

House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Family and Community Affairs

Submission No: 1394

From: KEVIN BUCKBY [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 5 September 2003 9:42 AM
To: Committee, FCA (REPS)
Subject: Child Access and Support

Received: 5-9-03
Secretary: [REDACTED]

Dear Committee Members

I have been spending enormous amounts of time on the internet sending emails and reading related documents on the above mentioned issue as my life is not only touched by these issues, but consumed by them. I have more experience than any person needs, as I have been a single mother and currently have not recieved Child Support from my sons father since March this year. A court case bought about by child access issues and the related stress was partly to blame for the breakdown of my first marriage and has me on anti-depressants due to same issues in my current relationship. I have 3 stepchildren whom I have known and loved for the major part of their lives, and now we are denied access by their mother who has spent 6 years systmatically trying to push us from their lives. She now simply refuses access despite even the children's plea's. As you can imagine, my thinking is that I have been put into these situations for a reason. In addition, my fiance has a sister who is on drugs, has 5 children, 4 living with her, one who we just found out has been molested when she was allowed to frequent a single man neighbours house by herself. She is only @ 5 years old.

So ask me if the SYSTEMS set up to protect our children, our families has failed us and I can only answer YES!!!

I took the time to email John Howard and each Member of Parliment which would mean you may all have previously recieved an email which partly outlines my story. Today I recieved a letter in response from the Hon Daryl Williams AM QC MP via George Sanderson, Acting Director, Ministerial and Parliamentary Services. Unfortunately I was not made aware until today that a public hearing was to be held in Brisbane today. I hope there will be more.

1) Family Court hearings are taking too long and quite frankly no solicitor we have spoken to is encouraging of a favourable outcome. We don't want to be told that we can only see the kids alternate weekends. We're distressed enough as it is. But that is the advice we have recieved time and time again, that The Family Court favours mothers with residence and fathers with access. We want to hear about our kids day at school, read them a bedtime story and kiss them good night. We want to be part of the every day that makes up their life.

2) Even if we decide to partake in this farce of a system, end results can take 2 years. And even then we anticipate the mother will still refuse access. So all the stress and anti-depressants, all the money, and all that time to have our hopes crushed. What a joke. On top of the insult to injury, the Courts are loathed to enforce access by punishing the party with residence of the child/children. So back to square one. You don't need to spend time and money on finding out why men are suiciding over these issues. Don't waste your time. You have the facts. What you need is an action plan.

3) The answer would be for each parent to put forward a parenting plan on separation, outlining separately their proposal for contact with each parent and any issues that may affect contact. With the ideal being a 50/50 arrangement, a judge could then determine what each parent wants. Not all parents may want as much contact. At this point the Systems are set up to cause problems between parents as residency of the children has lots of perks. We need a system where the parents are rewarded for their willingness to encourage a relationship and time with the other party and not take it away. Unfortunately people love to win, often at all costs. If winning could only happen by a willingness to share with the other party, people will be forced to change their thinking.

4) There are many counselling groups set up for separated couples to approach for help to overcome their differences. We tried to get my partner's ex to attend one of these to work towards a solution, however she refused. I am sure there are many other cases where a least one party doesn't want a different solution and simply refuses to attend. I suggest that there be groups (possibly formed from current services) set up, and that newly separated couples must attend a certain number of times.

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These would be sessions on the importance of meaningful contact with both parents and other related issues.

5) The same should happen for children. Children need support and parents should be compelled to take their children to these sessions.

6) Child Support should be based in on level of income across the board, based on the actual cost of raising a child and divided in half, assuring financial responsibility is divided fairly between both parents. Each parent should have the right to share their excess finances with the children while they are in their care, as they see fit. I don't believe that some of the excessive amounts that paying parents are currently being forced to pay are going solely to the children. I believe that in a large number of cases the children are no better off for the extra that is paid as they do not receive the benefits of it anyway. CSA is well off the mark if they think that money is what makes children grow up balanced. My son's father earns much less than I do and I don't see my son suffering when he goes over there. In fact it is a good thing that he gets to experience the different financial circumstances of the different households. I keep him more grounded. My son and I discuss it when he brings it up, we discuss that love is what is important, not the latest X-BOX game.

Too much discussion has been had. We know most of the issues. What we need is some immediate answers. As it stands, I will probably never see my stepchildren again. By the time they grow up. Their very manipulative mother will have filled their heads with so much rubbish that it will make forming a relationship with them virtually impossible. And I am very concerned how it will affect their relationships later on. My own parents divorced when I was young and my father just wasn't around much. Although we have all reformed a bond with him, it is not nearly as close as the one we share with our mother. Between childhood and becoming an adult, we learn about who our parents are, the good, the bad and the ugly. It's a very special relationship, where the depth of the bond lets us know we can rely on someone even in adult life to nurture us when life takes its inevitable twists and turns. We can show our vulnerabilities to our parents that we dare not show our friends. But the bond starts to form early and is a continual process, that if we lose that contact we never get quite the same bond back.

I am contactable by email should you wish to discuss my email with me.

Our children need to be treated like the precious people they are. And they need to be protected, and their cries of despair heard.

Thankyou for trying to make changes for the better.

Kind regards

Arna Lissette