

17 August 2005
(Plus information of 25 August 2005)

The Honourable Bronwyn Bishop MP
Standing Committee on Family and Human Services
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Bishop

Rather belatedly I wanted to make a submission to the current Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas (I only found out about it recently). My comment concerns the Queensland process. My wife and I have three young children. Prior to having the third we seriously considered adopting a child from overseas. This was because we have spent some time in the Philippines doing some charity work and know the conditions of many children living in poverty. We wanted to give a child a secure loving Christian home where otherwise they would not have one. We lodged our interest with the Qld Intercountry Adoption Unit on 12 November 2002 to adopt a child from the Philippines. As of December 2003 we had not heard anything despite making an unhelpful phone call to the Unit a few months prior.

I subsequently wrote a letter of complaint to the Director-General Frank Peach and instead of receiving a letter addressing my concerns received a letter dated 29 January 2004 from the Acting Director-General Steve Armitage highlighting the good work the Unit has been doing. The actual figure of children adopted was 41 for 2002-3 and 33 in 2001-2002. At the time I thought this figure (and still do) was appalling i.e. not even one a week. For 2002-3 103 assessments were finalized with 100 on target to be met for 2003-04. Apparently there was a commitment by the Minister to finalise between 100-110 assessments a year. I still think both figures are woeful. It wasn't until about another year later that the Unit issued a call for Expressions of interests. By that time we had become disgruntled with the system and given up waiting. The Unit's website stated that the waiting period for a child from the Philippines was about 9 months so we expected this process to be reasonably quick. And of course obviously it wasn't.

My concern is this: There are thousands of children worldwide who need secure loving family environments whether because of poverty, disease, famine etc.. and whilst we wait for the bureaucracy to run its course, these children are placed at greater risk. It seems to me that the current process in Queensland is poorly administered or at the very least, inefficient. I believe it is in the best interests of the child to keep any adoption process streamlined whilst maintaining the necessary controls and vetting procedures. The sooner an overseas child is taken up by appropriate parents the better.

I am aware in the US the adoption process is undertaken by private firms, and I am led to believe that the process is much quicker. Perhaps this type of arrangement could be implemented in Australia.

I hope that in some way my comments are able to assist with your inquiry. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Benjamin Faint