

House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Family and Community Affairs

Submission No: 142

Date Received: 1-8-03

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

To Whom it may Concern,

Experiences of Paternal Grandparents Following a Marriage Breakdown

Our son, [REDACTED], married [REDACTED]. The marriage ended in divorce some seven years ago. Our Grandson [REDACTED] is the only child of that union.. Our son [REDACTED] is an officer in the Australian [REDACTED] and since the marriage break-up has served continuously in the Eastern States of Australia and East Timor. [REDACTED] lives in [REDACTED] and has custody of [REDACTED]. Because of the distance between father and son, frequent regular visits are impossible. [REDACTED] visits and stays with his father and new family twice a year during school holidays. This arrangement came about by Order of The Family Court. All expenses for each trip are all paid by [REDACTED] father. No contribution has ever been offered by [REDACTED] mother. The following has been our experience over the years.

- (a) Our Grandson [REDACTED] has not been encouraged by his mother to contact us at any time. Contact with him has always been at our initiative. At times, following our request to have [REDACTED] for a day, [REDACTED] has forced us to wait up to twelve days before giving an answer.
- (b) We have found that as Paternal Grandparents, we are not treated as favourably, or given the same consideration as the Maternal Grandparents. Yet we are the only stable relationship between [REDACTED] and his father.
- (c) If not for action taken by our son [REDACTED], through The Family Court, [REDACTED] would, because of her bitterness, continue to make access to [REDACTED] as difficult as possible. In fact on one occasion, [REDACTED] took [REDACTED] away for a holiday at Christmas Time, even though she knew [REDACTED] father and family were making a special trip from the Eastern States to see [REDACTED]. Unfortunately there does not appear to be any follow-up support to prevent this sort of behaviour happening again. It is impossible to predict her actions in this regard as she has at times made it hard for us when she has had a disagreement with [REDACTED] father. We know now, that if we upset [REDACTED] in any way, she would do whatever she could to prevent us from seeing [REDACTED]. There needs to be some legal safeguard to prevent Paternal Grandparents from being victimised in this way.
- (d) In any situation where a male child is in the sole care of a female (his mother), without a male adult presence, that child is greatly influenced by the female outlook and accepts as normal the female way of life. The child misses out on a lot of the normal boyish activities. This does not help at all as the male child heads towards adulthood. For this reason shared custody (50/50) would help to ensure a balanced upbringing.
- (e) [REDACTED] remains single and has not worked since the birth of [REDACTED]. [REDACTED], our son has remarried and now has a new family. [REDACTED] has a new half sister and half brother, both of whom love him dearly. It is of great benefit to [REDACTED] when he spends time in this family environment twice a year. This is another reason to consider joint custody.

Yours sincerely,