

House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Family and Community Affairs

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House of Representatives

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE
ON FAMILY AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

25 July 03

Dear Committee Members.

The question I wish to place before the committee is,

Does a child have the right to maintain contact with both natural paternal and maternal grandparents, if that child so wishes?

In the situation of the child's natural parents separating and then the custodial parent re-marrying to a partner who refuses the child to have any contact with both paternal and maternal grandparents, what are the rights of the child?

This is a situation thousands of children around the country find themselves in.

I have taken this very problem to the Family Court. The child and mother had lived with my wife and I, the maternal grandparents, for five years, before the mother re-married and moved interstate. Judgment being that the child wanted to have contact with grandparents but due to the objection of the step-father and influence he held over the child's mother, my application was dismissed.

Surely it must be a basic human right for a child to have contact with their grandparents.

I can only speculate with concern the potential for emotional damage done to children who are in this situation.

In most Family Court action taken, it is the child's relationship with their grandparents that suffer instant and permanent damage. It is normal and a natural part of growing for a child to build a loving relationship with their grandparents. To take this relationship away from a child is not normal.

Grandparents are an important part of a child's up-bringing, countless studies and surveys bare this out. It is that grandparents who hold the family history. It is this history that gives a child a sense of belonging. A person with no family history is like a tree with no roots.

Yours faithfully,