

Submission No: 50

Date: [REDACTED], 30-7-03

Committee Secretary,
Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs,
Child Custody Arrangements Inquiry,
Department of the House of Representatives,
Parliament House,
Canberra A.C.T. 2600.

27th July 2003.

SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST.

Re: FAMILY COURT PROCEEDINGS, CHILD CUSTODY, & CHILD SUPPORT.
Response to letter from Federal Member for Richmond, Larry Anthony M.P.

- 1) It is with experience that Family Court proceedings should try to be avoided at all costs, to alleviate the bitterness and heartbreak children are subjected to. In fact it is the parents ignorance and belief that they are a better parent, therefore, they behave more like children themselves, fighting over a toy, throwing accusations, even lies to 'win' hence, forgetting the children's needs.
- 2) It is a disgrace that if there is not any chance of a 'private, peace keeping agreement' or fast resolution intervention in the Family Court Act, that the children suffer the consequences of their parents disrespect toward each other.
- 3) It seems inconceivable that two people cannot communicate as adults when there is so much at stake. If one parent has the ability to care for and provide a warm loving safe and stable environment for the children of a marriage, then it should be focused upon with scrutiny to be absolutely certain that this will continue, and not be a short time 'bluff' to gain self power.
- 4) My personal belief is that contact with both parents (unless there is significant reason to doubt the safety of a child when in the care of one parent) should not be denied for the sake of the children. Children of broken relationships are often traumatised if they don't feel loved by both parents, and for one parent to express inadequacies of the other to the children, is encouraging a feeling of insecurity within them, as they feel they are to blame for all this animosity. I also believe same as above with regards to Grandparents and immediate family. I would feel concern however if either parent pursued a relationship that was not in the best interests of moral standards and ethics, hence being a possible danger upon the children's welfare, where possible child abuse is to be questioned. Mentally or physically. Then, intervention would have to prevail, for the child's happiness and future development.
- 5) As to the issue of children spending equal time with each parent, I personally believe that this could cause more upheaval to all parties concerned, and foremost the children. They are not parcels to be packed up and sent every two weeks from 'A' to 'B'. Children adjust well in routine, relaxation, homework, expectations of knowing they are home, familiarity, freedom of speech and adapting to a feeling of security. Not all parents wish to provide this comfort zone that children rely on. If our Government wishes to make this proposal, then they should probably consider the effects this could have upon parents work schedules, which could cause a disastrous effect on employment, and pose hardship upon the 'non-resident' parent, who in fact, as our current usual access arrangements stand, this parent actually spends more 'quality time' with the children than the 'resident' parent, who has a routine, and the everyday care to 'expose them to the realism of life, commitment, school etc.'

- 6) Child Support! I believe in child support in more ways than one. Speaking of not denying access to the 'non resident' parent, I, as I have stated believe that children should have a good relationship with both parents, is of high priority for the children's stability etc. (I consider that as being part of child support in a non-financial way.) I was subjected to 5 years of Family Court proceedings, it was evident and crucial to the children's future that I had to fight for their rights. I lost so much of my hard earned financial assets I had for the children, and the only thing left now is my home for their security. I do not trust my former husband, as he left the children and me [REDACTED]. He entered my life with no financial input, and walked out just over 5 years later, with \$20,000 worth of assets I'd bought him! I tried to talk to him about the children, and some financial agreement for them. He refused any commitment what so ever. I suggested a private account for them that neither he or I could touch, so when they matured, they'd have money for either education purposes or whatever avenue they wished to pursue that would be of mature decision.
- 7) Child Support Agency: As my husband refused any private agreement, I was then obliged to enter this Government department, to help provide funding for the children. Now, down the track, my husband is in arrears of approximately \$24,000. [REDACTED], I did a review with the Agency, as I'd written to every political figure in the country, begging for some overhaul of the system. In that review, my husband stated he was earning approximately \$40,000 p.a. but did not know what his net income was after tax. His form was somewhat limited in detail. I focused strongly on his workplace, his way of contracts, who effectively employs him, to the extent of total nausea and exhaustion! Recently there was a C.S.A. team brought up to the [REDACTED] area, I made an appointment to discuss my position. I put enormous effort into my file. I contacted my new 'Case Manager' last week to find she was not available, I spoke with another lady there, and went through all the same process again! She gave me some information that I was told I was not allowed to know, but it just slipped out, he has not lodged a tax return since [REDACTED]. She obviously was not informed or trained properly for the job!
- 8) The biggest 'loop-hole' and the easiest for these 'non paying' parents is to simply form a company name, hence, they live how they wish with no conscience, as they, personally own nothing in their name! He sees the children regularly, and unfortunately it puts a tremendous strain on me, watching him take them and knowing the truth about his obsession to choose to not support them with their everyday needs.
- 9) The Child Support Agency is either totally inadequate, or have their hands tied up with 'red tape!' As far as the Government expenditure is concerned, this is a total waste of honest taxpayer's money! Not to mention the Government's payments for more public servants not equipped for the job!
- 10) I believe in two issues, one is that I do not see it to be fair to the poor old worker who is paying steep child support to a woman who has ripped him off, taken the kids and re-married a man who can afford the big house for her, car and private schooling for the children and her make-up and spa bath! I think there should be justice where the natural father sees his children and does not feel intimidated by the luxuries he can't afford. The other issue is, that, no matter which way it goes, the children, if not too emotionally bruised, will grow up and make their own choices. Family Court is a farce.

Yours sincerely, [REDACTED]
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