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Inquiry into child custody arrangements in the event of family separation

As a single parent with majority time care and control of 2 children (established in a calm manner between two parents who had the welfare of the children as our most important priority) I am aware of the difficulties that may arise from shared care and control, and I am concerned that these will only add to the difficulties already inherent in arranging child care and control.

Geographical distance of residences is just one. If the 2 parents live in different suburbs which school do children attend (or is the government going to provide funding to 2 schools for places taken up by children for a week at a time at two weekly intervals?) An education nightmare. (as a teacher this bothers me for a myriad of reasons)

I am concerned that the government is considering shared care and control before it has fully addressed issues of shared responsibility. Couples who decide that children should be cared for predominantly by one parent are at present inadequately supported both financially and philosophically. Inadequate childcare facilities and support mean that the parent with care and control is frequently denied job or study opportunities, and child support arrangements cause alienation and/or resentment because this society (government included) has never supported the ideal that children are a shared responsibility no matter who they live with.

Shared care and control would inevitable result in 2 disadvantaged parents and many disadvantaged children unless the Government is planning on increasing childcare facilities, funding and availability. (also refer back to geographical issues)

I am concerned that the shared custody arrangements proposed will simply supply parents with another issue to argue over, and to use to withhold child support from the less financially secure parent.

Most importantly I am concerned that care and control is equated with good parenting. I suspect that many "non-custodial" parents are good parents, and many are not, just as custodial parents vary in their ability and commitment to parenting.

There are many facets to this debate and mandating 50% time sharing of children is not, I believe, the answer to the Australian parenting dilemma. Imbalances of time with children does not have to be harmful, it happens in unbroken families on a constant basis. Ensuring that children are financially and emotionally supported and provided with adequate and affordable childcare is what is important, not ensuring 50/50 time share which appear to me to be more about parents rights (and gripes) than children's rights.

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