



Australian Government

Department of Families,  
Housing, Community Services  
and Indigenous Affairs

# Child Support Scheme Reforms

## Fact sheet Seven: Appealing child support decisions to the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT)

### What are the changes?

From 1 January 2007, the role of the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT) was expanded to include the independent review of child support decisions.

Before applying to the SSAT, you must first seek an internal review (objection) through the Child Support Agency (CSA). If you are unhappy with the CSA's decision (the 'objection decision') you can then apply to the SSAT for review of that objection decision. Only objection decisions made by CSA after 1 January 2007 can be appealed to the SSAT.

### Why the change?

Previously, parents who disagreed with a CSA objection decision could only appeal the decision through the courts, which was expensive and time consuming. The new arrangements improve the consistency and transparency of child support decisions and provide a review mechanism that is economical, fair, informal and quick.

### How do I seek a review?

You must apply to the SSAT for a review within 28 days of receiving CSA's objection decision. You may wish to seek legal advice before you do. If you do not apply within 28 days, you may ask the SSAT for an extension of time.

To apply to the SSAT:

- contact the SSAT on **1800 011 140**
- send or fax an appeal form or letter to the SSAT, details are available on their website **[www.ssat.gov.au](http://www.ssat.gov.au)**
- complete an appeal form at your local CSA or Centrelink offices.

### How will it work?

The SSAT usually consists of a panel of two members who take a fresh look at the matter. The other parent is notified that the SSAT review is to take place, and both parents and the SSAT are provided with any documents held by CSA that are relevant to the decision.

The SSAT panel will hold a hearing with both parents face-to-face, on the phone or by video conference. The CSA may be represented at some hearings. You do not need a lawyer to appeal to the SSAT.

The SSAT can affirm the original decision (i.e. agree with it), alter it or set it aside and substitute a new decision. The SSAT can also send the matter back to CSA for reconsideration in accordance with any directions or recommendations of the SSAT.

If you do not agree with the SSAT decision you may appeal to a court but only on a question of law. A question of law is how the law or legal principle was interpreted and how it was applied to the facts of the case.

### Decisions the SSAT cannot review

The SSAT cannot review an objection decision about a change of assessment where CSA has refused to make a change because the matters are too complex. Similarly, the SSAT cannot consider appeals about parentage. In these cases, parents must apply to the court for a decision.

For more information contact CSA on **131 272**.

CSA has a detailed brochure which outlines customer's rights when they are unhappy with a CSA decision. A copy of the brochure is available on the CSA website **[www.csa.gov.au](http://www.csa.gov.au)**

### Where do I find more information?

For more information call the SSAT on **1800 011 140** or visit **[www.ssat.gov.au](http://www.ssat.gov.au)**

Please note this fact sheet is for general guidance only. It should not be treated as a complete or authoritative legal statement.

More details about these changes can be found in other fact sheets and on the Child Support Agency website **[www.csa.gov.au](http://www.csa.gov.au)**

If you would like to read more information on the Taskforce and how the reforms started, visit the website of the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs **[www.fahcsia.gov.au](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au)**