

House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Family and Community Affairs

Submission No. 190

Date Received: 3-8-03

Secretary: _____

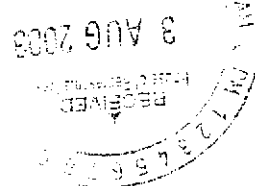
From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Sunday, 3 August 2003 1:48 PM

To: Committee, FCA (REPS)

Cc: McLucas, Jan (Senator)

Subject: Federal Government Inquiry into Child Custody - Submission.



03/08/03

Dear Madam/Sir,

Please find below my submission to the Federal Government's inquiry into child custody arrangements.

Gambling

In Australia gambling is out of control. Gambling contributed to the demise of my family. My former spouse was unable to stop gambling, no matter how hard we tried to help her. But it seems Australian Government's, both state and federal, are determined to reap a windfall in revenue from the proceeds of gambling. They appear quite happy to tolerate casualties, families that disintegrate as a result of either partner gambling. Gamblers lie, steal and prostitute themselves to carry out their selfish act that in the end has ramifications for the entire community. Pleas to the Government for assistance from the victims of those married to gamblers fall on deaf ears.

Family Court

On the other hand it appears the gambler receives their full support with free legal representation in the family court during property settlement and child custody disputes (my former spouse had a barrister – Josephine Willis and a solicitor from the Cairns Women's legal centre – I had to defend myself, despite submissions to AG Darryl Williams from myself and local member Warren Entsch pointing out the imbalance of legal representation). The non-gambler has no support from the Government, as it appears that the system is aware that they will profit faster from a person who in effect is working for them - the gambler.

Our family court dispute saw my former spouse (who still gambles) win the family property along with dividends from my Ansett retrenchment payout. I live in a small flat (I do not gamble). So we can see who was the clear winner – a fine signal to the broader community indeed. I currently have the pleasure of my daughter [REDACTED] six days a fortnight. However I had to fight hard for that in the family court. All I wanted was equal custody (interestingly this is also what the children want). I applaud the Government's initiative in addressing what is perhaps the most important issue for Australian children – a right to grow with both parents caring for them- equally.

Child Support

My situation prior to being retrenched from Ansett was one of severe frustration regarding child support payments. After separation I was forced to pay the standard amount of child support as per my income. However I was also solely responsible for family debt incurred prior to separation. Despite earning a reasonable income while still at Ansett (prior to redundancy) I was pushed further into debt by demands from the Child Support Industry and being solely responsible for the family debt. I can well understand the breadwinner's reluctance to continue to work when there is no money left over to feed her or himself. And with the rate of divorce spiralling out of control this in itself must have grave consequences for the economy, let alone the children.

Equal Custody

3/08/2003

The equal custody initiative should also look at some of the root causes of divorcé. Gambling is merely one of them. If a policy of equal custody is not implemented, then at least some consideration should be made as to the behaviour of both parents, that is who would be the more suitable parent in terms of the best interests of the child/ren. It is important that both parents receive equal representation in the family court, after all, this is a democracy we live in is it not?