

From: Lisa Dobb [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 18 April 2005 6:10 PM
To: Committee, FHS (REPS)
Subject: Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas

Point 1 – Missing the boat.

Australia has an aging population and the serious implications for all Australians are obvious to us all.

There are many countries with the opposite problem and the serious implications for the people of countries are also obvious.

In Australia, there are hundreds of couples and individuals currently waiting on waiting list to adoption from overseas. They are waiting up to 6 years due to lack of children available to their state and country.

There are millions of destitute children around the world and for some (not all) of these children adoption would be the best option.

Other countries have been more pro-active in setting up these mutually beneficial relationships as they have been faster to recognise the opportunity and more professional in their approach. These mutually beneficial relationships also include helping the children who are not best served by adoption.

Point 2 – Professionalism

The establishment of adoption programs with other countries have been largely done by motivated and brave but untrained people hoping to adopt. The state department only step in at the later stages due to lack of resources and motivation. Often these delicate relationships are mishandled. Overseas adoption worker are often offended by the untrained low-level staff they deal with.

Australia needs to establish through high level diplomatic channels, mutually beneficial agreements with other countries where we will help children and increase our young population. Currently these negotiations are being done by medium-level public servants with inadequate diplomatic training. These delicate matters should be lead by the best of diplomats not social workers and administrators. These diplomats should be from the Department of Foreign Affairs because this is a foreign affair. The potential for embarrassment to Australia in the current system is huge and has happened in the past.

Point 3 – State Management of a Federal Issue

Currently each adoption program is administered by a managing state. For example India is managed by Victoria. The role of managing the country falls to medium-level managers and the day-to-day dealings are done by low-level staff. Under this system,

there is potential for mismanagement and unfair advantage to applicant from that state. For example, there are programs that don't exist, there are programs that only exist in name and there are programs that are severely limited to applicants in some states. [REDACTED]

Point 4 – State staff members battle lack of resources and training

Adoption staff need to receive diplomatic and culture training. The potential for embarrassment to Australia is huge and has happened in the past. Australia adoptions workers are not always well-regarded by their overseas counterpart. I believe that lack of training and lack of resources is at fault.

Point 4 – Not all Australians have Equal Access

As adoption is handled on a state by state basis, not all Australians have the same access to intercountry adoption. Some Australians have chosen to move interstate to improve their chances. For example, there are over 600 applicants waiting to adopt in Queensland but these people have the second lowest chance of adopting. Please see the figures below.

2003 stats (pop 20,111,30) using June 2004 stats from ABS and 02/04 intercountry adoption stats from AIHW: Adoptions Australia 2003-04.

State & Pop.	Intercountry adoptions	One adoption per...
ACT 324000	26	12,461
SA 1534300	72	21,309
TAS 482100	22	21,913
NT 199900	5	39,980
WA 1982200	44	45,050
VIC 4972800	86	57,823
QLD 3882000	49	79,224
NSW 6731399	66	101,990

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/cws/aa03-04/aa03-04.pdf>

Point 5 – Not all Australia are Equal

There are major inconsistencies between state and territory approval processes for overseas adoptions for example defacto couples can adopt from Western Australia but Queensland couples must be married for 2 years.

Point 6 – Inconsistent Treatment of Children once in Australia

There are 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. Due to the age limit on the \$3,000 baby bonus most adopted children are excluded. This includes the most needy children, these are older children who often need additional care, tutoring and counselling. In Queensland, we are required to have one caregiver not work for the first year. Adoptive parents agree that this is in the best interest of the child but receive no assistance to do so.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Yours faithfully,

Lisa Dibb
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