

## Draft submission to Child Support Inquiry – 5/8/03

Submission No. 1058

Date Received: I, as well as some of my siblings  
8-8-03

Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_

This submission is based on personal experience and upon anecdotal evidence. I, as well as some of my siblings, friends and colleagues, have weathered the storm of separation and divorce.

### Introduction:

Parenting a child is often both the most rewarding yet challenging opportunity a person ever undertakes. Each child is different and responds to their parents, siblings, peers and circumstances differently in gaining their own life experience.

To raise well adjusted, confident, socially responsible young men and women is the challenge every parent faces and they must be supported and encouraged by Governments and government agencies. Unfortunately today, more and more young people are lacking in self-esteem, confidence and social skills than in the past. This is evidenced through their higher drug use, at-risk behaviours, violence, teen pregnancy (6th-highest teenage pregnancy rate and 3rd-highest abortion rate among AECD countries) and suicide.

The most important aspect of parenting is love – love for a child demonstrated through providing time and energy to support each child to achieve their best.

When two people become parents, most often, they make a commitment to raise their child in a safe and happy environment. That commitment does not necessarily mean that both parents will spend equal time, energy, or financial resources in achieving that goal. It certainly doesn't mean that the parent who spends more money on, or time or energy with, the child is a "better parent".

Separation and divorce rarely happen when parents are happy, cooperative and in a satisfying relationship. Rather it occurs when two people have reached a point where frustration, anger, disagreement and sometimes violence is destructive to the relationship. Unfortunately it is often in this environment of anger and dysfunction that parents are required to make decisions about future arrangements for their children trying to keep "the best interests of the child/children" in mind.

The challenge of "deciding respective time with each parent" cannot be simply a matter of determining the hours per day/ week or month each parent should spend with their child - that is clearly too simplistic. Good quality time spent with each child should be the aim of every parent whether or not they are living with the child and this cannot be legislated by Government.

### Social policy – Australia's future:

The physical, emotional, social and spiritual well being of Australian children is of vital importance to all Australians. Therefore this Inquiry has been asked to call for submissions into child custody arrangements in the event of family separation. The Australian Government must be applauded in taking this action.

The Family and Community affairs Committee, of the Australian Government, has been ask to investigate -

- (a) Given that the best interests of the child are the paramount consideration:
  - (i) what other factors should be taken into account in deciding the respective time each parent should spend with their children post separation, in particular whether there should be a presumption that children will spend equal time with each parent and, if so, in what circumstances such a presumption could be rebutted; and
  - (ii) in what circumstances a court should order that children of separation parents have contact with other persons, including their grandparents.
- (b) Whether the existing child support formula works fairly for both parents in relation to their care of, and contact with, their children.

### What factors should be taken into account?

- Age of Child/children: How each parent provide love / care / control / happy environment / stability for their children – changes as the child grows up.
- Children with special needs: Children with special needs
- Importance of quality time: How parents demonstrate love / care / provide control / a happy environment and stability for their children – varies according to their own experience/ their personality /temperament and the personality/temperament of the child. Some people speak the "love language" of quality time, others appreciate words of affirmation, or gifts, or ..... as being more important.

- Provision of financial stability: Some parents spend considerable time away from their children without being separated from their partner. If a parent is in the armed forces, travel long distances for work etc. they may be away from the children for extended times. The needs of these children are just as important as the needs of children from separated parents, but balancing "equal time" may be harder on these families if the parents separate or divorce.

To prescribe a "time requirement" on parents may create as many problems as it seeks to address.

## The Assumption of equal time following separation

Both parents are equally responsible for the creation of the child, for the provision of a suitable environment for the child and for adequately providing for the financial, social, emotional and physical needs of their children.

1. It is therefore reasonable to expect that children should have equal access to time with both parents following separation. In the majority of cases this would be the fairest starting point however there are circumstances where equal time is not going to be appropriate or practical and IWA 7 assessment by a psychologist or the police and the possibility of initial custody visits being "supervised visits" etc could all play a part in finding the "best outcome for the children" as well as giving both parents the most appropriate determination  
Draft submission to Child Support Inquiry – 5/8/03

This submission is based on personal experience and upon anecdotal evidence – I, as well as some of my siblings, friends and colleagues, have weathered the storm of separation and divorce.

### Introduction:

- Parenting a child is often both the most rewarding yet challenging opportunity a person ever undertakes. Each child is different and responds to their parents, siblings, peers and circumstances differently in gaining their circumstances differently in gaining their own life experience.
- 2.

To raise well adjusted, confident, socially responsible young men and women is the challenge every parent faces and they must be supported and encouraged by Governments and government agencies. Unfortunately today, more and more young people are lacking in self-esteem, confidence and social skills than in the past. This is evidenced through their higher drug use, at-risk behaviours, violence, teen pregnancy (6th-highest teenage pregnancy rate and 3rd-highest abortion rate among AECDC countries) and suicide.