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House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs	
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Secretary:	

Child Custody Arrangements Inquiry
Parliament House, Canberra
ACT 2600

August 3rd 2003

Re: Submission for Equal Shared Parenting

To Whom It May Concern

I would like to take this opportunity to make a submission for the support of equal and shared parenting in the aftermath of a divorce or separation.

It has been my experience, being involved with divorce fathers and an advocate for shared parenting for almost 20 years, that many fathers going through divorce and child custody battles are far too often subjected to horrendous discrimination in the family courts. This often leads to unbearable frustration and, at times, to suicide. I am, as well as many other fathers, absolutely convinced that the family courts is still an adversarial system that only perpetuates the animosity and is actually doing more harm to our children. The family court, still, has the antiquated belief that children are far better (after a divorce) off with their mothers with only the fathers, at best, being visitors.

This could not be further from the truth, with the overwhelming number of scientific researched information that we now have access to. This thoroughly researched information, generally, states that the family courts are, in fact, undervaluing how immensely important fathers are in the lives of their children. I have only downloaded a few, there are literally hundreds on the Internet under "shared parenting", for you to peruse through. The highly creditable American Institution of Family Phycology has recently released one particular report, which I would like to mention. This, 14 year empirical study, report has conclusively shown that when father are allowed to equally participate in the lives of their children (after

a divorce) the children were better off educationally, emotionally, socially and had a higher self-esteem than children who did not.

We hear far too often how many young people, particularly boys, that have committed suicide or an increase in juvenile crime and delinquency and the high juvenile incarceration rate. And research continues to demonstrate that many of these “anti-social behaviour are often contributed to a lack of good “male role models” in their lives.

Yes Children need their mothers. However, they also need their fathers. We are not only doing society a disservice, but we are also knowingly destroying the lives of our children by ignoring the problem and believing that our family court system has got it right, it simply does not!

I have recently perused through the Internet and have found that there are many countries that are working towards, or have, a shared parenting legislation. Once such country is Canada that now has progressive legislation in shared parenting. I must emphasize here, that it is shared parenting not only in words but also in equal time spent with the children! Canada had based this legislation on the report called “**For The Sake of The Children**”. For the sake of our children let's have the same!

Therefore, I am convinced that the only way that our children will be better off and have a greater chance of reaching their full potential as productive adults is to legislate a shared parenting bill allowing both parents to equally participate in the parenting after a divorce.

As stated by one pioneer in shared parenting (Dr. James Henderson) in his “independent members Bill” in Canadian Parliament “Two loving and caring parent should be allowed to equally participate in the parenting in the unfortunate situation of a divorce or separation”. No one can deny that if either parent is abusive to the children, then obviously there should be restrictions put on them. However, logic and now research has revealed that children are far better off with both parents equally involved in their lives.

Yours sincerely

Larry P. Cairns