

Submission No: 1562

Date Received: 8-10-03

Secretary: [Redacted]

26 Sept 2003

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Dear Kay,

I am writing to you in relation to children and the break-up of marriages and issues involving Child Support Agency and the Family law court. Having written to you previously and from the various news articles it seems your one of the few who is taking an interest in this.

I did read recently that you were involved with some sort of meeting/conference on this and that submissions were taken. In a way I kind of wished I was asked to make a submission. I just feel so many of the people who make the decisions involving kids really have no idea of what it is like or what really happens in the real world.

I have 3 daughters, that are now 9, 14 and 16. I broke up with my ex in 1997, so it has been a long time and the children were young at the time and there have been times of enormous emotional stress on everyone. I have been to court to stop my kids being taken away from [Redacted] and basically the magistrate couldn't have cared less and didn't stop them being moved from [Redacted]. I was disgusted at him as he didn't even fully read the paperwork in front of him. To me the decision was whatever the mother wanted and the feelings of the dad or the kids was irrelevant.

I have enclosed a newspaper article that you have probably read anyway (it's what prompted me to write). When I read something like that it makes me so sad and angry. Sad that the kids have suffered like that and sad that the system has let this happen. I read it and feel it is the Family Court that are the ones who should be charged with murder, this is not a one-of incident, it has happened before and will happen again. Having seen the consequences of the courts and how it affects people and children I just feel so strongly that we are only at the tip of an iceberg so to speak, that suicide and murder is going to increase as a direct result of the family courts and Child Support Agency. You may ask why? And it is hard to say in a brief letter. I just feel that so many kids are going to grow up without their dads and these kids are more prone to suicide. I wonder if there are any figures available on youth suicides and what proportion come from broken families. Children suffer more then we know when they lose a parent from their lives, they lose self-confidence, self-esteem. They lose security and feel unloved and much more. It is worse on kids to know they have a dad they can't see then to actually have their dad die. And I know courts/people will say, oh you can always phone, you still see each other during holidays or whatever, but it isn't the same. Even seeing your kids during holidays is difficult. Child Support Agency don't take into account costs of travel, public transport (eg staterail) don't allow kids under 12 to travel without an adult. So at every turn kids are denied access to their dad.

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And then there are the parents, and in this regards I very much take the side of the dads. Fathers are not treated fairly and when your children and money and virtually every reason to live are taken away how are they suppose to think or feel... happy?, I don't think so.

They need help. And from experience this is where we have a big problem. For one thing, men simply don't go looking for help; it's not in their nature. And secondly, where do they turn to? Where is there to go for help? The very 'systems' that are there to supposedly help, Child Support Agency and Family Court, don't help one bit. Both these put children and dads last, the whole system and indeed the community as a whole rewards mothers for taking children away. Both these systems let children be taken from their fathers, and then the father is forced to pay more money on top of that. To me that is just stupid, Surely blind Freddy could see this would make a male more angry than anything! So to me it is little wonder the tragedies like this one in the newspaper happen, and they will continue to happen until there is a major change in how the issue of children and families is dealt with.

I don't hide the fact I hate Child Support Agency and the courts more then words can say. But somehow I want to see the whole process changed. We need to put children first, we need to say, ok, the parents have separated, those things are inevitable, but where there are kids involved, priority should be equal time with each parent. And I mean on a weekly basis. That one parent can not take the kids away without the other parents consent. End of story (unless the kids are in some sort of danger of course). Not where your kids are taken and then you're told to pay more and no-one cares or listens, because that's exactly how it works at the moment.

I know this letter will be disjointed but hopefully you will be able to make sense of it. And no, I don't want an answer to each point or even a reply, not unless I can in some way help others or change the current way things are dealt with. I just want to have my say, and to encourage you or others with reforms in the area of children and families.

Yours Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area, obscuring the name and any handwritten notes.