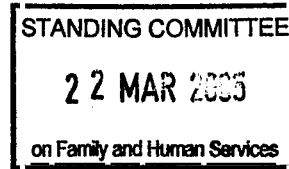


From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 18 March 2005 1:06 PM
To: Committee, FHS (REPS)
Subject: International Adoption Inquiry - Submission

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family and Human Services



RE: International Adoption

Dear Sir/Madam

My husband and I first began investigating the possibility of International Adoption in 2004, when we sadly discovered that we would be unable to have biological children without undergoing IVF. Due to the costs of IVF, and the physical toll of the process, we felt that adoption would be a better alternative. We were wrong on that count.

1. During this time, we have encountered the following inconsistencies with State approval processes:

Queensland (our home state) appears to have significantly longer application processing times than any other state in the country. In fact, the Queensland Department of Child Safety closed its doors to adoption applications for almost 3 years, as they were "unable to cope with the quantity of applicants". I have never heard of a Government Department shutting down due to understaffing or too much work – I still find this incredible.

When the Queensland Department reopened its doors for expressions of interest, we were required to attend Information Sessions in order to collect Adoption application forms. These sessions were literally overflowing with couples. We were told that our applications must be lodged by the 8th November, 2004. One of the requirements for submitting an Adoption application in Queensland is that you must have been married for two years. Sadly, several couples in our Information Session would not have their second wedding anniversary until just after the 8th November, and so were not permitted to lodge their applications. As the Queensland Department refused to disclose when Expressions of Interest may reopen, one could assume that these couples may be waiting years for their opportunity to apply. This does not happen in any other State.

There are large differences between States in regards to Application expenses, processing times, support and assistance provided by Department staff, Fees played by applicants, Applicant suitability criteria, and surprisingly, the selection of countries that you are able to adopt from. Such diverse criteria are serving the needs of no one. Inter-country Adoption should be managed federally, to better ensure equity, and *provide prospective parents caring and supportive service with properly trained staff.*

We did lodge our application in Queensland by the 8th November 2004. It is currently March 2005, and we have not yet heard back from the Queensland Department of Child Safety. We are considering moving to another State to better facilitate our desire to have a family, before we reach country specific age limits.

2. Are there any inconsistencies between the benefits and entitlements provided to families with their own birth children and those provided to families who have adopted children from overseas?

Clearly the Baby Bonus is a significant inconsistency, as very few children involved in Inter-country Adoption enter Australia before 26 weeks of age.

In addition, the process of issuing Adoptive children with Australian Visas through the Department of Immigration needs to be streamlined.

The most significant inconsistency we have encountered is that Adoptive parents ultimately receive very little financial support. We are expected to bear the huge cost of the adoption process with no assistance (which can be more than one years wages), and we miss out on the baby bonus. Families with biological children receive 9 months of pre-natal care, disability allowance (in some cases) or maternity leave, and Medicare funded hospital care for the birth. Couples undergoing IVF receive massive Medicare subsidies for their treatment. Adoptive parents receive nothing.

Thank you for reading my submission, and I'm sure we all look forward to hearing the results of your inquiry.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Queensland