

House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Family and Community Affairs

Submission No: 1362

Date Received: 19-9-03

Secretary:

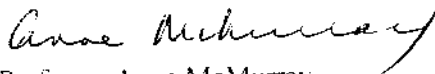
Committee Secretary,
Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs,
Child Custody Arrangements Inquiry,
Department of the House of Representatives,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600,
Australia.

15 September, 2003.

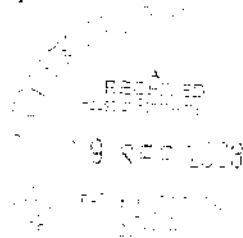
Dear Secretary,

I apologise for the lateness of this submission but I was going to try to attend the public hearings in Queensland and was unable to do so. I would like to submit the attached two research reports from a set of studies I conducted ten years ago in Perth. I continue to be interested in the processes of separation, divorce, and parent-child relationships, but I have not published any further work in this area over the last few years, as the same issues seem to persist. As a researcher and a parent, I am pleased to see that the language of parenting has changed in most forums, and I support the government's attempt to ensure that the focus is squarely placed on the best interests of the child and the child's access to the parents, rather than the other way around. I am, however, disconcerted to learn that non-residential parents are continuing to experience similar barriers to parenting today as when I conducted a series of interviews with them in the early 1990's. The two main solutions that emerged from my research were the need for parenting plans and enriched education for adolescents. I believe cooperative parenting plans, rather than residential requirements, should be mandated at the time of divorce and property settlements. Relationship guidance for adolescents should focus on replacing the 'ownership' model of relationships with increased attention to building young people's capacity for self-esteem and sensitivity to others. I hope the voices of non-residential parents as presented in the attached research studies are helpful to your inquiry.

Sincerely,



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