

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

Kerry and Ruth Emerson

Queensland

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services

Honorable Browyn Bishop MP
Chairperson
Standing Committee on Family and Human Services
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

By way of introduction my name is Kerry Emerson and my wife and I have adopted two children from Ethiopia. We went through the process of adoption in Queensland starting in the last century in 1997. In the year 2002 we were approved for siblings and were allocated two beautiful girls in 2002.

During the adoption process we were subjected to a stringent process of requirements where my wife was required to conform to a certain body mass index although her health was not at risk. I do not understand how this requirement can detract from parenting skills?

Apart from the statistical data already supplied for each state regarding overseas adoption I believe the process of overseas adoption needs to be addressed on a national level.

In regard to your review I would like the committee to take into account my following views on overseas adoption.

In some adoption cases two or more children are collected at the same time, being very similar to a multiple birth, but because of differing ages in the children their needs are at different levels, but adopted parents receive no such benefit.

Also, maternity allowance for adoptive parents is available but the child has to be under the age of 26 weeks at date of placement. This is in most cases of overseas adoption not possible due to waiting times after allocations.

Given the time frame of being able to be accepted for overseas adoption in Queensland, I believe a number of applicants have and will pull out of the process as they feel it is a 'weeding out' of suitable applications. Therefore, this will have the result of people feeling like they have failed and it will also make them angry, as anger grows out of a loss of control. Surely the Queensland Government must be concerned about the

'downloading' of stress in systems onto individuals who then carry the burden of this failure of the system into society.

Likewise, the absolute compliance of the current Queensland Government regulations regarding overseas adoptions connotes a 'just following' mentality all too readily to sacrifice personal values and client welfare to an imperfect system of rules and regulations. The bottom line is the laws regarding overseas adoption are generally framed with adults in mind and not the children's.

At the moment the bureaucratic legalistic nature of the overseas adoption process in Queensland is raising criticism, so it is up to the Federal Government to find an alternative process that will minimize and equalize the overseas adoption process.

It needs to be asked that if they uphold current guidelines that are put in place for overseas adoption are they are truly meeting ethical standards? It is ethically moral to have separate regulations for each state regarding overseas adoption? This also needs to be addressed at a Federal level.

I believe the Federal Government's laws on overseas adoption should maximize happiness and minimize suffering, that is, it should move beyond the scope of one's own interest and take into account the interest of others.

Therefore, the overseas adoption process should be a caring profession for all involved.

However, I do believe the overseas adoption process should follow the Queensland rules and regulations where there is a need for the adoptive parents to have been married for a minimum period of two years. This will then stress empathetic associations with adoption departments, as well as a sense of being responsible and it promotes traits concerned with personal relationships such as compassion, sympathy, trust and insight.

Before we commit a grave injustice against our future adopted children the laws regarding overseas adoption must apply to every couple equally.

Thank you for the opportunity of voicing an opinion and I look forward to your bestir reply.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kerry Emerson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kerry Emerson