

## **Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**

### **Information about the Enhancing Adoption as a Service for Children Working Group and the National Principles in Adoption**

**Requested by the Community Affairs Committee, January 2012**

The Community and Disability Services Ministers Conference (CDSMC) on 23 July 2008 agreed to establish the Enhancing Adoption as a Service for Children Working Group to consider broad issues about the future role of adoption in meeting the needs of children and families, consider research and best practice evidence on adoption, and undertake further work to achieve a more consistent approach to adoption matters across jurisdictions.

The Terms of Reference of the Working Group are:

- to examine research and best practice evidence to explore the future role of adoptions in meeting the needs of children and families,
- to review the National Principles in Adoption with a view to reaching agreement on a set of principles to guide adoption practice which achieves the best possible outcomes for children and families,
- within the context of a reviewed set of National Principles in Adoption and to achieve better outcomes for children, to achieve a more consistent approach to adoption matters across jurisdictions, and
- to report back to the Community and Disability Services Ministers Conference about the outcomes of the group

The Working Group consists of senior representatives from the Commonwealth and each of the states and territories and is chaired by officials from the Victorian Department of Human Services.

The National Principles in Adoption (**attached**) underpin all adoption practice in Australia and relate to the various laws and policies in each jurisdiction. They were first ratified by the Community and Disability Services Ministers Conference in 1993 and reviewed in 1997 to incorporate Australia's obligations under the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption. Significant changes have occurred in adoption regulation and practice in Australia since 1997 and a number of national forums have identified the need to review and redraft the Principles.

Draft Principles are expected to be considered by Ministers in the first half of 2012.