

Sent: Monday, 14 July 2003 4:50 PM
To: Committee, FCA (REPS)
Cc: Claringbold, Helena (A. Abbott, MP)
Subject: Errol Hunt (E-mail format) Child support submission

House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Family and Community Affairs

Submission No: 8

Date Received: 15-7-03

Secretary: B. Forbes

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14/7/03

E-mail to fca.reps@aph.gov.au re: Child custody submission to inquiry committee.

Some seven years ago I made personal submissions to the Hon. Tony Abbott current Federal Minister for Industrial relations and to the Hon. Dr. Brendan Nelson current Federal Minister for Education about the inequities in the present child support scheme. Nothing was done, except for some platitudes offered, as it was a very thorny nettle for any politician to tackle.

Since then the male suicide rate has accelerated due in no small part to the utter helplessness felt by the dispossessed party, as I prefer to call the poor male who inevitably loses his children to the occasional contact offered. He is required to pay the bulk of the monies he earns to the ex-wife, save for that obligation to the tax department of 50%. This woman now inevitably has another 'partner' in tow. He also has no idea as to how his funds are even spent, if such monies are indeed spent on his children. The ex-wife's income does not seem to be taken into consideration, nor the live in lover's finances. The Courts are a graveyard for hopes of equity in an inequitable situation. Costs of action to attempt a modicum of fairness are prohibitive.

The result is utter hopelessness, depression and often suicide. In my son's case he did not cause the separation but was forced to bear the consequences and in turn this caused untold grief to us as grandparents, as the ex-wife had relocated to a distance of a 5 hour round drive for us all to get the visitation rights of our son's access of each second weekend and half school holidays.

There is an answer and I found it in the Rotary Four Way Test. "Is it fair to all concerned" At present it patently is not. Maybe this solution that I am suggesting is too simple for our legal eagles but it can work: try implementing a policy of joint parenting. For this to work it should be a condition of non-violent separations that equal time is spent with each parent and this means that the separated couple are required to live within a 5km radius, so that schooling etc., of the children is not adversely affected. Finance of the costs of bringing up the children is jointly shared, as each parent is responsible for the child's maintenance during the time they spend with that parent.

This will have the added benefit of making couples think twice about 'opting' out of relationships and cause them to seek solutions to their problems instead of allowing persons to walk away from their obligations and cause so much grief all round to all, including and most importantly to the innocent children.