

3rd August 2003

House of Representatives Standing Committee  
on Family and Community Affairs

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I believe there is a need for a major over-haul of Family Law involving decisions about child custody. I am the father of two children who currently spends 5.5 days per fortnight caring for my children. Next year my eldest child starts school and I am forced to face reduced contact to 2 days/fortnight. Since my childrens birth I have never had so little contact with my children and find I am very apprehensive about my pending isolation from them. Why am I forced to accept this situation next year? My childrens mother is 'riding' the single parents benefits system and additionally already 'acquired' my home. She makes no attempt to earn a living (why would she?) and abuses free government subsidised respite day care by placing my children in a family day care centre on the week days that she is responsible for my children. Before my eldest starts school I am spending all of the 5.5 days/fortnight contact in their direct company. No daycare, no ferrying out. Simply lots of quality time and bonding time. The three working days each week I don't see them I am self employed. My income after child support deductions and work related expenses is less than half of their non-working mothers.

Current Family Law least legislation/policy, Centrelink and Child Support Agency rules provide the single parent with absolutely no incentive to agree to 50/50 joint parenting.

If we shared the upbringing of our children equally there would be many benefits: 1) Both children will have an abundance of love and time with mum and dad and feel safe in the knowledge that both parents love them

2) Both parents would have to work or be ~~ered~~ <sup>ered</sup> with a very low standard of living. This would encourage a strong work ethic in my children and ease the tax payers burden

3) Children can only grow up balanced in our society with mum and dad to provide them with guidance and role model behaviour. This society asks that we are self assured and <sup>self</sup> reliant.

4) Property settlement would be 50/50 giving both parents equal opportunity to make a fresh start and recognise the equal input of both parents into the creation of wealth.

My current shared parenting arrangement works well. At any time their mother, as primary carer, has the legal power to deny me access over her insistence that the situation is uncomfortable. I am forced to agree with her or fight through the courts and be denied access in the interim. A court case would produce a plan <sup>order</sup> giving me 2 days/fortnight contact. Really, that's the equivalent to a visit and allows for no real input, not an integral part of their upbringing.

The current system empowers their mother and builds resentment in the father. The current system can easily be exploited and once the mother becomes aware of the benefits on offer will swiftly avoid shared parenting and use the children as a mechanism for financial gain and emotional punishment.

All of these issues could be avoided if joint parenting was the presumed status post separation. My children's mother has become lazy, unemployable (by choice), greedy, parasitical, incapable of making responsible and balanced decisions regarding my children's health, education and well being.

Please change the system to a presumed state of joint custody. Stop the bludging mothers and the lonely children and fathers.

Yours sincerely