

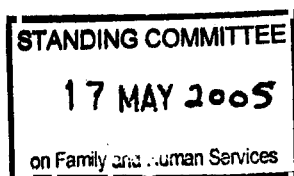
## SUBMISSION – Adoption of Children from Overseas

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

**SUBMISSION NO. 174**

AUTHORISED: 1-6-05 *hldh*

11th May 2005



Dear Secretary,

This is a submission to the inquiry into adoption of children from overseas. We address the terms of reference below.

### **1. Inconsistencies between benefits and entitlements provided to families with their own birth children and those provided to families who have adopted children from overseas.**

#### Maternity Payment

We understand that the maternity payment is to assist families with a new child in meeting financial pressures due to the costs of a new child and lost income.

This payment is currently available to parents of birth children and to parents of children adopted at younger than 26 weeks of age. Most adoptive families do not qualify for this payment as their children are older than 26 weeks at the time of adoption. We have a daughter adopted from China at the age of 17 months so we were ineligible for the payment.

We feel that adoptive families should also receive this payment irrespective of the age of the child at adoption because:

- The costs of adding a child to a family by adoption are far higher than by birth, so adoptive families need the same government support as birth families.
- Our state government requires as a condition of approving the adoption application that one parent commits to taking a year out of paid employment to settle the child in. In our case this partner is only returning to work part-time because we feel our daughter needs more time to settle before both parents work full-time.
- There are relatively few adoptions of children in Australia. The cost of removing the age restriction would be minimal to the federal and state governments, but would provide great assistance to those families, and remove what is effectively discrimination against older adopted children.

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### Federal Provision for Adoption Leave

Currently 12 months unpaid leave for families adopting a child applies only if the child is under 5 years at adoption.

We feel this age restriction should be removed because:

- All adoptive families need to take leave from work for an adoption.
- Older children have as many needs as a younger child at the time of adoption and for a long period after they have joined the family. Our child required intensive parenting in her first year in our family after spending her first 17 months in an orphanage. An older child would require no less input for a long period after placement.

### Visa Payments

We paid \$1245 in Visa application fees for our child.

Given the subsidies provided by federal and state governments provide at birth to biological children, we feel the Visa fees for children adopted internationally should be waived.

## **2. Any inconsistencies between state and territory approval processes for overseas adoptions**

The fees for processing an adoption, waiting times and age limits of parents varies a great deal from state to state. While intercountry adoptions are determined by Commonwealth Law, they are processed by state and territory governments which make their own rules. It is completely unacceptable to have different criteria apply to applicants solely because they live in different states. There should be greater national consistency both in the criteria applied to applicants for intercountry adoption and in the application processes.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our views and we look forward to the results of this inquiry.

Yours sincerely

