

About your Child Support appeal

Read this after you have lodged your appeal

– it gives general information on the hearing process.

Here is some information on the SSAT Child Support appeal process. Remember, you can call the SSAT if you have any questions or need help understanding appeal documents (Freecall™ 1800 011 140).

Do I have to pay for my appeal?

No, you don't have to pay to appeal to the SSAT.

The SSAT will help you get to the hearing by reimbursing reasonable public transport travel costs.

All information you provide that is relevant to your appeal will be passed on to the other parent.

How long will it be before I have my hearing?

The SSAT will arrange a hearing date as quickly as possible. You will receive a copy of the information relevant to your appeal at least seven days before your hearing.

What happens in the hearing?

There are three hearing options: in person, by telephone and by video-conference. In most cases, the hearing will be attended by you, any other party affected by the appeal (including the other parent) and the SSAT members. In some cases, a representative from the Child Support Agency will also attend the hearing. The hearing usually lasts between one and two hours.

The SSAT members will speak to each party to the appeal; they will ask questions and listen to what you have to say. You do not need to express yourself in 'legal language'. The SSAT members may take notes during the hearing to make sure that nothing is overlooked or forgotten. The hearing proceedings will also be recorded electronically.

An SSAT case manager will keep in touch with you throughout the appeal process.

Do I need a lawyer?

You do not require legal assistance to appeal to the SSAT. However, if you would like legal assistance, a community legal centre may be able to give you free legal advice about your appeal. Please note that the SSAT does not pay the fees of solicitors or other professionals.

If you want to seek legal advice, it is best to do so while you are preparing for your hearing, not at the last minute.

What if I need help in preparing for the hearing?

Before the hearing all parties to the appeal will be sent a copy of the Child Support Agency information relevant to the appeal. The same information is used by the SSAT members at the hearing. You should bring these papers with you to the hearing.

Links to a number of organisations which might be of assistance in preparing your case are given on our website (www.ssat.gov.au).

You can also contact your SSAT case manager if you would like more details on the hearing or organisations that can assist you.

Can I bring someone with me to the hearing?

Child Support appeal hearings are required by law to be held in private.

You may be represented (at your own expense) by a legal representative, advocate or welfare worker. In most instances you will still need to personally participate in the hearing, as a representative may make submissions but would not normally be expected to be

able to give evidence on your behalf. To protect the privacy of the parties, persons who are family, friends or partners will NOT usually be admitted to the hearing room. If you intend to bring someone to the hearing please discuss this with your Tribunal case manager well before the hearing. A decision on who is admitted to the hearing room can only be made by the Presiding Member hearing the matter. Tribunal staff can advise about Tribunal processes but do not have the authority to make a ruling on who may attend the hearing.

Important: Children should not be brought to the Tribunal as they are not permitted in the hearing room and the SSAT does not provide child care.

Is the SSAT independent?

The SSAT is an independent statutory body. It is not part of the Child Support Agency. Hearings are conducted by members who have a background in areas such as social welfare, law or public administration.

The SSAT can change Child Support Agency decisions, but only according to the law. Where the SSAT sets aside (ie changes) a decision under review, it may substitute a new decision or send the matter back to the Child Support Agency with directions for further action.

If you require help with any special needs, please let the SSAT know.

How long will it be before I get the decision?

Within 14 days of your hearing, you will receive the SSAT's decision in the mail.

The SSAT will tell you if the members have to delay making a decision in your case until a later date. This could be because the SSAT needs to get more information.

Services for applicants and other parties

Disability-Related Needs

Contact your nearest SSAT office to discuss how your individual needs can best be met.

Assistance may include sign interpreters, hearing loop, help getting to and from the hearing and flexible hearing options (like hearings by phone or video-conference).

Teletypewriter Service (TTY)

Call Freecall™ 1800 060 116 for teletypewriter service.

Large Print

Contact your nearest SSAT office if you need large print formats of our general information documents.

Audio CD

Contact your nearest SSAT office if you would like an audio CD of our general information documents.

Translating and Interpreting Service

For information in another language, call 131 450 from anywhere in Australia. The Translating and Interpreting Service can call the SSAT on your behalf.

If needed, a professional interpreter can be arranged for your hearing, at no cost to you.

Any other questions?

If you have any other questions, call the SSAT on Freecall™ 1800 011 140.

Information is also available on the SSAT website (www.ssat.gov.au).