

Submission  
by  
Vanessa Riepler  
Vaucluse

Ref. Amendments to Family Law.

I respectfully entreat the Senate hearing to remove Clauses from the Amendments which would exclude current applicants to the Family Court from the benefits of the Amendments once they are in place.

It has come to my attention that the much publicised Amendments to Family Law will ignore those thousands of applicants to the Court who are already in the system. As the proposed Amendments now stand, they will apply only to applicants who lodge their cases with the Family Court after 1 July 2006.

Therefore, those of us who have cases pending and who may not be heard until after 1 July will be judged by a different set of laws than those who put their applications in after 1 July.

This is unconscionable. Mr Ruddock is very rightly determined to amend the current laws pertaining in the Family Court. They are being amended in recognition that the present laws are not equitable to many children, their parents and grandparents.

Thus, if the amended laws are only to apply to applicants lodging after 1 July, those of us already in the system will be judged by inferior laws to those by which applicants after that date will be judged.

Further, I understand that those of us subjected to the unamended laws will not be able to appeal on grounds of changed circumstances if by that we mean a change in the laws.

Mr Ruddock has held many public meetings around the country, and issued several press releases announcing Amendments to the current laws.

Those most attentive to the publicity he has given to the Amendments, that is, those of us who currently have applications before the Court, will ironically be forever excluded from the benefits and justice intended by the Amendments, if the exclusionary clauses are upheld!

I believe Professor Tom Altobelli, Family Law representative on the Law Council of Australia, has put a cogent case for the new laws to be immediately applicable to all children after enactment.

I earnestly entreat the Senate to rescind the Clauses which provide for exclusion of current applicants from the many benefits of the Amended laws.

With thanks for your consideration  
Vanessa Riepler (B.Soc.) (University of NSW).