 the number of sole parent families increased by 90 per cent, from 183,000 to 346,000. This represents 15 per cent of all Australian families with dependants. [ABS, Family Status and Employment Status of the Population, 1974 and The Labour Force, Australia, 1987.]

'Between 1974 and 1987 the proportion of sole parents on a pension or benefit payable by the Commonwealth increased from 46 per cent to over 70 per cent (excluding de jure widows). Commonwealth expenditure on social security payments for Class A Widows (those having the care and control of child/ren) and Supporting Parent beneficiaries rose from $160m in 1973-74 to $1886m in 1986-87, a real increase in excess of 200 per cent. At June 1987 more than 265,000 sole parents who cared for
455,000 children received a pension or benefit. For most, social security is their only source of income." (Edwards, 1988:1)

Reform

Family Law in Australia has been the subject of extensive reform since the early 1970s - the most sweeping changes being brought about by the introduction of the Family Law Act 1975. The Act itself has been the subject of considerable fine-tuning since its implementation, with discussion and debate focusing on numerous problems facing separated families.

One of the major topics to have been considered centres on the question of child (and, to a lesser extent, spousal) maintenance - its adequacy, equity and regularity.

The new Child Support Scheme has evolved out of this discussion. As with most matters arising from an evolutionary process, and which have a variety of antecedents elsewhere around the world, it is difficult if not impossible to say just where the debates began. There have however, particularly in the last four years, been several seminal papers and reports which collectively may be said to have been the most critical to the Scheme's present design.

'Child Support - Public or Private', presented at the 1984 'Family Law in 84' conference sponsored by the Law Council of Australia is the first of these benchmark studies. (Harrison, Harper and Edwards, 1984) As the title suggests, this paper focuses primarily on the balance between public (i.e., social security) and private (i.e., child maintenance) support of the children of separated parents -
and, by implication, support of the custodial parent. The authors initially raise (p.1) several general problems with the system as it then applied -

- it 'favour[s] the interests of men rather than women and adults rather than children'
- it fails 'to separate out the support of children from the support of spouses, who are generally women'
- it contributes to 'the feminisation of poverty because it is with women that the major responsibility for the care of dependent children rests [which] in turn has resulted in large numbers of children in poverty'

On a more specific level, the authors note (pp. 7-8) that -

- 'there are conflicts in the sets of legislation providing for child support' (particularly the assumption of joint parental responsibility and the requirement that a custodial partner's potential social security entitlements be considered when setting maintenance levels)
- 'there are difficulties in the collection and the enforcement of maintenance'
- 'current levels of payment of both public and private support are inadequate'
- 'there are serious inequities'
- 'there are disincentives to self support'
Drawing on overseas experience and examining the available Australian evidence about child support levels (both public and private), the authors examine and reject several proposals then being debated -

- the tax deductability of maintenance payments (this would be open to abuse and would impose a significant cost to revenue)

- use of the Department of Social Security as a maintenance collection agency (this could lead to conflicts of interest for Social Security officers and would be too narrowly defined since maintenance matters are relevant to non-pensioners as well as those receiving government benefits).

- use of the Family Court as a collection agency (this would mean that the Court could not assist people make applications or negotiate agreements since the Collector of Maintenance could not as a court officer be seen to support one party against another)

- establishment of an independent national maintenance agency (examination of the South Australian and Western Australian experiences with such agencies failed to suggest that such a potentially expensive exercise would alleviate significantly the problems the authors were addressing - 'approximately three out of four single parent families receiving social security assistance do not receive maintenance, regardless of whether or not an agency exists.' (pp. 22-23))
Having rejected these options, Harrison et al. suggest that one option they considered could work efficiently and effectively - 'a system of child support payments based on a child support tax recouped through the taxation system'. (p. 26)

'A system based on a child support tax, whatever its specific form, would have a number of benefits:

- it would be equitable as it would be directly related to the liable parent’s income, and therefore to his or her ability to pay;

- it would lead to a greater efficiency, as such a system would be capable of ensuring payments to a greater number of children than is currently the case;

- it would be flexible, as it could allow for fluctuations in the income of the liable parent;

- it would benefit the child and the custodial parent because they would be assured of regular and adequate support;

- it could assist all children equally - whether they be nuptial or ex-nuptial, or of a first or subsequent marriage, or relationship;

- because of the indirect nature of the payments, much of the fear or stress that results from bargaining would be eliminated;

- the cost of establishing and maintaining the system would be lower as it would be utilizing...
existing systems and because government would be recouping much of the cost of child support payments from the liable parent by means of the levy;

- it reinforces the responsibility of parents to maintain their children following the breakdown of the family, whilst removing some of the stress and aggression that frequently characterises bargaining over maintenance payment.' (p. 25)

In effect, when both Stage I and Stage II have been implemented the new Child Support Scheme will be a system for child support taxation - Stage I transfers the liable parent's financial responsibility from the other parent to the Commonwealth through the taxation system (for dissemination through the social security system - thereby allowing, where appropriate, for a reduction in social security expenditure); Stage II will provide for the administrative assessment of maintenance levels (while known as a 'Formula', it will in all respects other than name resemble a tax levy).

The major areas which have been examined since the 1984 Harrison, Harper and Edwards paper have included -

- the nature of the Formula to be applied, in particular
  - whether the custodial parent's income should be considered or just that of the non-custodial parent
  - whether the formula should apply to gross or to nett income
the actual mathematical basis of the formula (i.e., maintenance rates as a proportion of income, whether or not separate provisions should be made for a 'self-support' component, what provisions are to be made for subsequent family obligations)

what should be the collecting authority

what should be the disbursing authority

the nature of and the extent to which children should be 'guaranteed' financial support (i.e., when should public support be provided in addition to private support - critical to the question of revenue savings)

the scope of application of the scheme (i.e., just to pensioners and beneficiaries or to all custodial parents)

the extent to which participation should be mandatory (for everyone who is eligible, for pensioners, only where maintenance has been in default)

the question of retrospectivity (i.e., whether and to what extent access to the new scheme should be available to or, indeed, compulsory for separations which preceded the introduction of the scheme)

the relationship between property settlements and maintenance
At its June 1985 meeting, the Family Law Council established a maintenance sub-committee to consider child support options. Harrison, Harper and Edwards were appointed to this sub-committee along with Mr. G.C. Bruff, His Honour I.W.P. McCall and the Council's Director of Research. In their report of November of that year, the sub-committee recommended, inter alia, that a system of child support should recognise 'the need for a mix of both public and private responsibilities' (p. 1) and that:

- 'the determination of child maintenance payable should be set by a formula which should be kept as simple as possible . . . . [with the amount payable] determined, in the first instance, administratively rather than judicially' (p. 4)

- 'the formula should be applied to the disposable income of the non-custodial parent which is derived by deducting .... income tax, the medicare levy, superannuation and basic living costs .... from the gross income' (p. 4)

- 'the Tax Office is the most appropriate collection and enforcement agency' (p. 6)

- 'current social security arrangements for the treatment of child maintenance as part of the custodial parent's private income [should] remain' (p. 7)

- 'a guaranteed minimum payment for all children of sole custodial parents should be paid to all sole custodial parents on a regular basis' (p. 7)

- 'the method of payment to the custodial parent
would need to be a matter for the Tax Office and the Department of Social Security to work out. One suggestion considered was that the Tax Office could remit payments received ... to the Department of Social Security for payment to custodial parents' (p. 20) deducting from the amount collected an amount equal to the guaranteed minimum payment being paid by the Department of Social Security.

It is probably fair to say that at this stage of the discussion, attention was focused primarily on the question of a formula and secondarily on other particularly economic concerns such as a minimum guaranteed child support payment and offset savings the government might make from increased maintenance payments. It was generally assumed that location, collection and enforcement would flow more or less automatically from the use of the taxation system. The question of the scope of the scheme's application was guided primarily by principles of social justice more than social welfare - that is, application should be universal rather than limited to those receiving pensions or benefits.

The question of the scheme's scope of application was, however, beginning to become one of the central questions requiring resolution. Only a month after the sub-committee's report, Edwards, Harper and Harrison defined clearly the central issue about the scheme's coverage in a paper presented to the Third Australian Law and Society Conference:

'If the purpose of reform of the system is to save revenue by reducing government expenditure on pensions and benefits, then it is more likely to cover only pensioner and beneficiary custodial parents....If,
however, the prime objective of reform of the system is that of equity... then the case for inclusion of non-pensioner custodial parents is much stronger.'
(Edwards, Harper and Harrison, 1985: 26)

This approach was adopted by the (Commonwealth) Cabinet Sub-Committee on Maintenance in its report of October 1986 -

'A scheme confined to social security recipients would cover most sole parent families since over 80 per cent of sole parent families receive a pension or benefit. However, most children whose custodial parent had full-time employment would be excluded as would children whose custodial parent had repartnered.

'For reasons of both efficiency and equity, the Government decided on a broader scheme. It would be inefficient and confusing to have a scheme in which separate maintenance arrangements had to be made by custodial parents when they moved off a pension or benefit....

'Finally, the Government does not want to create first and second class systems of justice by leaving custodial parents who are not social security recipients out of its proposed reform. The children of those parents would be left with the present ineffective maintenance system. All children have a basic right to share in their parents' income, whether or not the custodial parent is in receipt of a pension or benefit.' (pp. 20-21)

The Family Law Council's Maintenance Sub-Committee had recommended in its November 1985 Report 'that there should
be a phasing in period for the proposed child maintenance system e.g. two years, during which all existing maintenance orders would be converted to the new levy system.' (p.24)

That is, in general application the Scheme was to have been retrospective although provision was to be made during the phasing in period for variations in particular cases where property settlements had been made in lieu of maintenance and where private agreements had been reached between the parents 'involving payments from the non-custodial parent to the custodial parent e.g. mortgage payments, school fees or the like.' (p. 24)

It is not altogether clear from the published literature just where or when this retrospective approach was rejected. However, in a Parliamentary Statement of 24 March 1987, the Minister for Social Security, the Hon. Brian Howe M.P. noted 'the community consultation which followed' the release of the October 1986 Committee Report and indicated that the legislation that would be introduced would restrict application of the Scheme to new cases, cases already registered for collection by State or Territory agencies and to pensioners or beneficiaries.

In a News Release the day prior to this Parliamentary Statement, the Minister concretely tied the decision to introduce the scheme in two stages to this public consultation:

'Consultations ... showed widespread support for the reform - but the Government has recognised the need to sensitively shape this new system which will affect so many families at a very emotional time in their lives.

'For this reason the Australian Government has decided
on a two-stage reform to allow a smooth transition to the new scheme.

Stage I is the subject of the current evaluation. It involves primarily the establishment of a collection and payment system. In addition it makes provision for some increase in maintenance levels and a reduction in the public payment of 'guaranteed minimum support.'

Stage II will involve the introduction of a formula for the assessment of maintenance and for its administrative assessment. The detailed questions of the nature and application of the formula were referred to Mr Justice Fogarty's Child Support Consultative Group for advice to the Government. The Fogarty Report was submitted to Government 6 May 1988 and is currently under consideration. As it deals strictly with Stage II, it is beyond the scope of the current evaluation.

Legislation


The first to be implemented (April 1988) were the changes to the Family Law Act. Most significant of the amendments are those designed to increase the amount of child maintenance which may be ordered. This is accomplished through two separate sets of provisions -

- New paragraph 66D(3)(b)(ii) and new sub-section 75(3) provide that 'A pension, benefit or
allowance ... to which a person seeking maintenance may be entitled is not to be taken into account when considering the level of maintenance payable in respect of a child or spouse' (Family Law Amendment Bill 1987: Explanatory Memorandum, para. 18, p. 6).

Previously, the availability of public support via the social security system resulted in many cases in the minimisation of court ordered or approved maintenance payments. (Section 75(2) previously had required that pension entitlements be taken into account when setting maintenance amounts. The Stage I amendments reversed this, requiring that they not be considered.)

New Division 6 of Part VII provides for Child Maintenance and is to be read in conjunction with and subject to 'new section 60D which provides that in any proceedings under new Part VII, the court shall regard the welfare of the child as the paramount consideration.' (para. 68, p. 17) 'The particular objects of [Division 6] include ensuring that children have their proper needs met from reasonable and adequate shares in the income, earning capacity, property and financial resources of both of their parents, and that both parents share equitably in the support of their children - sub-section 66A(2).’ (para. 102, p. 27) In particular, it provides that parents' maintenance duty 'is of no lower priority than the duty of the parent to maintain any other child ... or to maintain any other person....is to take priority over all commitments ... other than commitments necessary to enable the parent to support himself or herself or any other person or child that the
parent has a duty to maintain; and is not affected either by the duty of any other person...or by any entitlement that the child or any other person...may have for an income-tested pension, allowance or benefit.' (para. 103, p. 27) In addition, it sets out a sequential approach to be adopted in setting maintenance levels, requiring the court, first, to assess the needs of the child and only afterwards to assess the contribution toward these needs which should be met by each liable party (ss. 66C-E). 'This sequential approach is in accordance with the decision of the Full Court of the Family Court in Mee v Ferguson (1986) FLC 91-716.' (para. 105, p. 28)

Inter alia, other amendments of particular significance include (a) clearly separating the issue of child maintenance from that of spousal maintenance, (b) requiring courts to specify what proportion of lump sum and property transfers are for the purpose of child maintenance and (c) drawing upon the reference of powers from the States to the Commonwealth to provide for the extension of child maintenance provisions to ex-nuptial children as well as children of married parents (except in Queensland and Western Australia where such powers have not been referred but where steps are being taken to provide for their inclusion).

The new Child Support Act 'provides for the collection of certain periodic child and/or spousal maintenance payable under court orders and maintenance agreements.

'Its provisions contain measures for:

the establishment of a Child Support Register to
be administered by the Child Support Registrar (the Commissioner of Taxation);

- the creation of a child support debt whereby periodic child and/or spousal maintenance, formerly payable by a payer to a payee under an order or agreement, becomes a debt due by the payer to the Commonwealth....

- as far as practicable, the collection of periodic child and/or spousal maintenance by means of automatic withholding (deductions) from the salary or wages of employees....

- collection ... by means of direct remittance on a monthly basis by the payer where automatic withholding does not or cannot apply;

- payment of maintenance collected by the Child Support Registrar to payees - this will be done by the Secretary to the Department of Social Security;

- recovery of maintenance that becomes unpaid only during the time the liability is payable to the Commonwealth;

- penalties ....; and

- objection and appeal rights....' (Child Support Bill 1987 - Explanatory Memorandum, p. 1)

The Act does not itself address directly the questions of scope of application (i.e., across types of cases) or retrospectivity. In fact, it is designed in such a way as
to allow the registration of all court-enforceable child maintenance orders and agreements. Provision is made, however, under the Regulations, to exclude specified liabilities (including classes of liabilities). The exercise of this exclusion power has, in effect, limited the application of Stage I to those set out by the Minister for Social Security in his March 1987 Statement -

- separations after the implementation date (i.e., 1 June 1988);

- where the parents have not co-habited, to children born after that date;

- all cases in which the payee (i.e., custodial parent) is in receipt of an income-tested social security or veterans’ pension or benefit;

- cases in which the order or agreement has been lodged for collection with a State or Territory collection agency or court.

The Social Security and Veterans’ Entitlements (Maintenance Income Test) Amendment Act 1988 requires all new recipients of sole parents’ pensions to take all reasonable action to obtain a court-enforceable order or agreement (unless they already have one) and to register with the Child Support Agency for its collection. All existing recipients with an order or agreement less than three years old are also required to register with the Agency. Exceptions are to be allowed where there is a reasonable fear of violence or concern for the health or safety of the child/ren.

This Act also introduces a new income test on maintenance
income for pensions and benefits (all income-tested pensions and benefits except Family Allowance - not just sole parent pensions). Pensions and benefits are to be reduced by fifty cents for every dollar of maintenance received above a threshold of $15 per week for the first child and $5 a week for each additional child. Lump sum and capital transfers in lieu of maintenance will be converted into weekly maintenance values for the purposes of income testing.

EVALUATION

The Explanatory Memorandum to the Child Support Bill 1987 sets out the 'overall objectives' of Stage I of the new Child Support Scheme - 'to ensure that:

- non-custodial parents share the cost of supporting their children, according to their capacity to pay;

- adequate support is available for children of separated parents;

- Commonwealth expenditure is limited to what is necessary to ensure that those needs are met;

- neither parent is discouraged from participating in the work force; and

- the overall arrangements are simple, flexible and respect personal privacy.' (p. 2)

This statement of objectives is taken almost directly from the Minister's Parliamentary Statement of 24 March, 1987 when he announced the Government's decision to introduce both Stage I and Stage II of the Scheme (p. 4) and from the
Cabinet Sub-Committee on Maintenance’s October 1986 Discussion Paper (p. 14). Any evaluation of the extent to which Stage I meets these stated objectives must have regard to the fact that, while designed to overcome many of the problems faced by custodial parents and their children, Stage I by itself is designed only as a partial remedy.

In a Briefing Kit issued in March 1988, the Department of Social Security set out five specific aims of Stage I, to:

- 'Substantially increase the number of sole-parent families receiving child maintenance payments

- Provide an effective mechanism for court orders for child maintenance to be enforced

- Help ensure maintenance payments are received regularly and on time

- Provide for more adequate levels of maintenance payments to be set in Court maintenance orders made after the start of the scheme

- Relieve taxpayers of a substantial burden, by ensuring non-custodial parents accept a fair share of financial responsibility for their children. It is estimated that by 1989-90 the net savings to the taxpayer will by $192.8 million per year.' (p. 1)

(Except for the forecast of savings, these aims are restated in the Department’s pamphlet, 'Child Support: A General Introduction'.)

Clearly, an evaluation of the impact of such fundamental
legislative and administrative changes as those involved in the introduction of Stage I must address the extent to which the Government's stated objectives are met. (N.B.: to a certain extent the appropriate Commonwealth Departments will also be responsible under Department of Finance guidelines to make such an assessment.)

A thorough evaluation, however, must attempt to assess both intended and unintended consequences and both direct and indirect effects. Research must be guided not only by Ministerial and Departmental statements of objectives, but also by observations made during the debate leading to the reform and any other information available to those carrying it out.

It is reasonable, for example, to assume that in some cases the financial re-involvement (where maintenance previously was not being paid) of the non-custodial parent with his/her former children and partner may lead to additional contact with them - with the potential both for good (e.g., joint parenting) and bad (e.g., physical or emotional abuse and harassment). On the other hand, some respondents to a national survey conducted for the Department of Social Security by The Market Research Workshop in April and May 1988 suggested that the new scheme could 'keep parents at arm's length/no need to deal with each other'. (Bright, 1988: Table 2)

On a completely different plane, Harrison et. al. (1984) suggest that a proper child maintenance system will help defeminise poverty.

Also, the greater financial independence of custodial parents could in time lead to a greater incidence of repartnering. At the same time, any new relationship of the
non-custodial parent could be disadvantaged, as could be the
prospect of their forming new relationships (notwithstanding
the fact that financial responsibility is more equitably
distributed).

Voluntary contributions unknown to the Department of Social
Security ('sweetheart deals') could reduce or be terminated,
as could other, legitimate, periodic or non-periodic
maintenance payments.

The new provisions for treatment of lump sum and property
transfers made in lieu of maintenance could conceivably
alter the ways parents choose to divide their property after
separation.

The nature and diversity of such areas needing examination
dictated two significant aspects of the Evaluation research
design:

(a) since many possible effects of Stage I
(particularly possible indirect effects - e.g. repartnering,
changes in access arrangements) would take place only over
time, a longitudinal study was required; and

(b) large samples would be required in order to obtain
sufficient numbers of respondents from statistically small
segments of the population (e.g. male custodial and female
non-custodial parents, those already receiving maintenance,
ex-nuptial parents).

With these factors in mind, the cost of conducting face-to-
face interviews would have been prohibitive. Fortunately,
pre-testing an initial questionnaire on a known sample (the
panel sample used by the Institute in its surveys of the
'Economic Consequences of Marriage Breakdown' and 'Parents
and Children after Marriage Breakdown') established the feasibility of using mail questionnaires.

The current report focuses on the series of mail questionnaires to be used in the evaluation. As pointed out in the introduction, however, while analysis of responses to these new questionnaires will form the bulk of the evaluation, other data sources are also to be examined - data collected in 1987 by the Institute for a study of parenting after divorce are to be reworked and analysed for the purposes also of this evaluation, data are to be collected from the Child Support Agency recording actual court orders and agreements from 1 June 1988 and for 'old' cases registered with the agency, and a short questionnaire is being designed to examine employers' responses to their role in the new system.

Time Frame

Current funding provides for what is essentially a two-stage research design:

- a first set of questionnaires was sent in 1988 to samples of Family Allowance recipients presumed not to be registered with the Child Support Agency; and

- when a sufficient number of cases is registered with the Agency to assume a fair representation of their prospective client base (on current projections, about April 1989), questionnaires will be sent to a representative sample of on-scheme parents while, at the same time, the initial pre-scheme sample will be reinterviewed. (Employer questionnaires will also be mailed out at that time.)

In addition, in order primarily to be able to provide a
reasonably early assessment of any 'teething' problems faced by the scheme, questionnaires were sent in 1988 to the first 6000 pairs of parents registered. Since the bulk of cases to be picked up when state collection authority cases are transferred to the Agency will not be included in this 6000 and since the balance of 'new' versus 'old' cases will be a function largely of early administrative procedures, it is not assumed that this sample will be representative of the long-term population of child support registrations.

Target Groups

Generally, samples have been or will be drawn of those on the scheme and those not, of pensioners and non-pensioners, of custodial parents and non-custodial parents, of men and women, and - primarily for control purposes - one sample of parents who are either in their first relationship or who have no children from a previous relationship.

The PRE-SCHEME custodial parent samples were drawn for the Institute by the Department of Social Security from its Family Allowance files.

The sampling frame was designed to produce, first, a sample of pensioner parents under the age of 55, one quarter of whom were male. While no accurate projections were available it was assumed that 80-90 per cent of the 9080 pensioner Family Allowees sent questionnaires would be custodial parents in receipt of an income-tested pension or benefit.

Secondly, 55744 non-pensioner Family Allowees (one quarter male) were sent questionnaires designed to be answered and returned only by custodial parents, i.e. parents with the primary caring responsibility for at least one child under
the age of 18 and who was separated from, divorced from or never had lived with that child's other parent. We expected that approximately 10 per cent (i.e. 5574) of those receiving this questionnaire would actually be custodial parents. For the most part, these custodial parents were at the time of selection ineligible for registration with the Child Support Agency unless maintenance was being collected by a State or Territory collection authority. Those for whom such an agency collects maintenance will in time be automatically included on the register.

Finally, 6968 non-pensioner Family Allowees received questionnaires designed to be completed by those currently in intact relationships. While in time some of these parents will separate and become eligible for registration, the primary purpose for including them is to allow for statistical control and comparison. The instructions provided with this questionnaire were designed to elicit 50 per cent male and 50 per cent female respondents.

While sending questionnaires to Family Allowance recipients, especially those on pensions, provided a reasonable number of custodial parents for our samples, there is no comparable source of names and addresses for non-custodial parents. Recognising the difficulties of compounding sampling bias by doing so, the Institute was required to draw its pre-scheme sample of non-custodial parents either by their own self-selection or by their identification by respondents in other samples.

Each custodial parent (i.e., not the control group respondents) was asked to provide, if possible, the name and address of their former partner so that questionnaires could be mailed to a sample of non-custodial parents. In the event, only 1048 names were provided in this manner. The
names of an additional 236 non-custodial parents were supplied in response to a request in the August 1988 issue of Family Matters. These non-custodial parents were sent questionnaires in December 1988. Among other questions, we have also asked these surveyed non-custodial parents if they could supply the names and addresses of other non-custodial parents who might be willing to participate in the evaluation.

Questionnaires

Questionnaire design for each of the separate samples will be discussed in preliminary reports of the findings about each. The present discussion will focus on the questionnaire design for the Pre-Scheme custodial and non-custodial parent samples, specifically the two pilot samples drawn from the Institute's existing ECMB and PCMB panel.

These pilot samples were selected to serve at least three different purposes:

- to allow an assessment of the feasibility of administering child support evaluation questionnaires by mail;

- to pre-test questions and question formats proposed for use with our proposed large Pre-Scheme samples; and

- as a source of data in themselves.

Custodial parent questionnaires (see Appendix I) were prepared first. Non-custodial parent questionnaires (Appendix II), prepared subsequently, were modified in light
of response difficulties uncovered when piloting the custodial parent questionnaires.

Each questionnaire is broken into ten substantive sections:

(1) 'Children in Household' (‘Your Children’ in the non-custodial questionnaire) - questions establishing the custodial/non-custodial status of the respondent, number of children, their age, sex and place of residence, former relationship with the other parent, date of separation;

(2) 'Maintenance' - amounts of periodic maintenance ordered, agreed and paid (if any), non-periodic maintenance, attitude to the pre-scheme system;

(3) 'Housing' - previous living arrangements and disposition of the family home;

(4) 'Property' - details of any property settlement;

(5) 'Access' - distance between the homes of the children and the non-custodial parent, frequency and regularity of access/visiting, satisfaction with access/visiting arrangements, expenses incurred, access-maintenance linkage (if any), relations with the former partner involving parenting;

(6) 'Current Status' - age, sex, education, employment and pension/benefit status, income;

(7) 'Financial Problems' ('Family and Financial Matters' in the non-custodial questionnaire) - rent/mortgage, financial difficulties, current
living arrangements, current partner’s (if any) income, pension/benefit status, maintenance due or paid;

(8) ‘Personal Satisfaction’ - respondents’ general personal satisfaction (standard of living, the way problems are handled, etc.);

(9) ‘Satisfaction with Children’ - items eliciting respondents’ satisfaction with their relationships with their children and with their children’s lives in general, child care; and

(10) ‘Child Support Scheme’ - prior awareness of the new Child Support Scheme and attitudes toward its four major features - increasing the amounts of maintenance, using the taxation system to collect it, requiring pensioners/beneficiaries to seek maintenance and relating the amount of maintenance to the income of the non-custodial parent.

PRE-SCHEME PILOT RESULTS

The Sample

From May to August 1984 the Australian Institute of Family Studies carried out interviews with 825 separated parents as part of a study of the economic consequences of marriage breakdown (ECMB). The sample was made up of three sub-groups: younger couples with children who had divorced in 1981 (n=275); younger couples with children who had divorced in 1983 (n=300); and older couples divorced in 1981 (n=250). All divorces had been registered with the Melbourne Registry. All younger couples had had two children each,
had never been previously married, had been married for a period of 5-14 years and were separated for a period of 12-23 months prior to their divorce. The findings of this study are summarised in Settling Up: Property and Income Distribution on Divorce in Australia (Peter McDonald, Editor-in-Chief, 1986).

Respondents to the earlier study in the two younger groups were again interviewed in mid 1987 with a questionnaire which elicited detailed information about the parenting of the children of the marriage since the time of the marriage breakdown. Of those who participated in the 1984 survey, approximately 95 per cent were reinterviewed in 1987.

By June 1988 when the pre-scheme questionnaire was to be piloted, 255 custodial and 259 non-custodial parents remained in scope (i.e., had at least one child under 18 years of age and had not advised the Institute that they did not wish to participate in any further studies).

Completed questionnaires were received from 146 custodial and 83 non-custodial parents. Response rates were approximately 57% and 32%, respectively. No follow-up letters were sent to encourage response since the questionnaires received were sufficient to validate the use of mail questionnaires and since it was necessary at the time to proceed with the large national samples.

Sample Bias

Addressing the question of sampling bias, Kathleen Funder noted, when describing the first wave of completed interviews, that:

'First, men of all ages were less likely to respond
than women from the same divorcing population. Secondly, for both men and women the response rate was higher the more recent the divorce. Finally, younger men were more likely than older men to respond, although a similar trend was not observed for women. This is consistent with it being more likely for invitations to reach the recently divorced at the address found on the Court file. It is also consistent with their being closer to the divorce and therefore more open to talking about it than those whose divorce was further in the past and less prominent in their lives.' (Settling Up, p. 21)

The current questionnaires were administered four years later. It must be assumed that the earlier bias has magnified. It also must be noted that all respondents have now been separated and divorced for several years and are older than the currently divorcing population. At the same time, they represented the most easily surveyable population of divorced parents and allowed for the early presentation of results.

Findings

Table 1 summarises the general demographic characteristics of the custodial and non-custodial parents in our sample. Nothing in these data differs particularly from earlier findings or from expectations: custodial parents are predominantly women (90%), they are less likely to be in paid employment than are non-custodial parents, even those who are in paid employment earn less than do non-custodial parents (see Figure 1), they are more likely to be in receipt of some sort of income tested pension or benefit, and are significantly less likely to have repartnered since their divorce (see also Figure 2).
### TABLE 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CUSTODIAL AND NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT SAMPLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number in Sample</strong></td>
<td>146</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Per Cent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>68</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban/Rural</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital City</td>
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<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major City</td>
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<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<td><strong>Working</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>71</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Earned Income</strong></td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;10001</td>
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<td>30001-40000</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
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<td>&gt;50000</td>
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<td><strong>DSS Recipient</strong></td>
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<td>88</td>
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<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
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<td>Year 10 or Less</td>
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<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Tertiary</td>
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<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Degree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present Personal Circumstances</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>De Facto</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relshp., not living together</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Relationship</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 1: EARNED INCOME

Per Cent

$ Per Year (if in paid employment)

- Custodial Parents
- Non-custodial Parents
FIGURE 2: PRESENT PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- Married
- De Facto
- Rel. not livg togeth
- No Relationship

Per Cent

- Custodial Parents
- Non-Custodial Parents
The impact of sampling bias is potentially most significant when examining the questions of maintenance and access. If, as seems reasonable to assume, non-custodial parent response rates increase in part as a function of the parent's involvement with the former family, then it is likely that non-custodial respondents will be drawn disproportionately from those who pay maintenance and who see their children.

With this in mind and turning now to Table 2, we find a surprising similarity between custodial and non-custodial parents' reports of the amount of maintenance that is ordered or agreed: the average amount ordered or agreed (per child per week) as reported by custodial parents is $19.38 ($25.43 for those who actually have an order or an agreement - 76%) and about one dollar less per child per week as reported by non-custodial parents. Similarly, those custodial parents who report that they receive maintenance (49%) and those non-custodial parents who report that they pay maintenance (66%) agree about the amount that is paid - $25.36 and $25.13, respectively.

There is, however, no such similarity between custodial and non-custodial parent responses about the payment of non-periodic maintenance. While only 37% of our custodial parent respondents report the receipt of money for such things as school fees and clothing, 72% of the non-custodial parents report such payment. In part, this discrepancy is no doubt due to response bias and, in part, reflects reality. It is also reasonable to assume that there may be differences of perception between custodial and non-custodial parents about such matters. The larger pre-Scheme and on-Scheme samples may allow us to pursue this matter more fully.
TABLE 2

MAINTENANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount Ordered and/or Agreed</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>($ per child per week)</td>
<td>Per Cent</td>
<td>Per Cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>&lt; 21</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>$19.38</strong></td>
<td><strong>$18.26</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean, if payable</strong></td>
<td><strong>$25.43</strong></td>
<td><strong>$24.45</strong></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount Paid</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>($ per week per child)</td>
<td>Per Cent</td>
<td>Per Cent</td>
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<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>&lt; 21</td>
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<td>21-30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>$12.42</strong></td>
<td><strong>$16.64</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean, if paid</strong></td>
<td><strong>$25.36</strong></td>
<td><strong>$25.13</strong></td>
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Non-Periodic Maintenance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<th>Non-Custodial</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Fees</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical/Dental Costs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Costs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust Fund</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Lessons</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Equipment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Current Maintenance Situation

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Item</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid Properly</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Paid</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Paid</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None Now Paid</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None Ever Paid</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consistent both with the earlier observation about the proportions reporting receipt/payment of maintenance, where 45% of the custodial parents with an order or agreement report that maintenance is paid as ordered or agreed, 60% of the non-custodial parents say that it is. Consistent also with our supposition about response bias 27% of our custodial parents against 15% of our non-custodial parents report that while maintenance had been paid in the past, none now is.

Figure 3 presents reasons given by non-custodial parents for the non-payment of maintenance (respondents were asked to specify all reasons, not just the most important). The number of respondents who reported having an order or an agreement and who reported not paying maintenance as ordered or agreed is too small to justify any detailed discussion of the reasons given for non-payment, although the three most frequent justifications involve financial need - the custodial parent has a job, the custodial parent is in a new relationship (to date, the most reliable device custodial parents may use to get out of their poverty trap), and that the child has no need. Our large sample surveys will allow a more reliable assessment of these justifications.

Table 3 presents the results of several attitudinal questions centred around respondents' satisfaction with current maintenance arrangements (see also Figure 4). Generally, and as would be expected, custodial parents are less satisfied than are non-custodial parents with the amount of maintenance that has been ordered or agreed, less satisfied with the amount actually paid, and less satisfied with the way it is paid (to them, to a bank account, to the children, etc.) The significance of the responses to two questions about the judicial system - satisfaction with the Court's ability to enforce its own orders, satisfaction with
FIGURE 3: REASONS GIVEN BY NCPs FOR NOT PAYING MAINTENANCE

- CP Has a Job: 10
- CP in New Relationship: 8
- Child Has No Need: 8
- Not Spent on Child: 7
- Inadequate Income: 7
- Irregular Income: 4
- Custody/Access Problems: 4
- Don't See Child: 2
- Not Spent Sensibly: 2
- Feel No Obligation: 2
- New Family Priority: 1
- Don't Think as Mine: 0
- DK Where Lives: 0

(Multiple Response Variable)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Amount Ordered or Agreed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Happy nor Unhappy</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unhappy</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Amount Paid</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Happy nor Unhappy</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unhappy</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Way it is Paid</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neither Happy nor Unhappy</td>
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<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unhappy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>The Court's Enforcement Ability</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Happy nor Unhappy</td>
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<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unhappy</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Unhappy</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ability to Change an Order or Agreement</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Happy nor Unhappy</td>
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<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unhappy</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 4: SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

Per Cent Happy
Minus
Per Cent Unhappy

Amount Due
Amount Paid
Way Paid
Court Enforcement
Ways to Vary

Aspect of the Child Support Scheme

- Custodial Parents
- Non-custodial Parents

Per Cent Happy
80-----------------------------------------------
60
40
20
0
-20
-40
-60~-----------------------------------------
Amount Due Amount Paid Way Paid 'Court Enforcement Ways to Vary

-38-
the procedures for varying orders or agreements - lies not in the differences between custodial and non-custodial parents (although custodial parents are less happy with the system than are non-custodials), but in the fact that both groups express strong dissatisfaction with the existing court-based system. 65% of custodial parent respondents and 47% of non-custodial parents say that they are either unhappy or very unhappy with the Court’s enforcement ability. 62% of custodial parents and 53% of non-custodial parents report the same dissatisfaction with the procedures for varying maintenance.

When asked their views about certain aspects of Stage I of the new Child Support Scheme, non-custodial parents were surprisingly supportive (See Table 4 and Figure 5). 36% agreed with increasing maintenance amounts against 40% who disagreed, 39% agreed with using the tax system to collect maintenance (50% disagreed) and 59% agreed with obliging pensioners to seek maintenance (20% disagreed). The proposition that maintenance levels should be related to the non-custodial parent’s income (more a Stage II matter) met with less agreement (32% agreed, 58% disagreed). Custodial parents were overwhelmingly supportive of all four aspects of the new Scheme.

Questions were asked in the Institute’s second (1987) wave of interviews with these same respondents about their attitudes to using the tax system to collect maintenance and to relating the amount of maintenance to the non-custodial parent’s income. Figures 6 and 7 compare the support for these two aspects of the Scheme in 1988 and 1987. Generally, while it cannot be said that support or opposition has changed dramatically, respondents are now
### TABLE 4

**ATTITUDE TOWARD NEW CHILD SUPPORT SCHEME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase Maintenance Amounts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
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<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Use the Tax System to Collect Maintenance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oblige Pensioners to Seek Maintenance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relate Maintenance to the NCP’s Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 5: AGREEMENT WITH THE NEW SCHEME

Per Cent Agree
Minus
Per Cent Disagree

Custodial Parents
Non-Custodial Parents

Increase $
Use Tax System
Compel Pensioners
Relate to NCP Income

Aspect of the Child Support Scheme
FIGURE 6: AGREEMENT WITH USING THE TAX SYSTEM TO COLLECT MAINTENANCE

Non-custodial Parents

Custodial Parents

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neither Ag nor Disag
Agree
Strongly Agree

Per Cent

Interviewed in 1988
Interviewed in 1987
FIGURE 7: AGREEMENT WITH RELATING MAINTENANCE TO NCP'S INCOME

Non-custodial Parents

Custodial Parents

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neither Ag nor Disagree
Agree
Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neither Ag nor Disagree
Agree
Strongly Agree

Per Cent

Interviewed in 1988
Interviewed in 1987

Per Cent
less extreme in the pattern of their responses - that is, they are now more likely to 'agree' than to 'strongly agree' and more likely to 'disagree' than to 'strongly disagree'.

Provision is made under Stage I for the explicit imputation of maintenance from certain property transfers for the purpose of pension and benefit income testing. There are too few pensioners in the current sample to suggest how this provision will affect property settlements or pension entitlements. But, to the extent that the current data may allow for some idea of the nature of property settlements pre-Scheme, two notable observations may be made about respondents' answers to relevant questions (see Table 5): first, that 43% of custodial parents and 68% of non-custodials report that the custodial parent received an additional share of the property because of the needs of the children and, secondly, the generally low value of the family property at the time of settlement. Including their equity in the family home, only 27% of custodial parents and 36% of non-custodials report having had property to split with a (1981-1983) value in excess of $50,000, and these were reasonably 'settled' families in that they had been married for at least five years and had had two children. It is reasonable to assume that pensioner custodial parents are likely to benefit less from property transfers.

Difficulties and problems surrounding access and visitation frequently are as contentious as problems about maintenance between separated parents. Legally separate, access and maintenance nonetheless are often related.

Only 30% of our custodial parents and 45% of non-custodials report access visits more frequently than once a month. (See Table 6) Consistent with this, 23% of custodial parents and 12% of non-custodials report that no access
# TABLE 5

## PROPERTY SETTLEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Former Living Arrangements</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buying a House or Flat</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owned a House or Flat</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renting a House or Flat</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer-provided Housing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Free Arrangement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposition of Family Home</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sold</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sold</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner Who Remained in Family Home</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Custodial Parent</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-custodial Parent</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No/Not Applicable</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Value of Property at Settlement</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 10000</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10001-30000</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30001-50000</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50001-100000</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 100000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Share to the Custodial Parent?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 6
ACCESS/VISITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance Between Children and the NCP (kilometres)</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-500</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 500, in Australia</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Access/Visits</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly or More</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several Times a Month</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every Few Months</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Year</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; Once a Year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regularity of Access/Visits</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day/Nights Spent with NCP Per Year</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance of Children Seeing Both Parents</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Important</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very Important</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important at All</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion of Former Partner's Relationship with the Children</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not So Good</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Good at All</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
visits take place. (This discrepancy between custodial and non-custodial parent responses lends support to the supposition that the sample is biased towards those who continue somehow to be involved with their former family.)

At the same time, both custodial and non-custodial parents overwhelmingly report that they regard it as important that children see both parents. Generally, they also view favourably their former partner's relationship with the children.

When asked directly (see Table 7), few respondents suggested a link between access and maintenance. Against this, however, data presented in Table 8 suggest otherwise. While it is not true of non-custodial parents, analysis of custodial parent responses shows a direct link between visitation and whether maintenance has been ordered or agreed - 81% who report that their children spend 53 nights a year or more with the non-custodial parent state that they have an order or an agreement, 75% of those whose children from 1 to 52 nights a year with the other parent have one, while only 68% of those whose children spend no nights with the non-custodial parent have an order or agreement.

Responses from both custodial and non-custodial parents suggest a relationship between visitation and maintenance actually paid. 67% of custodial parents (73% of non-custodials) whose children spend 53 or more nights per year with the non-custodial parent report receiving (paying) some maintenance, against only 30% (56%) of those who report no overnight visits. The effect of this relationship on the amount actually received is obvious; however, even among only those who report actually receiving (paying) maintenance, the amounts received are somewhat related to whether or not the children spend any time with the other parent.
TABLE 7

REPORTED LINK BETWEEN MAINTENANCE AND ACCESS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has a Maintenance Order or Agreement Ever Been Changed Because of Access</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, Increased</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, Decreased</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency Access Has Been Restricted Due to Non-Payment of Maintenance</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly Ever</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency Access Differences Have Led to Non- or Reduced Maintenance Payment</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly Ever</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 8

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAINTENANCE AND THE NUMBER OF DAYS/ NIGHTS CHILDREN SPEND EACH YEAR WITH THE NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days/Nights per Year</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53 or more</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 52</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AVERAGE AMOUNT ORDERED OR AGREED ($ PER CHILD PER WEEK)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days/Nights per Year</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53 or more</td>
<td>26.19</td>
<td>19.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 52</td>
<td>18.90</td>
<td>18.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>15.86</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PER CENT PAYING/RECEIVING MAINTENANCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days/Nights per Year</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53 or more</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 52</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AVERAGE AMOUNT PAID/RECEIVED ($ PER CHILD PER WEEK)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days/Nights per Year</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53 or more</td>
<td>18.33</td>
<td>18.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 52</td>
<td>14.15</td>
<td>16.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>7.06</td>
<td>11.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AVERAGE AMOUNT ORDERED OR AGREED - ONLY THOSE RESPONDENTS WITH AN ORDER OR AGREEMENT ($ PER CHILD PER WEEK)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days/Nights per Year</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53 or more</td>
<td>32.35</td>
<td>24.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 52</td>
<td>25.20</td>
<td>24.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>23.50</td>
<td>20.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AVERAGE AMOUNT PAID/RECEIVED - ONLY THOSE RESPONDENTS PAYING/RECEIVING MAINTENANCE ($ PER CHILD PER WEEK)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days/Nights per Year</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53 or more</td>
<td>27.50</td>
<td>25.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 52</td>
<td>26.72</td>
<td>25.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>23.54</td>
<td>20.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables 9 and 10 present the responses to several opinion questions. Table 9, to questions about relationships with the other parent, Table 10 (see also Figure 8) to questions about the respondents’ satisfaction with various aspects of their children’s lives.

Generally speaking, the data suggest that custodial parents - and this could easily be a function of response bias (data from previously coupled respondents in our large samples will allow us to examine the issue more reliably) - are less likely than are non-custodial parents to believe that they help each other raise the children, are more likely to perceive basic differences of opinion about issues relating to their children, and are slightly more likely to view relations with the other parent as stressful, tense, hostile and argumentative.

Not surprisingly, non-custodial parents are far less satisfied than are custodial parents with virtually all aspects of their children’s lives - health, diet, schools, the extent to which they are getting ahead in life, their friends and living arrangements.

CONCLUSIONS

Both from an examination of the literature of the past few years and from the preliminary analysis presented in this report, it is apparent that some new system was required to replace that previously in effect for awarding and collecting maintenance - only a small proportion of the divorced population have orders or agreements, maintenance awarded under those orders or agreements is too small, the social security system is required in too many instances to assume the financial responsibilities of non-custodial parents.
# TABLE 9
## INTER-PARENT RELATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How often do you and your former partner</strong></td>
<td><strong>Per Cent</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help each other in raising the children?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly Ever</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the Custodial parent needs help regarding the children, is it sought from the Non-Custodial parent?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly Ever</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you and your former partner discuss the children, how often does an argument result?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly Ever</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the underlying atmosphere one of anger and hostility?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly Ever</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the conversation stressful or tense?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly Ever</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you and your former partner have basic differences of opinion about issues relating to child rearing?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly Ever</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 10
**SATISFACTION WITH VARIOUS ASPECTS OF CHILDREN'S LIVES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Custodial</th>
<th>Non-Custodial</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Their Health in General</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Happy nor Unhappy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unhappy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their Diet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Happy nor Unhappy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unhappy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Schools They Attend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Happy nor Unhappy</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unhappy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Extent They are Succeeding, Getting Ahead in Life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Happy nor Unhappy</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unhappy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their Friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Happy nor Unhappy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unhappy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their Living Arrangements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(own rooms, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Happy</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Happy nor Unhappy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Unhappy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 8: SATISFACTION WITH CHILDREN'S LIVES

Per Cent Happy Minus Per Cent Unhappy

Satisfaction with Child(ren)'s...
It is plain also from an examination of the points raised during the discussions leading to the introduction of the new Scheme that it must be evaluated not only in terms of its ability to reduce custodial parent poverty and that of their children, but also in terms of its impact on property settlements, opportunities for custodial parents to re-enter the workforce, on joint parenting, and access—that is, a proper evaluation must be focused widely rather than narrowly and longitudinally rather than at a single time.

Pre-testing questionnaires with a known sample established the feasibility of using mail questionnaires rather than more costly and time-consuming face-to-face interviews, thus allowing for a more comprehensive, longitudinal evaluation.

And, finally, at least with the limited sample discussed in the present report, the new Child Support Scheme enjoys general support while the more significant aspects of pre-Scheme arrangements do not.
REFERENCES

AUSTRALIAN Bureau of Statistics (ABS)


CHILD SUPPORT CONSULTATIVE GROUP (1988), Child support: formula for Australia; Mr Justice John Fogarty chairperson; Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.


APPENDIX I

PILOT CUSTODIAL PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE
Australian Institute of Family Studies

Child Support Scheme Evaluation 1988

On 1 June 1988, the Commonwealth Government introduced a Child Support Scheme to cover child maintenance. This involved changes in a number of areas, in particular:

1. The Family Law Act has been changed to encourage courts to increase the level of child maintenance payments.

2. Most of those receiving social security pensions and benefits who should be receiving child maintenance will be required to seek maintenance.

3. The taxation system will be used to collect maintenance payments from relevant non-custodial parents.

It is also proposed that in the future, changes will be made to require that child maintenance be determined as a percentage of the non-custodial parent's income after allowance has been made for certain basic costs of living and having regard to such other things as the custodial parent's income, split custody, etc.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies has been commissioned to evaluate the social, political and economic consequences of the changes already made to the child maintenance system.

This questionnaire is a part of that study.

It is designed to obtain some benchmark information about families with children and to find out generally how people are reacting to the introduction of new changes.


The Institute functions as a statutory authority of the Australian Government, from which it derives its financial support. The founding Director is Dr Don Edgar. The Institute has a Board of Management of appointed members and a permanent staff of professional and support personnel. In addition, specialist assistants and consultants in appropriate fields are engaged to assist the Institute in its work when necessary.

The Institute exists in order to promote the identification and understanding of factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia. Authority for the Institute's activities derives from Part XIVA of the Family Law Act 1975 (as amended).

The Institute's performance of its responsibilities under the Family Law Act involves:

- Research
  The study and evaluation of matters which affect the social and economic wellbeing of all Australian families;

- Advice
  Advice to Government and other bodies concerned with family wellbeing on issues related to Institute findings;

- Promotion
  The development of improved methods of family support, including measures which prevent family disruption and promote marital and family stability;

- Dissemination
  The dissemination of Institute findings and other family research.

Thus the objectives of the Institute are essentially practical ones, concerned primarily with learning about real situations through research on Australian families.
INSTRUCTIONS: Most questions only need a tick in the answer box - numbers alongside boxes are only for processing purposes. In some cases you will be asked to write an answer on the line provided.

CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD

1. Are you the mother or father of a child aged less than 18 who lives in this household and whose other natural parent lives somewhere else?
   - [ ] 1 No ➔ Thank you, but this questionnaire is not designed for you. Please do not return this questionnaire.
   - [ ] 2 Yes

2. How many children have you had? ______

3. How many of your children live with you? ______

4. How many of your children live with someone else? ______

5. How many other children live with you? ______

6. Would you please provide the following information about your own children and about any other children who live with you. In each column please provide information about your oldest child first, then the next oldest and so on. If more than six children (in any column), provide answers for the six oldest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Children</th>
<th>Your Children</th>
<th>Other Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living With You</td>
<td>Living Somewhere Else</td>
<td>Living With You</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   Age in years:_____ Age in years:_____ Age in years:_____  
   Sex: male [ ] 1 Sex: male [ ] 1 Sex: male [ ] 1  
   female [ ] 2 female [ ] 2 female [ ] 2  

   Age in years:_____ Age in years:_____ Age in years:_____  
   Sex: male [ ] 1 Sex: male [ ] 1 Sex: male [ ] 1  
   female [ ] 2 female [ ] 2 female [ ] 2  

   Age in years:_____ Age in years:_____ Age in years:_____  
   Sex: male [ ] 1 Sex: male [ ] 1 Sex: male [ ] 1  
   female [ ] 2 female [ ] 2 female [ ] 2  

   Age in years:_____ Age in years:_____ Age in years:_____  
   Sex: male [ ] 1 Sex: male [ ] 1 Sex: male [ ] 1  
   female [ ] 2 female [ ] 2 female [ ] 2  

7. How many of your own children under 18 years old who live with you have a father or mother who lives somewhere else? ______  

   IF NONE, GO TO QUESTION 54

8. Do all of your children whose other parent lives somewhere else have the same other parent?  
   - [ ] Yes [ ] 1  
   - [ ] No [ ] 2 ➔ GO TO QUESTION 54

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO YOUR FORMER PARTNER AND TO YOUR CHILDREN OF THAT RELATIONSHIP. QUESTIONS WILL BE ASKED LATER ABOUT ANY CURRENT RELATIONSHIP YOU MAY HAVE AND ANY CHILDREN OF THAT RELATIONSHIP.

9. Which of the following statements best describes your relationship to your former partner?  
   - We were married but have now divorced [ ] 1  
   - We were married and are now separated but not divorced [ ] 2  
   - We were not married but we lived together and have now separated [ ] 3  
   - We never lived together [ ] 4 ➔ GO TO QUESTION 13

10. In what year did you finally separate? 19_____  

11. If you separated in 1988, in what month? ____  

12. How long did you live together?  
   Years:______ Months:______

MAINTENANCE

13. Do you have a court order for the payment of any regular or periodic maintenance for your children - that is, maintenance paid on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis?  
   - [ ] Yes [ ] 1  
   - [ ] No [ ] 2 ➔ GO TO QUESTION 18
14. In which court was the most recent maintenance order obtained? (That is, the most recent order, variation, or appeal.)

- a Magistrate’s Court □ 1
- the Family Court □ 2
- a State Supreme Court □ 3
- Don’t know □ 4

15. In what year was the most recent court maintenance order obtained? 19___

16. If in 1988, in what month? ____________

17. How much is specified in the order to be paid as regular child maintenance for each child who is under 18 years old? (If your order was not made in respect of individual children but for all of the children, please put the total amount on the line provided.) If the maintenance ordered is different for different children, please provide first the maintenance ordered for the oldest child, then that for the next oldest and so on. If none, put $0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child no.</th>
<th>$________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 1</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 2</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 3</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 4</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 5</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 6</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total per week for all children $________

18. Do you and the other natural parent of your children have a private agreement or a court approved agreement for the payment of regular child maintenance?

- Yes □ 1
- No □ 2  ➔ GO TO QUESTION 20

19. How much is specified in the private or court approved agreement to be paid as regular child maintenance for each child under 18? (If your agreement is not made in terms of individual children but for all of the children, please put the total amount on the line provided.) If the maintenance agreed is different for different children, please provide first the maintenance agreed for the oldest child, then that for the next oldest and so on. If none, put $0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child no.</th>
<th>$________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 1</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 2</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 3</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 4</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 5</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 6</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total per week for all children $________

20. Which of the statements below best describes your situation with respect to the payment of maintenance?

- Maintenance is paid regularly in the agreed or ordered amounts □ 1
- Some maintenance is paid but not in the agreed or ordered amounts □ 2
- Maintenance has been paid in the past but is not now being paid at all □ 3  ➔ GO TO QUESTION 22
- Maintenance has never been paid at all □ 4  ➔ GO TO QUESTION 22

21. How much maintenance is actually being paid regularly for your children under 18? If paid irregularly, what is the average weekly payment? If the maintenance being paid is different for different children, please provide first the amount being paid for the oldest child, then the amount being paid for the next oldest and so on. If none, put $0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child no.</th>
<th>$________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 1</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 2</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 3</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 4</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 5</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child no. 6</td>
<td>$________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total per week for all children $________

22. Excluding maintenance that is paid weekly, fortnightly or monthly, for which of the following do you receive payments or are payments made by your children’s other parent? (Tick every appropriate box)

- school fees or costs □
- dental costs □
- private health insurance □
- housing costs (eg, mortgage or rent) □
- holidays □
- trust fund □
- extra lessons (eg, music) □
- clothing □
- holiday or recreational equipment □
- other (please specify): __________________
- none of the above payments are made □  ➔ GO TO QUESTION 25

23. About how much would these be worth in total each year? Dollars per year $________
24. Are these paid as a result of a: (tick every appropriate box)
- a court order □
- a private agreement □
- a court approved agreement □
- no order or agreement □

25. Thinking of both regular, periodic maintenance, and occasional maintenance (school fees, health insurance, etc.), how is the maintenance paid? (tick every appropriate box)
- No maintenance is paid □
- Paid through the Collector of Maintenance/State Collection Agency □
- Paid through a magistrates court □
- Paid through a State welfare department □
- Paid through the Child Support Agency/Department of Social Security □
- Paid directly to me/my bank account, building society, credit union account □
- Paid directly to my children/their bank account, building society, credit union account □
- Paid to a third party (e.g., school, medical fund, etc.) □

Other (Please specify): ____________________________

26. Has any maintenance been ordered or agreed for any children over the age of 18?
- Yes □ 1
- No □ 2
- Not applicable □ 3

27. Overall, how do you feel about each of the following aspects of maintenance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Happy</th>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>It's OK</th>
<th>Unhappy</th>
<th>Very Unhappy</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The amount ordered or agreed □ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 6
The amounts actually paid □ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 6
The regularity of payment □ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 6
The way it is paid □ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 6
The court's ability to ensure that maintenance is paid □ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 6
The procedures by which new orders or arrangements can be made as circumstances change □ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 6

28. Have you ever used a lawyer to prepare papers for you or to represent you in court on a maintenance matter - when you got your first order or registered an agreement or in any disagreement over maintenance or changes to maintenance?
- Yes, privately hired □ 1
- Yes, provided by legal aid □ 2
- Yes, both private hired and provided by legal aid □ 3
- No □ 4

29. If a maintenance matter were to be raised in the future, if either you or your former partner seeks a variation in maintenance, would you:
- represent yourself □ 1
- hire a private lawyer □ 2
- apply for legal aid □ 3

30. Which of the following best describes your living arrangements when you last lived together with the other natural parent or your child/children?
- never lived together □ 1 → GO TO QUESTION 37
- buying house/flat □ 2
- fully owned house/flat □ 3
- rented a house/flat □ 4
- lived in public housing/Housing Commission house/flat □ 5
- lived in employer-provided or subsidised house/flat □ 6
- other paid arrangement □ 7
- other arrangement at no cost □ 8

31. At the time of the property settlement was a decision taken to sell the family home?
- yes □ 1 → GO TO QUESTION 33
- no □ 2
- not applicable/ no property settlement □ 3 → GO TO QUESTION 33

32. Did you or the other natural parent continue to live in the family home?
- yes, I did □ 1
- yes, my former partner did □ 2
- no, neither of us did □ 3
- not applicable □ 4
PROPERTY

33. At the time you separated, what was the value of all of your and your former partner’s property (including the family home) after subtracting any debts and mortgages.

$0 ☐ 1 → GO TO QUESTION 37
$10,000 or less ☐ 2
$10,001 to $30,000 ☐ 3
$30,001 to $50,000 ☐ 4
$50,001 to $100,000 ☐ 5
$100,001 to $150,000 ☐ 6
$150,001 to $300,000 ☐ 7
$300,001 or above ☐ 8

34. In what year did you reach a final property settlement? 19
not applicable/not yet settled ☐ 99 → GO TO QUESTION 37

35. If this year, in what month? month:______________

36. Remembering back to the property settlement, did you get an additional share of the property because you were going to look after the children?

Yes ☐ 1
No ☐ 2

ACCESS

37. About how far away from you does the other natural parent of your children live?

less than five kilometres ☐ 1
between 5 and 15 kilometres ☐ 2
between 15 and 50 kilometres ☐ 3
between 50 and 500 kilometres ☐ 4
in Australia but more than 500 kilometres ☐ 5
overseas ☐ 6
I don’t know where he/she lives ☐ 7

38. Do any of your children living in this household ever spend time with their other natural parent?

Yes, they all do ☐ 1
Yes, but not all of them see him/her ☐ 2
No, none of them see him/her ☐ 3 → GO TO QUESTION 44

39. Is the amount of time spent with the other natural parent about the same for each of your children who lives in this household?

Only one child sees him/her ☐ 1
The time they spend is about the same ☐ 2
The time they spend is different ☐ 3

40. How often do your children see their other natural parent? (If the time spent is different for different children, answer in respect of the child who spends the most time with the other parent.)

Once a week or more ☐ 1
2-3 times a month ☐ 2
once a month ☐ 3
every few months ☐ 4
once a year ☐ 5
less than once a year ☐ 6

41. On average, about how many days a year do the children usually stay with their other parent when they visit (the child who spends the most time if there are differences)?

_____ days

42. Are the visiting patterns regular or irregular?

Regular ☐ 1
Irregular ☐ 2

43. In general, how would you describe your former partner’s relationship with your children?

Excellent ☐ 1
Good ☐ 2
Alright, OK ☐ 3
Not so good ☐ 4
Not good at all ☐ 5

44. Overall, how happy are you with the contact between your children and their other parent (please answer this question whether or not there actually is any contact between them)?

I am very happy with it ☐ 1
I am happy with it ☐ 2
it’s OK ☐ 3
I am unhappy with it ☐ 4
I am very unhappy with it ☐ 5
45. Which of the following do you think best describes your former partner's wishes about custody of the children and access?

- He/she would like the children to live with him/her  □ 1
- He/she would like to see more of the children  □ 2
- He/she would like to see less of the children  □ 3
- He/she does not wish to see the children  □ 4
- I don't know □ 5

46. Would any of your children like to see more of their other parent?

- Yes □ 1
- No □ 2
- Don't know □ 3

47. Would any of your children like to see less of their other parent?

- Yes □ 1
- No □ 2
- Don't know □ 3

48. Has a maintenance order or agreement ever been made larger or smaller because of the amount of access your former partner has to the children?

- Yes, higher maintenance was ordered/agreed □ 1
- Yes, less maintenance was ordered/agreed □ 2
- No, access was never a factor in the level of maintenance ordered or agreed □ 3
- Not applicable □ 4

49. How frequently have you changed the amount of access that the other parent had to your children because he/she did not pay the maintenance?

- Often □ 1
- Sometimes □ 2
- Hardly ever □ 3
- Never □ 4
- Not applicable □ 5

50. How frequently have difficulties about access ever led the children's other parent to reduce or to stop paying the maintenance that was ordered or agreed?

- Often □ 1
- Sometimes □ 2
- Hardly ever □ 3
- Never □ 4
- Not applicable □ 5

51. In general, how important do you think it is for children living with only one of their natural parents to keep in contact with both their mother and father?

- Extremely important □ 1
- Very important □ 2
- Moderately important □ 3
- Not very important □ 4
- Not important at all □ 5

52. Here are some questions about relationships between separated parents. Would you please answer each as it applies to you and your former partner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Hardly Ever</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you and your former partner help each other in raising the children?</td>
<td>□ 1</td>
<td>□ 2</td>
<td>□ 3</td>
<td>□ 4</td>
<td>□ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you and your former partner discuss the children, how often does an argument result?</td>
<td>□ 1</td>
<td>□ 2</td>
<td>□ 3</td>
<td>□ 4</td>
<td>□ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the underlying atmosphere one of anger and hostility?</td>
<td>□ 1</td>
<td>□ 2</td>
<td>□ 3</td>
<td>□ 4</td>
<td>□ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the conversation stressful or tense?</td>
<td>□ 1</td>
<td>□ 2</td>
<td>□ 3</td>
<td>□ 4</td>
<td>□ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you need help regarding the children, do you seek it from your former partner?</td>
<td>□ 1</td>
<td>□ 2</td>
<td>□ 3</td>
<td>□ 4</td>
<td>□ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you and your former partner have basic differences of opinion about issues relating to child rearing?</td>
<td>□ 1</td>
<td>□ 2</td>
<td>□ 3</td>
<td>□ 4</td>
<td>□ 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53. Is there anything about your situation in relation to maintenance that we have not covered?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
**CURRENT STATUS**

54. What is your present age, in years (at last birthday)?

55. Your sex?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

56. What was the highest class you completed at school?

| Year 12, Form 6 (HSC) | 1 |
| Year 11, Form 5 | 2 |
| Year 10, Form 4 | 3 |
| Year 9, Form 3 | 4 |
| Year 8, Form 2 | 5 |
| Year 7, Form 1 | 6 |
| Primary Schooling | 7 |
| Did not complete Primary School | 8 |

57. If you have any other educational qualifications, which of the following best describes the highest qualification you have?

| No other educational qualifications | 1 |
| Trade/Apprenticeship | 2 |
| Certificate from business college, TAFE Certificate, etc. | 3 |
| Diploma (tertiary, beyond year 12) | 4 |
| Bachelor Degree | 5 |
| Post-Graduate diploma/Higher degree | 6 |
| Other professional qualification | 7 |

58. In which State or Territory do you live?

| Australian Capital Territory | 1 |
| New South Wales | 2 |
| Northern Territory | 3 |
| Queensland | 4 |
| South Australia | 5 |
| Tasmania | 6 |
| Victoria | 7 |
| Western Australia | 8 |

59. Do you live in:

| A capital city (ie Canberra, Sydney, Darwin, Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth) | 1 |
| A major city or town (eg, Newcastle, Wollongong, Gold Coast, Geelong, Townsville, Brisbane Water, Launceston, Toowoomba, Ballarat, Albury-Wodonga, Bendigo, Rockhampton, Cairns) | 2 |
| Other | 3 |

60. Are you currently in paid employment?

| Yes | 1 |
| No | 2 → GO TO QUESTION 63 |

61. About how many hours do you work each week?

62. And, about how much would you earn before taxes and other deductions? (fill in only one line)

| Dollars per week: $ | |
| Dollars per fortnight: $ | |
| Dollars per month: $ | |
| Dollars per year: $ | |

63. If you had a choice, would you prefer to

| work full time | 1 |
| work part time | 2 |
| not work at all | 3 |

64. Do you receive any spousal maintenance?

If so, how much?

| No | 1 |
| Yes $________ per week | |

65. Do you have any sources of income apart from any income you may receive from paid employment, spousal or child maintenance, family allowance, or any government pensions or benefits?

| Yes | 1 |
| No | 2 → GO TO QUESTION 67 |

66. How much would this other income be worth each year (before taxes and any other deductions)?

| Dollars per year: $ | |

7
67. At the present time, are you receiving any of the following government pensions or benefits? (Tick all that apply)
- Unemployment benefit
- Supporting parents benefit
- Widow's pension
- Aged pension
- Invalid pension
- Sickness benefit
- Special benefit
- Carer's allowance
- War service/Disability/Repatriation pension
- Austudy or other education allowance
- Worker's Compensation
- None of the above

68. For how long have these pensions or benefits been continuously received (that is, without any break in payments)?
- less than three months
- between three and six months
- between six months and one year
- one-two years
- for more than two years
- never/not applicable

69. If you receive any of these pensions or benefits, in what year did you first receive them?
19__
99 Not applicable

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

70. Many families experience financial difficulties. Could you indicate whether you experience any of the following difficulties frequently, occasionally, or not at all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>paying credit card bills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paying your rent or mortgage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obtaining credit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paying for food</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paying for clothing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not having enough money for leisure activities/holidays</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not having enough money for child care</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

71. Which of the following best describes your present financial situation? (Tick only one)
- spending more than I/we make
- no money left over at the end of the week
- able to put money aside each week for savings, holidays, household improvements

72. Which of the following best describes your present personal circumstances?
- I am married and living with my spouse
- I am now living with someone but not married to him/her
- I have a relationship with someone but we are not living together
- I am not presently in a relationship

73. And what is your marital status?
- Never married
- Now in first marriage
- Now remarried
- Separated from a marriage but not divorced
- Divorced
- Widowed

74. About how much is your current partner's total income before taxes and any other deductions? Please include income from all sources: salary, pension or benefits, maintenance, investments, etc. Please fill in only one line.

| Amount per week: $________
| or
| Amount per fortnight: $________
| or
| Amount per month: $________
| or
| Amount per year: $________

75. Does your current partner receive any spousal or child maintenance?
- Yes, $________ per week
- No

9999
76. Does your current partner pay any spousal or child maintenance?

Yes, $________ per week

No □ 9999

77. Does your current partner receive any of the following government pensions or benefits? (Tick all that apply)

- Unemployment benefit □
- Supporting parents benefit □
- Widow's pension □
- Aged pension □
- Invalid pension □
- Sickness benefit □
- Special benefit □
- Carer's allowance □
- War service/Disability/Repatriation pension □
- Austudy or other education allowance □
- Worker's compensation □
- None of the above □

78. Here are a number of different aspects of your children's lives. How satisfied are you with each of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Very Happiest</th>
<th>Happiest</th>
<th>It's OK</th>
<th>Unhappiest</th>
<th>Very Unhappiest</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your relationship with your children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their health in general</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their diet, the food they eat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The schools they go to</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The extent to which your children are succeeding and getting ahead in life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

78. (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Very Happy</th>
<th>Happiest</th>
<th>It's OK</th>
<th>Unhappiest</th>
<th>Very Unhappiest</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your children's friends - the type of people they are</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your children's living arrangements - rooms of their own, etc.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The availability of child care</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cost of child care</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

79. About how much do you spend each week on child care? $________

80. How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Very Happy</th>
<th>Happiest</th>
<th>It's OK</th>
<th>Unhappiest</th>
<th>Very Unhappiest</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your standard of living: the things you have - housing, car, furniture, etc.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way you handle the problems that come up in your life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How capable or competent, effective you are</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What you are accomplishing in your life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sense of purpose and meaning in your life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your life as a whole</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
81. Before today, had you heard anything about the new child support scheme?
   Yes ☐ 1
   No ☐ 2 → GO TO QUESTION 83

82. Would you say that your understanding of the scheme is:
   Very good ☐ 1
   Good ☐ 2
   Not very good ☐ 3
   Poor ☐ 4

83. Would you please indicate what you think about the following aspects of the new system and the proposed future change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generally increasing the amounts to be paid for child maintenance</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Using the taxation system to collect maintenance</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requiring those receiving pensions or benefits to seek maintenance</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relating the amount of maintenance to be paid to the non-custodial parent's income</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

84. Do you have any further comments you would care to make on the system of maintenance?

________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please mail back as soon as possible in the reply-paid envelope.
APPENDIX II

PILOT NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE
On 1 June 1988, the Commonwealth Government introduced a Child Support Scheme to cover child maintenance. This involved changes in a number of areas, in particular:

1. The Family Law Act has been changed to encourage courts to increase the level of child maintenance payments.
2. Most of those receiving social security pensions and benefits who should be receiving child maintenance will be required to seek maintenance.
3. The taxation system will be used to collect maintenance payments from relevant non-custodial parents.

It is also proposed that in the future, changes will be made to require that child maintenance be determined as a percentage of the non-custodial parent's income after allowance has been made for certain basic costs of living and having regard to such other things as the custodial parent's income, split custody, etc.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies has been asked to evaluate the social, political and economic consequences of the changes already made to the child maintenance system.

This questionnaire is a part of that study.

It is designed to obtain some benchmark information about families with children and to find out generally how people are reacting to the introduction of new changes.

ALL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONNAIRES ARE STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Australian Institute of Family Studies
300 Queen Street
Melbourne 3000 Victoria
Australia
Phone: (03) 608 6888
INSTRUCTIONS: Most questions only need a tick in the answer box – numbers alongside boxes are only for processing purposes. In some cases you will be asked to write an answer on the line provided.

PLEASE DO NOT USE PENCIL.

YOUR CHILDREN

1. Are you the mother or father of a child aged less than 18 who lives somewhere else with his/her other parent?
   - No
   - Yes

2. How many children have you had?
   (i.e. given birth to or fathered)

3. Would you please provide the following information about your own children. If more than seven children, provide answers for the seven oldest.

Child No. 1 (Oldest)
- Age in years:
- Sex: Male
- Female
- This child lives: With you
- Somewhere else with other parent
- Elsewhere

Child No. 2
- Age in years:
- Sex: Male
- Female
- This child lives: With you
- Somewhere else with other parent
- Elsewhere

Child No. 3
- Age in years:
- Sex: Male
- Female
- This child lives: With you
- Somewhere else with other parent
- Elsewhere

Child No. 4
- Age in years:
- Sex: Male
- Female
- This child lives: With you
- Somewhere else with other parent
- Elsewhere

Child No. 5
- Age in years:
- Sex: Male
- Female
- This child lives: With you
- Somewhere else with other parent
- Elsewhere

Child No. 6
- Age in years:
- Sex: Male
- Female
- This child lives: With you
- Somewhere else with other parent
- Elsewhere

Child No. 7
- Age in years:
- Sex: Male
- Female
- This child lives: With you
- Somewhere else with other parent
- Elsewhere

4. Are both parents named on the birth certificates of all your children?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Don’t know

5. Do all of your children who live elsewhere have the same other parent?
   - Yes
   - No

6. Which of the following statements best describes you and your former partner?
   - We were married but have now divorced
   - We were married and are now separated but not divorced
   - We were not married but we lived together and have now separated
   - We never lived together

7. In what year did you finally separate?

8. If you separated in 1988, in what month?

9. How long did you live together?
   - Years:
   - Months:
MAINTENANCE

10. Is there a court order or court approved agreement for the payment of any regular maintenance for your children — that is, maintenance paid on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis?

   Yes, a court order □ 1
   Yes, a court approved agreement □ 2
   Yes, but don’t know which □ 3
   No court order or approved agreement □ 4 → GO TO QUESTION 15

   No, regular maintenance has never been asked for □ 5 → GO TO QUESTION 20

11. In which court was the most recent maintenance order or court approved agreement obtained? (That is, the most recent order, variation, or appeal.)

   A Magistrate’s Court □ 1
   The Family Court □ 2
   A State Supreme Court □ 3
   Don’t know □ 8

12. In what year was the most recent court maintenance order or court approved agreement obtained? 19____

13. If in 1988, in what month? ______________

14. How much child maintenance does the court order or agreement say should be paid for each child who is under 18 years old? (If your order was not made in respect of individual children but for all of the children, please put the total amount on the line provided.) If none, put $0

   Dollars per Week

   (Oldest child first)  
   Child no. 1 $______
   Child no. 2 $______
   Child no. 3 $______
   Child no. 4 $______
   Child no. 5 $______
   Child no. 6 $______
   Child no. 7 $______

   Total per week for all children $______

15. Do you and the child’s other parent have a private agreement for the payment of regular child maintenance?

   Yes □ 1
   No □ 2 → GO TO QUESTION 17

16. How much child maintenance does the private agreement say should be paid as regular child maintenance for each child under 18? (If your agreement is not made in terms of individual children but for all of the children, please put the total amount on the line provided.) If none, put $0

   Dollars per Week

   (Oldest child first)  
   Child no. 1 $______
   Child no. 2 $______
   Child no. 3 $______
   Child no. 4 $______
   Child no. 5 $______
   Child no. 6 $______
   Child no. 7 $______

   Total per week for all children $______

17. Which of the statements below best describes the situation with respect to your payment of regular child maintenance?

   I pay maintenance as agreed or ordered □ 1 → GO TO QUESTION 21
   I pay more maintenance than agreed or ordered □ 2
   I pay maintenance but not as agreed or ordered □ 3
   I have paid maintenance in the past but do not do so now □ 4 → GO TO QUESTION 20
   I have never paid maintenance □ 5 → GO TO QUESTION 20

18. This maintenance is:

   Always paid on time □ 1
   Usually paid on time □ 2
   Not usually paid on time □ 3
   Never paid on time □ 4

19. How much maintenance is actually being paid regularly for your children under 18? If not paid regularly, what is the average weekly payment? If none, put $0

   Dollars per Week

   (Oldest child first)  
   Child no. 1 $______
   Child no. 2 $______
   Child no. 3 $______
   Child no. 4 $______
   Child no. 5 $______
   Child no. 6 $______
   Child no. 7 $______

   Total per week for all children $______
20. The following are reasons that some people give for not paying maintenance or for paying less maintenance than has been ordered or agreed to. Please tick all those that apply to you.

- Not applicable/maintenance is paid as ordered/agreed
- I do not have enough income
- My income is irregular
- There are problems over custody/access
- The child has no real financial need
- My new family is more important
- I do not know where the child is
- I do not see the child
- The child’s other parent has a new relationship
- The child’s other parent has a job
- I feel no obligation to support the child
- The money is not spent sensibly
- The money is not spent on the child(ren)
- I do not think of the child as mine
- Other (please specify): ________

21. Excluding maintenance that is paid weekly, fortnightly or monthly, do you contribute to any of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Amounts ($)</th>
<th>Under Court Order/Approved Agreement</th>
<th>Under Private or Other Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School fees or costs</td>
<td>$_________</td>
<td>$_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental costs</td>
<td>$_________</td>
<td>$_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private health insurance</td>
<td>$_________</td>
<td>$_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical costs</td>
<td>$_________</td>
<td>$_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing costs (eg, mortgage or rent)</td>
<td>$_________</td>
<td>$_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>$_________</td>
<td>$_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust fund</td>
<td>$_________</td>
<td>$_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra lessons (eg, music)</td>
<td>$_________</td>
<td>$_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>$_________</td>
<td>$_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday or recreational equipment</td>
<td>$_________</td>
<td>$_________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td>$_________</td>
<td>$_________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None of the above payments are made

22. Do you pay any spousal maintenance? (i.e. for your former partner not the children)

- Yes $_________ per week
- No $ 0000
- Not applicable $ 9999

23. Has the child’s other parent ever tried to change the amount of financial support?

- Yes, by discussing it
- Yes, by taking legal steps
- Yes, both ways
- No

24. Thinking of both regular, maintenance, and occasional maintenance (school fees, health insurance, etc.), how is the maintenance paid? (tick every appropriate box)

- No maintenance is paid
- Paid through the Collector of Maintenance/State Collection Agency
- Paid through a magistrates court
- Paid through a State welfare department
- Paid through the Child Support Agency/Department of Social Security
- Paid to the other parent – cash/cheque/bank account, building society or credit union account
- Paid directly to the children/their bank account, building society, credit union account
- Paid to a third party (eg, school, medical fund, etc)
- Other (Please specify):

25. Has any maintenance been ordered or agreed for any children over the age of 18?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

26. How many of your own children under 18 years old who live with you have a father or mother who lives somewhere else?

27. Do you receive maintenance for any of your own children?

- Yes $_________ per week
- No $ 0000
- Not applicable $ 9999

28. Do you receive any spousal maintenance? (i.e. for you, not the children)

- Yes $_________ per week
- No $ 0000
- Not applicable $ 9999

29. Overall, how do you feel about each of the following aspects of maintenance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Happy</th>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>Neither Happy nor Unhappy</th>
<th>Unhappy</th>
<th>Very Unhappy</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The amount ordered or agreed</td>
<td>☐ 1</td>
<td>☐ 2</td>
<td>☐ 3</td>
<td>☐ 4</td>
<td>☐ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The amounts you pay</td>
<td>☐ 1</td>
<td>☐ 2</td>
<td>☐ 3</td>
<td>☐ 4</td>
<td>☐ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way it is paid</td>
<td>☐ 1</td>
<td>☐ 2</td>
<td>☐ 3</td>
<td>☐ 4</td>
<td>☐ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way maintenance is spent</td>
<td>☐ 1</td>
<td>☐ 2</td>
<td>☐ 3</td>
<td>☐ 4</td>
<td>☐ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The court’s power to enforce maintenance</td>
<td>☐ 1</td>
<td>☐ 2</td>
<td>☐ 3</td>
<td>☐ 4</td>
<td>☐ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The procedures for varying maintenance</td>
<td>☐ 1</td>
<td>☐ 2</td>
<td>☐ 3</td>
<td>☐ 4</td>
<td>☐ 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
30. Have you ever used a lawyer to prepare papers for you or to represent you in court on a maintenance matter?
   - Yes, privately hired 1
   - Yes, provided by legal aid 2
   - Yes, both private hired and provided by legal aid 3
   - No 4

31. If a child maintenance matter is raised in the future, would you:
   - Represent yourself 1
   - Hire a private lawyer 2
   - Apply for legal aid 3

HOUSING

32. Which of the following best describes your living arrangements when you last lived together with the child's other parent?
   - Never lived together 1 → GO TO QUESTION 41
   - Buying house/flat 2
   - Fully owned house/flat 3
   - Rented a house/flat 4
   - Lived in public housing/Housing Commission house/flat 5
   - Lived in employer-provided or subsidised house/flat 6
   - Other paid arrangement 7
   - Other arrangement at no cost 8 → GO TO QUESTION 36

33. At the time you divided your property what happened to the family home?
   - I bought/took over his/her share 1
   - He/she bought/took over my share 2
   - We sold it 3 → GO TO QUESTION 41
   - There was no change in ownership 4
   - Not applicable/no property settlement 9 → GO TO QUESTION 41

34. Did you or the child's other parent continue to live in the family home?
   - Yes, I did 1
   - Yes, my former partner did 2
   - Yes, we both did 3
   - No, neither of us did 4

35. Do either you or the child's other parent still live in the family home?
   - Yes, I do 1
   - Yes, he/she does 2
   - Yes, we both do 3
   - No 4

PROPERTY

36. At the time you separated, what was the value of all of your and your former partner's property (including the family home) after subtracting any debts and mortgages?
   - $0 1 → GO TO QUESTION 41
   - $10,000 or less 2
   - $10,001 to $30,000 3
   - $30,001 to $50,000 4
   - $50,001 to $100,000 5
   - $100,001 to $150,000 6
   - $150,001 to $300,000 7
   - $300,001 or above 8

37. In what year did you reach a final property settlement? 19___
   - Not applicable/not yet settled 99 → GO TO QUESTION 41

38. If in 1988, in what month? month: ____________

39. Remembering back to the property settlement, did the child's other parent get an additional share of the property because he/she was going to look after the children?
   - Yes 1
   - No 2 → GO TO QUESTION 41

40. Did this extra share:
   - Reduce the maintenance you pay 1
   - Mean you paid no child maintenance 2
   - Not affect the amount of child maintenance to be paid 3

ACCESS

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS RELATE TO YOUR ACCESS TO YOUR CHILD(REN) LIVING WITH THE OTHER PARENT.

41. About how far away from you does the child's other parent live?
   - Less than five kilometres 1
   - Between 5 and 15 kilometres 2
   - Between 15 and 50 kilometres 3
   - Between 50 and 500 kilometres 4
   - In Australia but more than 500 kilometres 5
   - Overseas 6
   - I don't know where he/she lives 7

42. Do any of your children living with their other parent spend time with you?
   - Yes, they all do 1
   - Yes, but not all of them 2
   - No, none of them 3 → GO TO QUESTION 48

43. Is the amount of time you spend with each of your children who lives with their other parent about the same?
   - Yes 1
   - No 2
44. How often do you see your children who live with their other parent? (If the time spent is different for different children, answer in respect of the child who spends the most time with you.)

- Daily ☐ 1
- Once a week or more ☐ 2
- 2-3 times a month ☐ 3
- Once a month ☐ 4
- Every few months ☐ 5
- Once a year ☐ 6
- Less than once a year ☐ 7

45. On average, about how many nights a year do the children usually stay with you when they visit (the child who spends the most nights if there are differences)?

- ________ nights a year

46. Is the pattern of visits when you see your children:

- Regular ☐ 1
- Irregular ☐ 2

47. In general, how would you describe your former partner's relationship with your children?

- Excellent ☐ 1
- Good ☐ 2
- Alright, OK ☐ 3
- Not so good ☐ 4
- Not good at all ☐ 5
- Don't know ☐ 8

48. Which of the following best describes your wishes about custody of the children and access?

- I would like the children to live with me ☐ 1
- I would like to see more of the children ☐ 2
- I like the present arrangements ☐ 3
- I would like to see less of the children ☐ 4
- I do not wish to see the children ☐ 5

49. What do you think is the other parent's attitude to your seeing your children?

- Wants me to see more of the child(ren) ☐ 1
- Wants me to see less of the child(ren) ☐ 2
- Agrees with present arrangements ☐ 3
- Don't know ☐ 8

50. Do access visits involve financial costs to you?

- Yes ☐ $ ______ per week
- $ ______ per month
- $ ______ per year
- No ☐ 0000

51. Has a maintenance order or agreement ever been made larger or smaller because of the amount of access you have to the children?

- Yes, higher maintenance was ordered/agreed ☐ 1
- Yes, less maintenance was ordered/agreed ☐ 2
- No, access was never a factor in the level of maintenance ordered or agreed ☐ 3
- Not applicable ☐ 9

52. Has access to your children been changed by the other parent because of maintenance issues?

- Yes, often ☐ 1
- Yes, sometimes ☐ 2
- Yes, hardly ever ☐ 3
- No ☐ 4
- Not applicable ☐ 9

53. Have difficulties about access ever led you to reduce or to stop paying the maintenance that was ordered or agreed?

- Yes, often ☐ 1
- Yes, sometimes ☐ 2
- Yes, hardly ever ☐ 3
- No ☐ 4
- Not applicable ☐ 9

54. In general, how important do you think it is for children living with only one of their natural parents to keep in contact with both their mother and father?

- Extremely important ☐ 1
- Very important ☐ 2
- Moderately important ☐ 3
- Not very important ☐ 4
- Not important at all ☐ 5

55. Here are some questions about relationships between separated parents. Would you please answer each as it applies to you and your former partner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you and your former partner help each other in raising the children?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Often ☐ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you and your former partner discuss the children, how often does an argument result?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often ☐ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the underlying atmosphere one of anger and hostility?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often ☐ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the conversation stressful or tense?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often ☐ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the other parent ever seek your help regarding the children?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often ☐ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you and your former partner have basic differences of opinion about issues relating to child rearing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often ☐ 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
56. Is there anything about your situation in relation to maintenance that we have not covered?

______________________________
______________________________
______________________________
______________________________
______________________________

CURRENT STATUS

57. What is your present age, in years (at last birthday)?

58. Your sex?

Male □ 1
Female □ 2

59. What was the highest class you completed at school?

Year 12, Form 6 (HSC) □ 1
Year 11, Form 5 □ 2
Year 10, Form 4 □ 3
Year 9, Form 3 or less □ 4

60. If you have any other educational qualifications, which of the following best describes the highest qualification you have? (tick only one box)

No other educational qualifications □ 1
Trade/Apprenticeship □ 2
Certificate from business college, TAFE Certificate, etc. □ 3
Diploma (tertiary, beyond year 12) □ 4
Bachelor Degree □ 5
Post-Graduate diploma/Higher degree □ 6
Other professional qualification □ 7

61. In which State or Territory do you live?

Australian Capital Territory □ 1
New South Wales □ 2
Northern Territory □ 3
Queensland □ 4
South Australia □ 5
Tasmania □ 6
Victoria □ 7
Western Australia □ 8

62. Do you live in:

A capital city (ie Canberra, Sydney, Darwin, Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth) □ 1
A major city or town (eg, Newcastle, Wollongong, Gold Coast, Geelong, Townsville, Brisbane Water, Launceston, Toowoomba, Ballarat, Albury-Wodonga, Bendigo, Rockhampton, Cairns) □ 2
Other □ 3

63. Are you currently in paid employment?

Yes □ 1
No □ 2 → GO TO QUESTION 66

64. About how many hours do you work each week?


65. And, about how much would you earn before taxes and other deductions? (fill in only one line)

Dollars per week: $________
or
Dollars per fortnight: $________
or
Dollars per month: $________
or
Dollars per year: $________

66. If you had a choice, would you prefer to

... work full time □ 1
... work part time □ 2
... not work at all □ 3

67. Do you have any sources of income apart from any income you may receive from paid employment, spousal or child maintenance, family allowance, or any government pensions or benefits?

Yes □ 1
No □ 2 → GO TO QUESTION 69

68. How much would this other income be worth each year (before taxes and any other deductions)?

Dollars per year: $________

69. At the present time, are you receiving any of the following government pensions or benefits? (Tick all that apply)

Family allowance supplement □
Handicapped child allowance □
Unemployment, sickness or special benefit □
Supporting parents benefit □
Widow's pension □
Aged, invalid or carer's allowance pension □
War service/Disability/Repatriation pension □
Austudy or other education allowance □
Worker's Compensation □
Other □
No, none □ → GO TO QUESTION 72
70. For how long have these pensions or benefits been continuously received (that is, without any break in payments)?

- Less than three months: 0
- Between three and six months: 2
- Between six months and one year: 0
- One-two years: 4
- For more than two years: 5

71. In what year did you first receive any of these pensions or benefits? (even if there have been breaks since then)

19_

FAMILY AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

72. How much does your housing rent/mortgage cost you and/or your current partner?

- Rent: Dollars per week: $_____
- Mortgage: Dollars per month: $_____
- None, fully own my home: 0
- None, live rent/mortgage free: 0

73. Many families experience financial difficulties. Could you indicate whether you experience any of the following difficulties frequently, occasionally, or not at all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paying hire purchase/credit card bills</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying your rent or mortgage</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining credit</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying for food</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying for clothing</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying education costs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying health costs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying transport costs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having enough money for leisure activities/holidays</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having enough money for child care</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

74. Which of the following best describes your present financial situation? (Tick only one)

- Spending more than I/we make: 1
- No money left over at the end of the week: 2
- Able to put money aside each week for savings, holidays, household improvements: 3

75. Which of the following best describes your present personal circumstances?

- I am married and living with my spouse: 1
- I am now living with someone but not married to him/her: 2
- I have a relationship with someone but we are not living together: 3
- I am not presently in a relationship: 4

76. And what is your marital status?

- Never married: 1
- Now in first marriage: 2
- Now remarried: 3
- Separated from a marriage but not divorced: 4
- Divorced: 5
- Widowed: 6

77. About how much is your current partner's total income before taxes and any other deductions? Please include income from all sources: salary, pension or benefits, maintenance, investments, etc. Please fill in only one line.

- Dollars per week: $_____
- Dollars per fortnight: $_____
- Dollars per month: $_____
- Dollars per year: $_____

78. Are there any children living with you who are your current partner's children from a previous relationship?

- Yes (number) ______
- No: 00

79. Does your current partner receive any spousal or child maintenance?

- Yes, $_______ per week
- No: 0000
80. Does your current partner pay any spousal or child maintenance?
Yes, $_______ per week
No □ 0000

81. Does your current partner receive any of the following government pensions or benefits? (Tick all that apply)
Family allowance supplement □
Handicapped child allowance □
Unemployment, sickness or special benefit □
Supporting parents benefit □
Widow’s pension □
Aged or invalid pension □
Carer’s allowance □
War service/Disability/Repatriation pension □
Austudy or other education allowance □
Worker’s compensation □
Other □
No, none □

82. PERSONAL SATISFACTION

83. SATISFACTION WITH CHILDREN

PLEASE ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN WHO LIVE WITH THEIR OTHER PARENT.

83. Here are a number of different aspects of your children’s lives. How satisfied are you with each of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of Children's Lives</th>
<th>Very Happy</th>
<th>Not Happy</th>
<th>Not Unhappy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your relationship with your children</td>
<td>□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their health in general</td>
<td>□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their diet, the food they eat</td>
<td>□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The schools they go to</td>
<td>□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The extent to which your children are succeeding and getting ahead in life</td>
<td>□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your children’s friends – the type of people they are</td>
<td>□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your children’s living arrangements – rooms of their own, etc.</td>
<td>□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The availability of child care for your children</td>
<td>□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cost of child care to you</td>
<td>□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

84. About how much do you spend in total each week on child care for these children? (i.e. money paid to someone else for looking after the children) $_______
CHILD SUPPORT SCHEME

85. Before you read the description on the front of this form, had you heard anything about the new child support scheme?

Yes □ 1
No □ 2

86. Would you say that your understanding of the scheme is:

Very good □ 1
Good □ 2
Not very good □ 3
Poor □ 4

87. Generally, do you think a parent's overall responsibility is primarily to children of:

His/her first relationship □ 1
His/her current relationship □ 2
Equally to children of both relationships □ 3

88. More specifically, do you think a parent's financial responsibility is primarily to children of:

His/her first relationship □ 1
His/her current relationship □ 2
Equally to children of both relationships □ 3

89. Would you please indicate what you think about the following aspects of the new system and the proposed future change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generally increasing the amounts to be paid for child maintenance</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Using the taxation system to collect maintenance</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requiring those receiving pensions or benefits to seek maintenance</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relating the amount of maintenance to the income of the non-custodial parent</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

90. Do you have any further comments you would care to make on the system of maintenance?

91. We would like to be able to contact you again around the end of the year. Would you be willing to let us contact you again?

Yes □ 1
No □ 2
92. In case we should have any trouble getting mail to you, would you mind PRINTING the name, address and telephone number of a CLOSE RELATIVE or FRIEND who will know how to reach you in the future.

Mr
Mrs
Miss
Ms

(First name) (Initial) (Last name)

Address: _____________

(number) (street)

(city) (state) (postcode)

Telephone: _____________

(area code) (number)

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please mail back as soon as possible in the reply-paid envelope.
Australian Institute of Family Studies


The Institute functions as a statutory authority of the Australian Government, from which it derives its financial support. The founding Director is Dr Don Edgar. The Institute has a Board of Management of appointed members and a permanent staff of professional and support personnel. In addition, specialist assistants and consultants in appropriate fields are engaged to assist the Institute in its work when necessary.

The Institute exists in order to promote the identification and understanding of factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia. Authority for the Institute's activities derives from Part XIVA of the Family Law Act 1975 (as amended).

The Institute's performance of its responsibilities under the Family Law Act involves:

Research

The study and evaluation of matters which affect the social and economic wellbeing of all Australian families;

Information

Provision of information to Government and other bodies concerned with family wellbeing on issues related to Institute findings;

Promotion

The development of improved methods of family support, including measures which prevent family disruption and promote marital and family stability;

Dissemination

The dissemination of Institute findings and other family research.

Thus the objectives of the Institute are essentially practical ones, concerned primarily with learning about real situations through research on Australian families.

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