

RESPONSE TO LES BLACKLOW'S NOTE TO MY ARTICLE

*Tammy Wolffs**

I welcome Les Blacklow's comments on my article. I acknowledge that reference could have been made in my article to sections 156 and 160 of the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* (Cth) and equivalent provisions in the *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999* (Cth) and, in particular, to the addition of the other parent in cases before the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT) that deal with the apportionment of care for determining the rate of Family Tax Benefit.

While the experience of the SSAT in respect of these cases strengthens my argument that the SSAT is best placed to consider appeals of Child Support Agency (CSA) decisions, I believe the implications for the SSAT, as set out in my article, remain. That is, the formulation of procedures for ensuring that the other parent in any child support cases is heard and his or her views considered appropriately would be helpful. This is because of the significant increase in the volume of cases where another person is added. Further, this increase in volume, combined with the complexities of child support law and the conflicts that can often occur between parents, is a further consideration that supports the development of tailored procedures.

Finally, I am encouraged by Les Blacklow's consideration of my arguments and heartened that he has not identified any obstacles to the inclusion of CSA decisions in the jurisdiction of the SSAT.

* *Department of Finance and Administration, formerly Director of Investigations, Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman.*