

Submission No.

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Secretary:

Hobson, Megan (P. Dutton, MP)

From: Jason Falcongren
Sent: Monday, 18 August 2003 2:30 PM
To: Dutton, Peter (MP)

Subject: inquiry into child custody

In response to your call for concern into the 'inquiry into child custody arrangements...', I would like to contribute the following points:

I have been a single parent (father) for the last five years, dedicating my time essentially to the role of primary carer for my two boys now aged 6 and 8yrs. I have also taken the opportunity offered to me to undertake retraining so that I may become a teacher when the time is right.

I am greatly appreciative of the single parent pension as it provides me with the opportunity to focus on the role of being a parent for my children in their important formative years. I have been able to make sure their needs for a safe, supportive and stable home environment are being met. We live at a subsistence level, where the children may go without some of the luxuries which are now considered the norm in the lives of some of their school mates-most of whom have double income parents. However, I feel (and hope my kids will eventually appreciate) that what I can provide for them as a dedicated parent -both at home, in their school and in the other child-parent related environments-will be of more far-reaching benefit. I have noticed amongst other parents I am in contact with, that there is a growing social pressure for all parents to go to work, to meet 'economic imperatives'. I firmly believe that the needs of our children are being severely undermined by this situation.

The main thrust of my concern in this proposed 50-50 custody arrangement, is that it removes the role of a dedicated parent. It may be possible for functional, equally-shared, parenting responsibilities to exist in a harmonious relationship, based on common values and good communication in change-over of parenting time. However this would be the exception in most separated family situations.

I am a strong supporter of substantial involvement by the non-primary parent in the lives of their children, however not to the extent where the child is denied a strong consolidated foundation in their primary site of stability and security- their home.

With only half the single parent pension available, I would be forced to seek employment to supplement a short fall in my pension. Opportunities for work which fall into the timetable constraints of school life are few and far between. Even if a parent is lucky enough to find one, the parent is rarely in a position of being ready to meet their child's needs shortly after returning from work. Similarly an increased reliance on child care facilities would further serve to remove the child from the personal attention that only a parent can give.

The most important point I would like to convey to you is the risk the 50-50 proposition will have on our children by removing the opportunity for a child to be entitled to a dedicated parent. It is an area in which I have a high level of personal experience-both in seeing the benefits a dedicated parent can offer, but also in seeing the detrimental effects of not having a dedicated parent. There are many other arguments to include in opposition to the 50-50 proposition, based on psychological research and other social and geographical concerns, however I would defer to the more informed testimony of other parties who are lobbying against this initiative. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to air my concerns and hope that your prime consideration remains to be in the best interests of our children.

Regards Jason Falcongren

18/08/2003