



Media Release

'Bridge Protest- Children First'

Father's cry for Government to put children first

Dads4Kids does not know the father who climbed onto Sydney Harbour Bridge in the early hours of this morning nor does it endorse his actions. However Dads4Kids applaud the intent behind his non-violent protest and call to put our children first. The situation for our children is very serious.

The Dads4Kids Fatherhood Foundation is calling on the government to put our children first in government policy. Dads4Kids, in its Senate submission to the Family Law Inquiry, (see link) rejects the Gillard government's proposed rollback of the very moderate 2006 shared parenting reforms.

The Family Law Legislation amendment Bill 2011 has been drafted on the basis that the proposed amendments will reduce child homicides. The reverse is actually the case. Statistics show that the 2006 Family Law Reforms helped save the lives of many children. The threatened rollback is likely to increase child homicides to pre-2006 levels which negates the purpose of the proposed Family Law Reforms.

Warwick Marsh, founder of Dads4Kids said, "Over the last few years a well orchestrated campaign has been mounted to make the claim that children are more at risk from violent fathers and that there has been an increase in child homicides at the hands of biological fathers. However this is not the case.

Warwick Marsh continued, "It is often presumed that fathers are the main offenders in child homicide cases. This is not the truth. According to Men's Health Australia, the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) showed in its 2006-2007 annual report there were eleven homicides involving a mother and eleven homicides involving a male family member. However, when the 'male family member' category was broken down, five perpetrators were biological fathers and five were de-facto partners of the mother who lived with the child.

A study in the Medical Journal of Australia found similar results. They stated that fatal child abuse was the most common cause of death and the offender was most commonly the child's mother or her de-facto partner.

It might be noted that child homicide has reduced by almost 50% since the introduction of the much fairer 2006 reforms according to NSW figures. The NSW Child Death Team Annual Reports stated:

- In 2005, twelve children aged between 0-17 died by fatal assault
- In 2007, nine children aged between 0-17 died by fatal assault. 2007 had the lowest child mortality rate observed over 1996-2007. This is the year directly after the reforms were instigated.
- In 2009, seven children aged between 0-17 died in six incidents.

These results indicate the 2006 reforms reduced the lethal danger to children. It is our belief that child homicides could well go back to their pre 2006 levels with the new proposed reforms. This would be an appalling outcome for our children." We call on the government to put our children first.

Link to Dads4Kids Senate submission:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/legcon_ctte/family_law_familyviolence/submissions.htm

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