

Support available for separated parents

Budgeting for the festive season can be daunting for many parents, but for separated parents, the costs both financially and emotionally can be even more demanding.

Separated parents often experience a range of financial stresses post-separation, with the money that used to support one household now having to support two.

Planning school holidays around designated access times, arranging long-distance travel and school holiday activities as well as preparing for annual celebrations can all contribute to additional costs and stress for separated parents.

It is important to take the time to plan ahead and seek help if necessary to effectively co-parent post-separation, especially during significant times such as Christmas or birthdays. Putting a little bit of time into sorting out your arrangements can make the world of difference in terms of avoiding stress and arguments.

Children benefit from the love and support of both parents. Something as simple as sending your child a recording of you reading their favourite bedtime story or singing a song can help close the distance between you and your loved ones.

Child Support Agency General Manager, Matt Miller, said children benefit when parents treat each other with respect and can cooperate.

"This can be a tough thing to do when a relationship breaks down, but we encourage parents to do it for the kids," Mr Miller said.

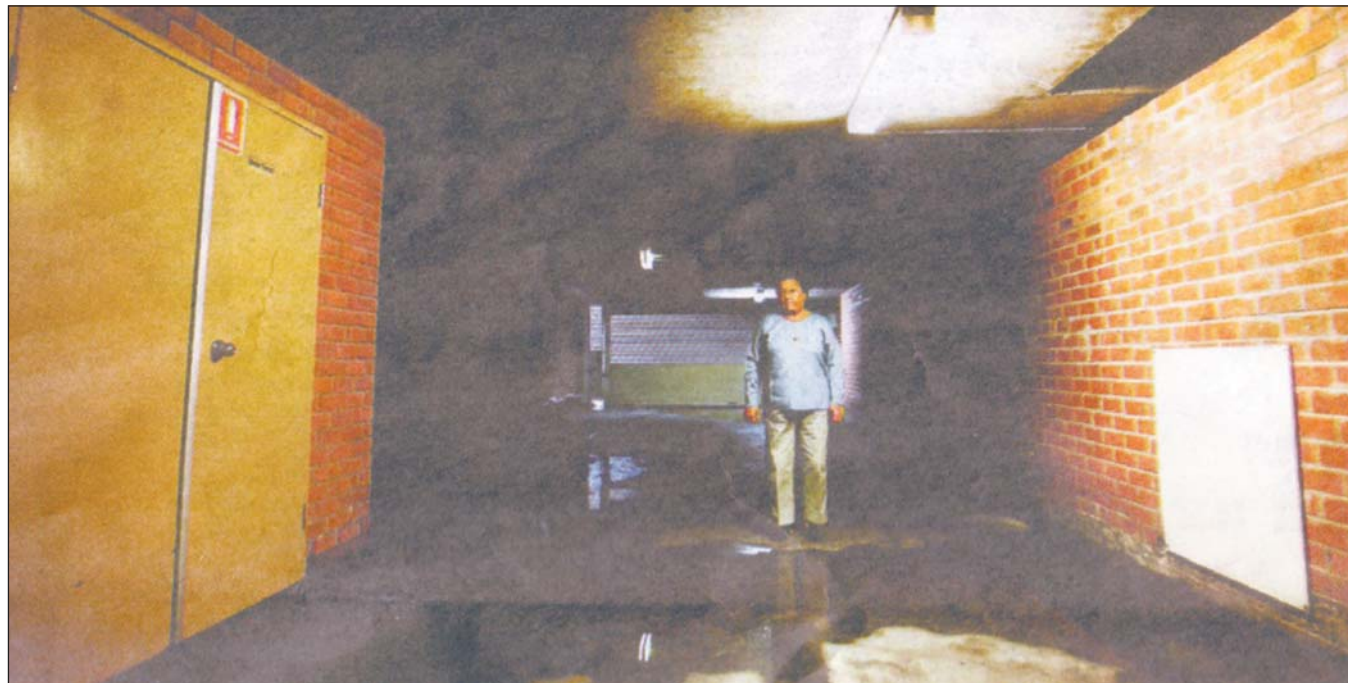
"Many parents tell us that by viewing their post-separation relationship as a business-like partnership, they've been able to keep things cooperative and civil and focus on what's best for the kids."

New research conducted on behalf of the Child Support Agency shows strong, positive changes in how parents view their relationship with their former partner. About 43 per cent of those parents surveyed in August this year said they were very likely to deal with the other parent in a business-like way. This is up from 26 per cent in February 2008.

The CSA has a number of different publications and support services for separated parents, children and families going through separation. The Me and My series is full of handy hints and tips to help support separated families have a positive parenting experience. The booklets cover key issues such as practical money ideas, taking care of yourself, forming a workable relationship with the other parent and parenting from a distance.

Publications such as Family Separation: A Guide for Teens and the youth website www.youth.csa.gov.au provide additional support for younger family members affected by separation.

Other services such as the Family Relationship Advice Line 1800 050 321 and CSA's Online Community Services Directory are available to assist parents both during and post-separation. The Community Services Directory can help you find support services and groups in your local area and is found at www.csa.gov.au. To access any of CSA's free publications call 1800 040 972 or visit www.csa.gov.au to order books, download PDFs or MP3 files.



Occupants up for huge costs on new units

Building work probe

By Marianna Papadakis

FREDA Pefkos thought she was set for cosy retirement after selling her house and moving to a new partment at Ramsgate, until the walls began to crumble around her.

Mrs Pefkos said she spent more than \$5000 fixing the interior of her Ramsgate Road apartment. Defects included cracking walls and water leaks.

"I got an electric shock from water coming through a power socket in the kitchen", she said. "From the day I walked in I had problems".

Residents of the 10-apartment complex have been left with \$210,000 in repairs after Vero insurance rejected their claims on the building work.

In a letter to Mrs Pefkos, Vero said her claim was rejected because it could not be established that the builder whose name appears on the

certificate of insurance was responsible for the defective works.

The letter said that the builder was placed into administration after the completion of the basement level and part of the first floor and that it was 'unclear from the documentation available' who completed the subsequent works.

Mrs Pefkos bought the two-bedroom apartment after the building had been completed by new builders for \$608,000 in 2002. She bought it from the company that owned the property, Sandakan Investments Pty Ltd, now deregistered.

Simon Touma was a shareholder and director of Sandakan for one day but was not involved in the building work.

Mrs Pefkos signed the contract of sale with Mr Touma's brother, real estate agent Thomas Touma of Peter A Simon Real Estate, through which the company

Sandakan sold the apartments".

Simon Touma said he was not a director of the company at the time of land acquisition and future development.

"I was not aware of any building defects at the time of sale of the properties", Mr Touma said.

Similarly, estate agent Thomas Touma was not aware of any defects at the time of sale.

Development consent for the building was approved by Rockdale Council in 2000 and privately certified in 2002.

Former NSW Planning Minister Frank Sartor, the MP for Rockdale said controversial planning reforms introduced this year would lower the risk of shonky approvals whether they be construction certificates or occupation certificates.

"In human nature there is a shonk gene, and unfortunately it occasionally expresses itself in builders", he said.

TIM CLARK TO CHASE AUSTRALIAN OPEN HISTORY

Three-time European Tour winner and US Tour player Tim Clark will join the world-class field at The Royal Sydney Golf Club from December 11-14.

Clark, a member of the 2003 and 2005 Presidents Cup international team will look to finish his Australian visit on a major high.

The former Scottish Open winner and world number 42 has had a solid year overseas including a tie for second at the Crowne Plaza Invitational in Texas where he finished a shot behind Phil Mickelson.

Championship Director Trevor Herden said he was delighted to welcome Clark to The Royal Sydney Golf Club and give him the chance to fight for the coveted Stonehaven Cup.

"Tim is an exceptional player who has had a great year in the US and Europe and will be a boost to the international contingent at the 2008 Australian Open," Herden said.

"The Australian Open has an illustrious history with outstanding South African golfers and it will be Tim's chance to battle for one of the

world's most exclusive titles."

Much of that history belongs to Gary Player-one of golf's legends and the man whose name appears seven times on the Stonehaven Cup-the most wins in the history of the championship.

Speaking ahead of his Australian Open debut, Clark said he was looking forward to creating his own slice of history in Sydney.

"I'm pleased to be able to play the Australian Open and take on the challenges of Royal Sydney," Clark said.

"Gary Player won the Australian Open seven times and I'm looking forward to the opportunity to add another South African name to the rich history of the Stonehaven Cup."

The 2008 Australian Open will be held from 11-14 December at The Royal Sydney Golf Club. Tickets are now available from Ticketmaster outlets, by calling 1300 136 122 or on-line at www.ticketmaster.com.au.



AUSTRALIAN OPEN