

Submission No: 564

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Secretary:

The Committee Secretary
 Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs
 Parliament House
 Canberra, ACT

Attn Ms Beverly Forbes

7/8/03

Dear Madam

This letter is a submission to the Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs' inquiry into shared parenting and child support.

There is no question that the current system severely disadvantages fathers. One could argue that children also are the losers in the current combative and sexually discriminatory arrangement.

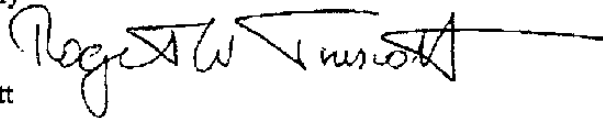
Despite being a devoted father to my children I can easily now see how approximately 80% of fathers lose contact with their children after 5 years. As soon as you have contact with the Family court/ Child support agency system you realise that the system is heavily stacked against you – no matter how good a parent you may have been (are). **In fact, my advice to males in Australia is not to have children unless you are prepared to suffer total financial ruin. It is a very REAL prospect – and it can arise through no fault of their own.**

It is also very clear to me that because women know that the outcome of any child care arrangement will almost certainly go in their favour, that this situation is far too easily exploited. Why put up with, or try to solve any slight difficulty, when you can get the vast majority of the resources simply by leaving with the children and applying to the Family court? This current outrageous state of affairs certainly, in my view, facilitates marriage breakdown.

Many of the current inequities could easily be remedied if a shared (50%) parenting arrangement were to be the default. From what I have read, this has been adopted in some overseas countries (e.g. some US states) and the results have been very positive. If this default arrangement is subject to an initial, and an annual, review to sort out the small minority of clearly undesirable parents, then I can see no reason why this should not be adopted.

In order to reduce the damaging impact on dads now, and children now and in the future, I urge you strongly to at least make joint residency/shared parenting one basic recommendation. There are many other injustices in the current system but this is the most important.

Yours sincerely



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