

The Chamberlains were paid a sum, which they are forbidden to disclose, but has been widely reported to be \$1.3 million Australian dollars, shared between Lindy and Michael. Their children did not get anything for essentially having their parents missing from most of their lives for eight years, as Lindy and Michael fought for justice. The money was paid in May 1992, some four years after exoneration. Ironically, or true to form, the Chamberlains found out over the radio, just like the rest of Australia. Some persons felt that the Chamberlains should not be entitled to any compensation, as they had been given (!) the opportunity to earn more through media, films, and books than they could have as a pastor and wife. (See the recordings section to hear the actual statement.)

While on the surface that might appear so, that attitude does not take into account at least two factors: it was never possible to make a reasonable living from those media sources, as it is not something you can make a budget or plan on; the opportunities for ‘regular’ jobs had been made infinitely more difficult by their notoriety; and the Chamberlains had run up huge debts as they fought to prove their innocence.

Wherever do we get the idea that just because someone is a public figure, and seen in the media, that big money automatically comes with it? Yes, there are some for whom the financial rewards are great; primarily the big entertainers, broadcasters, and sports figures. But for the majority it just is not so.

Their church had loaned them money for legal fees, which the Northern Territory government had to reimburse the church for – though not for any of the interest that had built up. (The Northern Territory had deducted every last cent that anyone had sent in or contributed to the Chamberlain defence fund before they paid, though.)

But Lindy at least, still had huge debts. When compensation came through, Lindy and the children – when they were with her – had been living for two years from the pension of her parents, the graces of a lenient bank (for the mortgage on the house she had bought in her own name, with her own money), and the generosity of friends. There was very little left of Lindy’s share of the compensation once the debts were paid – certainly not enough to build a life on.

That is why it is called compensation; much like insurance, it is to compensate the person for what they have lost in the past – to bring them back to the financial position they were before the event. Punitive damages (most common in America) are to punish the wrongdoer, and give the recipient money for the future, and always exceed the cost of compensation for past losses.