

**From:** Andrew Rate [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 22 April 2005 1:11 PM  
**To:** Committee, FHS (REPS)  
**Subject:** Submission: Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] WA [REDACTED]

22 April 2005

Bronwyn Bishop MP  
Chairman of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family & Human Services

**Re: Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas**

Dear Ms Bishop

we sent the following letter (below) to a number of State and Federal Parliamentary Representatives in December 2004, relating mainly to the inconsistencies in eligibility for the Maternity Payment. We wish the content of that correspondence to be considered as a submission for the current Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas. This relates to the second Term of Reference of this Inquiry "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."

We also believe that the process of adoption from overseas would be greatly assisted by allowing private adoption agencies, licensed by State or Federal Government, to facilitate the adoption process for potential adoptive parents. The current situation where, in most States, Government Departments are responsible for both the administration of adoption *and* provision of support for adoptive parents, places these State agencies in a potentially conflicting position. We believe that the conflict between regulating adoption, and supporting families created by adoption, would be resolved by allowing licensed private agencies to assume the support role, leaving government agencies in a regulatory role. Such an arrangement would also relieve pressure on the State agencies which currently manage adoption; anecdotally, it seems that in most states such agencies experience high workloads which affect their capacity to deliver timely services to adoptive parents. It would also ensure that child protection issues, such as those afforded by the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, would continue to be addressed. This issue also comes under the second term of reference of the Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours sincerely,  
Andrew Rate                      Johanna (Annelies) Rate

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WA

22 December 2004

The Hon. Kay Patterson  
Minister for Family and Community Services  
Shop 3, 10-40 Burwood Highway,  
Burwood East Victoria 3151

Dear Ms Patterson

We are writing in support of the proposed extension of the Government's Maternity Payment to all adoptive parents, a policy which is apparently under review in your office.

There are many ways of becoming a family in Australia, and we believe that the Australian Government's policy on supporting families should reflect this diversity. Adoption is, and should be, subject to safeguards to ensure that the best interests of adopted children are protected. The administrative process associated with such safeguards, however, takes time to complete. This means that most children who are adopted from Australia, and especially from overseas, are older than the 26-week limit set by the current policy. The lack of access for adoptive families to the financial assistance afforded by the Maternity Payment is an unfortunate anomaly which, unfortunately, is understandably considered by some people to be discriminatory.

We urge the current Australian Government to amend the law so that adoptive parents have full access to the Maternity payment without an age limit being placed on their adopted children. This would reflect the reality that adoptive parenting is as valid a form of parenting as occurs in biologically-formed families, with the same financial requirements. The relatively small numbers of children adopted in Australia would mean that additional burdens on the tax system would be a very small proportion of the Family and Community Services budget.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.

Yours sincerely,  
Andrew Rate

Johanna (Annelies) Rate

(this letter has been sent separately by post)

Copies to: The Hon Julie Bishop, Federal MP for Curtin and Minister for Ageing  
Ms Tanya Plibersek, Opposition Spokesperson on Family Issues  
Senator Natasha Stott Despoja (Australian Democrats, SA)

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