

Australian Korean Friendship Group (Queensland) Inc.



“Supporting Families and Adopted Children”

14th April 2005

The Secretary of the Committee
Standing Committee on Family and Human Services

Dear Sir/Madam

The Australia Korean Friendship Group Qld Inc is a family support group consisting of families with adopted Korean children and families interested in adopting from Korea. The group was established to provide support and fellowship among member families and increase our awareness of the rich Korean culture and heritage.

We welcome the opportunity to submit the following.

There are a number of inconsistencies between States and Territories in the approval process for persons applying for intercountry adoptions.

Age

Each state and territory has different policies regarding age. These cover a number of areas:

1. The age of the adoptive parents - Various countries set age limits on persons applying for adoption. Currently, each Australian State or Territory also has its own age restrictions. Therefore, some couples, although they would fit the relinquishing country's age criteria, do not meet their individual state/territory's age criteria. If couples were simply governed by the age restrictions of the relinquishing country, then we would have consistent conditions for all Australian couples wishing to adopt.
2. The age of the children being adopted - This criteria also currently differs from state to state. In Queensland, the current maximum age limit for an adoptive child is five years, whereas in other states, the children can be older.

Fees

Each state deals with the same countries, but each state has different fees and charges, even though they each deliver the same service.

Marital Status

Each state has different policies regarding married, de facto relationship couples and single persons wishing to apply for adoption. The number of years that applicants need to have been married before applying to adopt also varies from state to state. Also, not every state accepts applications from single persons.

Timelines

Each state has different timelines to complete the same process.

Applying for Adoption

Each state has different processes for applying for adoption. In Queensland, the application process is currently closed and it is not known when it will reopen. Therefore, current Queensland residents wishing to adopt a child/children must either move to another state to apply or wait indefinitely for applications to be called. If couples choose to wait, they face the possibility of exceeding the age limit criteria by the time the list reopens, which would make them ineligible to apply.

Support Groups Newsletters

Each state has different restrictions on the content of the newsletters produced to assist couples through the process. With recent developments in Queensland, couples now have less access and support from newsletters as we have been recently advised of strict regulations restricting what we are allowed to publish. This impacts hardest on country members who, for the most part, the newsletter is their only contact with support groups.

There are also inconsistencies between the benefits and entitlements provided to families with biological children and those provided to families who have adopted children from overseas.

Baby Bonus

Some families have received this payment whilst other applications have been rejected.

Medical Procedures

Various medical procedures for starting a family are paid for or subsidised by Federal or State governments eg. IVF. Currently, no benefits are available for persons adopting a child/children from overseas.

In summing up, overseas adoption as run currently by each individual state is full of inconsistencies. This causes unnecessary delays and anguish for couples. There needs to be a uniform set of rules so each and every Australian (regardless of where they live) are treated equally. Again, we thank the Standing Committee on Family and Human Services for this opportunity to comment on Overseas Adoptions.

Stephen Finkel
President AKFG Qld. Inc.

<p>Address: 7 Firefly Crescent, Lawnton, Queensland, 4501 Ph: (07) 38821968 or (07) 38812030 Mob: 0411420182 Fax: (07) 38812050 E-mail: stephen@thermalalarms.com.au</p>
