

1st October, 2006

Michael Pitt

Dear Committee Members,

The most common scenario in family separation is that the father has the children every second weekend, half the holidays and maybe five public holidays, which is approximately 24% of the time. A non custodial parent with 3 kids, earning just above the minimum wage (\$26,000pa) will be expected to survive on about \$390 a week (\$445 with rent assistance). So how does this parent put a roof over his/her head, pay the bills, put food on the table and keep and replace a car on the road for work? It is simply unsustainable now, let alone what is to come. Many more will end up unemployed because they cannot afford to work and what do they then have to look forward to? They will then be expected to survive on about \$270 a week with no consideration for how many children they have. Please can you tell me how they will survive? Let alone justify it as social justice. It is not in the "Best Interests of Children" to destroy their fathers surely?

The Howard government has espoused how 60% of fathers would be better off when these reforms are implemented; that fathers would pay less child support, conveniently after the next election. But did not publicly make reference to how they would lose access to the family tax benefit, effectively making low income fathers worse off. It is as transparent as the three days allowed to respond to this inquiry. The general population is not aware of the tragedy that is to follow. I can only envisage anarchy when the reality sets in for those affected. Our Parliament treats criminals better than non-custodial parents.

The median rental in Adelaide is \$230 a week, an unemployed non-custodial parent will then left with \$40 a week to pay the bills and feed him and any number of children. Maybe the Parliament of Australia could at least initiate a policy to install larger benches in our parks and city squares, so unemployed non-custodial fathers will be able accommodate as well as feed their children on week end visits.

The lives of low income, non-custodial parents will get worse come July 2008 when the "Parkinson" legislative changes take full effect, whilst wealthy fathers and politicians who already have avenues to reduce child support will be substantially better off. This legislation is not social policy; it is a disgrace.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pitt