

## Summary: Parental Alienation Syndrome

PAS is a theory whose widespread use and admission in international family law courts has never been matched by widespread acceptance within the international scientific community. The theory has been criticised in publications that are too numerous to mention. Below are some of the most frequent criticisms of the theory.

- 1) PAS is not in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV (DSM IV) or earlier versions;
- 2) Dr Gardner's work has never been published in a peer-reviewed journal and his books are self-published;
- 3) Not a single study has confirmed that mental health professionals can reliably diagnose PAS;
- 4) The Diagnostic criteria suggested by Dr Gardner are similar to those for his now widely discredited test for fabricating allegations of sexual abuse - the Sex Abuse Legitimacy Scale (SAL);
- 5) The fundamental assumption at the heart of PAS - i.e., that children frequently lie about sexual abuse - is contradicted by all the major research in the area;
- 6) The idea that false allegations of child sexual abuse increase in custodial litigation has been contradicted by research conducted both within Australia and internationally;
- 7) The PAS theory is blatantly sexist and targeted against mothers;
- 8) PAS is not applicable if there has been actual abuse i.e. if the accusations are truthful (which studies suggest they generally are);
- 9) Dr Gardner's suggested remedy of placing the child with the alienated parent risks handing an abused child over to an abuser while removing the protection of the other parent;
- 10) Several American Courts have rejected PAS as scientifically baseless and disallowed its admission as evidence;
- 11) Dr Gardner has made several comments in his books which are sympathetic and supportive of paedophiles;

Source - PAS, 'Unacceptable Risk' and the Culture of the Australian Family Court: How current judicial paradigms are violating CROc and failing to protect abused children. pp. 8,9.

A submission to the Federal Attorney-General, the Hon Phillip Ruddock MP.

Jonathan Humphrey, November 4, 2005.