

Guardianship of Infants Bill, 1932.

EXPLANATORY NOTE.

THE principal objects of the Bill are as follow:—

1. To confer on the Supreme Court the power to make orders as to the custody of an infant and access to such infant by either parent, having regard to the welfare of the infant and the wishes, as well of the mother as of the father.
2. To extend the above jurisdiction with certain limitations to a district court or a court of petty sessions holden before a stipendiary or police magistrate. Such jurisdiction is not to be exercised where the infant is over sixteen years of age, where the order would embrace administration of the infant's property or awards maintenance over £1 per week.
3. To provide machinery to enable such courts to enforce their orders.
4. To provide for the appointment of guardians by the father or mother, who upon the death of the parent appointing them will act jointly with the surviving parent.

If the surviving parent objects to act jointly, the court may determine who is to act as guardian.

5. Amends the provisions of the Marriage Act relating to consents necessary to the marriage of minors, and follows, with necessary variations, the English Act.
 6. Confers power on the Registrar-General to appoint justices to consent to the marriage of minors in certain cases.
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PROOF

No. , 1932.

A BILL

To amend the law with respect to the guardianship and custody and marriage of infants; to amend the Infants' Custody and Settlements Act of 1899, the Marriage Act, 1899, the Testator's Family Maintenance and Guardianship of Infants Act, 1916, and certain other Acts; and for purposes connected therewith.

[MR. L. O. MARTIN;— *September, 1932.*]

BE it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly of New South Wales in Parliament assembled, and by the authority of
5 the same, as follows:—

1. This Act may be cited as the "Guardianship of Short title. Infants Act, 1932."

Amendment of Act No. 39, 1899.

2. The Infants' Custody and Settlements Act of 1899 is amended—

Substituted s. 5.

(a) by omitting section five and by inserting in lieu thereof the following new section :—

Custody of infant.

49 & 50 Vic., c. 27, s. 5.

5. (1) The Supreme Court in its equitable jurisdiction, may, upon the application of the mother of any infant, make such order as it may think fit regarding the custody of the infant and the right of access thereto of either parent, having regard to the welfare of the infant, and to the conduct of the parents, and to the wishes as well of the mother as of the father. 5 10

The fact that a parent contemplates leaving the jurisdiction shall not of itself be regarded as a reason for denying such parent the custody of the child or depriving such parent thereof if the court is satisfied that the welfare of the child will best be served by allowing such parent to have or retain such custody. 15 20

15 & 16 Geo. V, c. 45, s. 3 (1).

(2) The power of the court under this section to make an order as to the custody of an infant and the right of access thereto may be exercised notwithstanding that the mother of the infant is then residing with the father of the infant. 25

Ibid. s. 3 (2).

(3) Where the court under this section makes an order giving the custody of the infant to the mother, then, whether or not the mother is then residing with the father, the court may further order that the father shall pay to the mother towards the maintenance of the infant such weekly or other periodical sum as the court, having regard to the means of the father, may think reasonable. 30 35

Ibid. s. 3 (3).

(4) No such order, whether for custody or maintenance, shall be enforceable and no liability shall accrue while the mother resides with the father, and any such order shall cease

to have effect if for a period of three months after it is made the mother of the infant continues to reside with the father.

5 (5) In every case under this section the court may make such order respecting the costs of the mother and the liability of the father for the same or otherwise as to costs as it thinks just. 49 & 50 Vic, c. 27, s. 5.

10 (6) The powers of the court under this section to make orders regarding the custody of an infant, and the right of access thereto of either parent, may be exercised upon the application of the father of an infant in like manner as those powers may be exercised upon the application of the mother of the infant. 18 & 19 Geo. V, c. 26, s. 16.

15 (7) Any order made under this section may, on the application either of the father or the mother or any guardian of the infant, be varied or discharged by a subsequent order. 15 & 16 Geo. V, c. 45, s. 3 (4).

20 (b) by inserting next after section ten the following new sections :— New ss. 10A., 10B, 10c.

25 10A. (1) The jurisdiction conferred on the Supreme Court in its equitable jurisdiction by this Part may also be exercised by the district court of the district in which the respondent or respondents or any of them reside, or by a court of petty sessions nearest to the place of residence of the respondent or respondents or any of them : Extension of jurisdiction to district courts and courts of petty sessions holden before stipendiary or police magistrates. cf. 49 & 50 Vic., c. 27, s. 9, and 15 & 16 Geo. V, c. 45, s. 7.

30 Provided that—

(a) such court of petty sessions shall be constituted by a stipendiary or police magistrate sitting alone; and

(b) such court shall not be competent—

35 (i) to entertain any application other than an application for variation or discharge of an existing order made by a court of petty sessions relating to an infant who has attained the age

age of sixteen years, unless the infant is physically or mentally incapable of self support; or

(ii) to entertain any application involving the administration or application of any property belonging to or held in trust for an infant, or the income thereof; or

(iii) to award the payment of sums towards the maintenance of any infant exceeding the sum of twenty shillings per week.

(2) (a) Where a district court makes or refuses to make an order on an application under this section an appeal shall lie to the Supreme Court in the manner prescribed by the rules of that court.

(b) Where a court of petty sessions makes or refuses to make such an order an appeal shall lie to a court of quarter sessions, and Part V of the Justices Act, 1902, shall be deemed to extend to such an appeal :

Provided that where the application is made to a district court, and such court considers that the matter is one which would be dealt with more conveniently by the Supreme Court, or where any such application is made to a court of petty sessions and such court considers that the matter is one which would be dealt with more conveniently by the Supreme Court or a district court, the court to which the application is made may refuse to make any order, and in such case no appeal shall lie to any court against such refusal.

(3) An order of a district court or of a court of petty sessions for the payment of money under this Part shall be enforceable in like manner as an order for the payment of a civil debt recoverable summarily.

(4) Where an order under this Part contains a provision committing to the applicant or any other person the legal custody of any

5 any infant, a copy of the order may be served on any person in whose actual custody the infant may for the time being be, and if such person makes default in complying with such provision he shall be liable on summary conviction to a penalty not exceeding *five* pounds per day for each day he makes default in complying with such provision.

10 10B. When any application has been made under this Part to a district court or to a court of petty sessions, the Supreme Court may, at the instance of any party to such application, order such application to be removed to the Supreme Court upon such terms as to costs as it thinks proper.

Removal of proceedings. cf. 49 & 50 Vict., c. 27, s. 10.

15 10c. (1) Any person for the time being under an obligation to make payments in pursuance of any order for the payment of money under this Part shall give notice of any change of address to such person (if any) as may be specified in the order, and any person failing without reasonable excuse to give such a notice shall be liable on summary conviction to a penalty not exceeding *two* pounds.

Enforcement of orders for payment of money. 15 & 16 Geo. V, c. 45, s. 8 (1).

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25 (2) Where any order for the payment of money has been made in exercise of the powers contained in this Part, the court making the order shall, in addition to any other powers for enforcing compliance with the order, have power in any case where there is any pension or income payable to the person against whom the order is made and capable of being attached, after giving the person by whom the pension or income is payable an opportunity of being heard, to order that such part as the court may think fit of any such pension or income be attached and paid to the person named by the court, and such further order shall be an authority to the person by whom such pension or income is payable to make the payments so ordered, and the receipt of the person

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person to whom the payment is ordered to be made shall be a good discharge to the person by whom the pension or income is payable.

Further amendment of Act No. 39, 1899. New Part IV.

3. The Infants' Custody and Settlements Act of 1899 is further amended— 5

(a) by inserting next after section sixteen the following new Part:—

PART IV.

Provisions applicable in all courts.

Custody, upbringing, and property of infant. 15 & 16 Geo. V, c. 45, s. 1.

17. Where in any proceeding before any 10 court (whether or not a court within the meaning of this Act) the custody or upbringing of an infant, or the administration of any property belonging to or held in trust for an infant, or the application of the income 15 thereof, is in question, the court, in deciding that question, shall regard the welfare of the infant as the first and paramount consideration, and shall not take into consideration whether from any other point of view the 20 claim by the father, or any right at common law possessed by the father, in respect of such custody, upbringing, administration, or application is superior to that of the mother, or the claim of the mother is superior to that of the 25 father.

Equal right of mother to apply to court.

Ibid. s. 2.

Sec. 1. (Division into Parts.)

18. The mother of an infant shall have the like powers to apply to any court in respect of any matter affecting the infant as are possessed by the father. 30

(b) by inserting at the end of section one the following words and figures:—

PART IV.—*Provisions applicable in all courts—ss. 17, 18.*

Further amendment of Act No. 39, 1899, s. 4. (Rules.)

4. The Infants' Custody and Settlements Act of 1899, is further amended— 35

(a) by inserting in section four after the word "procedure" the words "in the Supreme Court"; (b)

(b) by inserting at the end of the same section the following new subsections :—

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(2) The district court judges or any four of them may make rules for regulating the practice and procedure upon applications made under Part I of this Act to district courts and to the enforcement of orders made upon such applications.

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(3) The Governor may make rules for regulating the practice and procedure upon applications made under Part I of this Act to courts of petty sessions and to the enforcement of orders made upon such applications.

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(4) Any rules made under this Act shall—

- (a) be published in the Gazette;
- (b) take effect from the date of publication, or from a later date specified in the rules;

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(c) be laid before both Houses of Parliament within fourteen sitting days if Parliament is then in session, and if not, then within fourteen sitting days after the commencement of the next session.

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If either House of Parliament passes a resolution of which notice has been given at any time within fifteen sitting days after the rules have been laid before such House disallowing any rule or part thereof, the rule or part shall thereupon cease to have effect.

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5. The Testator's Family Maintenance and Guardianship of Infants Act, 1916, is amended by omitting sections thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen, and by inserting in lieu thereof the following new sections :—

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13. (1) On the death of the father of an infant, the mother, if surviving, shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, be guardian of the infant, either alone or jointly with any guardian appointed by the father.

Amendment of Act No. 41, 1916, ss. 13-16. Substituted ss. 13, 14. Rights of surviving parent as to guardianship. 15 & 16 Geo. V, c. 45, s. 4.

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Where no guardian has been appointed by the father, or if the guardian or guardians appointed by the father is or are dead or refuses or refuse to act, the court may, if it thinks fit, appoint a guardian to act jointly with the mother. 5

(2) On the death of the mother of an infant, the father, if surviving, shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, be guardian of the infant, either alone or jointly, with any guardian appointed by the mother. 10

Where no guardian has been appointed by the mother, or if the guardian or guardians appointed by the mother is or are dead or refuses or refuse to act, the court may, if it thinks fit, appoint a guardian to act jointly with the father. 15

Power of
mother and
father to
appoint
guardians.
15 & 16 Geo.
V, c. 45, s. 5.

14. (1) The father of an infant may by deed or will appoint any person to be guardian of the infant after his death.

(2) The mother of an infant may by deed or will appoint any person to be guardian of the infant after her death. 20

(3) Any guardian so appointed shall act jointly with the mother or father, as the case may be, of the infant so long as the mother or father remains alive, unless the mother or father objects to his so acting. 25

(4) If the mother or father so objects, or if the guardian so appointed considers that the mother or father is unfit to have the custody of the infant, the guardian may apply to the court. 30

The court may either refuse to make an order (in which case the mother or father shall remain sole guardian) or make an order that the guardian so appointed shall act jointly with the mother or father, or that he shall be sole guardian of the infant. 35

Where the court makes an order that the guardian so appointed shall be the sole guardian of the infant, the court may make such order regarding the custody of the infant and the right of access thereto of its mother or father as, having regard to the welfare 40

welfare of the infant, the court may think fit, and may further order that the mother or father shall pay to the guardian towards the maintenance of the infant such weekly or other periodical sum as, having regard to the means of the mother or father, the court may consider reasonable.

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(5) Where guardians are appointed by both parents, the guardians so appointed shall, after the death of the surviving parent, act jointly.

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(6) If under the preceding section a guardian has been appointed by the court to act jointly with a surviving parent, he shall continue to act as guardian after the death of the surviving parent; but if the surviving parent has appointed a guardian, the guardian appointed by the court shall act jointly with the guardian appointed by the surviving parent.

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6. The Testator's Family Maintenance and Guardianship of Infants Act, 1916, is further amended—

Further amendment of Act No. 41, 1916, s. 18.

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(a) by omitting from section eighteen the words "of the Act" and by inserting in lieu thereof the words "of this Act";

(b) by inserting at the end of section eighteen the following new paragraph:—

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The powers of the court under this section extend to the removal of either parent from guardianship under this Act.

7. The Marriage Act, 1899, is amended—

Amendment of Act No. 16, 1899. Substituted s. 9.

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(a) by omitting section nine and by inserting in lieu thereof the following new section:—

9. (1) If either party to any intended marriage, not being a widower or widow, is under the age of twenty-one years, such marriage shall not take place without production to the person about to celebrate the same of the written consent of the person or persons mentioned in the Fifth Schedule to this Act:

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Provided that—

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(a) if the person about to celebrate the marriage is satisfied that the consent of any person whose consent is so required cannot

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cannot be obtained by reason of absence or inaccessibility, or by reason of his being under any disability, the necessity for the consent of that person shall be dispensed with if there is any other person whose consent is also required and has been obtained, and if the consent of no other person is required, or if so required cannot for any of the reasons abovementioned be obtained, a stipendiary or police magistrate or some justice of the peace appointed for that purpose may on application in the prescribed form consent to the marriage;

(b) if any person whose consent is required refuses his consent, the court may, on application in the prescribed form, consent to the marriage.

(2) Before a consent is given pursuant to paragraphs (a) and (b) of subsection one of this section an inquiry shall be made on oath or solemn affirmation as to the facts and circumstances of the case.

(3) The consent of the court or of a stipendiary or police magistrate or justice of the peace to any marriage pursuant to this section shall have the same effect as if it had been given by the person whose consent cannot be so obtained or, as the case may be, is so refused.

(4) For the purposes of this section "the court" shall mean the Supreme Court in its equitable jurisdiction or a judge thereof, the district court of the district in which the minor resides, or the court of petty sessions nearest to the place of residence of the minor which is holden before a stipendiary or police magistrate sitting alone.

(b) (i) by omitting from subsection one of section ten the words "Judges of the Supreme Court" and by inserting in lieu thereof the words "Registrar-General"; (ii)

Inquiry by court, magistrate, or justice.

Effect of consent of court, magistrate, or justice.

Definition of court.

Sec. 10.

- (ii) by omitting from subsection two of the same section the words "said Judges" and by inserting in lieu thereof the words "Registrar-General";
- 5 (c) by inserting after Schedule Four the following new Schedule:—

New Sched. Five.

FIFTH SCHEDULE.

CONSENTS REQUIRED TO THE MARRIAGE OF AN INFANT.

Sec. 9.
cf. 15 & 16
Geo. V,
c. 45, Sch.

Circumstances.	Person whose consent is required.
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I.—Where the infant is legitimate.

10	1. Where both parents are living—	
	(a) if the parents are living together;	Both parents.
15	(b) if the parents are divorced or separated by order of court or by agreement;	The parent to whom the custody of the infant is committed by order of any court or by the agreement, or if the custody of the infant is so committed to one parent during a period of time and to the other parent during another period or periods of time, both parents.
20	(c) if one parent has been deserted by the other;	The parent who has been deserted.
	(d) if both parents have been deprived of the custody of the infant by order of any court.	The person to whose custody the infant is committed by order of any court.
25	2. Where one parent is dead—	
	(a) if there is no other guardian;	The surviving parent,
30	(b) if a guardian has been appointed by the deceased parent.	The surviving parent and the guardian if acting jointly, or the surviving parent or the guardian if the parent or guardian is the sole guardian of the infant.

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Guardianship of Infants.

FIFTH SCHEDULE—continued.

CONSENTS REQUIRED TO THE MARRIAGE OF AN INFANT—
continued.

Circumstances.	Person whose consent is required.
I.—Where the infant is legitimate—continued.	
3. Where both parents are dead.	The guardians or guardian appointed by the deceased parents or by any court, or if no such guardian has been appointed, a stipendiary or police magistrate or justice of the peace appointed in that behalf in accordance with section ten of this Act.
II.—Where the infant is illegitimate.	
If the mother of the infant is alive.	The mother, or if she has by order of any court been deprived of the custody of the infant, the person to whom the custody of the infant has been committed by order of the court.
If the mother of the infant is dead.	The guardian appointed by the mother or by any court, or if no such guardian has been appointed, a stipendiary or police magistrate or justice of the peace appointed in that behalf in accordance with section ten of this Act.