

**From:** Danielle Vandenberg [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, 18 April 2005 5:42 PM  
**To:** Committee, FHS (REPS)  
**Subject:** Submission to the Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas

18 April 2005

To Whom it May Concern,

**Submission to the Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas**

I am an approved applicant to adopt a child from China. I am a single woman living in NSW and am approved to adopt a female child from 0-2 years of age. I am expecting to travel to China this December to get my daughter. She will definitely be over 6 months old at the time of adoption and most likely at least 12 months old. This is because of rules in China that stipulate that a child must have been abandoned for a certain length of time before they can be put up for adoption and the length of time that it takes for the bureaucratic processes with respect to the adoption process being initiated. This is the case for almost all children being adopted from overseas into Australia. Because my daughter will be over 6 months of age at adoption I will not qualify for the Commonwealth Government's maternity payment. I consider that this is very discriminatory towards adoptive families and I believe that all adoptive families should be eligible for this payment irrespective of the age of the child at adoption.

The birth of a biological child is heavily subsidized by the government. However the cost of adopting a child from overseas, which is the only way that I can now have a child, will cost me tens of thousands of dollars. Furthermore I will have to sign an undertaking, as stipulated by NSW DoCS, that I will have to remain at home, full-time, with my daughter for 6 months after placement. In fact I am planning to remain at home for at least 2 years as I feel that this will be of most benefit for my daughter's adjustment and development and then to work part-time for several years. This will come at a considerable financial cost. It is well described that children adopted from overseas may have a variety of emotional and developmental issues and these problems are more likely the older the child at the time of adoption. Hence the importance of adoptive parents remaining at home for as long as possible and the need for parents adopting older children to also receive the maternity payment. I am struck by the irony that while the Commonwealth Government is implementing incentives for people to have biological children this does not apply in general to parents forming a family by adoption. This is in contrast to a number of other national governments where parents adopting children both locally and overseas receive a much higher level of financial support than we do in Australia.

I am fortunate to live in NSW where government legislation allows single people to adopt. This is not the case in a number of other Australian states who have a range of very restrictive criteria based on marital status and age that exclude many people from adopting. This discrimination needs to be fairly addressed on a national level as does the

right of adoptive parents to paid and unpaid maternity/paternity leave on equal parity to biological parents. I am fortunate not to be affected by this but it is an issue for most adoptive parents and again should not be based on the age of the child at adoption.

I would also like to emphasize the recent increase in fees for intercountry adoption in NSW that have nearly tripled to \$9,700 for first applications despite strong opposition from adoptive parents. This has not occurred in relation to local adoptions. Despite DoCS promising that this fee increase would result in an increased efficiency in the processing of applications this does not appear to have occurred with the wait currently to be approved from the point of receipt of the Social Worker's report being in excess of 6 months. This has certainly been the case for a friend of mine. Furthermore this fee increase will discourage some potential adoptive families. This process is not just about parents getting children but about giving children without a family the opportunity to be raised in a family environment with access to a reasonable education and health care.

Thank you for your attention to this submission.  
Yours faithfully,

Danielle Vandenberg  
NSW