

**A
F
S
S
A

I
n
c
.**

House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Family and Community Affairs

Submission No: 191

Date Received: 3-8-03

Secretary: _____

**AUSTRALIAN FAMILY SUPPORT
SERVICES ASSOCIATION INC.**

Sunday, August 03, 2003

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



RE: SHARED PARENTING

Dear Committee,

Recently there has been a lot of talk of the current laws, regarding the separation and divorce of two parents.

Many from the media and some Academics, say that shared parenting would not work. Citing the prevalence of violence within the Australian family unit.

In fact, the 'ABS' and the Family Court, recognize that only 4-5% of all marriage breakdowns, are as a direct result of physical violence.

It is my belief, taken from the many thousands of men I have spoken to and helped through their marriage or family breakdown, that if given the opportunity, they would embrace a more substantial role in the raising of their children.

Under the current system, it is usual to presume that men are the providers and that women are the carer's. Of course, we know this is not always true. There are many women in the workforce and there are many men who are home carer's. This change in society is having a hand-break effect on both genders sharing traditional roles. If we as a society believe in equality and mutual obligation, then surely our Judiciary should also change to meet our societal needs.

Shared parenting is not suitable for everyone, as we are all different and we have different needs. However, the current system of the father only seeing his children alternate weekends is having a detrimental effect on their children. "The fatherly figure in children's lives has positive effects on their growth and development". 'Dr Richard Warshak'.

Taking into account children's needs and the positive influence of significant input from both parents in their lives, it is as paramount that shared parenting be the starting point for all marriage and family breakdown resolution.

P.O. BOX 2721, ROWVILLE, VICTORIA, 3178
PHONE: 03 9738 2478, MOBILE: 0427 987 988
EMAIL: INFO@AISSM.COM.AU, WEBSITE: WWW.AISSM.COM.AU
Incorporation Number: A0041124B

August 3, 2003

The benefits to be had for the 'best interests of the children', outweighs any difficulties either parent may have, when it comes to litigation.

Unfortunately I see too often, one parent use the children against the other parent, for a financial advantage or control over the other parent for self satisfaction.

It is my hope, that the laws go one step further, so that at the time of separation, shared parenting is initiated for at least 12 months. Both parents are forced to meet the financial responsibility of maintaining the children, the children's home and the accommodation for both parents. To explain this further experts such as, Financial Counselors, Accountants or Legal Representatives, would be appointed to calculate the total costs of maintaining the children and physical assets. Then both parents contribute on a % base of earnings toward this up keep.

i.e. If Dad earns \$50k per year and Mum earns \$25k per year, then dad pays \$2.00 for every \$1.00 that mum pays, 'on a hundred dollar bill, dad pays \$66.00 and mum pays \$33.00, or vice versa. These figures are easily obtained, by keeping very simple accounting details and matching them up, with the taxation each year.

The biggest draw back with the current system would be eliminated, when both parties are forced to go to counseling. Obtaining financial advantage and the use of the children as a badgering tool would go against the parent trying this old tactic.

To produce well balanced children, we need a situation when two parents in separation can present a balanced and co-ordinated 'team'. Differences and settling of assets and financial matters should remain a background issue to child matters.

Should it prove impossible to implement a 12 month period of shared parenting, the court sitting in judgment, should take into account, the contributing factors preventing the presumption of shared parenting - no matter the gender of the party.

Yours truly,

Geoff Brayshaw

Geoff Brayshaw
Founder

And on behalf of the Committee and its Members.