

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 21 April 2005 2:36 PM
To: Committee, FHS (REPS)
Subject: [REDACTED] - Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas

1. 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.

The following is strictly confidential and if published (in part or in full) we request that our names be suppressed.

We adopted our daughter from China on September 20th after a 2 year long process. We incurred costs of around \$25,000 which included:

- Fees to Department of Human Services, Victoria
- Fees to Department of Immigration Affairs, Victoria
- Police checks
- Medicals
- Mandatory donation to orphanage in China.
- Mandatory fees to guides in China
- Travel to China
- Accommodation and meals in China
- Change of name application
- Citizenship application
- Clothes (our daughter only came with a pair of bloomers, singlet and cotton sandals), toys, high chair, car seat, cot, pram, safety equipment etc.

The Department of Human Services states that one person must be home full time to care for their child for 12 months. We have seen women who have biological children return to work after 6 weeks of maternity leave. Hence, after being a dual income couple, we have lost one complete salary for an entire year and have no choice in the matter.

We understand that the Australian government is encouraging more women to have children via a \$3000 baby bonus. We question if adoptive families really count towards this. It is very rare that an internationally adopted child brought home to Australia is younger than 6 months in age, hence, we feel that adoptive parents and their adopted children are somewhat discriminated against. In our journey to become a family, we have spent considerably more than we would have if we had of conceived naturally without any help whatsoever, yet we are not entitled to any government assistance.

Before choosing to adopt, we spent 2 years on IVF. Although this was heavily subsidised by Medicare, for all the money (we and the government) spent, the outcome was a learning experience, but no baby. However, a couple pursuing international adoption (within the current climate), who has been approved, is pretty much guaranteed that they will have an addition to the family sometime in the future, and hence an addition to the Australian population. This is much more of a guarantee of a child than IVF.

Another point which we stumbled onto was the fact that the government offers a \$200 reimbursement if a child is fully immunised prior to being 2 years of age. Our daughter was 20.5 months old when she arrived in Australia. By the time we could get her to see a paediatrician, she was 22 months. By the time her blood tests were done and we were notified that she needed most of the standard injections to catch up to Australian requirements, our daughter was 23 months. Due to the stressful situation, the doctor did not recommend having 8 needles at the one sitting, so this has been spaced out over periods of 4 weeks at a time. Unfortunately, we did not find out about the \$200 reimbursement until after

our daughter turned 2, and only just discovered this fact whilst talking to a mother with biological children. It would seem that mothers with biological children receive much more information regarding their entitlements than adoptive parents do. We just seem to stumble onto them, and often it is too late.

Thankyou for holding a Parliamentary inquiry on adoption from overseas and inviting public submissions. We look forward to hearing the results of your inquiry.

Regards

[REDACTED]

Victoria