

Malcolm McCulloch  
13/38 Bootle Place  
Phillip, ACT  
Canberra 2606

House of Representatives Standing Committee  
on Family and Community Affairs

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

**Subject: Child Custody Arrangements Inquiry**

Dear Sirs,

You will undoubtedly receive many submissions on the impracticality and difficulties that may arise from joint custody arrangements. However I believe for the following reasons that this should be the basic starting point from which custodial arrangements are made.

1. **It is important that children benefit from shared interaction with both parents (father and mother).** Under the current system once one of the parents (usually the male) leaves the family home, even with the best of intentions from both parties, shared interaction decreases dramatically. It is important that both sons and daughters can have the opportunity to interact with both parents in a proper shared way.
2. **The current system is biased towards one gender (generally the mother) and too readily facilitates separation and divorce.** Under the current system, apart from exceptional circumstances, it is generally assumed that the mother will become the main custodial parent. Thus when difficulties arise between parents, there is a relatively simple straightforward path for separation, based on the assumption that one partner (generally mother) will be the prime custodial parent. The financial aspects of child support are specified by the Child Support Agency, and based on this, property settlement etc follows. Thus separation/divorce can readily occur with joint custody rarely being considered. This neglects an important aspect of what constitutes 'the best interests of the children'.
3. **The alternative of joint custody.** This is not straightforward, but also not impossible. For example, arrangements such as the children stay in the family home and the parents alternate. The establishment of two more modest 'family homes' with each parent.

I hope these comments are of some value.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm McCulloch