Relationships AUSTRALIA

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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
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https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/SociSecTech2

Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes No. 2) Bill 2026

Dear Secretary

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Technical Changes No. 2) Bill 2026, following our comments on the Bill introduced in February 2026. Relationships Australia welcomes Government's ongoing work to ensuring that the social security system is fair and operates lawfully. We also welcome Government's commitment to limit opportunities for systems abuse, especially through weaponisation of the child support system, noting the recent publication of the *Preventing Financial Abuse through Child Support Strategy* and *Action Plan* (https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/preventing-financial-abuse-through-child-support-strategy?context=22).

Pre-issue income data use (Schedule 5, Part 1)

Relationships Australia supports reforms to curtail weaponisation of the child support system by thwarting a payer's attempts to delay assessment of their tax obligations. Relationships Australia expects these amendments to enable more current and more accurate child support assessments.

We do have some concerns about the use of subordinate legislation to prescribe new methods for making provisional income determinations under section 58, including based on new sources of information that may become available. We consider that public confidence in the fairness of the taxation and child support systems requires maximum transparency of:

- how rules about assessment of obligations are changed, and
- the information sources on which legislative decision-makers are entitled to rely.

The fact that this Bill retrospectively validates historic use of PIID underscores the imperative for ongoing rigorous scrutiny. Given the lesser public visibility of delegated legislation, Relationships Australia ***recommends*** that Government commit to proactive circulation of exposure drafts of regulations, giving stakeholders time to consider and provide comments on proposed new information sources. (**Recommendation 1**)

Automation of provisional income (Schedule 5, Part 2)

Relationships Australia welcomes measures that will provide clarity and certainty about the Registrar's powers to counter the perpetration of financial abuse by a payer not lodging tax returns at all, or in a timely way. We acknowledge that the Bill seeks to reserve automation of provision income where there is no discretionary or evaluative decisions, in accordance with the Commonwealth Ombudsman's recent guidance in its 2025 Better Practice Guide (https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/317437/Automated-Decision-Making-Better-Practice-Guide-March-2025.pdf).

Urgent payments (Schedule 8)

We take this opportunity to draw attention to the comments we made in relation to the February 2026 Bill (accessible at https://www.relationships.org.au/research/#advocacy). It is vital, for the urgent payments provisions to achieve their objectives without causing unintended harm, to provide:

- adequate resourcing, in terms of staff time and training, of Services Australia officers to enable them to identify appropriate, culturally sensitive supports, that are tailored to each individual, and
- adequate resourcing for services on the referral pathways – Relationships Australia is aware that financial counsellors across Australia are hard pressed to meet current demand (and current inflationary pressures will only exacerbate this situation). Further, the community and health services sector generally is equally facing overwhelm. It is unhelpful when the successful implementation of legislation relies on referral pathways which are chronically under-resourced to provide the kinds and intensity of support promised during the passage of legislation.

Relationships Australia commends the measures, in the 2026/2027 Budget, to better fund financial counsellors. This is particularly critical given cost of living pressures that are continuing to tighten their grip on an increasing proportion of families in Australia. We **recommend** that resourcing for financial counselling be kept under review to ensure that these mechanisms can continue to operate as intended. (**Recommendation 2**)

Conclusion

Thank you again for inviting Relationships Australia to make a submission on this Bill. Should you wish to discuss the submission, further please do not hesitate to contact me at [redacted], or our National Policy Manager, Dr Susan F Cochrane, at [redacted] .

Kind regards

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Nick Tebbey
National Executive Officer