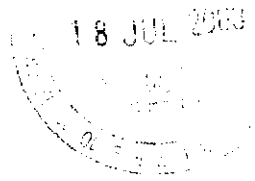


To: Committee, FCA (REPS)
Subject: Submission



House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs
Submission No: 104
Date Received: 18-7-03
Secretary: _____

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I would like to offer a submission to you regarding the possible alteration of contact/ financial arrangements in child custody cases.

Two years ago my ex-wife and her new partner sent me a letter outlining their financial and contact plans regarding my 2 young children. Failure to comply with these extortionate demands would result in me having to go through the Family Court and the CSA. The demands were such that I had no choice but to refuse to be blackmailed and trust that I would get a fair go.

Well nothing in my 42 years had prepared me for the events that followed.

I will not bore you with the nitty gritty but suffice to say I had lost faith in the court system which assumed that men's thoughts and wishes were irrelevant. I became a spectator witnessing the magistrate and my ex- wife in a "huddle" deciding the fate of my children and I. It was my wish for my children to be educated privately with me funding this exclusively, this was not to be with my ex-wife being allowed to withdraw them from their private schools and placing them in a government school because it was "handier". I was left with the crumbs off the table and charged 27% of my AFTER tax income for the pleasure. This money, \$1000 + per month was supposed to reflect the costs of supporting a 4 and 6 year old. Obviously the surplus was used as pocket money for my ex and her new partner to add insult to injury.

The custody arrangements were a disaster.

My 4 year old son especially suffered as before the court ruling we had regular contact and we were especially close. With the new arrangements we had no time before he was due back, it was a totally false environment with me desperate to show the children a great time rather than the relaxed atmosphere of a real family with time on their hands. I was also loathe to discipline them as I could not bear to see them upset in the little time we had.

My son began showing real distress at "hometime", often refusing to get into the car for the return journey.

Mercifully this situation did not last and my ex and I were able to agree on a shared parenting situation. (No thanks to the Family Court) The children would spend time with us on a week about basis and I was able to have some input into the lives of my own children. The children especially my son blossomed under this arrangement. I think that parents are the ones who initially struggle with the concept of shared parenting but if both parties are genuine in their desire for the children's needs to be paramount then they will make the effort for it to succeed.

From my own experience and talking to other Fathers in the same situation we want nothing more than to be involved in our children's lives. The vast, vast majority of us are honest, hard working men who desperately love their children and who aren't even bothered that much about the money we have to pay we just want to be acknowledged and not sidelined.

Under Fathered children are responsible for much of the anti-social behaviour we see today and so we need an institution which promotes equal input not a club with vested interests with a winner take all gameshow mentality.

Yours faithfully,