



Australian Government

Department of Family and Community Services

House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Family and Community Affairs

Supp.

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Secretary:

THE SECRETARY

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Mrs Kay Hull MP
Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Family and Community Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Ms Hull

Thank you for your letter of 8 October 2003 requesting additional information for the Committee's Inquiry into Child Custody Arrangements.

In regard to the first and second of your requests, detailed modelling is likely to take until December to complete, as costings of this nature cannot be completed with existing data sets. We are looking instead at ways of providing indicative estimates, which do not require detailed modeling, within a shorter timeframe.

We expect to be able to respond to the third, fourth and fifth of your requests by the end of this month, and to provide any other requests outstanding from the 15 September hearing by then as well.

I understand that we provided the information for your sixth request to the Committee Secretary last week.

I hope this approach will assist the Committee in its work.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sullivan
24 October 2003

facs making a difference

Mrs Kay Hull
Chair of the Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Hull

INQUIRY INTO CHILD CUSTODY IN THE EVENT OF FAMILY SEPARATION

Research findings: Patterns of care reported by fathers paying child support

I am concerned that the Committee may have incomplete information in relation to the suggestion that the threshold in the child support formula (30% of the year or 109 nights) is acting as a barrier to parents sharing care more fully.

A 1997 Child Support Agency survey of 2,481 fathers paying child support reports their responses in relation to care. It shows that only 3.7% of the group (which is representative) had contact just under the threshold (ie between 100 and 109 nights). If the threshold was acting as a significant barrier the expectation would be that there would be a 'clumping' effect. On this evidence it would appear that parents are not manipulating the amount of contact in order to obtain a financial advantage.

The following table describes the reported arrangements for contact.

Patterns of Contact reported by Payer Fathers			
Contact level %	Contact level - days	Number	Percentage
No contact	0	459	18.5
0 to less than 5%	18	404	16.3
5% to less than 10%	36	351	14.1
10% to less than 15%	54	443	17.9
15% to less than 20%	73	195	7.9
20% to less than 25%	91	104	4.2
25% to less than 27.5%	100	138	5.6
27.5% to less than 30%	109	92	3.7
30% to less than 35%	128	72	2.9
35% to less than 40%	146	34	1.4
40% to less than 45%	164	78	3.1
45% to less than 50%	182	33	1.3
50% to less than 60%	219	46	1.9
60% and greater		32	1.3

Source: CSA, unpublished data.

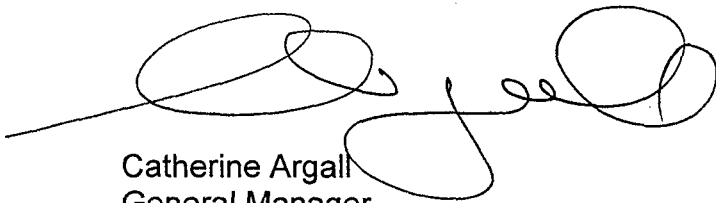


The patterns of contact reported by fathers in this survey shows a wide range of arrangements:

- 18.5% had no contact;
- 48.9% had contact less than 10% of the year;
- 79% had less than 25% contact, i.e. less than every second week-end and half of school holidays; and
- the '80:20' arrangement referred to as the norm, is not the typical or average outcome.

I trust that this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Catherine Argall
General Manager
29 October 2003

Cc: David Kalisch