

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
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It is my view that adoption is not a viable option for children in out-of-home care and that there are more child-focussed arrangements, such as permanent guardianship orders, which, when suitably designed, can provide stability and permanency for such children, while avoiding the long term negative outcomes related to adoption. The number of adoptions taking place in Australia has been reducing steadily since the early 1970s, as society has increasingly become aware of the long term negative outcomes for those who are adopted. **It is my view that the guiding principle for a national framework for local adoptions within Australia should be that there will be no further adoptions.**

Under current legislation, in most jurisdictions, a child who is adopted is issued with a birth certificate which contains false information ie that the adoptive parents are not only the legal parents of the child, but also the genetic parents. A birth certificate is a record of the details of one's birth. When the names of the parents who gave birth to the child are replaced by the names of the parents who adopt the child, this certificate is no longer an accurate record of that event. I believe that it is unconscionable to issue a false birth certificate, which supersedes the original birth certificate, thereby denying the truth of the child's lineage. This practice contributes to the genealogical confusion and sense of loss experienced by many adults who were adopted as children. The negative impact of these issues can be profound and enduring. There are post-adoption support services in every state and territory of Australia which can attest to this. **Their input to this inquiry will be of vital importance.**

In South Australia, an adopted child can be issued with an honest birth certificate, which states the true relationships and contains the names of the genetic parents as well as the legal parents. With this type of birth certificate, adopted children are not forced to live a life of pretence with a false identity.

Historically, adoption was designed to protect children from the truth of their origins. Honesty was sacrificed in favour of decency. In the twenty-first century many different family configurations exist and there is no need for dishonesty. It is an insult to adopted children to issue them with contrived, dishonest birth certificates.

Adoption as it is practised in the West does not exist in the Islamic world, where lineage is of paramount significance and cannot be fabricated. As a society, we owe it to our vulnerable children to honour their lineage and not to devalue it. Instead of children being forced to change their names and to lose their original identities through being adopted, their origins can be preserved and they can retain their original birth certificates, with the addition of the name(s) of their legal guardian(s). In that way, the child is protected and made safe without the pretence that they were born to their legal guardians. It is the deceit and pretence implicit in adoption which is harmful to children and their resultant discomfort is often carried through into adulthood, creating long term negative outcomes. At the time of the National Adoption Apology in 2013, our government vowed to learn from the mistakes of the past and not to repeat them. We have a moral duty to ensure that that promise is honoured.

Children in out-of-home care can have the stability and permanency which will provide them with security and safety, without the additional insecurity of pretending that they are the genetic children of the people who are caring for them. An open and honest guardianship arrangement, instead of an adoption, will allow a long term, healthy adjustment in children who are unable to live safely with their parents.

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