

Chairman of Standing Committee on Family and Human Services

**Mrs Bronwyn Bishop House of Representatives Parliament
House Canberra**

**Submission from Origins Inc Supporting People Separated by Adoption
Queensland Branch.**

**Secretariat,
Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas,
House of Representatives,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA. ACT. 2600**

SUBMISSION

Origins presents this submission for consideration in response to Submission NO 56. Presented by the Australian Council for Adoption presented to the Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas.

The points of discussion and argument presented by the Australian Council for Adoption in Submission No 56 raised concerns with Origin over the issue social contextualisation and resulting skewing of the arguments presented.

With respect to the inquiry Origins in this submission attempts to address this issue and put forward further points for consideration with regard to the Adoption of Children from Overseas.

Point 1

The Australian Council for Adoption which from this point will be referred to in this submission as ACFA in submission no 56 states that at the time of the ratification of the Hague convention by the Australian Federal Government in 1998 that the formulation and process of compiling the convention was influenced by false propoganda against adoption.

Origins responds on this issue pointing out that the Adoption of Children is an issue that is contextualised within human relations and family and while the issue is addressed by the state is cannot be completely deconstructed outside of the humanity in which all members of the adoption community live familiarly, nationally, culturally, spiritually and racially. Arguments proposed then and now by members of the Adoption community who spoke with concerns over the adoption of children domestically and internationally addressed issues that arise out of the humanity in which we all live and the social expectations and pressures put on human relations arising out of that humanity.

Notably Origins refers to the bonds between mother and child, familial bonds and dynamics of families of origin, lifelong grief for all parties when a child is separated from its parent and family, the grief of prospective adoptive parents who cannot conceive children and feel state policy and society can remedy what nature cannot.

Origins also refers to the issues of class and wealth in adoption then and now. It is important to note and pregnancy is a human condition there are single parents across the spectrum of society but it is the financially comfortable who have the means to address the needs of single mothers in their families and allow them the support to keep their children.

Further it is the financially able who attempt to fill their homes with children from domestically born children of less financially able mothers within their domestic society and from mothers from third world countries where the family bonds have been torn and wounded by political instability and natural disaster. The less financially able in Australian Society cannot dream of adoption to fill their homes. They are not able to pressure the state to provide the children to them that nature could not.

Origins then proposed that it is then plausible in light of the above points to consider the concept of "babies for sale" with reference to overseas and domestic adoption on the basis of financial availability, and the concept of money buys influence with regard to the pressure of prospective adoptive parents on policy, legislation and social mores.

Origins states that with regard to the point raised by ACFA in submission no 56 that the Federal Government has not to date assisted in the appointment of non-government accredited adoption agencies it is a dangerous concept to open the movements, lifelong repercussions, and the gifts of love family and culture to agencies operating on the basis of profit and not part of the public sector but of the private profit driven economy.

Point 2

Origins responds to the point raised by ACFA on the issue of the maternity payments eligible to mothers who keep their children as opposed to adoptive parents circumstances and age of child when they apply for the maternity payment.

Centrelink has addressed the issue of adoptive parents eligibility for maternity payment in recent legislative changes and addressed the issue of needs of child while with the caring parent, (the party caring for the child) both biological and adoptive Origins suggests that ACFA contacts the Family Assistance Office for further information on these changes.

Point 3.

It is Origins understanding that under Australian Law when a child is adopted they become a legal entity within that family of adoption and all legal rights are forfeited to the biological family.

Adoptive children have the right to inheritance as to the biological children of the adoptive family and any family members and retain all legal rights as citizens and as part of that family.

With regard to the issue of discrimination of adoptive persons because of birth or status Origins stands and states that this is a good thing and as an organisation Origins upholds this principle including the issue of rights to access of knowledge of adoption and family of origin and contact without veto.

Point 5.

Origins responds to the issues raised by ACFA of the excessive nature of fees and expectations involved in the process of application of adoption of children from overseas and locally.

Origins raises the point that it is appropriate that care and concerns are adequately addressed by government in the selection and education and assessment of prospective adoptive parents and that if these issues are to be addressed then that takes time, staff and resources.

Origins responds to the point raised by ACFA in submission no 56 of the possibility of adverse circumstances impacting on the children placed for adoption and that they may be in receipt of a damaged child requiring specialized care and attention.

Origins here questions, is ACFA addressing the fact that children are human beings and that even in the instance of children who remain with their biological families all are impacted on by their environment and relations and that these families have to deal with those aspects of needs of care and wounds to the child as a life course event.

The argument presented by ACFA raises the question of who in any society is guaranteed a perfect child, is there such a thing. Origins argues the point for consideration very strongly that children adopted or otherwise are not commodities and an order for a human being to meet criteria for a job or social role not to be ever confused with someone who is supposed to be considered and being made welcome as part of a family.

Point 6.

Origins addresses the point raised by ACFA in submission no 56 encompassed by the quote that "the child least likely to be abused is the child with adoptive parents"

In his address and paper presented at the Australian National Conference for Adoption in Brisbane in 1997 Dr Jeff Ricarby advised that there is overwhelming evidence that the adoptive child is overrepresented in psychiatric care and juvenile Justice processes and institutions in Australia and overseas. These findings are mirrored by the adult adoptive population in society.

In their evidence to the Inquiry in Brisbane Mrs Law and Mrs Carroll stated the Western Australian Government sent prospective adoptive parents to Origins for counselling when the truth is that Origins has no office in Western Australia. In the States we do have an office [Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria] the relevant departments never send us prospective adoptive parents for counselling as we are a support group for Post Adoption ie: Adoptive Parents who have already adopted, Adoptees and Natural parents who lost children to Adoption.

Origins is not anti adoption as we believe if all other avenues have been explored and no one in the child's natural families or in their own countries or in their own race in another country can care for him or her then adoption into a family of strangers is better than being abandoned without a family.

What we do object to is the secrecy in past adoptions where the child's identity is expunged and he is given a new false birth certificate and name change. We have found in our experience this has been damaging to the adoptee and so we support the idea of permanent care orders.

Origins receives no funding from any Government as we generate our own finances by membership and the income derived from the two conferences we have produced since 2002.

Both these Conferences were highly successful and were attended by both Professionals and consumers and the publication of the conference Papers has been very successful in that they have been requested from all over the world. We have sent copies to Universities in the United States and the United Kingdom and Canada and so far have had very positive feedback from these Schools.

We also have facilitated workshops in both Sydney and country Queensland and are about to travel to Far North Queensland to run more workshops funded by the Uniting Church Social Justice Fund. So you can see we are certainly not funded by as Mrs Law "an annual thing". We are also active in the political field and I am currently a member of the Queensland Minister for Child Safety [Hon Mr Mike Reynolds] Adoption Consultative Forum.

Mrs Law and Mrs Carroll also stated that the so called anti adoption groups never give submissions unless they are confidential-----

We have given Submissions to a recent Senate Inquiry into Mental Health and were invited to give evidence in Brisbane which we did. We have participated in Inquiries in Other States and our Submissions are never confidential.

Mrs Carroll also stated that the 1988 [it was in fact 1998] Inquiry into past adoption practices in New South Wales was initiated by "a small handful of of , I think eight women". This is also totally untrue as we at that time had some 800 members mostly mothers who had had their newborns stolen from them in Government owned Public Hospitals. Many more than eight gave submissions and evidence and there were so many who supported us but were still so traumatised by their experience that they could not face an Inquiry.

We deal every day with natural mothers and adopted people who are still suffering the long term affects of family separation. Therefore we don't advocate the same practices of adoption that were in place in those terrible times.

When **Mrs Irwin** asked --Do you get any State funding and Mrs Carroll said they had a "one off grant" and Mrs Law said " no we never had a grant"----

The fact is that the same Women are also known as **The Adoption Privacy Group** and did indeed receive a grant from the State government of Queensland [Mrs Judy Spence was the relevant Minister at the time]. The received \$6000 in the later part of 2002 as a one off grant.. Mrs Carroll sits on the same forum as myself as the representative of the Adoption Privacy Group.

Before taking up the position of Queensland coordinator of Origins Inc I was the Registrar at Jigsaw Queensland and I was appalled at the untruths **Mrs Law and Mrs Carroll** told the Inquiry about the operation of this fine organisation. For instance Jigsaw never went to the Registrar of Birth Deaths and Marriages to conduct searches on behalf of members as this was impossible. The only person able to access this information is the holder of the form 25 and that was the relevant person and their personal information is never given out to anyone but themselves.

The fact that the searcher must sign a disclaimer that they would not take any action against Jigsaw if the reunion goes wrong is laughable. For a start no one can foresee the result of a contact and reunion and no one can take legal action against an organisation who merely gives information and support through a difficult time.

I believe that the statement that "the service they provide in Queensland is not a satisfactory one at all "is for the members to decide.

The President of Jigsaw Professor Dr. Trevor Jordan is a close colleague and friend of Origins and we support the wonderful work they do alongside our group.

The workers at the Adoptions section of the Department do not refer people contemplating adopting locally or intercountry to Jigsaw for counselling as they are busy enough with the many people seeking help with post adoption issues.

I also take issue with the statement by **Mrs Law** that "They would not exist if they were not funded. Jigsaw does indeed receive funding of around \$6000 a year to operate .They do not rent or pay to the Government an amount of \$4000 for their premises as they rent from a private party.

I have been a member of Jigsaw since the late 1980's and I know that if they were not funded they would take their operations back to a member's house or garage as we did in those days. . This is the level of commitment these people have to helping others who have been effected by past adoption practices.

Origins has been operating from my garage until two years ago when the Mental Health Association of Queensland recognised the work we do and gave us an office free and gratis .I work in a voluntary capacity and am available at all hours and seven days a week to talk to anyone with adoption issues.

We submit that the various Government departments are in fact not anti adoption but are in fact aware of the great harm that separation of mother and child causes, and have been for some time, and therefore must acquaint any mother seeking information about adoption with the truth. I have worked closely with the workers in the Queensland Department of child Safety . Local and post adoption section and I know that as professionals they would impart this information with sensitivity and compassion and would never tell a young expectant mother she was "a monster" for considering adoption for her baby as was stated by the N F C A ..

In conclusion Origins thanks the Inquiry for consideration of the issues raised in this submission and for the opportunity to respond to submission number 56 by the ACFA.

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