

# Opening the black box of child support

## Recommendations

The recommendations put forth in this report are a direct result of our survey findings and are intended to:

- bring about meaningful improvements;
- empower women with autonomy and choice that is directed by what they want and require for their family; and,
- create a system that is safe for women to engage in.

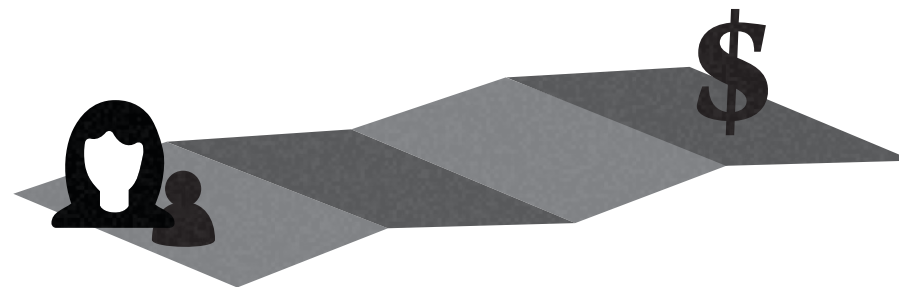
We make four recommendations that would greatly reduce the capacity of the system to be weaponised.

### **1. Delink family payments from child support by eliminating the Maintenance Income Test.**

The separation of child support from family payments simplifies administrative work and system complexity, enhances system safety, and improves the certainty of social security.

### **2. Co-design family violence processes within the child support system to recognise the high rates of violence experienced by system users.**

The positioning of family violence as the norm rather than the exception within the system would ensure that perpetrators are not rewarded through exemptions or non-payments and victim survivors are not re-victimised.



### **3. Move all child support collections back into the Australian Tax Office.**

The ATO is best positioned to collect child support payments, address the \$1.7 billion child support debt, close assessment loopholes, and uphold the expectations of timely and paid-in full payment.

### **4. Make all payment debts owed to and enforced by the Commonwealth.**

The principle of the Commonwealth paying women first and pursuing non-compliance second is a superior policy approach and one that would create certainty of payments, reduce administrative burdens and enable the child support system to operate in the best interest of the children.

Enacting these recommendations would provide mothers with autonomy and remove women from the impossible situations that they currently face. Redesigning the system to recognise the trauma experienced by women with abusive ex-partners would hold perpetrators to account and facilitate women's financial and emotional recovery. The Commonwealth has a role to play in women's recovery, by taking on the responsibility for collecting payments, and ensuring that some of Australia's lowest income families receive the money that they are entitled to. In short, the government should provide the safety net that women and children so desperately deserve.

#### **Citation:**

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