

West Pennant Hills



COMMUNITY CHURCH

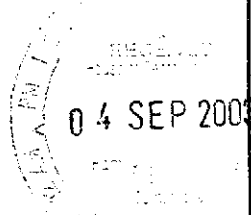
41 - 43 Eaton Road, West Pennant Hills NSW 2125  
P.O. Box 69, West Pennant Hills NSW 2125

Ph: (02) 9872 4200 Fax: (02) 9872 2947

A.B.N. 85 522 407 250  
www.wphcc.com  
email: wphcc@wphcc.com

7<sup>th</sup> August 2003

The Hon Alan Cadman MP  
PO Box 1173  
CASTLE HILL 1765



House of Representatives Standing Committee  
on Family and Community Affairs  
Submission No: 727  
Date Received: 7-8-03  
Secretary: .....

Dear Mr. Cadman,

In response to your request we have formulated a response to the questions put into your enquiry into the Child Custody Arrangements in the Event of Family Separation.

We have in our membership two couples who served as houseparents in Lutanda Children's Home for many years, Mr. and Mrs. David Bryant and Mr. and Mrs. Ray Dupen, and their input has been used in our response.

The issues are very complex and we are aware that it is nearly impossible to set in place fixed guidelines because in every case the emotions and support for one child need to be different than for another child.

In passing we mention that Pastor Adams has now resigned as our Pastor and is currently in Britain catching up with his family who now reside there.

Thank you for inviting us to have input into this matter.

May God bless you in your service,

Yours faithfully,  
On behalf of West Pennant Hills Community Church

Ray Dupen

West Pennant Hills



COMMUNITY CHURCH

41 - 43 Eaton Road, West Pennant Hills NSW 2125  
P.O. Box 69, West Pennant Hills NSW 2125

Ph: (02) 9872 4200 Fax: (02) 9872 2947

A.B.N. 85 522 407 250  
www.wphcc.com  
email: wphcc@wphcc.com

**Response to the Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs Inquiry  
into Child Custody Arrangements in the Event of Family Separation**

In reference to the factors outlined in Part (a) we respond as follows:

- (i) The best interests of the child must be held as paramount
1. Where separating parents can achieve it, equal time would be desirable providing other stable time frames would not be affected.  
e.g. routine of school, homework etc.
  2. Availability of each parent to child's school.
  3. Suitability of accommodation when changing from one parent to another.  
e.g. if the child has been used to their own bedroom it would not be right for them to have to share a room with one parents new partners child.
  4. Suitability of the parent to provide a stable environment when the child stays with them.  
e.g. a parent who is emotionally or mentally unstable.
  5. The child used as a tool to effect revenge on the other partner of the marriage.
  6. What attitude and quality of care is being provided by any new partner of the separated parent.

In respect to the second question of Part (a)(i) we believe that rebuttal should occur at anytime change takes place in the circumstances that effect the child, that is, "When the best interests of the child are not being provided".

- (ii) We believe that generally speaking Grandparents have a strong influence for good upon children; therefore denying Grandparents and other, significant adults such as Aunts and Uncles is not in the best interests of the child, unless there is a significant reason for not permitting access.  
e.g. Child molestation or strong criticism of the parent the child loves.

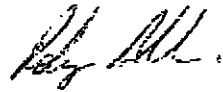
Because Grandparents are one step removed from the emotion of the separation we believe they can provide a respite and safe haven to the child who so often is feeling the emotional effect of separation, even blaming themselves as a cause of the breakdown of the marriage.

The Grandparents can also pick up on incidents and observations which may indicate ongoing problems in the child's upbringing and have constructive input in the child's well being...

Emotionally Grandparents, Aunts and Uncles can provide love and support to a grieving child in a different way to other persons.

e.g. an Uncle can provide a good male role model to a boy when the father is not present.

- (b) We believe that the existing formula for child support is not equitable in its current form and needs to be revised. We are aware of cases where one parent carries all the financial burden and the other seems to be better off financially than they were before the marriage broke up.



Ray Dupen

Signed on behalf of the West Pennant Hills Community Church