

House of Representatives	Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs
Submission No.	63
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Sent: Tuesday, July 29, 2003 8:28 PM
 Attach: A submission to the " Inquiry into child custody arrangements in the event of family separation .eml
 Subject: Fw: A submission to the " Inquiry into child custody arrangements in the event of family separation "

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— Original Message —

To: committee.reps@aph.gov.au
 Sent: Tuesday, July 29, 2003 8:27 PM
 Subject: A submission to the " Inquiry into child custody arrangements in the event of family separation "

Att: The Minister for Children and Youth affairs - The Hon Larry Anthony MP.

The Attorney - General , the Hon Daryl Williams AM QC MP.

A Submission to the " inquiry " into Child custody arrangements in the event of a family separation "

I wish to add my very painful experience as a **submissions** to this inquiry as I truly believe my recent journey may help you better understand the feelings of a " discarded " father.

I was married for fifteen (15) years and the last 2 (two) years were spent subject to IVF(this was emotional roll-coaster) which magically produced an absolute beautiful baby boy, [REDACTED]. Then about 10 months later my complete life " changed ". My wife (now ex wife) left with our child - [REDACTED]. Then I discovered a very tragic side of her - she controlled my level in involvement with my son. I was not allowed to have any involvement in his life other than 4 hours a week. This lasted for many, many months while we sorted out the property settlement and this very limited child contact was subject to constant change i.e. completely at the whim of my ex wife - often it was cancelled due the child having other social engagements (I was never informed of these details) and "supposed " illness. I was never allowed

details of these "illness" at all! During the 10 months my son [REDACTED] lived with me and my ex wife I took a very active role, I would be up during the night caring for him every week and I would be constantly with him while ex wife would go out "shopping". I would start my day at 5.00 am in the morning and care for him until I left for work and as soon as I returned home at about 5.30 pm I would be very actively involved in his joint care. So I had real "hands on" experience as any father while being the sole "bread winner". So the shock I experienced when I was reduced to 4 hours a week to be an active father it was heart breaking. I was (as well as my own family) not allowed to attend his first birthday party, and very other birthday, but had to pay all the expenses.

After a very hard round of begging for more time I received 24 hours a week until he is 18 years old and no involvement in health, education and any other issues I have very token contact other than, two hours on Christmas Day and no contact on my birthday.

I have no criminal history, no other adverse history of any kind other than a few council parking tickets which always pay before the due date. Now the only way I can obtain a better chance of being a more active father is to file a "request" of more time and natural child involvement, is to file an action in the [REDACTED] Family Court. This as you would be aware is very expensive and will take some time to reach a hearing.

I felt I have some *sort* of right to contact to my son [REDACTED] while respecting he has a mother, so he can get to know his father and my family being [REDACTED]'s grandparents and his Aunt, my sister. I have asked in both verbal and in the written form for a co / joint parenting plan but my ex wife just refused to respond to any of my requests. I have completed a number of parenting and single father's courses to be able to offer my son [REDACTED] the best I am able to offer him. I have asked my ex wife to consider [REDACTED]'s interests before her desire to collect all the social transfer payments on offer to her.

What I would like to "happen" is to have 7 days continuous contact with [REDACTED] and then the next 7 days with his mother. While having a joint "plan" in respect to schooling and other issues would be more unified in terms of a more meaningful parenting plan. I truly believe that [REDACTED], my son, will be the better for this

combined and equal approach to "separated parenting". As I strongly believe that both myself and ex wife have a lot to offer him from our own now separate life expenses.

I strongly believe that I am a better than a "cheque book" who role so reduced to pay Child support and a one day a week baby sitter. It that being a father in to day's world?

Currently, I do not believe that my son's true interests are being served and will never be until I am allowed to be more active and supportive role in terms of this on going needs, but I am completely powerless to do any thing to change or correct this imbalance to my current role as a father. My only real option is to use the courts to try to correct this imbalance. But this will "waist" funds which could be used to provide for [REDACTED]'s future and our own personal welfare. But this an option I am considering as my only remaining way to reclaim my role of a parent.

My son is now 3 years of age and this unfortunate situation has lasted now for more than two years and I am still very sad with this aspect of my life. It has effect my level of performance in terms of my employment.

If the aspect of child contact was better charted and truly equal (seven days by seven days contact) and then their would be one less thing to have to deal with when faced with a marriage separation and rebuilding my "new single life". The effect of this parental imbalance can only be having an negative effect on the child, being confusing and reducing the enjoyment of having one less active loving parents and the forgotten aspect of the extended family on the fathers side who just miss out.

If there were any charted cases of child neglect and child abuse then the courts could rule on reduced contact. But in my case and in may other cases fathers we are reduced to less than a fair child contact regime thus left to be a second class parent. I feel in the main highly burdened when it comes to child support payments and in my case I would love the chance to "trade" *part* of this payment to be a real and active father to with my son. I know I would truly love the opportunity to resume the role of a father again. Reduce my working hours could to allow me to be a willing "slave" to my son if I could spend time more time with him.

Some fathers I meet feel so saddened that they just "opt" out for sometime to try to better understand why a marriage separation means the loss of fatherhood as well as. The one comment I have heard is why do I have I also lost my children as well? It is the little thing that I feel "robbed" of : for example ;at bed time the loss of reading a story before sleep & meal time which are small but are priceless lost for that one day a week.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

[REDACTED]