

Submission No: 1434

Date Received: 15-8-03

To The Committee Secretary

In response to the child custody arrangement inquiry I believe that a whole range of factors should be taken into account starting with

- * the age of the children
- * the sex of the children
- * who has been the primary carer of the child
- * how much time either parent has spent with the child prior to separation including grandparents.
- * whether either parent has an addiction whether it be drugs alcohol or gambling.
- * which parent can provide proper care of the child such as emotionally and financially
- * whether either parent is violent or negligent of care toward the child
- * whether the child is going to be looked after by the parent or by other means for long periods, example daycare, babysitters, grandparents etc.
- * whether the parents work hours fit in with the child's activities eg school home routine.
- * whether the child need specialised care
- * whether either parent cannot provide stability for the child eg continually out of work, cannot find work easily, constantly moving houses/towns, constantly changing partners in short periods of time

I believe the court should not order children should have contact with the other person but the children should be able to make up their own minds if old enough to understand. If children are too young to understand then the court should take into account how much time the other person has spent with them prior to the separation whether it's the primary carer or not.

I believe child support formula is a mine field towards the child's needs and contact for either parent. Being most children become a bargaining chip for money for example one parent wants shared care consisting of 146 nights per year so then they get money from Centrelink (FAO) payments and then the amount of maintenance they pay to the other parent is then halved.

Shared Care example

I will give my own experience as example how it is with my husband and my case at the moment.

Myself - I get single pension of \$440 per fortnight and FAO of about \$380 per fortnight then maintenance for 2 children of \$431 per month (not payed so far).

He gets - Wages of about \$2000 per month. He was getting FAO per fortnight plus he is working a couple of nights per week cash in hand and not paying maintenance.

If he has shared care he is payed the FAO by Centrelink then maintenance is reduced to \$220 per month (he pays me less if I work and still has his cash in hand work which is not taxed or accounted for in yearly wages).