

02/11/2005

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family and Human Services
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Re : Parliamentary enquiry into intercountry adoptions.

Dear Committee,

I hope that you will accept this late submission that I am sending in relation to an issue that has arisen at the last few hearings. This issue relates to Australian issued birth certificates for children adopted from countries where the adoption is finalised in the sending country rather than through the courts in Australia. An example of such a country is China, from where my two daughters came to us. Our children were issued with (translated) notarial certificates in China, one of which states the date of birth, another being a certificate of abandonment and the other an adoption certificate. It should be noted that the date of birth record and the abandonment certificate are separate documents as the term "abandonment certificate" seems to have been used incorrectly, i.e. interchangeably, at times in the hearings.

From reading the transcripts there seems to be a perception that an Australian issued birth certificate is something that would be universally desirable. While I am aware that this is true for many families, it is also true that families such as our own do not need or desire such a document.

Some families have experienced problems with various institutions not recognising the Chinese issued documentation of their children's birth. These experiences have created much frustration, concern and anger for the families concerned and examples have occurred with both government and private sector organisations. We have also experienced problems with the recognition of our daughters' documents at both Medicare and the passport office. Our response is not to consider that an Australian issued certificate would resolve the situation, rather that education and training of the agencies concerned would be effective and appropriate.

I have no problem with those who desire such a document being given a way to obtain one in Australia. I would, however take issue if such a document became a mandatory

requirement for identification purposes. My reason for this is quite simply that I personally consider that listing my name or designating Australia on any document referring to my children's births to be inaccurate and dishonest. I see no value for my family in pursuing such a document and if one should become available for the families who do want one, I would not like to see it become a required piece of identification over and above the Chinese issued documents. In saying this, I am keenly aware that there are adult adoptees that have stated that it was very important for them to have a birth certificate naming their adoptive parents. Conversely, there are also many adult adoptees who express the opposite view with regards to their amended birth certificates. If either of my daughters decides at some later date that such a document is still important to them after hearing our reasons for not trying to obtain one now, then I will support their decision and do all I can to help them obtain one. Until such time, we will continue to use the documentation that we have, which now includes a Certificate of Australian Citizenship.

Regards,

Jan Williamson
Via email