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Secretary:

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

Dear Sir

SUBMISSION FOR YOUR REPORT TO PARLIAMENT

Under the specific terms of reference you have, the best interests of the child are paramount. I trust it will be the conclusion of the committee that in all but exceptional circumstances (abuse, etc.) that the child should spend equal time with each parent.

Given this, we MUST introduce a proximity clause to make this possible.

Currently the father is shut out of the children's lives by a mother moving a long way away. Can you think of a worse punishment for a father than not seeing his children? Punishment for what? - no crime, just being the working parent. How grossly unfair and unjust!

Many, many people, including a large number of Commonwealth employees are told where to live and when to relocate.

The children should remain in the area they are familiar with, the school, friends, doctors AND THE FATHER.

To have the mother stay close is far less an imposition than denying a father access to his children.

The police will not take action when a woman walks out with the children without the father's consent (illegal) unless they are shown a court order. (The time taken to get a court order allows the new location to be classed as home). The law here is useless and must be rectified because we are currently allowing the mother to relocate at a distance rendering shared custody impossible.

Proximity as suggested would also take care of the contact with other persons, including their grandparents.

The second clause of the Terms of Reference relates to the Child Support formula.

Equal shared custody, made possible by geographical proximity would see no need for payments one way or the other, as both parents would have equal financial needs and equal opportunity to work. Problem solved by proximity.

I quote an example of the current formula and whilst I am not separated, I will use my income as an example, with 2 children.

\$624 gross weekly income	Compare this to the wife that leaves
126 Tax	
\$498	Single parent pension \$223 per week
168 27% of gross taken by Child Support Agency	Child allowance for 2 126
	C.S.A. from Dad 168
	517
330	
200 p.w. rent 3 bed house, cheap suburb	This is unearned and untaxed.
130 left for food, electricity, phone & clothes from Vinnies & no car & no hope of travelling long distances to see children	This is more than Dad earned when supporting whole family.

We are encouraging the non-working partner to leave and paying them handsomely to do so.

On top of this she can earn a substantial sum and not lose these untaxed benefits.

She also obtained custody by being the 'at home' parent, but as soon as custody is determined by the family court, she can obtain full time employment (same as Dad), obtain Government subsidised childcare for pre-schoolers, and not lose custody!

Why does the father have to pay C.S.A. 52 weeks of the year if he has the children for school holidays and every 2nd weekend. He is paying for their needs for this period and paying the mother as well.

As you can see, proximity is the central issue.

The areas specified in the Terms of Reference:

- Equal time, shared custody
- Contact with other familiar persons
- Child Support payments

All are resolved by geographical proximity.

And I enormous plus - the largest suicide group in this country is separated males.

Lets solve the issue in your brief and at the same time save some lives.

Yours faithfully



IAN BEST