

House of Representatives Standing Committee  
on Family and Community Affairs

Submission No. 444

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

Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs  
Child Custody Arrangements Inquiry  
Department of the House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Fax: 6277 4844  
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To whom it may concern,

In the future social equity issues will gain increased significance and importance in the global community and especially in capitalist, democratic societies such as Australia. Given the range of gender equity reforms achieved in our culture during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the destabilization of the institution of marriage, detached and semi-detached children from the increasing number of failed marriages, tears at our emotions and social fabric. The past and current inequities of dealing with child custody through the legal system, does not reflect the evolution of gender role shifts in the workplace and households of Australia. So as to provide a fair dinkum approach to this thorny issue, I believe the best interests of the children of Australia, would ultimately be best served by changing the legislation to allow for social equity, in today's terms. This would therefore require establishing an equal (50/50, mother/father) starting point of reference from which any final child custody arrangement can be uniquely assessed, developed and implemented under the law.

My own circumstances may help to highlight the current inequities of child custody. My ex-wife and I decided to have children in 1993. We decided to adopt a gender role reversal approach to child rearing, whereby I would be the primary caregiver from the child's age of three months. This arrangement meant that my wife could return to her well-paid career, while I could be more flexible as a home-husband /small business owner and train to be a teacher. After great difficulty our daughter was born in 1995. The role reversal was a success until the marriage stagnated. We separated in 2002 and my wife filed for a divorce. The divorce was granted in April 2003. Our childcare arrangements during this time and until today involves my parenting role occupying only 5 of the 14 days per cycle. I have requested on several occasions for a more equal 50/50 parenting arrangement, only to be told both directly and indirectly through my ex-wife's lawyer that my daughter needs to spend more time with her mother than with her father and that this assumption is reinforced by the current Family Court law. We have yet to finalize both our child custody matters and property matters through the court system.

In a broader sense, I also feel for the disaffected grandparents who are unable to contribute equitably to the education, welfare and enjoyment of their grandchildren.

The cultural and social harmony, which flows from gender equity, is a vital component in the future welfare of children and their potential as effective parents and grandparents. I believe it is our responsibility to bring social equity rights, albeit kicking and screaming, into the twenty first century for the benefit of both current and future generations of Australians. The time is ripe.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]