

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

**Program 1.1**

**Question No. 89**

**Senator Trood asked the following question after the hearing on 22 February 2011:**

According to the Update on the Ethiopia-Australia Intercountry Adoption Program – February 2011 “a new fee structure is being finalised based on the costs of administering the Program. There will be an increase to the total amount of fees in order to meet the standards and expectations of the Program and respond to inflationary pressures in Ethiopia.”

- a. Has the new fee structure been finalised?
- b. When will it be implemented?
- c. How much has it increased by?
- d. What specific changes have occurred to warrant the change in fees?
- e. Where is the money collected in fees paid?
- f. Have the families involved in the Ethiopian Program been notified about the change in fees? How were they notified?
- g. Is any support being offered to the families to assist them with the increase in fees?

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

- a. The new fee structure has not yet been finalised.
- b. The structure is being implemented progressively. It will be fully implemented once the Department has concluded arrangements to engage an adoption service provider to support the Australian representative for the Ethiopia-Australia Intercountry Adoption Program (see answer to Question No. 48). The Department is seeking to finalise these arrangements as a priority.
- c. We estimate the total fee payable per application will be in the order of US\$12,000. This would be an increase of US\$2,500 on the previous fee (US\$9500) which had been in place since April 2010.
- d. The increased fees have been calculated based on the costs involved in meeting the standards and expectation of the Program. In particular, the new structure will include a component to ensure extensive professional management of background checking of children and to establish and manage development assistance projects. The increase is also partly attributable to high inflationary pressures in Ethiopia (Reuters Africa reported an annual inflation rate of 17.7 percent in January 2011).

- e. The fees are payable by instalments paid by families seeking adoption from Ethiopia. The money is paid into an account for the Ethiopia-Australia Intercountry Adoption Program with the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. Receipts from the fees are provided to the Australian State and Territory Central Authorities for Intercountry Adoption.
- f. Prospective adoptive parents with active files in Ethiopia were notified in February 2011 of the anticipated increase in fees through direct contact from the relevant Australian State or Territory Central Authorities. They were also provided with an information sheet outlining interim arrangements for the fees pending finalisation of the new fee structure.
- g. The Department is not aware of any financial assistance being provided to prospective adoptive families.