

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family & Community Affairs
Child Custody Arrangements Inquiry
Department of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs
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Secretary:

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Dear Secretary,

There is nothing more important in my life than my two beautiful children. When my exwife decided to leave me when she was 8 months pregnant with our second child to be with an old boyfriend it was very difficult indeed but it was her choice and her right. What the system then allowed her to do totally took away my choice, took away my rights took away my children's rights and was the most discriminatory and bias process that I have ever been involved with.

Whether you take a religious side, a biological side or simply a moral side these two children have been equally created by both parents and share the genetics of each. They show characteristics of both parents and they have a natural bond, desire and need to be with both parents. I have a health background and currently work for the health department, I have experience and training in childcare and am certainly as fit and skilled a parent as the mother. Your system however said that she had the right to take both children, deny me the right to access them (until I was able to fight through the family courts) and immediately demand \$1063:67 a month maintenance payments from me.

My children are four and a half and two. Your system (or certainly the magistrates) feel that young children are better being with their mother. So even though my son was totally distraught at being away from his father your system decided that both children were better off with the mother cramped into a 3 bedroom home with four other adults, one of which is a diagnosed manic depressant with violent episodes.

Your system forced me to go through the family law courts to try and achieve some sort of reasonable access to my children; this process cost me over \$16,000 in legal fees. This is money that could have and should have gone towards my children's future. Your system will continue to force me to go back to court and incur further costs if I am to seek further access to my children.

In regards to my maintenance payments of \$1063:67 per month I hope that you can see how bias your current formulae and assessment is. How is it that the Family Assistance Office can get it so right and the Child Support Agency can get it so wrong? The F.A.O use a very fair system that says that your allowance is calculated on the exact percentage of time that you care for your children. The C.S.A on the other hand don't care what % of time you care for your children. They only apply the extremely bias 109 night rule that is simply unbelievable. In my case for example I have both of my children for approximately 20% of the time, but this is not always overnight so there is no reduction at all in my payment. So in affect I am paying the same amount as if I never cared for my children at all. For 20% of the time I meet

all of the expenses for my children and this is on top of my maintenance payment. So your system allows for the mother to place both children in care during the week at taxpayer's expense and get paid well for the privilege. Then on the weekends I look after the children, giving her each weekend free and I then continue to pay her maintenance whilst I'm doing this. How can this possibly be regarded as being fair?

Both my children and myself would therefore applaud any moves by the government to review the current system and a move toward equal access by both parents unless there is very strong evidence against in specific cases. It is simply criminal, bias and unjust to continue with the current system that has effectively worked to try and take the "Pa" out of parenting.

I thank you very much for your time and consideration of this very important issue and would greatly appreciate any response or advice you may be able to provide.