

Submission No.

308

Date Received:

3-8-03

Secretary

August 4, 2003

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

Dear Sir or Madam:

Re: Inquiry into child custody arrangements in the event of family separation

On the 21st of September 2001 I separated from my now ex-husband for the following reasons:

- His excessive use of alcohol
- His excessive use of marijuana
- His gambling addiction
- His obsessive behavior and jealousy
- His torturous verbal abuse and emotional blackmail (this included swearing abuse at the girls)
- We had very different parenting ideas for e.g. he didn't believe in discipline and didn't really care about education.

I made a decision that the above behavior was not acceptable for myself and above all my two little girls. It left us all in tears on a daily basis and was destroying us emotionally and physically, and he refused to go to counseling, as he didn't think he had a problem.

After separation the situation did not change, in fact in some instances became worse. Please see below for post separation history:

- Saw the girls twice a week for approximately 1 year and in this time frame verbally abused me in front of the girls when he would pick them up or bring them home. He would also slander me when he did have the girls.

- This behavior once again would always leave us in tears and the girls very confused. This resulted in me having to take my eldest daughter to a child psychologist as she was badly affected by the behavior, which resulted in nightmares and behavioral problems.
- Would constantly call me on my phones to abuse me, and if I didn't answer would leave abusive messages on my answering machine and mobile.
- At this stage we had financial and contact orders put into place. My ex-husband was so concerned about securing his property that he just gave me full custody with his right to contact in place.
- By the time the orders came back sealed he had not contacted me for some time to see the girls, this being over the Christmas period, and also stopped paying child support, but the abusive mobile text messages continued.
- At this stage I wrote him a letter as advised by legal aid describing compliance with the contact orders and that I needed his address to do so, but have received nothing in reply. This was in April 2003.
- I have since moved to Sydney to be around family and friends and much needed support, and have still not heard from him, therefore he no longer exercises his right to contact.

I feel that introducing the proposed legislation would be a disaster in my situation for the above-mentioned reasons and would be totally destabilizing for the girls whom have now finally reached emotional stability after a lot hard work on my behalf, and are extremely happy in their new environment.