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Dear Committee,

Following are my responses to the recent inquiry regarding child custody. As indicated in the local paper on the Central Coast,

"presumption of equal time to be spent by children with each parent,
the child support formula and
grandparents contact rights"

are under consideration.

Firstly, thankyou for raising the inquiry.

I am concerned greatly that the inquiry, however, or perhaps moreover, the "presumption", may be the direct result of the male power groups currently whispering in the Prime Minister's ear.

I am of the grave suspicion that these men/fathers are choosing to go for the further destruction of the family now that the environment is showing obvious and painful signs of stress and decay.

I would be truly surprised if the men/fathers in question would like **50% of the housekeeping** along with their bootie, should they succeed. I am almost certain now that "men shall work and women shall bear children in pain" does not mean that the men were intended to run off to the factory to avoid the housework!!! **(The Greens Social Equity policy is a winner for our current times)**

Furthermore, are they interested in the post sleepless nights, nappy training phase as well as the post school-age part??

Following are my comments on each of the relevant areas.

Presumption of Equal Time spent by Children with each Parent:

First, let's define parent as someone who has shown care for their children, either as a nurturer or provider.

As a mother, the nurturer, in a solo parent circumstance, I consider the government is the most important "other parent" in the lives of my two daughters and I. Every mother, biologically stated, is a nurturer for the rest of her life.

The biological father in this instance, a "kiwi", is not willing to provide for his family. Until the father is willing to provide as reliable an income as the government provides for us, **he is not to be considered the other parent.**

My point, on a universal scale, is that a woman is a parent for nine months prior to the birth of each child. A woman's body and hormonal structure is designed to provide for the baby after birth. **There is an intricate**

biological game of give and take going on at lots of levels. It is not just a case of the man now being able to give a baby a bottle while he watches the footy. It is my belief and understanding that the mother is the intended carer, and the best carer for any **wanted** pregnancy/child. For there to be a presumption at all, the presumption would be best to read:

100% child custody always given to the mother of a wanted pregnancy/child, and the responsibility of provision for the mother and children to be, without question and without escape of debt, at least the amount of financial provision for survival given to the mother and children for the same purpose by the government, for the rest of the term of the mother's life, and the children before the age of 21.

If this is not done, Australia will become a land of big-boy baby-toting wanna-be-mums. The children would grow up to be as emotional as wet blankets, unable to move and, should one fall pregnant at 11, only know how to kick her child out the door! The mental institutions would be heralded as the only safe place for Mums. In biological terms, I feel the mother would enter into a phase of very low self esteem, a form of immobility as well, and in real terms, be challenged financially to pay for accommodation. I repeat here, the mother is not supposed to work after having children... **oh, maybe this can go the other way and men can have 100% custody, the car, the house and everything that's in it, and Mums of two or more children can do whatever they please, work or otherwise.**

While the nurture element may not necessarily represent a dollar figure to the gross domestic product, it may be comforting to the government that I realised just recently that I *could* support my family. I could simply spend half of our government income and child maintenance on the lotteries!

An additional annoyance in my circumstance is that I worked hard and saved for approximately fifteen years before deciding to have children, and now that I am a mother, I am granted no legally bound spousal maintenance!

Perhaps a precedent to consider alongside any considerations for 50/50 custody is to ensure that:

1. **priority with placement agencies for employment if socio-economic factors may cause stress on the children, utilising jobshare, preferably sharing the same job so the mother does not get stuck with the poorer quality types of work options.**
2. **Spousal maintenance must be paid by the father to the mother for the period of duration of the pregnancy and the first three years (times 24 hours) of each child's life at the base rate awarded to a child-carer. (that alone would send most of these pressure group fathers running in the other direction!).**

If the points above are NOT taken seriously, at least for consideration, mothers will be on the streets without children, homeless, without a donkey. Or is that what these men want???

Additionally, in the case of a unwanted child being born to unconsenting or unappreciative parents, the child must be automatically considered after birth to be in the care of the State, to be provided for by the best known carer/ nurturer that is available through DOCS or Barnados or similar. The recent decision to award a mother money for the care of an **unwanted** child is absolutely shameful! That is such a clear cut case - take the child and the money away from the parents ASAP!!!!

In the same instance mentioned above, I do not understand why the set of parents in question were not happy with the government assistance money currently given at birth to support or help support a child, especially given that they had previously been awarded \$1 million for the pregnancy.

The Child Support Formula:

Currently, the biological father of the two children and I have adopted the standard procedure in place for division of time with the children, with a few additions of three dinner outings per fortnight.

I am currently attempting to liase with a solicitor over a few changes I would like to have written into our seperation contract. I would like the right to move with the children wherever I choose until they reach the age of 21, and have legal control over whom they live with until that time. This condition would be suitable to any percentage custody agreement, and be understood to be in good faith.

As mentioned above, I favour 100% child custody in my circumstance. I have attempted to pertain to most of the current presumptions when working with the solicitor toward a mutually amicable solution, but have found there are always "changeover" difficulties, for the children and for myself, when they return to me. This lasts for about three days in general, and the extra work is hardly worth the so-called help. *The children are both girls, and one is below the age of three.*

Grandparents Contact Rights:

[REDACTED]

One set of grandparents are comfortably numb, and the other biological grandparent is so overloaded it rediculous! I know, in my circumstance, grandparents contact rights is not an issue... it is not even a possible and humane consideration!

While most grandparents are willing to care for their grandchildren on a relief basis, very few I have met are sympathetic to the difficulties facing their daughters or daughter-in-laws. Most concede it was more difficult in their day, often with larger families than the 1.8 (?) we have today.

[REDACTED]

Lets never have another baby boom, and lets concentrate on nurture.



Linda Gleeson

Kind Regards,