

House of Representatives Standing Committee  
on Family and Community Affairs

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Secretary: .....

297 Dunns Rd  
Mornington 3931

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Standing Committee on Joint Custody and the Child Support Formula  
Parliament House  
Canberra 2600

Dear Sirs and Mesdames

In relation to the child support formula, Australia's percentages are the lowest in the world. They could be increased for payers who do not have contact with their children, as it costs more to care for children 100% of the time than it does for 83% of the time, especially during school holidays.

As a contact parent for two children and resident parent for one child, it is much cheaper to look after two children only every second weekend and half school holidays. I only have to have a two bedroom house, rather than a four bedroom house, so I save a lot on accommodation. In the lounge room are two couches that fold down into beds for the two children I have every second weekend. I also do not pay their school fees nor wash their clothes, nor take any responsibility for things like dental appointments. I have 100% responsibility for only one child and this enables me to be in full-time paid employment..

If child support was gradated in relation to contact, this would be unfair to resident parents, because the school fees do not decrease by 17% or 29% when the contact parent has the child for 17% or 29% of the time. The rent of the resident parent does not decrease by 17% or 29%. You find that the contact parent does not pay 17% or 29% of the bills, such as dental and pharmaceutical bills. There are fixed costs that the resident parent pays in relation to the children, which do not change according to changes in contact.

The contact parent spends 100% of their income on bringing up the child/ren. Children are always wanting to play sport, go swimming, go out with their friends etc and if there is money left from the basic necessities, it is spent on improving the lifestyle of the children. However the contact parent gets their basic necessities first, that is the exempt income, and then spend only 18% or 27% of their discretionary money on the children. They have 82% or 73% of their discretionary money left over. Anyone who believes that it would be fair to decrease child support because of contact has never had the full-time care and responsibility of children and does not appreciate how children cost money. They are always growing out of their shoes or wearing them out. The contact parent has much more discretionary money than the resident parent. People with children are poorer than those without.

One of the things that does not get taken into account is the opportunity cost of having children. If you forsake paid employment, you miss out on a wage and your qualifications go out of date, so that you have to re-train when you are able to go back into the workforce. Your salary does not even start where you left off, you have to start again from a lower level. It would be unfair to further punish parents financially for putting the full-time care of their children at a priority, particularly when they are very young. They should be rewarded for their commitment to their children.

Yours faithfully,

*Katrina Haller*

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