

From: Mills, Vanessa [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 14 March 2005 2:44 PM
To: Committee, FHS (REPS)
Subject: Submission on Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas

Dear Sir/Madam

Regarding the Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas, I would like to make a submission that has particular relevance to the second of the two terms of reference. That is, *any 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.*

Firstly, employees of the Department of Defence employees who adopt are not eligible for paid maternity leave. Instead, we are provided with only 2-weeks paid parental leave, and are then given access to unpaid leave. This compares to those who have birth children who are provided with 14 weeks paid leave. As is well known, there are significant costs involved in adoption, so to not be eligible for the same paid leave as a mother who gives birth is quite devastating. It also demonstrates a misunderstanding of the adoption process and a lack of emotional support for adoptive parents.

The second issue I would like to draw to attention is that the government's maternity payment has essentially excluded adoptive mothers. The policy states that:

You may get Maternity Payment if:

you have a newborn child or have care of a newborn child born on or after 1 July 2004

you have a newborn child or have care of a newborn child (born on or after 1 July 2004) within 13 weeks of the child's birth and are likely to continue to have care for no less than 13 weeks, or

a child born on or after 1 July 2004 has been entrusted to your care for adoption before 26 weeks of age, or

you have a stillborn child or a child who dies shortly after being born (for a child born on or after 1 July 2004), and

you were eligible for Family Tax Benefit Part A within 13 weeks of the child's birth (born on or after 1 July 2004) or of the child being entrusted to your care.

Essentially, this means that the vast majority of adoptive families are ineligible for the payment. Because of the lengthy adoption process, babies are usually past 26 weeks before being entrusted into the care of their new family. Moreover, the baby bonus that we were once eligible for has now been cancelled. Again, given the fees involved in the adoption process, and the lack of government rebates or tax deductibility, any loss of benefits has a huge impact on us.

Please note that I am more than happy to speak to the inquiry committee on these matters at any time.

Regards, Vanessa Mills (currently in the process of adopting a baby from China)

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