



## **Inquiry into child custody arrangements in the event of family separation: call for submissions**

The House of Representatives Family and Community Affairs Committee is to conduct an inquiry into child custody arrangements in the event of family separation.

The inquiry has been referred to the Committee by the Federal Attorney-General and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. It was announced by the Prime Minister in the House of Representatives last week (24 June 2003).

The terms of reference for the inquiry - which include an examination of the concept of a 'rebuttable presumption' of equal time to be spent by children with each parent in the event of family separation, the child support formula, and grandparents' contact rights - appear below.

The Chair of the House of Representatives Family and Community Affairs Committee is Mrs Kay Hull MP (Member for Riverina, NSW). Mrs Hull says the inquiry presents a challenge for the Committee.

"As every Member of Parliament would know from the amount of inquiries to their offices, this subject is both important and highly emotional," Mrs Hull said.

"We are asking for people and organisations with an interest in this matter to make concise written **submissions to the Committee by Friday 8 August**, after which it is likely we will undertake a series of public hearings."

The inquiry is to **report by 31 December 2003**. Given the tight reporting time, those making submissions are asked to keep their submissions concise. Contributors making submissions are advised to obtain the guidelines for making a submission from the inquiry website ([www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fca/childcustody/](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fca/childcustody/)), or from the committee secretariat. Submissions should be directed to:

Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs  
Child Custody Arrangements Inquiry  
Department of the House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Tel. (02) 6277 4566, Fax 02 6277 4844, Email: [fca.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:fca.reps@aph.gov.au)

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee is to investigate and make recommendations for action on the following matters:

- (a) given that the best interests of the child are the paramount consideration:
  - (i) what other factors should be taken into account in deciding the respective time each parent should spend with their children post separation, in particular whether there should be a presumption that children will spend equal time with each parent and, if so, in what circumstances such a presumption could be rebutted; and
  - (ii) in what circumstances a court should order that children of separated parents have contact with other persons, including their grandparents.
- (b) whether the existing child support formula works fairly for both parents in relation to their care of, and contact with, their children.

The Committee has been asked to have regard to the Government's recent response to the report of the Family Law Pathways Advisory Group. A link to this report is available on the inquiry website.

**For media comment from the Chair, please contact:**  
Mrs Kay Hull, MP (Chair), Tel. (02) 6921 4600 (electorate office)

**For further details on the inquiry**, contact the Committee Secretariat – see above