

Restore access to the 'Parenting Payment Single' payment to all single parents until their youngest child reaches 16 years of age.

The right and the need to actively parent babies and children should not just be available to wealthy parents. Single mothering is stunning, challenging, and unique. It often requires recovering from gendered violence and navigating complex, unsafe co-parenting arrangements. Single parent families have a higher percentage of children with disabilities whilst parenting as work should be valued in its own right. Policy outcomes have arrived with a patriarchal view of caring and the blunt cut-off point for Parenting Payment Single at eight years for the youngest child doesn't consider the enormous diversity of experiences. It dismisses the direct and indirect costs and future limitations.

This year we **celebrate** 50 years of the Whitlam Government enacting the Supporting Mothers Benefit; it removed economic discrimination and classified women who had a child out of wedlock as worthy and legitimate - effectively overcoming the practice of forced adoptions for white women, which peaked in 1972 and then quickly declined. The Supporting Mothers Benefit was accessible until the youngest child turned 18 or 24 if dependent and studying. We are now fighting to have the Parenting Payment Single restored to parents until their youngest child is 16 years which will still be \$57 per week below the single Age Pension.

Restoring access would reverse successive Government decisions. Firstly, introduced by the Howard Government in 2006 for new recipients, followed by the Gillard Government, which removed grandfather provisions for existing claimants in 2013 - reclassified as 'unemployed' and not 'parenting'. Restoring access is aligned with the key recommendations from Professor Anne Summers [The Choice Violence or Poverty](#) (June 2022).



Click [here](#) for a 2 min clip
Produced in 2014

Why restore, why 16?

- As at 20 March 2023, a single parent with two children loses over \$100 a week (\$102.50) in payments transferring from PPS to JobSeeker when their youngest child turns 8. If they were also earning \$300 per week from a part time job (\$20 an hour for 15 hours a week), they also lose an additional \$57.14 per week due to the harsher Jobseeker income test, so a total loss of \$160 per week.
- While 80% of all Australian single parent families are female, more than 95% of the poorest single parent families, those who rely on inadequate income support payments, are headed by women. [Link](#)
- [The Choice Violence or Poverty](#) found that most single mothers who lost access to the Parenting Payment were survivors of family violence and coercive control. It recommends immediate access to the Parenting Payment Single for single parents whose children are 16 and still at school, progressing towards equity to the Single Age Pension.
- The latest ACOSS/UNSW report shows the risk of poverty for children in sole parent families in 2019-20 was more than three times that in partnered families (39% compared with 12%). [Link](#)
- Approximately 16% of single parent families include a child with a disability, compared with about 8% of couple-parent families and 24% of single parents have moderate or severe disability compared with 9% of partnered parents [Link](#)

- Single parents were less likely to be regularly receiving child support (36% in 2020 compared with 40% in 2001-03). Of those who did, received an average of 32% less in 2020 than in 2001-03 (\$2,360 in 2020 compared with \$3,490 in 2001-03 using December 2020 prices.) [Link](#)
- Economic disadvantage in the form of inadequate resources adversely affects children's social and educational opportunities and health outcomes in the short and long term. [Link](#)
- The policy decision to reduce frugal but critical income has never been subject to any research. All requests denied, including the Family Law Amendment (Review of Government Support for Single Parents) [Bill](#).
- The matter is the subject of a United Nations complaint. The first complaint to the United Nations is investigating Australia - under the optional protocol of The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Lodged by NCSMC in 2017 and against Government resistance has continued to ensure that the matter has remained on the United Nation's agenda. Click [here](#) & [here](#).
- In 2016 research [found](#) that the 'Welfare to Work' settings forced women into a low rate of unemployment payments, resulting in women accepting casual or part-time contract jobs without paid sick leave or superannuation payments whilst inhibiting their ability to find long-term and meaningful employment.
- The ANU [concluded](#), "Overall, due to lower government benefits and lower payment indexation, many single parent families are considerably worse off as a direct result of policy change enacted by various governments since 2005."
- The policy settings penalise women who had part-time or low-paid employment. It was never about paid work but a harsh budget-saving mechanism. Unemployment payments were not designed for single parenting and the harsher income test means the family receives less income when paid work is undertaken.

Additional Information

[Melbourne Institute](#) (September 2022). Single-parent households with children are struggling. Among single-parent households with children, just under half report using savings to cope with rising prices and almost 64% have sought cheaper food options. Worryingly, nearly 15% have pawned or sold possessions, 24% have cancelled or deferred medical appointments, 34% delayed bills or negotiated payment plans and a quarter have borrowed from friends or relatives. Although these strategies are also present among partnered households with children, the prevalence is much lower than in single-parent families.

Narrative data finds a correlation between losing the Parenting Payment Single and stopping studies. Women raising children can't afford to study on Jobseeker.

The Parenting Payment Single was not subject to the [Harmer Review](#) (2009). It, therefore, did not benefit from research to ascertain whether it is fit for purpose, or the increase provided to pension claimants.

Benefits to restoring the Parenting Payment Single

- Increases women's safety. [The Choice Violence or Poverty](#) report states that 90,000 wanted to leave, whilst [8,000 women](#) a year are forced to return to abusive partners.
- Increases the ability of women to protect and raise children.
- Increases economic security and financial safety and reduces child poverty.

- It provides solid ground for women to gain entry into paid work, undertake work-ready tasks, and study and skill enhancement. It enables future planning.
- It can assist businesses as women are financially rewarded if they undertake on-call and casual whilst they work towards building skills, networks, and future plans.
- Improved economic consequences for the next generation.

The 2018 [Inquiry](#) into Intergenerational Welfare Dependence found the need to increase income support, but it was 'erased' from the recommendations by then Prime Minister Scott Morrison. NCSMC appeared before the Committee. Media [link](#).

More detail of [Services Australia payments and income tests](#), accessed on 27/3/23:

Payment type	Rate with supplements per fortnight (family payments & rent assistance may also be payable)	Income test on earnings per fortnight
Age Pension	\$1064 per fortnight (\$532 pw or \$76 per day)	Payment reduces 40c per \$1 once earnings exceed \$190 pf (Income Bank, Work Bonus and Working Credit also applies)
Parenting Payment Single	\$949.30 per fortnight (\$474.65 pw or <\$68 a day)	Payment reduces at 40c per \$1 once earnings exceed \$202.60pf for 1 child (+ \$24.60pf per additional child)
Jobseeker Payment for single mothers	\$745.20 per fortnight (\$370.60 pw or ~\$53 per day)	Payment reduces at 50 cents for each dollar between \$150 and \$256 then 60 cents for each dollar over \$256

Recent Media

March 25, 2023. Emily Stewart, [Child support is being used as weapon to financially abuse ex-partners](#). ABC online. Based on report by Professor Kay Cook and Terese Edwards, [Financial Abuse: The Weaponisation of Child Support in Australia](#)

March 24, 2023. Mark Riley, [Labor's Great Mistake: Pressure on Anthony Albanese to restore Labor party's stained legacy on single mums](#), West Australian and March 23, [Channel 7 News](#)

March 18, 2023. Toni Wren. [At least 100 women killed in Australia since March 4 Justice in 2021](#), Canberra Times.

August 4, 2022. Chris Wallace. *Julia Gillard committed a terrible wrong. It's time for Albanese to right it.* Click [here](#) for the link.

2022. Jess Hill. *The Truth About Single Mothers and Domestic Violence How we're punishing women for leaving violent relationships.* Click [here](#) for the link

July 7 2022. Maani Truu. *An impossible choice between violence and poverty: 60 per cent of single mothers report past domestic abuse, research finds.* Click [here](#) for the link.

Contact: Terese Edwards terese@ncsmc.org.au or Toni Wren ed@antipovertyweek.org.au