

Family Law Legislation Amendment (Family Violence and Other Measures) Bill 2011 [Provisions]

Dear Sir/Madam,

If you intend to roll back the Family Law Act reforms of 2006 do so based on facts; not hype and skewed figures.

Family Law Act reforms of 2006: the child homicide rate has reduced by almost 50%. In 2005 12 children aged between 0-17 died by fatal assault, by 2009 that number was down to 7 children. It is clear that the 2006 reforms reduced the danger to children significantly.

The Senate needs to stop the ongoing lie that Fathers are more likely to kill their children. Statistics available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics proves that Mothers alone are responsible for almost 50% of the total deaths, while Fathers (Biological Fathers) are responsible for not even 25%.

In fact males involved with the mother (usually new partners) kill more children than Biological Fathers, but still nowhere near the number of children murdered by their own Mothers.

An example

The horrific death of Darcey Freeman at the hands of her father on the Westgate Bridge gave added focus to that claim and scared a number of sitting members on both sides of the house that perhaps the shared parental responsibility changes in 2006 had taken a step too far.

Most people (and politicians) are unaware of another tragedy on the Westgate Bridge that occurred less than twelve months prior. Gabriella Garcia caused the horrific death of her 22 month old son Oliver by jumping off the same Westgate Bridge with her son strapped to her chest, having made the claim **she was afraid the Family Court might give custody of her son to the father**. The tragic irony is that the father had made no applications to the court and had no intention of seeking custody. However this tragedy did not make headlines and the only recriminations were to criticise the authorities for not "jump proofing" the bridge.

I do not condone either of these parents or their actions but wish to highlight the headline hype that is stacked unfairly against biological fathers.

Biological fathers love their children regardless of marital status; I am sure many of you in Parliament who are reading this are fathers, or are mothers who have husbands/partners who love their children, what makes Parliament think this changes with the breakdown of a relationship.