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Secretary:

Women Helping Women Inc.

SHELTER



SUPPORT

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House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family & Community Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra

We wish to support the submission presented by The National Network of Women's Legal services, and agree with their detailed points.

We would like to add our great fear that children who have been sexually abused by the (non-resident) parent may be 'handed over' to them. Already access, albeit supervised by their relatives - who do not believe them to be capable of such abuse - occurs with sickening regularity, ordered by the Family Court.

Already the term 'in the best interests of the children' is a hollow mockery of any consideration for the child.

Can you imagine how a child feels when they have screwed up their courage to tell their mother of sexual abuse, often only after she has left the father because of domestic violence, to be 'handed over' on access? The feeling of hopelessness and betrayal must be so traumatic, how barbaric.

And now with no physical evidence, father denying all, no proven case etc. etc., they may be 'handed over' for shared custody, you don't think it would happen? Ask workers in women's refuges if child sex abusers get access, we know, and yes they do, and yes they will get shared residency if this becomes law.

We would beg you to seriously consider the above and the carefully reasoned points made by the Womens Legal Network.

Yours sincerely,

C. Saunders

President

On behalf of Women Helping Women