

The Committees Secretary
Standing Committee on Family & Community Affairs
Child Custody Arrangements Inquiry
Department of House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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Secretary:	

Mrs D McAdam
PO Box 5421
Torquay Qld 4655

Joint Custody arrangements will only work for the minority of families.

CUSTODY

A failure of a relationship/marriage is caused from one parent being dysfunctional. If these laws are legislated they are forcing the children of these failed relationships into a situation of disharmony and family unrest.

Children NEED:

- | | | |
|------------|----------------------|-------------|
| • Security | • Consistency | • Stability |
| • Love | • Spiritual guidance | • Affection |
| • Health | • Harmony | |

Joint Custody arrangements will not work on week about or month about. Changing the law will force children into a situation where all their needs (as above) are taken from them and will include:

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| • Different routines | • Different lifestyle |
| • Different rules | • Distance travelling |
| • Parents working arrangements would not allow for such changes | • Different School/daycare providers with each parent |
| • Disruption to both households | |

Childrens ideals of a normal family environment will be disreputed, as they will be chucked from pillar to post, living from house to house with no place to call home.

Changing the Custody Law will strengthen a marriage (as quoted from Gold Coast Newspaper) – That's saying that people should stay together for the children – That is putting the children in the middle of the parents relationship.

Each family should AUTOMATICALLY be individually assessed when Child Custody and Access arrangements are sought, eg.

- A Child Psychiatrist report (if age applicable)
- Counsellor report of each parent
- 100 points of evidence from each parent eg. Statements/affidavits from: 1. Family. 2. Employer. 3. Childrens carer. 4. Financial status. 5. Parents health (ill health/mental health). 6. Criminal history. 7. Cultural background/needs.

Custody and Access arrangements should not be means tested on the basis that a minority of fathers don't get to see their children – this is not a true judgement of the general population.

You can't change the Law of Mother Nature! A True Parents Maternal/Paternal Instincts will shine above the rest.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

WHY??? Can Family and Community Services come in and remove a child from a dangerous/violent situation **BUT**

A Child can be handed over for an Access visit to a parent who has a Domestic Violence Order against them?

Domestic Violence Orders **CANNOT** be used as evidence or in support of application for Family Court in Custody and Access arrangements **BUT SHOULD BE**. For this to occur Domestic Violence orders should be harder to get – more evidence to be provided when applying for one.

The financial and emotional stress placed on the parent and children when having to prove the other parent unfit never heals – study done for Domestic Violence Services; that Emotional Abuse is Real.

LEGALITIES

A Legal Advocacy Position needs to be created to assist parents through the legal system when applying for Custody and Access arrangements. eg. How to fill out forms, Legal avenues, Mediation services, Court procedures etc. For most parents it is a first time, and unless you are financially stable, the best interests of the children cannot be proven.

FINANCIAL

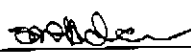
Legal Aid will only support financial aid for court costs, they do not include; transport, accommodation, childcare, court support, child psychiatrist or counsellor support or reports (unless requested from the Judge).

Child Support and Centrelink payments would be thrown into chaos. Partners would seek access to children only to gain financially.

The following organisations/programs in our Local Community (Bay Safety Mates, Reconnect, Lifeline, Domestic Violence Service, KIPP, Parent Aide Program, Dan'Dinna House, Hervey Bay Womens Health Centre) are Government funded and accountable for their services to operate. Before you attempt to change any part of the Custody Law, obtain statistics from these organisations as to; what service they provide, number of clients, how many staff, what programs are available, success rate etc. Many more organisations will be needed if Custody Law is changed to shared parenting.

In support of these recommendations, I have listed a couple of names who have input ideas into this letter. On behalf of them and many more, I would strongly recommend more investigation on a wider scale, more publicised, and case studies sought before any part of the Custody Law is changed.

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| Katrina Anderson
70 Drummond St
Hervey Bay Qld 4655 | Debbie McAdam
88 Denmans Camp Rd
Hervey Bay Qld 4655 | Caroline Peterson
Lot 301 Bilsborough Rd
Howard Qld 4659 |
| Dee Wrigley
15 Poinciana Cres
Hervey Bay Qld 4655 | Carlie Liesgang
27 Jacobsen Outlook
Hervey Bay Qld 4655 | |


D McAdam