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Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs
Child Custody Arrangements Inquiry
Department of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

CHILD SUPPORT COMMISSION

Following a request to constituents in my electorate I have received comments and submissions from some, a synopsis of which I set out below:

J O'Donnell – Victory Heights

- Submission attached

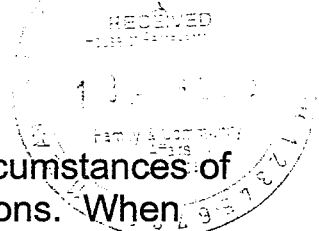
J L Ward – Kalgoorlie

- Need for CSA to include the circumstances of stepchildren in their considerations. When considering equity, CSA should consider the responsibilities of non-custodial parents for their natural children in a second relationship as well as the children of the second relationship partner.

K D Johnston – Karratha

- The amount to be paid in child support is the problem. Very unequal and leaves the non-custodial parent with little on which to live let alone establish a new relationship.

The responses received are predominantly from men, none of whom are custodial parents.



I have looked at the Terms of Reference and know that over the years I have received literally hundreds of cases of dissatisfaction with existing situation from both custodial and non-custodial parents. In this regard I comment as follows:

- A (i) Equal custody is the foundation on which further decisions should be based. The only way custody arrangements may be amended is at the insistence of either parent with evidence of wrongdoing which would be admissible under the Criminal Code.
- A (ii) Contact needs to be available for members of extended family deemed acceptable to both parents and Family Court in line with (i) above.
- B I strongly reject any assumption that the existing child support formula works fairly for both parents.

The nexus between access and non-parenting payments ought to be absolute. A system must be devised whereby if, in contravention of legally determined access arrangements, that access is frustrated in any way then the non-parenting payments should be immediately and directly affected.

The payment of child support by the non-custodial parent (non-parenting payments) should be treated as tax deductible for the payee. Conversely, the child support payments received by the custodial parent should be considered additional income, added to their taxable income and assessed accordingly.

Earnings of the custodial parent must be taken into account when calculating the non-parenting payment. When school age is reached by the last child for which the non-custodial parent is paying, the payments should be reduced.

If the custodial parent restricts their capacity to take on paid work by increasing their family in a second relationship this will not negate the reduction of the amount paid by the non custodial parent for the now school aged child.

I support a push for a universal mediation system. A three-stage system, that would be mandatory and ongoing, needs to be put in place to resolve the issues of payments, distribution of assets, custody arrangements and the like. Both parties would share costs.

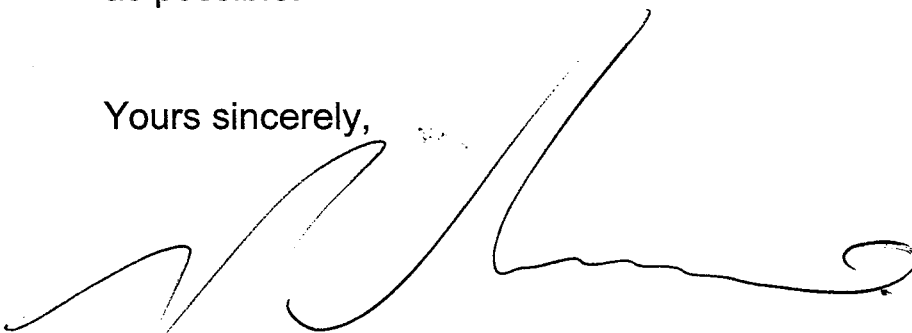
To enable such a mediation system to operate it may be necessary for a loan-based system to be established and funded by the government along the lines of the HECS program within the education system. Each party would be responsible for half the cost of the mediation services provided.

The structure of such a loans system and the mediation system itself needs to be carefully considered to prevent unnecessary extensions of the process by either party.

It is anticipated that if both parents are made aware from the outset that such mediation will be a cost to them both then that awareness should be motivation enough to prevent protracted and unnecessary negotiations.

The present system is not satisfactory. There are too many areas in which it can be manipulated. I strongly urge that a greater emphasis on shared arrangements with shared responsibility be put in place as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Haase', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

BARRY HAASE