



Child custody inquiry begins public hearings *First hearing: Geelong, Victoria, Thursday 28 August*

The House of Representatives Family and Community Affairs Committee's inquiry into child custody arrangements will begin its program of public hearings this Thursday, 28 August.

The first public hearing will be held in **Geelong** on the morning of Thursday 28 August. Later that day the committee will move to the suburb of **Knox**, in Melbourne (*from 2pm - see separate media alert*).

The Geelong hearing details are:

Date: Thursday 28 August 2003
Time: 8.30am - 11.30am
Venue: Centenary Hall, City of Greater Geelong
Cnr Princes Highway and Cox Road
Norlane, Geelong, Victoria

8.30 am	Women's Information and Referral Exchange Inc
8.50 am	Family Law Working Party, Federation of Community Legal Centres (Vic) Inc
9.10 am	Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre Inc & No To Violence (NTV), Male Family Violence Prevention Association Inc.
9.30 am – 10.10 am	Three individuals
10.30am – 11.30am	Community statements

The hearing will be followed by about an hour for Community statements each of about 3 minutes duration. All those who would like to speak are invited to attend. Participants will be chosen on the day. The 3 minute time limit should be adhered to so the committee can hear from as many people as possible within the hour.

Please note that due to the nature of the inquiry the committee may need to move into an in camera (confidential) hearing for some witnesses and the program could be subject to change.

The forthcoming dates and locations for hearings are:

- Thursday 28 August: 2.00pm – 5.00pm, Knox (Melbourne)
- Friday 29 August: 10.00am – 1.00pm, Launceston, Tasmania
- Monday 1 September: Wollongong, NSW, and Blacktown (western Sydney)

The Committee will then hold hearings in Queensland. Further detail on all these hearings will be issued closer to the events. Public hearings will be held in every State and Territory.

More than 1500 submissions have been received by the inquiry so far. This is a record for an inquiry by this Committee, and amongst the highest ever for a House of Representatives Committee.

For media comment from the Chair, please contact:
Mrs Kay Hull, MP (Chair), via tel: (02) 6921 4600 or 0428 211 591

For further details on the inquiry, including background documentation,
contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4566 or visit the inquiry website at
www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/fca/childcustody/

CHILD CUSTODY INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee is to investigate and make recommendations for action on the following matters:

- (a) given that the best interests of the child are the paramount consideration:
 - (i) what other factors should be taken into account in deciding the respective time each parent should spend with their children post separation, in particular whether there should be a presumption that children will spend equal time with each parent and, if so, in what circumstances such a presumption could be rebutted; and
 - (ii) in what circumstances a court should order that children of separated parents have contact with other persons, including their grandparents.
- (b) whether the existing child support formula works fairly for both parents in relation to their care of, and contact with, their children.
- (c) with the Committee to report to the Parliament by 31 December 2003.

The Committee has been asked to have regard to the Government's recent response to the report of the Family Law Pathways Advisory Group. A link to this report is available on the inquiry website.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Chairman Mrs Kay Hull MP

Members Hon Alan Cadman MP
 Ms Trish Draper MP
 Mr Peter Dutton MP
 Ms Jennie George MP
 Mrs Julia Irwin MP

Mr Chris Pearce MP
Hon Roger Price MP
Mr Harry Quick MP
Mr Cameron Thompson MP