20 April 2005

The Secretary of the Committee Standing Committee on Family and Human Services

## **Re:** Intercountry Adoption

As parents of our adopted son, we are writing with concern the inconsistencies between state and territory approval processes and the benefits and entitlements available to families who have created their families through intercountry adoption.

## INCONSISTENCIES BETWEEN STATE AND TERRITORIES

Currently each state differs in the areas of age requirements, fee structure, marital status, timelines, and application process for applying for adoption. Such inconsistencies require urgent attention especially due to the fact that each state and territory has the same countries available to which you can make application for intercountry adoption.

## The Situation in Queensland

Until late last year couples from Queensland interested in creating a family through adoption were forced to wait up to three years just to lodge an expression of interest due to the department closing their doors on all new applications. The Queensland register is once again closed for an indefinite period. For a government department to be able to do such a thing is just simply wrong. At present, any couple residing in Queensland wishing to create a family through intercountry adoption can:- (a) wait indefinitely for the intercountry register to reopen with the very real consequence of no longer being eligible especially due to the age limit criteria, or (b) move interstate where management of the intercountry application process does not require the closure of the adoption registers as in the state of Queensland.

## **Benefits and Entitlements**

Some families have been deemed eligible for the baby bonus payment, whilst others rejected due to the present criteria. To date, there are no benefits available for persons wishing to create a family through adopting a child/children from overseas.

To conclude, the above stated inconsistencies cause much heartache and anguish for persons residing in Queensland and wishing to adopt. This can not continue. A set of uniform rules are required to ensure prospective applicants are treated equally regardless of which state or territory they are living. Australian residents creating families through intercountry adoption are just that 'families' and benefit entitlements need to reflect this in providing greater support.

We thank the Standing Committee on Family and Human Services for this opportunity to comment on Overseas Adoptions.

Ian and Elizabeth Nussey

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