MATERNITY PAYMENT
Extending the age limit on adopted children
From 26 weeks to two years

BUDGET ANNOUNCEMENT
Impacting on

Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas

Bronwyn Bishop, Chairman of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services, which is inquiring into adoption of children from overseas, said the committee welcomes the budget announcement by the Treasurer last night to extend the qualifying age limit on adopted children under the Maternity Payment from 26 weeks to two years.

This will cost the Australian government $6.6 million over five years (including $0.5 million in 2004-05). Many parents of children adopted from overseas have previously missed out on the Maternity Payment as their children have been over 26 weeks old when arriving in Australia.

Mrs Bishop said the inquiry has already received a large number of submissions drawing attention to the issue of Maternity Payment and believed that future adoptive parents would be greatly encouraged by this increased time from 26 weeks to two years.

"This was a great illustration of the Australian government recognising the inequity between the entitlements provided to birth parents and adoptive parents," Mrs Bishop said.

The committee held its first public hearing into adoption of children from overseas on 9 May in Parliament House, Canberra.

Further hearings are planned around the country to allow the committee to talk to state and territory welfare agencies as well as to more people going through the intercountry adoption processes said Mrs Bishop.

For media interview: Please contact Damien Jones on **0409 147 247** at the electorate office of the Committee chairman Mrs Bronwyn Bishop.

For further information on the committee inquiry: contact the Committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4566 or email fhs.reps@aph.gov.au or visit the website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fhs