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Senate Legal and Constitutional Committees
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I am writing to express my alarm at the proposed rollback to changes made in 2006 to Shared Parenting. As a woman I find the lack of concern about children's rights to be awful!

This was a huge step forward in the rights of children to enjoy a meaningful relationship with BOTH parents and not just the mother.

I got to spend little time with my father and in the years between the ages of 9-18 I didn't get the opportunity to see him at all. In my early 20's I managed to locate my father and try to build a relationship with him....it was hard given that he had missed most of my childhood. My father died 3 years ago and I still mourn for the relationship I never got to have with him because my father had no choice in the end but to give up the continual fight to gain access with us. He was unable to continue the fight financially and emotionally....the courts always sided with the mother in those days, to the detriment of many children.

I find it appalling that a situation like the man who threw his daughter off the bridge seems to be getting used as a catalyst to bring about the roll back to the changes. What about the horrific statistics of children that are abused, sexually assaulted and murdered at the hands of step-fathers while the children are in the care of the mothers. Do we forget the children like Daniel Valerio who were tortured and eventually murdered at the hands of his mother and step-father?? What about Keisha Abrahams who's step father and mother are apparently prime suspects in her murder...you rarely read of a child being abused or murdered at the hands of the father and stepmother?? Whereas stories of children being abused or murdered at the hands of the stepfather while in the care of the mother are often in the media. Why is it that assumption of domestic violence against children in split families are most often leveled at father's when, in fact, the statistics would show otherwise.

Since when has it been okay to make the assumption that the majority of men are not fit parents when, in fact, the majority of fathers are fit to parent. Let's face it, there are many, many women who are not fit to parent and yet they still have their children, so why should it be an automatic assumption that women are the better parents!! Rolling back the changes are telling the men of Australia that they are not capable of caring for their children and not as worthy as parents as the mother. You can't punish the entire male population of Australia based on what a minority of men have done....if we punished the women of Australia based on what women like Daniel Valerio's mother did then no women would have custody of their children either. Then what??? Put them all in foster care after parent's divorce??

The presumption of 50/50 shared parenting needs to stay and should only be overturned by a court where real domestic violence has taken place, not claims of domestic violence that are exaggerated to win favor with the courts.

I am speaking as an ADULT who was raised in a situation where access to my father was limited and then non-existent....I am speaking as an ADULT who would have loved to have had greater time with my father. I am speaking as an ADULT who has 3 children of her own and would embrace 50/50 shared care with my husband if anything should happen to us.

Unfortunately during times of divorce children are seen as spoils of war.....this needs to stop...only the assumption of automatic 50/50 shared care can put an end to the battles between parents over who the children live with.....and I can tell you that I have lived through this same battle with my beautiful step-children and I have seen the effect it had on them. False claims by their mother of my partner being an abusive husband and father were put forward and there was nothing my husband could do about it.....anyone who believes that false allegations of abuse are not often used to win favor with the courts is in denial. Yes abuse does exist but to think that a person (either male OR female) could be labeled as abusive because they raise their voice to their partner is ridiculous....I do not know one parent, either male or female, who haven't raised their voices at each other, or indeed, their children!!

I do not think it is at all fair to take away a child's RIGHT to have a meaningful relationship with BOTH parents and share equal time with BOTH parents....not just the mother. Not only does it affect the relationship with the non-custodial parent but the extended family. I missed out on knowing my fraternal Grandmother and Grandfather (who are both now deceased) and my 2 Uncles (also both now deceased) and my Aunt plus my many cousins.

All children should have the automatic right to have equal time both parents not only so they can spend time with them but also both lots of extended family.