

Submission No. 355

Date: 6-8-03

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee of the House of Representatives
re Granting equal access to both parents by the Family Court and
Investigation into the Dept. of Family and Community Affairs.

When a specialist paediatrician requested the equivalent of the Dept. Family and Community Affairs in Hobart to check out suspected sexual abuse of my 2-year-old daughter by her father they failed to fully investigate the matter. Several similar written requests by the Tasmanian Commissioner for Children on behalf of my daughter have produced the same result.

The Hobart Family Court judge also failed to order an investigation into the sexual abuse allegations but ordered instead that I be assessed for a fabricated mental disorder that was subsequently rejected by the court psychologist. At the residence hearing which only occurred after numerous postponements, a judge from the mainland spent 4 days repeating the early evidence over and over so that there was no time for the presentation of the substantial medical evidence.

The appeal was conducted by video link-up from Melbourne on a small television in the corner of the Hobart family court. The Family Court status quo policy, no matter how bad that status quo is, prevailed. During the last 5 years the child's father consistently received legal aid while I, the child's mother received none. Consequently I have lost everything I owned including my house and car to pay for legal costs. The Family Court orders have prevented normal contact between my daughter and me, her mother for nearly 3 years.

Isolated mothers carry the full burden of responsibility to protect their children, usually little girls when they are abused by their fathers. The Prime Minister and the former Governor General recently acknowledged on national television the extent of domestic sexual abuse. Bureaucratic departments and male-dominated Family Court judiciary have consistently failed to adequately protect my child other children from sexual abuse in the home. I request that the Dads organisations and the standing committee invoke the protective male powers and lobby for real changes in both the Department and the Family Court to achieve:

1. protection for children from abusing fathers
2. better access arrangements for good fathers.

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