



Sect kids won't see dad

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A TASMANIAN man excommunicated from the Exclusive Brethren is still waiting to see his children despite a landmark Family Court decision granting him access.

In late December the Family Court granted the man bi-monthly access to his children but ordered him not to expose them to television, radio or computers which are banned by the sect.

The 49-year-old man, who cannot be named, was meant to see the three youngest of his eight children on Sunday.

The visit would have been the first since the man was granted access on December 21 after a lengthy legal battle.

However, a friend of the man said the children had refused to see their father.

"The Exclusive Brethren made no effort to encourage the children to go with their father and in the end police were called," the friend said.

"A contravention order will be filed but this poor man is still waiting to see his children."

The man, who left the sect in 2003, was initially permitted some access to his children but after he spoke publicly against the Exclusive Brethren last year all meaningful contact with his family ceased.

The man applied to the court for custody of his three youngest children -- aged 8, 13 and 16 -- and a lengthy court hearing was held in Hobart in October.

Although Justice Robert Benjamin denied the man's bid for full custody because it would be too traumatic for the children to be removed from the Exclusive Brethren, he found the Exclusive Brethren and the mother had been "abusive" in denying the father access visits.

Justice Benjamin said he accepted a psychologist's opinion that discouraging the children from spending time with their father amounted to "psychologically cruel, unacceptable and abusive behaviour towards these children."

In addition to ordering the man not to expose the children to things contrary to their religious beliefs, Justice Benjamin also banned both parents from discussing or denigrating each other's faith in front of the children.

In his decision Justice Benjamin said "this was the most difficult of cases" and told the elders of the Exclusive Brethren to stop funding custody battles in a bid to deny former members access to their children.

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