

Submission No: 965

Howard Learmouth
63 Lachlan Avenue, Date Received: 7-8-03
SINGLETON HEIGHTS NSW 2330
Tel/ Fax : [REDACTED] Secretary: [REDACTED]
Email : [REDACTED]
6th August 03

Committee Secretary
INQUIRY INTO CHILD CUSTODY ARRANGEMENTS (Family Separation)
Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs
House of Representatives
Parliament House CANBERRA

SUBMISSION

This governments handling of family breakdown is a complete disaster. Thomas Jefferson famous American revolutionary figure and fifth president of the USA once said, "***It is money, not morality that is the guiding principle of a commercial society.***" These words sound very true to any parent experiencing family breakdown utilising the services provided by our government.

The current formula based child support assessment system was never, ever designed to be fair. It was never based upon any credible research re the costs of maintaining children. Incredibly not even one cent of the monies collected by way of child support need actually be spent on the children concerned. The system is really just a scheme of spousal maintenance the name "child support" is just a caring name given to mask a completely uncaring, draconian taxation regime.

The system seems to particularly target ordinary PAYE income earners (ordinary wage and salary earners). Any such PAYE income earner subject to the scheme is basically financially ruined. A payer of child support such as myself often has all and more of the costs of maintaining their children via draconian CSA levies yet receives none of the financial benefits (CENTRELINK payments) granted to all other parents. We are blatantly discriminated against. To the rich, to the very high-income earners and to the self-employed the system is far less devastating. Judges for example would see less than half of their taxable income subject to a CSA levy where as ordinary working people on a far reduced income see all of their income levied. Those people who easily avoid income taxation just as easily dodge child support levies. Of note Australia's richest man would likely have no child support liability at all if he were to be subject to the scheme. Kerry Packer was recently publicised in the media (of course not his own media interests) as paying just \$36-00 in income tax over a 3 year period whilst at the same time vastly increasing his personal wealth. Yet another example of injustice of the scheme, A non custodial parent must have the care of his children for an incredible 109 nights of the year before their liability can be reduced at all.

This family has been only abused by the actions of the CSA for now almost 8 very long years. The children in my care are blatantly discriminated against by the totally [REDACTED] formula based assessment system. I am still levied 27% of my taxable income for the maintenance of

2 children. I can in no possible way support the children in my care to that same extent. My rate of pay rate has not varied at all for almost 3 years yet my CSA levy has vastly increased. Any increase in my income has come by my own extra effort and sacrifice in trying to help the children residing with me. The CSA system steals the profit from my extra effort. Any contact with the CSA over this period with the view to achieving a fair and just financial arrangement for this family situation has been like dealing with a tree stump or a brick wall. There is truly no avenue within this system to achieve fairness and no body seems to give a s—. The welfare of the children concerned is obviously of no consequence to the CSA. By concentrating only on the care of 2 of my children the CSA abuses and discriminates against the rest of us. Complaints are routinely ignored.

The current formula based Child Support scheme is basically wrong. A fair scheme would be based upon a persons real income (after tax income). A fair scheme would properly recognise that children are the responsibility of both parents. A fair scheme would be based upon credible independent research with achieving fairness and justice for family units as its primary objective. The current UK scheme is a very much fairer one at least that scheme properly recognises the vast differences between gross income and real income and formula rates are greatly reduced and more realistic. Court orders are certainly not the answer. Court orders help lawyers not children.

My involvement with the Family Law process has been equally horrendous. This court process very obviously exists to serve only the greed of lawyers not the needs of any child. My 4 elder children were finally left to sort out there own custody arrangements by constantly running away from their home to come and live with me. My ex wife qualified for Legal Aid which freely provided her with both a solicitor and a barrister for every hearing process. I working could afford no legal representation at all. The Family Court hence has never provided this family with a fair unbiased hearing process. Not only did the Family Court of Australia totally fail in serving the best interests of my children by providing a corrupt hearing procedure it then added insult to injury by awarding 2 huge costs orders against me totalling over \$14,000-00. Forcing me to fund my ex wife's completely over the top legal representation. My pay was garnisheed for more than 18 months. For half of this period I also had to directly care for my elder 4 children on this same income (\$240-00). The Family Court of Australia is nothing more than a lawyer run extortion racket.

Whilst the Federal Magistrates service is a far better less formalised process a lot more reform is still urgently required. List days should not be tolerated. House keeping formalities could and should be done over the phone or by correspondence. Set appointment times should be allocated for hearings like a doctors appointment and above all lawyers should be banned from any participation. Merit should be the only consideration used to determine the welfare and best interests of our children. Holding crazy criminal type trials will only continue to yield crazy court outcomes.

I now hate my government, I no longer respect it. I have seen enough of our so called justice system to convince me that it is also a seriously flawed, botched up authority. No wonder this country now faces the threat of terrorism. Terrorists are not born terrorists they are created by injustice. I certainly would never now defend this government as my father and his elders once did. I would relish the opportunity of fighting against it with the view to settling the score. My views are becoming very widely held views at my work place as at least half the workforce is similarly affected by family breakdown receiving equally appalling treatment. The ALP in developing and incredibly still maintaining such stupid illogical policies towards family breakdown has now lost much of its support and is sure to spend a very long period in opposition as a result.

No wonder more than 1000 men subject to CSA / Family Law abuse suicide each and every year in Australia. This is but one of many brutal statistics associated with bad family breakdown policies. These tragic events are engineered to occur because this government considers money and commercial interests far more highly than issues of morality.

Yours