

P O Box 1945 305

Submission No: 4825

Date Received: 4-8-03

Secretary:

Dear Sir / Madam,

I write this letter in order to make a submission to the Joint Parenting review.

Let me say from the outset, that I am a member of Lone Fathers Association, and have been since my wife & I separated in November 1991.

When I was trying to work out an access agreement with my ex-wife, I was advised by my solicitor that it would be almost impossible for me to obtain full custody of my son, and to not even waste my time & money trying.

Instead, I was dragged into a knock-down drag out fight just to get any access at all. This not only cost me quite a great deal of money, but the mental stress of (possibly) not seeing my son again very nearly drove me over the edge.

Non-custodial parents are not criminals, but Australian citizens who should be given equal treatment in our Courts. The Family Court will tell you that all parents are treated equally, but facts and figures clearly show differently; the non-custodial parent is clearly a big loser in these situations.

Most of this bias can be traced to the fact that the chief justice of the Family Court was one of the main players in drawing up the Child Support Act. In most cases, women regard children as a meal ticket, and go to great lengths to retain custody in order to maximize their income from their former spouse.

I am always amused by women who seem to regard children as entirely their property, but entirely a father's financial responsibility. In this day and age, this is unfair. Children are not possessions to be "owned" by either one of the parents. Men, today, are just as willing to act as a full time parent as the mother is, it is given to them to do so. The only disadvantage a male, non-custodial parent <sup>has</sup> is that they are usually working full time, whereas most custodial mothers seem to be able to obtain pensions allowing them to stay at home, when, in most cases, they could possibly be out working & still be able to care for their children, with the help of their former partner.

In my case, my son has now turned 18 years of age, and has gone to Uni. I believe I got a reasonable deal, for its time, on access to my son over a 12 year period, but I would have welcomed a lot more. It is my hope that these younger men now getting caught up in the same situation as I was, in 1991, will be able to get a much better deal than I got.

One of the main arguments that will be put forward, arguing against any change, is that of possible child abuse. There is no evidence to suggest that, non-custodial parents are any more guilty of this crime than any other individual or group. It could be argued that a child living between 2 separate households would be less likely to be confronted with this horror than one locked into a single, closed household or ethnic grouping. The fact that the odd parent

3  
may be guilty of this offence, should <sup>not</sup> mean that  
all non-custodial parents should be barred from  
access to their children; this is simply collective  
guilt and blame, and is grossly unfair

Thank you for the opportunity to  
make this submission.

Yours Truly  
John O'Leary