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21 April 2005

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family and Human Services
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA
Email: fhs.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir/ Madam,

This letter is a response to the Standing Committee on Family and Human Services invitation for submissions addressing the Committee's Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas looking into how the Australian Government can better assist Australians who are adopting, or have adopted, children from overseas countries.

This submission addresses your Terms of Reference with particular reference to inconsistencies between the benefits and entitlements provided to families with their own birth children and those provided to families who have adopted children from overseas.

My husband and I live in NSW and are currently seeking to adopt a child from overseas. We lodged our Application to Adopt with NSW Department of Community Services in March 2004 and are awaiting receive the Department's advice on approval or otherwise.

We welcome the Inquiry and hope that it will achieve a positive outcome for intercountry adoptive parents and children.

We are very conscious of the inconsistencies between entitlements for, and costs of becoming, a biological parent and those of an adoptive parent. Some of these inconsistencies seem quite unjust.

For biological families birth costs are covered by Medicare whilst intercountry adoptive families' adoption costs are borne by the family. Some adoption costs are placed on us by our governments:

- State Government application and processing fees of \$9700
- Federal Government immigration fees for the child of \$1245.00
- Police clearance \$185 per application (normally 2-3 times per child placement).

These are daunting costs and will be a heavy burden on us, particularly as it is mandatory that as we are adopting a child of over 2 years of age, one of us must take 12 months off work to be with the child.

Entitlements that are available for biological parents that we will not be eligible include:

- Maternity payment / Baby Bonus – our child will be over 26 weeks old, making us ineligible.
- Paid Maternity Leave. My (Christine's) employer provides paid maternity leave but not paid adoption leave.

We strongly support the equal payment of all entitlements for all new parents. There should be no discrepancy or discrimination between entitlements for all families whether the son / daughter is a new member of the family biologically or via adoption.

The age of the child should also not be relevant, as the set up costs for a new child into the family are costly, regardless of their age.

We request that our names, address and contact details be kept confidential. ✓

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]