

House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Family and Community Affairs

Submission No: 373

Date Received: 6-8-03

Secretary:

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Wednesday, 6 August 2003 11:18 PM

To: Committee, FCA (REPS)

Subject: Submission to Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs

6th August 2003

The Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to pass comment on several statements from the Government Response to the Family Law Pathways Report:

“Research indicated that parental conflict: is detrimental to the fathering role, partly due to the mother’s withdrawal from facilitating situations that enhance the father-child relationship.”

The estrangement of fathers is further enhanced by the current arrangements following marital breakup which apportion and legitimize, without independent assessment, but instead by mere default, that the mother be granted the lion’s share of contact time with the children.

The stereotyped assumption that the mother is the one best able to care for the children is not necessarily valid.

“Federal Government support for separating families is provided through a wide range of government and non-government service providers.....”

Immediately after my son’s marital breakup, his interface with the appropriate government agencies concerned exacerbated his trauma. He felt as though people from these agencies were apportioning the blame for the marriage collapse on him and went on to say that it was as though the system had a jaundiced view towards men. According to my son, if the man walked out of a marriage, the system in effect said, “what a bastard for walking out.” If the woman walked out (as in my son’s marriage), then the system in effect said “What did that bastard do to make her leave?” Either way, the accusing finger seems pointed at the male.

It is important for these government agencies to realize that the people who come to them, particularly in the immediate aftermath of marital breakup, have low esteem, an acute sense of failure and great shame and humiliation. These feelings do not need to be compounded by judgmental staff.

Courts can sometimes be daunting and confusing places for families, particularly those who do not have legal representation.

They are also daunting places where there is disproportional legal representation. Unlike my son, his ex-father-in-law is wealthy and could, and I feel sure would, have no hesitation in accessing the best legal help money could buy. This is one of the reasons why my son has no intention of voluntarily

7/08/2003

going anywhere near a court.

I would conclude by pleading that, except where the safety of the children concerned is in jeopardy, and *independently* assessed as such, strategy which permits the children to spend equal time with each parent be adopted.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]