

8th August, 2003

Committee Secretary
 Standing Committee on Family & Community Affairs
 Child Custody Arrangements Inquiry
 Department of House of Representatives
 Parliament House
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House of Representatives Standing Committee
 on Family and Community Affairs

Submission No: **539**Date Received: **8-8-03**

Secretary:

W. R. PRYOR
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Dear Secretary

Thank you for the overdue opportunity to voice my opinion in the "Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements" in the event of a family separation.

I feel very strongly that the child/children should spend "equal time" with each parent. This would allow them, and the parent, 'quality time' with *both* the Father, as well as the Mother. At present this is not occurring. The Mother has the predominant 'time & say' but the Father is 'ordered to pay' - without actually seeing what he is *paying for*. With 'equal time' Child Maintenance could be at least, halved.

The Family Court does not penalize parents who deliberately break Court Orders. Action should be taken against these parents in a way that does not cost the reliable parent, a lot of time and money - which is most valuable, as he/she is missing out in both regards.

In my experience 'Contact Time' is an absolute farce, and is never fully complied with by the Mother. They have this compulsion to ignore it completely - and why not? They get away 'scot-free' with no action taken against them!

The child/children's 'Health' should be a *shared decision* by both parents, with either being able to consult doctors, but always reports given to the other parent.

The child/children should be allowed to know and visit their extended family - *especially Grandparents*. Without these visits, not only the rest of the family, but the child/children miss out immensely. Grandparents have an abundance of life and knowledge to pass on to their grandchildren. Their stable maturity in times of separation can have a balancing effect as the child/children's welfare is their *utmost concern*. They are *never used as 'pawns'* to hurt the other parent, which often occurs during separations

The separation in families is a struggle for both partners, but seems to be recognized only for the Mother's element. Fathers are feeling this conflict to an even greater extent because in the majority of cases they not only see far less of their child/children but pay twice as much for them as they do when they are living at home. There should be receipts for *everything* bought and produced to the Father, similar to what is needed by the Father, when he is going through the Family Law Court. The "struggle" should not be honed in on one parent.

I sincerely hope my opinion is taken into account, with the many others that no doubt will be submitted to you. This inquiry affects a host of families - in one way or another, and a *fairer and just outcome* would benefit many Australians.

Many thanks
 Yours sincerely

W R Pryor