

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 23 April 2005 9:27 PM
To: Committee, FHS (REPS)
Subject: Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas

23/4/05

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] NSW [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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SUBMISSION NO. 126

(Supplementary to Sub No. 83)

AUTHORISED: 25.05.05 *hda@hi*

Dear Members of the Standing Committee on Family and Human Services,

I have already made a submission to the inquiry into the adoption of children from overseas. However, after contemplating the core issues faced by families wishing to adopt from overseas further I would like to make additional comment. I believe the more important issues faced by adoptive families at this time are: firstly the legislative and policy inconsistencies between states that prevent applicants from being assessed on their suitability to parent a child in need of placement for adoption and secondly chronic under-resourcing. I would like to briefly address this second issue. Under the terms of reference of the inquiry I believe that this would fall into an inconsistency in benefit and entitlement compared to biological families because pregnancy and birth is not similarly under-resourced (for instance we do not have families delaying pregnancy because they are unable to book into a hospital for birthing services due to waiting lists).

I think it is quite evident that adoption processing in each state and territory is under-resourced. This under-resourcing is more critical in the larger states. I believe that this is the case because the State and territory governments are prepared to put enough funding into adoption processing to provide a base level of service and when the population is lower this base level of service is closer to what the level of service that the population requires. Hence the relatively high number of adoptions per capita in the ACT, Tasmania etc and low number of adoptions per capita in Victoria and NSW particularly.

Chronic under resourcing is I believe largely due to the fact that intercountry adoptions processing is contained within the departments of community services who are also responsible for child protection which while extremely important, also appears to be a bottomless pit when it comes to funding requirements. I do not believe that intercountry adoption processing will ever get the funding it requires if it remains in competition with child protection or other services like disability services.

I understand that adoption is primarily the responsibility of the state governments. However, the federal government has a role in intercountry adoption under the Hague Convention on the protection of children in respect to intercountry adoption. I believe that it is reasonable for the federal government to assume a more significant role and in some way ensure that

intercountry adoption applications are processed in an efficient and timely way that does not exclude applicants due to cost. One way in what the federal government could do this is if funding for intercountry adoption services comes directly from the federal government. This would ensure adequate funding and that the state and territory governments provide a decent level of service. This need not be enormously expensive. During the discussions that surrounded adoption fees in NSW it was revealed that adoption processing in NSW cost the state government about \$1 000 000. I would estimate that well under \$20 000 000 a year Australia-wide would provide sufficient funding for adoptions to be processed in an efficient way with applicants paying minimal processing fees and at least double the number of adoptions. Funding could perhaps be linked to the number of adoptions processed.

The Australian government is concerned with increasing the number of children in families in order to fund future care for an aging population. It is worth considering that adoptive parents are committed to their children and committed to providing them with a good education and skills that will enable them to grow to become successful adults. These are parents who have had to have their abilities scrutinised. Children of these families will likely grow up to pay lots of taxes or otherwise contribute to society in a positive way. I would encourage you to consider this money well spent!

I would ask that you thoughtfully consider this option. Thankyou again for your time. This enquiry has raised a great deal of hope among adoptive families because it seems that finally someone is listening and trying to understand our experiences.

Regards

[REDACTED]