

Graeme Moffatt
**Submission for Commonwealth Government's Inquiry into the
Adoption of Children from Overseas**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address the Commonwealth Government's Inquiry into the Adoption of Children from Overseas.

I have recently supported two dear friends who have been fortunate enough to adopt a child from China. The process for doing so was long, required extreme commitment over a period exceeding 18 month before they were deemed to be suitable; and also involved considerable financial and emotional expense. From these observations I firmly believe that any individual is prepared to demonstrate this level of commitment and the desire to share their lives for the sake of a child cannot help but be a devoted parent.

In China alone, it is estimated that there are over 1 million children in orphanages, with the majority of these children being female, with many never having seen outside world; and little to no chance to do so until they will be released in adolescence. These children largely exist on a diet of congee, which is a porridge made from rice, with the only possessions they have of their own being their shoes. For children fortunate enough to be adopted, the process of care once they are taken from the institution is prolonged and difficult. With not only the changes for their physical well being – eg: the introduction of new foods to their diets, there is a prolonged period of demonstrating and showing these children that their new parents are the ones to turn to and will always be there (otherwise these children will

try to bond with anyone they encounter). As you can imagine, that majority that are not lucky enough to find placement and spend their entire young lives in an institution have no hope whatsoever of developing into functioning adults capable of leading any semblance of what we would consider a normal life.

Much of the negative sentiment in regards to the adoption (or for that matter, any custody and care for children) comes from various churches or discredited sources such as Dr Paul Cameron of the Family Research Institute. Dr Paul Cameron's studies are often cited as scientific research by groups seeking to oppose members of the GLBTI community on any issue. His so called studies will be cited in the pay-for-publication, Psychological Review. It must be remembered that Dr Cameron has been struck off the medical registers in the two states in the USA where he operated and his studies refuted by national professional bodies of both the psychiatric and psychological professions.

In regards to any opposition from religious organisations, I find it absolutely hypocritical their claims that their concerns are for the welfare of the child when, with particular reference to the catholic church, the church themselves have been the organisations that have, as some would say, perfected the art of institutionalised abuse of children. We do not have to go back far in history to see that two of the highest standing religious leaders in Australia to find the hypocrisy of these churches. We only have to look to Archbishop Hollingworth whose actions in not addressing an abusive priest allowed this child abuser, a practicing clergyman, to continue abusing children and continue his ministry. A further disgusting example of this hypocrisy is Cardinal Pell of the catholic church, who attended the trial of one of Victoria's worst child molesters, Father Gerald Risdale, in full priestly regalia not as a witness for the prosecution or their to administer support to the traumatised victims, but as Cardinal Pell put it: "as a demonstration of priestly solidarity."

While these religious institutions are quick to claim the fabricated ills and evils of two people of the same sex providing a loving, caring and nurturing environment for children, they are quick to disregard the very real evidence that:

The majority of child abuse occurs within a traditional family unit by a blood relative

By far the greatest perpetrator of domestic violence against children is by an immediate family member in a domestic setting

As reported by the Herald Sun, only two days ago on 1st August 2005, that the largest single contributor to a child's death (and this figure was stated to be in the order of 1,500 per annum, was poverty

We are fortunate that Australian society is now largely beyond blind faith; and, most importantly, already have numerous examples of members of the GLBTI community quietly going about the care of their families, with the same struggles, worries and joys as would any heterosexual or any other couple for this matter. These are the same members of the GLBTI that are teaching your children, nursing your sick, tending to your aged and infirm, paying taxes and even proudly serving and risking their lives in our military to protect the freedoms that every Australian enjoys.

It is often said that the test whether something is discriminatory is the left handed or epileptic test. As an example, if you were to replace a clause such as "Gay people to be banned from adopting children" with either "Left handed people to be banned from adopting children" or "Epileptic people to be banned from adopting children." If either of the latter two statements appear discriminatory, and with no credence, then the first is also discriminatory with no credence.

On the 18th November 2003, the Supreme Court in Massachusetts voted that it was unconstitutional to bar same sex couples from marrying. While the governor, seeking a compromise so as to appease those opposing this ruling, suggested Civil Unions as a separate but equal equivalent, the court issued its final decision in a statement that is immediately relevant to our own issue, that is:

"History has shown us that separate is never equal"

Separate is never equal, and any decision to the contrary is an affront to the very principals on which our nation is founded. More importantly, it denies children who are deserving of the very love, care and opportunities that thousands of caring, compassionate and devoted GLBTI peoples can provide.