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Secretary: .....

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 7 August 2003 10:21 PM  
**To:** Committee, FCA (REPS)  
**Cc:** Barry Williams

7 August 2003

**Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs  
Child Custody Arrangements Inquiry  
Department of the House of Representatives  
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Dear Honourable Members of the Parliamentary Committee

**Re: Shared Custody Inquiry**

Firstly, you must have read very many dry and submissions, so I thought before I start my submission that a little humour might possibly be appreciated. You probably all feel at times like the white mouse in the picture below about to be ensnared by your opponents !

Now onto business!

I am a father who has been fortunate to have achieved shared residence. I would like to explain and show you how shared residence benefits my children. I have attached some photographs (a picture is worth a thousand words). I would also like to explain to you about some issues regarding Child Support payable to Parties other than parents, who share custody of children.

At first, I was only allowed by the court to see my children 1 night per week (Friday nights and most of Saturdays). My son would be very upset when he had to be picked off me by his mother's family and taken away each Saturday. Gradually, however, the children's mother began to spend less time with the children. At first she let me gradually increase my contact with my children until I had them staying at my house every weekend from Saturday morning until Monday morning. She also let my children spend more time at the house of her brother and his wife (and their 6 children) throughout the week.

Eventually, about 2 years ago we went to court again, and the outcome was that residence was shared between myself and the maternal uncle and aunt. I was advised by my solicitor to accept the offer of having the children reside with me every week from Friday nights to Monday mornings, (except for the weekend commencing the first Friday of the month). This advice was given to me because in theory I could walk of the courtroom only having contact with my children once every 3 weekends, and my solicitor knew that I valued quality time with my children more than anything else.

This legal advice was given in spite of the family of the maternal aunt and uncle having 6 other children, and my son having a learning disability (he is one of about 5 children in a "special needs" class of children with similar learning disabilities at [REDACTED] Public School NSW). When my son is at the home of the maternal aunt and uncle and their 6 other children, there is a total of 8 children in their house. I do not know how any body could possibly rationally argue that residing in a crowded house of 8 children is in any way advantageous to a child with a learning disability, when the alternative is to spend a much greater proportion of one-to-one time with an adult who is prepared to teach him to read and develop skills for eventually attempting to cope in an adult world.

One possible motivation for the action of the maternal aunt and uncle in seeking residence of my 2 children is that the maternal aunt is now receiving \$1,740 per month in child support from me, plus an additional unknown (to me) amount of child support from the mother of my children (I do not know how much). She lives in a large double story brick home with her employed husband, plus earnings from her own employment - and only needing to care for my 2 children for 4 nights each week. It is interesting to compare this lucrative situation with that of many thousands of aged pensioners, and other people on welfare in our community who are trying to survive on a much lower amount every month).

Whilst in my care, as a father I enjoy contributing my time to my children. I especially value doing what ever I can to help develop my children's education.

On Saturdays, my daughter learns the violin, whilst I usually read a book to my son (who has a learning disability - his favourite book is "Bob the Builder"). I hope to one day teach my son to play a musical keyboard (I trained to 7th grade AMEB Piano standard when I was at school and I can still play the piano easily, so I hope to impart musical skills to my children).

My daughter also likes to sing, read and learn things. By having lots of time with her, I am able to encourage and develop her talents.

My children also enjoy outdoor activities such as swimming.

My children also join in family functions.

I hope that as an outcome of this inquiry into child custody that you consider the positive, constructive things that a father can contribute to the life of his children. We only live once, and children only have a childhood once.

Should you wish to discuss any of this with me, please do not hesitate to contact me either on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Thanks [REDACTED]