

Department of Multicultural Affairs
in Family and Community Affairs
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Secretary

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6 Harold Tony Drive
Yamba NSW 2464
[REDACTED]

Dear Sir,

I am writing this letter to you in support of joint residency in child custody arrangements, in the event of family separation.

I myself have been separated from my three beautiful children for nearly five years now and have recently divorced. My ex-wife decided to opt out of our mortgage for another relationship taking the children with her. On leaving the children were aged [REDACTED] 4, [REDACTED] 2 and [REDACTED] still unborn. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. My three children are now aged 9, 7, and 4 years. I myself still live alone in the family home. Our children currently spend 45 hrs per week with me and 123 hrs per week with their Mum.

Having been through the court system on numerous occasions to obtain custody arrangements, I have experienced the local court the family court and the Federal courts of Aust with expenses exceeding \$8,000-00. The money is of no interest to me, only that it could have gone to the children instead of my solicitor. It was well spent even if I had only been granted an extra 5 minutes per week with my children. I wanted to spend the rest of my

life with someone I loved and to have a family and to share that responsibility with my wife through good times and bad. We have three children and the marriage may have changed but the children have not. They are both our responsibility. They need a mum and a dad. They need their mum and dad. The children love mum and dad and want to live with both parents as a family, but if this is not possible, they want to spend as much time with one parent as they do the other parent, if this is the next best outcome. Children are the big losers in this separation. There is no fair way. There is no right or wrong way. But an even way would be a sensible one. Many fathers lose the wife they love. Then the children they love. Then their life savings through the family settlement. Then the court system, and child support agency. Then they lose their whole identity and their will to go on and the suicide. And there is no-one to talk to. Thank god for life-line. Thank god for mens-line. Thank god for Dads in Distress. Thank god I didn't suicide when you go to court as a dad you stand there alone, but the ex-love of your life gets legal aid, counselling and support, coffee and biscuits. I chose to stand up for myself and our children's rights to share in my life. That kept me alive.

Ask yourself, who would benefit the most out of shared parenting or equal time with both parents. There is only one answer - the children. Both parents have the responsibility of raising their children and in this society,

separation should not alter this equal time with mum or dad. Dads don't want it all their way, they just want an equal and fair system for all. Dads have feelings too. No two separations will ever be the same, but we do need a starting point. Why not start in the middle and work from there. Our children have a mother. Our children have a father. Our children have no say in court who they shall live with. A judge decides who the children reside with, in the best interests of the children. The mother has no say, the father has no say and the children have no say. Who had these children, who loves these children, and who lives with these children. Not the judge or the system, but mum and dad. There are no winners and there never will be but we could make it fairer and equal for all. Most mums want it, most dads want it, most children want it, most grandparents want it, and almost everyone else wants it. Who misses out if one parent gets majority care. The children miss out, and what do they miss out on, they miss out on the other parent's love. They miss out on the other parent's way of life, friends, grand parents, cousins, every thing. Is the current system fair and in the best interests of the children when one parent has majority care, ask yourself, I don't think so. Everyone on this planet must have someone close to them who has separated with children, so this must affect everyone. We live in a fair and democratic society but are fathers and mothers equal after separation. There are no set laws but the current
System

does favour the mother. Dad wants a fair go or it will only benefit the children and society down the track. A lot of children tend to live more with their dad later on in life of their own choice as Mum can't handle them later on in life, but it's too late then. They need Mum and Dad from day one. If not together, then equal apart. Both parents and children need have say in separation. Unless there is a more equal playing field families will only be more separated. I am a tax paying dad, and have never been out of work or on welfare since I left school 26 years ago. But it seems to be that the system a tax paying dad supports and votes for is sometimes hard on him. The Family court and child support agency are tax payer funded but are not fair to parents. And there is a lot of support for Mums and families but no funds for separated dads. It's not fair. We don't want mothers and children to lose out, we just want a fair system. Children don't want to lose their dads to suicide, but it's happening and there is no or very little government support. There are a lot of very good dads out there hurting. And yes, we can charge nappies and we can make formula and we can bath children, wash clothes, iron clothes, vacuum floors and cook and mow lawns and hold down a job and pay taxes, but we do need a fair go! And we can cry too. And our kids are missing out on all the good dads.

Whats wrong with crying, whats wrong with showing emotion, whats wrong with writing

to spend as much time with your children as their mother does. What is wrong with a fair and equal custody agreement. Is that fair and in the best interests of the children. Yes it is. I don't want anyone to go through what our family has gone through. And I don't want my children to go through it either. But if equal custody after separation ever comes of age, it will only benefit families, even if separated, and it will be in the best interests of the children. And it will save lives, time and money. Isn't that what we strive for. Separation is not easy and should not be encouraged. The family unit is a trust at all times and all things are equal. Even after divorce no-one can be badly done by if everything is equal after separation. And it will only teach our children to be fair. They are watching us.

In the end the children are not going to benefit from being with one parent more than the other, but they just may benefit from equal love and time spent with both parents. Just knowing that mum and dad love them the same and want them the same and want the very best for them. I want them to see mum and dad. Children have the right to have contact with both of their parents on an equal basis unless it is in the children's best interests not to. Mediation between both parents and the children could be better than a family court. Both parents have to give up a lot and take equal responsibility for their children after separation. The parents can work out a schedule to suit their children and themselves. Equal custody won't suit everyone, but it is a

Quinn- starting point and you can work it out
from there. Eosun family will be different and one
size won't fit all. You can't throw a blanket over
everyone and say that's how it is. But start from
the middle and work from there.

Shared parenting is in the best interests of
the children and everyone else.

yours Faith Sullivan