

Sen the Hon Amanda Vanstone

Minister for Immigration and Multicultural
and Indigenous Affairs

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs



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The Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP
Chairman

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Chairman Bishop

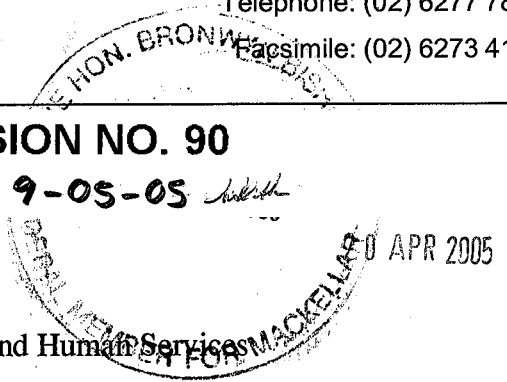
Thank you for your letter to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Senator the Hon Amanda Vanstone, of 25 February 2005 with regard to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (the department) providing a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services inquiry into the adoption of children from overseas. I am responding on Senator Vanstone's behalf as Acting Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. I regret the delay in responding.

The department does not have a direct role in intercountry adoption processes. However, satisfaction of those processes is the basis for the grant of a permanent visa which enables an adopted child to enter Australia as a permanent resident.

The Migration Regulations set out the criteria to be met for the grant of a visa including where the child is adopted under a State and Territory intercountry adoption program. No distinction is made between the different Australian States and Territories. The Migration Regulations also provide for the grant of a visa where a child is adopted overseas by expatriate Australians without the assistance of an Australian State or Territory adoption authority.

The department affords high priority to the processing of Adoption visa applications, with 50% of visa applications from State and Territory adoption programs being finalized within an eight week period from the time of lodgement. This compares favourably to the department's published Service Standard for the processing of the Child visa caseload which is four and a half months for high risk countries.

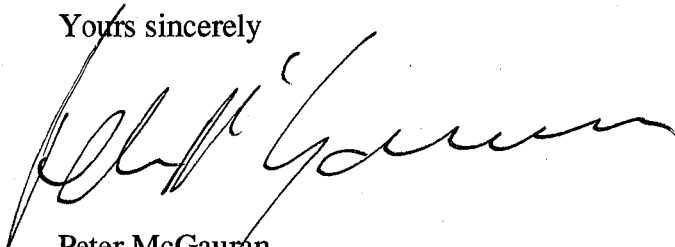
Non citizen children adopted by Australian citizens, permanent residents or eligible new Zealand citizens are subject to the health requirement and medical checking arrangements as for all permanent resident applicants. There is a mandatory requirement for testing for HIV and Hepatitis B for adopted children, along with other groups such as unaccompanied refugee children, pregnant women and where HIV or Hepatitis B is clinically indicated. The health examination of adopted children is undertaken through the department's overseas Panel doctor network. Arrangements are in place to expedite health clearances by Medical Officers of the Commonwealth for adoption visa applicants. There is generally a 24-hour turnaround time for such clearances. Under the Migration Regulations health waiver arrangements are available for adopted children that fail the health requirement.



The table below provides statistics on the number of Adoption visas granted for the previous two financial years.

Financial Year	Expatriate adoption	State/ Territory adoption program	Total
2002/2003	27	349	376
2003/2004	28	437	465

Yours sincerely



Peter McGauran
Acting Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs