

PLEASE KEEP OUR SUBMISSION CONFIDENTIAL – we respectfully request our names be withheld from public access.

We are the parents of two beautiful daughters who joined our family through inter-country adoption. We feel strongly that all Australian adoptive families should be entitled to the same rights and government support as families created through biological means.

Fees and Charges

The cost to a family of completing an intercountry adoption is very high, and unlike IVF and related fertility treatments, there is no government support available to families to help defray these costs. In our case we were diagnosed with infertility issues, and were offered the option of pursuing IVF as a means of having a child; the bulk of these costs would have been subsidised through medicare and private health insurance. After some discussion, we decided that we did not want to pursue IVF as what we wanted most was a child to love, and we knew there were so many children out in the world without families to love them. This decision has led us to our beautiful daughters, and resulted in no additional costs to the Australian taxpayers. We then pursued Intercountry adoption, which involves substantial out of pocket expenses for a family, both during the application process, and once the child is home in Australia with their new family. While we will never put a price on our children each adoption has cost our family more than \$20,000 in direct out of pocket expenses. Additionally, the Victorian govt. requires that one parent remains home with their newly adopted child for at least 12 months, which in our case resulted in substantial loss of income upon directly returning home with our daughters.

The Australian government wishes to encourage Australians to grow their families, however the current arrangements for intercountry adoption prohibit many families from even considering adoption as a viable way to build their own families.

Maternity Payment

The current maternity payment discriminates against adoptive families by capping the age of the child at 26 weeks. Our daughters were both older than 12 months when they joined our family so we would not have been eligible for this payment, yet we incurred huge costs once we arrived home with our daughters. Although both our daughters were toddlers, families adopting older children also incur large additional costs when these children join their families. There should be no age cap applied to the maternity payment – it should be made available to all families in Australia who have a child join their family – be it by birth or adoption.

Differences between States – Adoption Legislation

There are vast differences between the various Australian states in terms of legislation governing adoptions. For example in States such as South Australia, archaic age restrictions prohibit adoption by families with more than 45 years of age between parent and child. These types of legislative requirements have not kept pace with the changing nature of Australian families. We strongly support consolidation of state

adoption legislation, and establishment of a federal body to oversee adoption in all States. This would hopefully remove much of the discrimination built into several of the State's current legislation. The Australian government has the opportunity to play a key role in supporting Australians in making their families through adoption. This is good for Australia, and good for the many children in institutions around the world, who do not have families who can take care of them.

Thankyou for considering our submission

Yours faithfully

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