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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/Madam

I wish to make a submission to the *Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into child custody arrangements in the event of family separation*.

- When the Family Court orders that a Children's Representative be appointed, the Children's Representative should investigate ALL previous history of both parents from when they left school to the present time, as well as both family's background, standing in the community, stability (where the father and mother have lived and worked since school, and where the grandparents and other family members have lived and work), how the children have fitted into the community i.e. school, kindergarten, sporting groups, etc, how the children's parents have cared for and brought up the children (by interviewing people that have had contact with the family over years). The Children's Representative's findings should not rely solely on the Family Report and other part investigations. The Family Report should be completed only by full investigation of the above and not be a couple of hours interview of each parent, grandparents and perhaps a family member. All affidavits, medical records, police records, and letters between the respective solicitors, etc should also be taken into consideration when writing the Family Report. Magistrates cannot make informed decisions on part evidence.
- The Children's Representative should not have "budgetary constraints" when there is a complicated situation as to which parent should have residency of the children.
- Each parent's financial situation should be investigated to see whether either is capable of looking after the children.
- The parent who has residency should not be solely reliant on Centrelink support from Government and/or the father.
- Day-care should only be provided when the parent has a job.

- Fathers should not be disadvantaged because they work as to whether they should have Sole Residency of the children.
- Mothers should not have residency of the children just because they have been at home looking after the children together with day-care for 50 hours per week.
- Government assistance (Centrelink) to single parents should be investigated – it seems too easy to “get on the system” i.e. children’s day-care, parental allowance, single mother’s pension, rent assistance, etc.
- Fathers should not be penalized at Property Settlement and Maintenance of the children. Any gifts from the father’s parents (or other family) to him prior to the marriage or during the marriage (in the course of business) should not be taken away from him personally.
- Wives should not just think of a marriage as something of a “financial windfall” when there is separation.
- If the mother has been given Joint Residency of the children, investigations should be carried out to make sure that she is actually caring for the children properly.
- There should be no denial of contact for the father by the mother.
- Distance should not play a part in the best interests of the child. Parents should be made to live closer for the children’s sake in order for the children to have contact with both parents all the time.
- All costs in bringing up the children, travelling for contact, etc should be shared equally in a situation where the children have equal access to both parents.
- Children should be able to see their grandparents when they want to, especially when the grandparents have taken a supporting role in the children’s lives from when they were born. In rural situations, children often have contact with grandparents on a daily basis. This is all part of the family unit where children learn about life.
- Obviously, the Legal System process would be opposed to any changes from the present, as it appears that each party “feeds” off the other.

I firmly believe that children need both parents to love and care for them and children do not need to be a part of the conflict between the parents after separation.

Yours faithfully

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

A Very Caring Mother and Grandparent