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# Woman admits \$23,000 fake baby fraud

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**By Lee Glendinning**

For two years, Debra Anne Dalton pretended to be the mother of a baby that never existed.

Her former lover gave her more than \$23,000 in child support, even helping to pay when told his son needed to go the United States for treatment of a "chronic kidney disorder".

But Matthew Wojtowicz was never allowed to see his child, only a photo album entitled "Our Baby", which held a picture purportedly drawn by their son, whom Dalton called Reece James.

In Sutherland Local Court yesterday, the 23-year-old Beverly Hills woman admitted the child never existed and that she had concocted an elaborate plan, creating a fake baby and defrauding her former lover for child support payments. She pleaded guilty to one count of obtaining benefit by deception.

Matthew Wojtowicz, a 24-year-old train station attendant, from Lakemba, had a brief relationship with Dalton which ended in April 1998. She later contacted him by phone saying she was pregnant with his child.

He next heard from her in October, when she told him she had a baby son, but asked that he not visit the hospital.

She devised a meticulous plan, which began with inviting Mr Wojtowicz to a baby-naming ceremony and later downloading letterheads from the internet for a pediatric centre in New York so she could fabricate documents saying the child needed specialist treatment.

Dalton sent him hundreds of other fake letters, including demands of payment and invoices from the Child Support Agency, St George Hospital and the Family Court and even an invitation to the child's birthday party. She also asked for money for nappies, clothing, entertainment and hospital bills.

When he fell behind in his payments, she wrote a letter which said in part: "I know it's a lot of money and everything but I can't and won't do it on my own. I am willing to negotiate, but I won't help you if you don't even look after your own son."

Mr Wojtowicz fell under such financial strain he lost his car.

Whenever he tried to see his child, he was told he had turned up on the wrong date or at the wrong time.

When he requested a DNA test to determine paternity, Dalton told him she was unavailable.

According to police documents, Dalton has been diagnosed as a pathological liar, but says she has recovered after receiving counselling and joining the Church of Scientology.

In May this year, Mr Wojtowicz tried to find out about his legal and visitation rights after nearly two years of being refused access to his supposed child. It was then that police began investigating.

Dalton eventually made full admissions to police about concocting the child's birth and fabricating hundreds of documents.

She maintained, however, that she did fall pregnant to Mr Wojtowicz, but terminated the pregnancy.

Dalton told police she had spent the money on her new child, which she has had to another partner.

She will be sentenced at Sutherland Local Court on January 30.

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