SINGLE MOTHER FAMILIES AUSTRALIA

smfa

Annual Report 2025

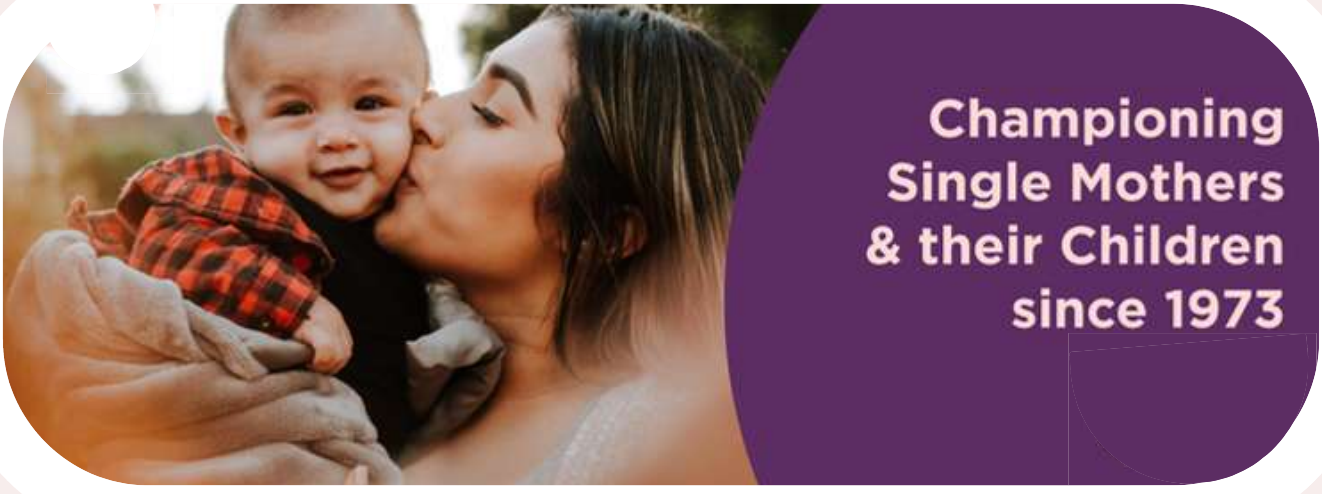


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2025

Executive Summary

Single Mother Families Australia (SMFA) was conceived in 1973 as a leading national voice with policy insight and expertise. We commenced life as the National Council of Single Mothers & Their Children Inc. and changed our name to Single Mother Families Australia in 2023 as part of our 50-year celebration.
It was time, and we could claim 'families' in our title, due to the work of many before us.



I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to our board, supporters, and our CEO. This report showcases our many achievements and the exceptional, diligent efforts that underpinned the work. The report touches on our future work, as our initiatives are both strategic and well-planned.
A particularly noteworthy highlight was the announcement that our Governor General will serve as our Patron—a significant moment for everyone present and a symbol of support for single mothers throughout Australia.
— Fiona Cheminant, Chairperson

Stable Governance

- Empowering Decision-Making by Single Mothers for Single Mothers.
- Visionary Leadership with a Long-Serving CEO. Click here for more details
- Resilient Amidst Industry-Wide Defunding Challenges.
- Robust Governance, including an independent audit of finances and access to pro bono legal advice. We hold DGR and PBI status (ABN 78 844 531 318).
- Uphold the requirements of the SA Incorporated Act and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.
- We understand good governance—SMFA has now assisted four grassroots services to become incorporated (nationwide).
- We embed our Theory of Change in our work.

Our work is driven by our deep experience of listening to and developing solutions with single mothers.

SMFA is an organisation dedicated to single mother families. We have an unrelenting quest and commitment to seek safer lives with agency, economic certainty and stability for single mother families.
Currently, SMFA serves as an unfunded national lead, leveraging our reputation, relationships, and small funding reserves to fulfil this role
- but positive changes are imminent -
SMFA engages in productive collaborations with other specialised single-mother organisations, irrespective of their size, funding status, online presence, or grassroots nature. Presently, only the Victorian Government provides funding for a statewide service, and we aspire for other States and Territories to emulate this support.

Our Patron



Her Excellency officially announced her patronage of SMFA at a breakfast hosted on 26 August 2025. While Her Excellency is the patron of many organisations, the breakfast was unique, a mark of respect and care, which we all felt.

Click here for the Governor General's Video.

SMFA appreciates the Paul Ramsay Foundation, which donated to ensure that women would have the opportunity to attend the breakfast at Government House and to participate in high-level discussions in Parliament House.

Our guest list was notable, featuring key members of SMFA and collaborators—mostly single mothers themselves—who generously offered their pro bono expertise.

We recognise that creating meaningful change requires strong allies. SMFA invited professionals who have worked respectfully alongside us, fostering a genuine collaboration. Among them were Minister Plibersek, Micaela Cronin, the Commissioner of Family, Domestic, and Sexual Violence, Katherine Berney, the Director of the National Women Safety Alliance, Elysia Raphael, the founder of nxysocial and Professor Kay Cook.

Supporting Single Mothers



Through our Facebook platform, women can reach out, connect, and gain information while using a pseudonym, safeguarding their identities and privacy. Engagement is affordable, and women can engage and disconnect as needed.

Our primary focus is sharing vital information on both our Facebook page and a purpose-built website. We are grateful for the trust women place in us.

Analytics confirm that our Facebook page had **429,359 views** in the last **28 days** (as of 21 November 2025).

Our Policy Work
Parenting Payment Single





2013

2014
10 Stories of Single Mothers Premiered in Parliament House
2015
Screened in Melbourne, Sydney & Adelaide





2023



2019, presentation at the United Nations (New York), the "UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights" was our co-presenter



Press Club Canberra,
Women`s Economic Equality Taskforce



Teals Press Conference Parliament House



The magnitude of expanding the PPS (social security) was captured in a commissioned case study, "How to change a bad law", by UTS.
The above picture is from a live ABC broadcast Q&A style



The Prime Minister announced the welcome changes and acknowledged the work of Terese Edwards.
The above picture is from the Jobs & Skills Summit.

The images vividly showcase our dedication, from trailblazing with the United Nations to our innovative creativity in producing and premiering a documentary at Parliament House and across Australia. Our reputation is further highlighted by our appointment to the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce, securing a seat at the Jobs & Skills Summit, and facilitating press conferences and forums in Parliament House.

The expanded PPS, until the youngest child is 14 years old, has now increased single mother access to social security for an additional 100,000 families, of which 17% are First Nations. The impact will grow annually.

Safety First in Family Law



A home is where the kids and I live together and feel safe.
Jayleen, 23/11/2025

- From an idea and lobbying in 2015, through to the Leaving Domestic Violence Program, SMFA has advocated for a payment for women at the critical, unsafe and costly point - the leaving.
- Our leadership and efforts, which have extended over a decade, received recognition through a personal call from the Attorney General's Adviser to inform us that the Family Law Bill (2023) had passed.
- The Chief Justice of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia invited Terese Edwards to the inaugural National Family Violence Symposium. We look forward to attending the second symposium.

Our research, Respect, Reform, and Recovery: Alleviating the Unrelenting Demands Placed on Single Mothers, confirms that gender-based violence has a long tail.

We still have much to do.
SMFA is concerned about Parenting Orders that automatically remove the safety provisions established by various authorities within the States and Territories, as well as the control that abusers retain, including access and where women with children can live.

Child Support

Delinking Child Support from Social Security is Critical

Systems must be safe and provide certainty

If you think Robodebt is finished - think again.

The scheme allows vexatious former partners to manipulate the system to deliberately create debts for single mother families.

The growing $1.9 billion owed to Australian children is only for children in the Agency Collection. The debt in Private Collect is not tracked.

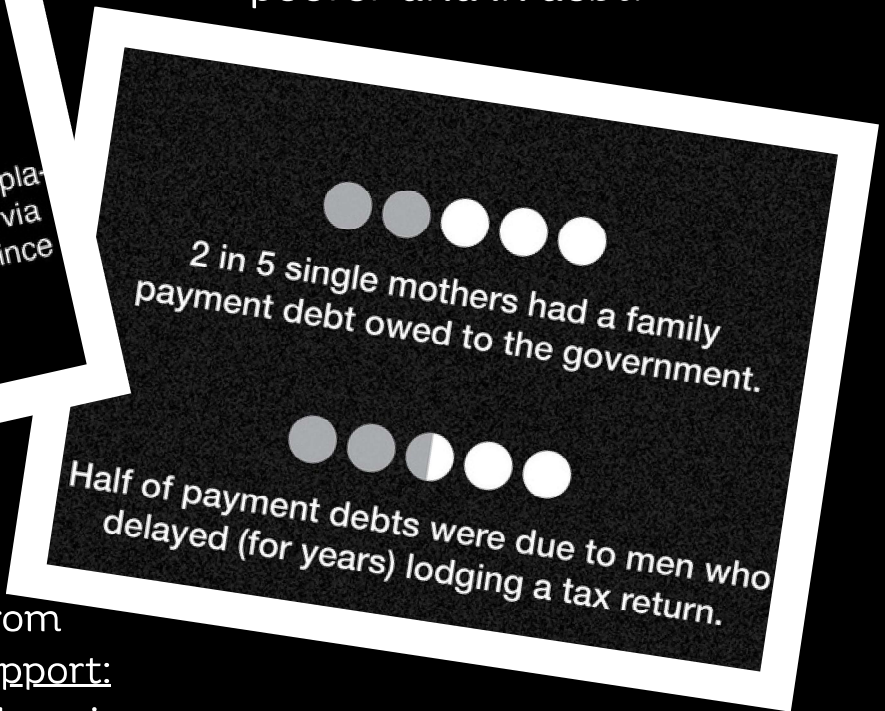
How?

If a former partner does not lodge a tax return, an incorrect or provisional amount is accepted by Services Australia without a deadline. This incorrect amount determines child support and family payments (FTB A), Once he lodges his tax return, which can take 10+ years, the correct amount triggers a new, retrospective calculation of child support and family payments. Often, Services Australia decides that the mother has received too much in family payments and collects the 'overpayment'. Money has already been spent on children.

Most likely the mother will be the FTB A debt won't receive the child support she is owed.

Women leave the child support system poorer and in debt.





Statistics on pages 6 & 7 are from Opening the black box of child support: Shining a light on how financial abuse is perpetrated.

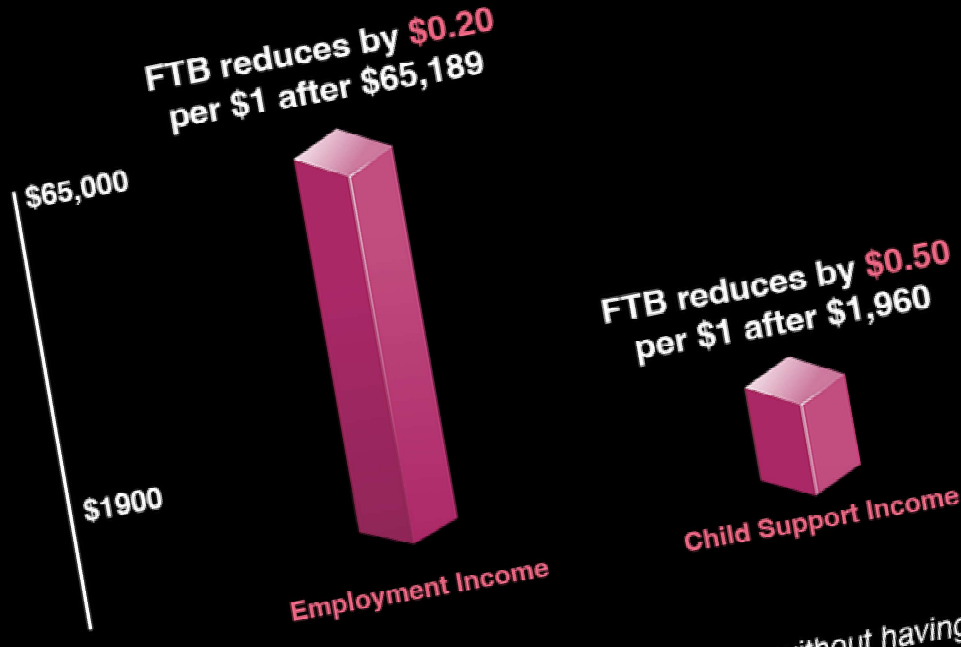
DELINK CHILD SUPPORT FROM SOCIAL SECURITY

Violence and Financial Penalties Enabled by the Child Support Scheme

Over half of women experiencing violence at separation didn't know they'd face a 70% cut to family payments without a child support agreement or exemption.

There`s more!

The system treats **unpaid caregiving differently from paid employment**, affecting FTB and Child Support.



If a paying parent lodges their tax return years later, without having paid child support and with no child support even collected by CSA, it can still trigger a robo-debt due to backdated 'overpayment' of FTB.

Parent Pathways

Parent Pathways has emerged as a vital service for women with children under 5 years old. The service provides flexibility and financial support, empowering women to identify their family's needs and plan for the future while single parenting.

- Click here for more info

Opportunities for Enhancement.

- Offer an online service.
- Relax the rules of paid work.
- Allow women who live near a service with children older than 5 to attend (under the same rules).

- SMFA has two representatives on the Parents Advisory Committee, and most importantly, our combined representation includes the vital perspective of a past participant.

Change the Narrative.

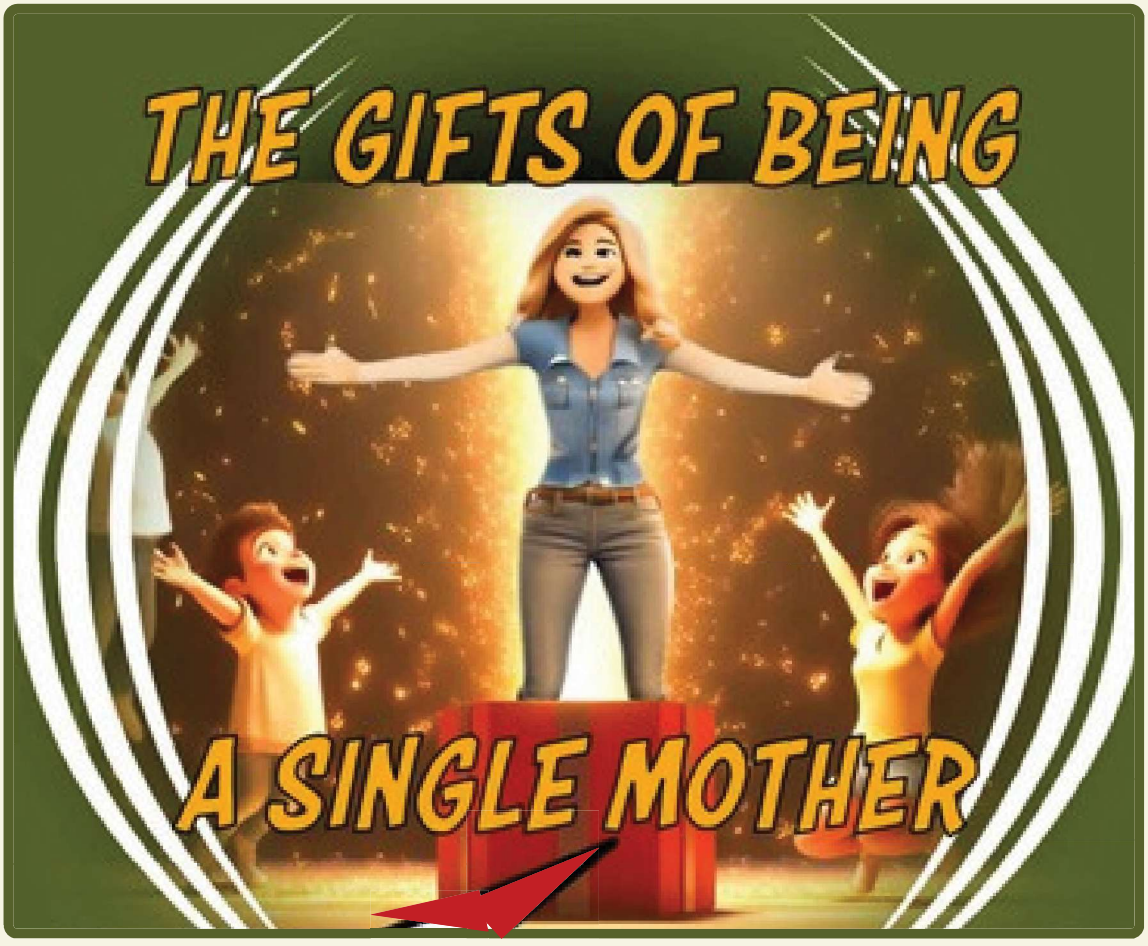
We launched a new digital platform celebrating single mothers to coincide with Mother's Day 2025.

"When I feel a bit sad, I feel low, I jump on the website and smile"

This new platform, "Celebrating Single Motherhood - valuing the care, love and grit" (gifts | Single Mother Families Australia). The platform also enables women to control and frame the conversation about their families.

Negative stereotypes and undervaluing of unpaid care and parenting deplete women at the time they and their children most need support, deter women from seeking help and enable government policies that harm.

Changing the narrative requires many voices and levers.



We tell a story





Evidence alone does not make the change.
We tell a story, we provide women a platform, and in doing so, we empower them, and together we change hearts and minds.



Global Stage



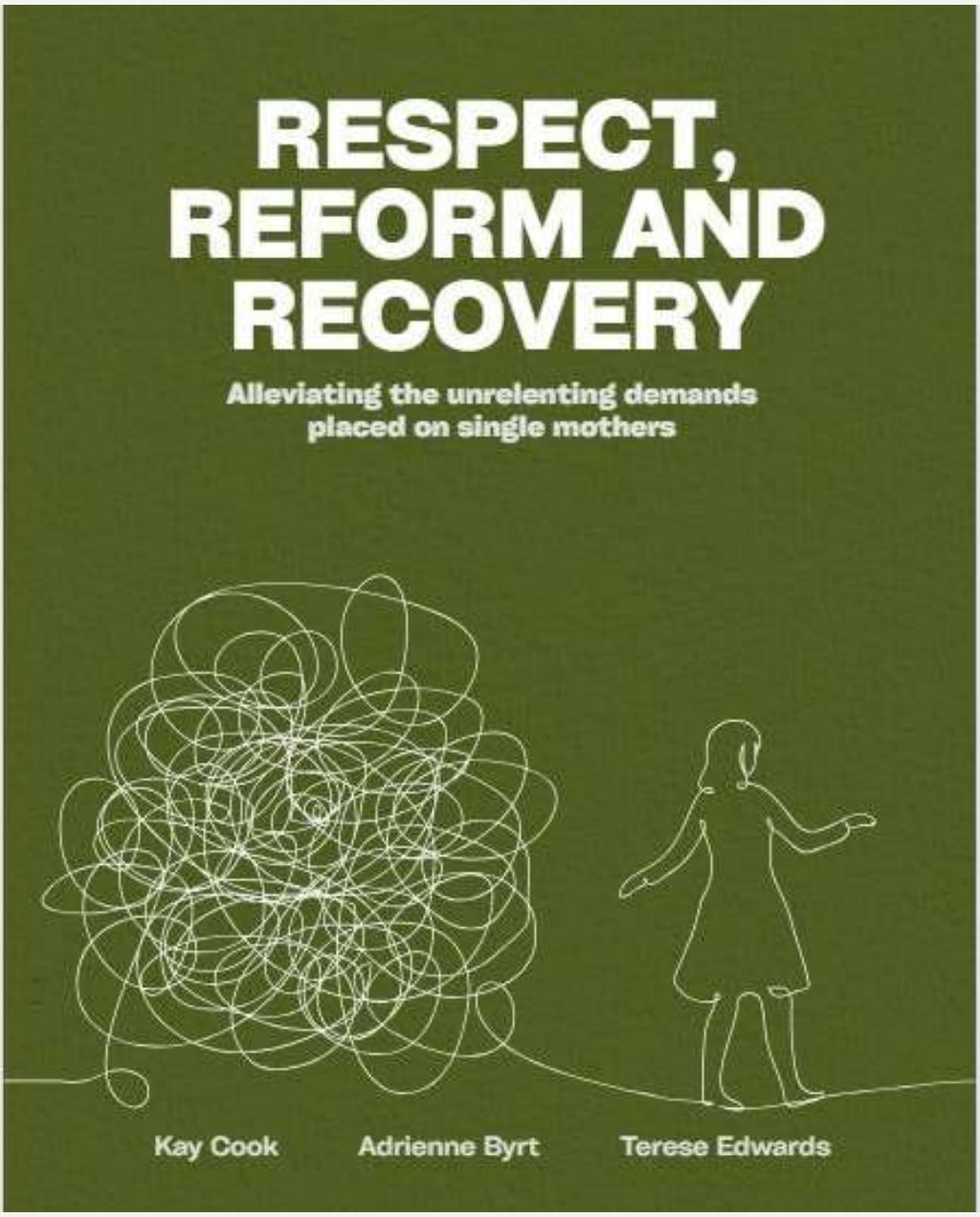


International collaborations; learning, sharing and seeking international solutions

Thanks to Isadora Duncan
October 2025



Our 2026 Work



Our work is driven by our deep experience in listening to and developing solutions with single mothers.

The most recent example of this is Respect, Reform and Recovery, Swinburne University's survey of 2,600 single parents published in August 2025. This project marks our fourth collaboration with Swinburne University, as we need robust evidence underpinned by ethics to move the stubborn policy dial. Released at a conversation-style event on 26 August 2025 with several notable guests, including Minister Plibersek and the Governor-General.

While it's too early for the rich findings to make the anticipated policy waves, recommendations are already woven into key work, such as the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee and will form our 2026 Pre-budget Submission. We have already completed three pieces of media, including a live appearance on ABC TV.

HOME

We understand the current housing dynamic.

Housing Stability



Our work over the past years has focused on increasing the income of single mothers, so they can improve their housing stability.

However, we have listened to single mothers and, with their urging, in 2026, SMFA will outline their unique and urgent needs in a detailed briefing paper, along with solutions. We understand that change requires many voices.

"Home" a stable place where families feel safe and secure
Aimee 32/11/25.

SMFA is a member of the respected 'Everybody's Home' campaign.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The Department of Social Services funds SMFA, and below is a summary of the funding.

Audited Financial Statements are tabled at the 2025 AGM and submitted to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

DESCRIPTION		
Income Grant	**186,735.68**	
Other	**2,701.55**	
Total		**189,437.23**
Operating Expense		
Human Resources	141,426	
Operating Costs	54,921.78	
Total	**196,347.78**	
TOTAL		**(6,910.55)**

THANKS TO PCS ACCOUNTS AND BUSINESS ADVISERS.

PCS ACCOUNTANTS
AND BUSINESS ADVISORS

$82,996.58

Equity as of 30 June 2025.

Donations

All donations received are fully transferred directly to a struggling single mother, delivered with care, respect, and a touch of hope. Contributions have varied, ranging from $20 to several thousand dollars.

These benevolent gifts have offered vital resources: nourishment for hungry bellies, school supplies for eager minds, medications for health, and fuel for her vehicle, allowing the mother to experience a moment of relief. On multiple occasions, these donations have helped sustain her tenancy; in some instances, they have even enabled her to place a present under the Christmas tree.



We are powered by individual generosity, we are not in receipt of any government emergency scheme, and we only offer funds when available, and it is a one-time offer.

PRF PAUL RAMSAY FOUNDATION

Special thanks to the Paul Ramsay Foundation, which helped us climb many policy hills and, critically, ensured that single mothers were central to the policy journey.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who have been a part of our journey, which commenced in 1973.

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