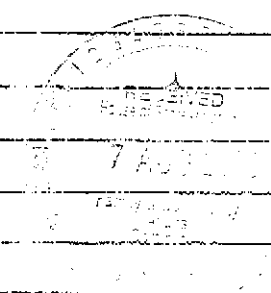


Submission No. 394
Date Received: 7-8-03
Secretary: _____

Pulgamurtie Nations
c/o Backers Hill 3880

7th August 2003.

Committee Secretary
Advising Committee on Family & Community Affairs
Child Custody Arrangements Inquiry
Dept of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra A.C.T. 2600



Dear Sir/Madam,

I agree the best interest of the child/children are of paramount consideration in any separation, but I think both parents should be allowed equal time with their children post separation, but for it to be workable I feel each parent must encourage their children to fulfil all obligations the court has given them in their orders. (If this is not fulfilled, you should have better penalties to encourage the fulfilment of those orders — or why have orders?) The examples are to follow:-

1. CONTACT. The contact time with the other parent isn't taken serious. When I say this, you turn up for contact & told 'They've gone to camp' doesn't matter if you live across town - well it does, BUT when it's a 500 km round trip I feel this isn't good enough OR they are leaving 10.00pm on a school excursion & your court order finishes at 7.00pm & they can't have contact because Mum can't have them ready in 3 hours so the child has to choose (Mum has only the clothes in their bags' missing from the wardrobe too!)

2. CONTACT PHONE CALLS These should not be restricted to court ordered time, you should be able to ring the children's family, that if any activity arises there is always to monitor.

3. HEALTH This is in my opinion the least looked at issue, for some unknown reason they seem to 'blame' each of the Doctors (the chemist will do) but 'Dental is a must'. We were asked to take a child to the chemist to get something for a 'pox' & the chemist said to see a Doctor before leaving town, it turned out to be 'impetigo' which indeed needed a Doctor's attention & the child had it for 4 days before we had contact.

5. OTHER ISSUES I feel if parents had children equal time, they would 'lose the line' so as they had no responsibilities in their time. What I care all of separated parents they often use the children as 'bargain power' - and children should not be used in this way.

CONTACT WITH OTHER PEOPLE If so, the children of separated parents should be given contact with the extended family, especially grandparents, unless you know them to be unsuitable, & they should not have to spend thousands of dollars to get contact. Grandparents

could be the only stable people in their life. This would not be such an issue should the parents have equal time with the children. Regardless of who has the children, Family gatherings, 21st, Wedding, special events etc, should be able to be negotiated without cancellations. Why should you have to arrange your life to a 'contact weekend' even if it is 3-4 weeks early or late.

Taking issues back to court is not the answer, in my opinion, as the court system is 'overworked', besides the cost involved. I wonder if families would be better served by an Agency like 'Fair Trading' only dealing in 'Family Issues' & should it be beyond an agency, then proceed to court. (This would 'fill up' the system!)

I feel equal time with parents adds a lot of issues on the child support, but it appears to me that the father accounts for everything & the mothers do not. I'm sure if mothers (or

custodial parent) had to be accountable. (I mean really accountable with receipts etc) this would not be an issue.

It is like to 'Thank You' for this opportunity of submitting this submission.

Yours faithfully.

N. E. Roberts

NOLA E. ROBERTS