

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

I personally believe this bill is simply an exercise in word-play. That is, it does not provide for any fundamental changes to alleviate the gross inequality of the current family law and child support system.

I would also suspect that the minor changes currently proposed will be "watered down" even more.

The federal government proposed "Shared Parenting Bill", due to be debated in parliament this week, is supposed to make it easier for children to enjoy the love, care and influence of both their parents and end the trauma and damage of the profitable business of excluding one parent by application to the Family Court.

Clearly conflict is against the best interests of children yet the Family Court and its ancillary practitioners promote conflict as an alternative to equal parenting.

Unfortunately, lawyers that specialise in Family Law make their money from conflict not resolution. Typically intervention orders are used that turn the father into an instant criminal (punishable by jail) if he attempts to see his children outside the restricted times that have been dictated. Intervention orders handed out without the need to prove any wrong doing, typically start a process that causes tremendous harm to children. , who as a consequence experience several times the incidents of underachievement, depression, mental illness, drug abuse, and suicide as they grow older.

Excluding any child's father (or mother when it occasionally swings this way) through a process of false allegation, intimidation, and vilification represents emotional torture for the father, and, very serious abuse of the children.

The debate is about whether or not a child gets to grow up with the care and guidance of both their parents. Its not a debate between men and women, as we so often get told. It's a debate between the "vested interests" - people who derive their livelihood from securing mutually exclusive custody arrangements for children on one side, and parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters - ordinary Australians that know children should be protected from harm and given every opportunity to succeed in life, on the other.

Unfortunately the vested interests are typically seen as experts and their views widely publicised by a media who is less willing to air the views of ordinary people who have no commercial interest in compromising children's lives.

If parliament can deliver the commitment expressed by Prime Minister John Howard to reduce the epidemic of fatherlessness in our community, they will do so in defiance of lawyers and associated social workers and practitioners who profit from this misery industry.

They will succeed in replacing the conflict that is agony for so many of Australia's children, with a common sense solution that delivers happiness and fulfilment to the children, and their parents, neither of whom need be aggrieved.

If parliament again fails to reform the Family Law Court (it's tried two times before), it should ensure that fathers are spared the suffering of expecting to be allowed to stay a part of their children's lives, by publicly acknowledging the Family Court's mutually exclusive policy on child custody arrangements, thereby allowing fathers to spare their children the torment of the process.

Regards

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