



The Hon. **Joe Hockey** MP
Minister for Human Services

The Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP
Chairman
Standing Committee on Family and Human Services
Parliament House
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Dear Mrs Bishop

Bronwyn

STANDING COMMITTEE

11 MAY 2006

13 APR 2006

Inquiry into adoption of children from overseas

Thank you for your letter of 1 December 2005 introducing the report *Overseas adoption in Australia* and raising concerns in the report about Medicare Australia's response to the needs of adoptive parents.

I am pleased to advise that on receipt of your report, Medicare Australia has looked at how it can improve support for adoptive families. Medicare Australia has taken immediate steps to improve the specific services provided to adoptive parents. In particular the agency will:

- develop and implement a specific training module for all public contact staff for special needs groups, including adoptive parents. This will include information to better inform staff of the specific issues facing these families as well as the communication style and physical environment that would be appropriate. This will ensure staff have accurate information that is provided sensitively to adoptive parents;
 - develop enrolment information for consumers as either a brochure and or content on the Medicare Australia website;
- and
- provide the option from March 2006 for children to be added to their parents' Medicare cards when they enter Australia on a temporary visa.

In addition new Medicare office designs provide more discreet sit-down counters for families. In the interim, as part of Medicare Australia's induction training, information will be provided to staff on how to best use the existing premises to ensure discretion for adoptive parents, for instance, using the Manager's office and quieter counters.

Your committee's work has led to real change and greater support for parents who adopt children from overseas. I congratulate you on your efforts in this area.

Yours sincerely

Joe Hockey