



Adoption Australia

Adoptive families working together to bring about change

Friday, May 02, 2008

**The Hon Kevin Rudd MP
Prime Minister.
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600**

Dear Mr Rudd,

On behalf of the Australian adoption community we formerly submit the attached petition promoted via several adoption support groups. We include the list of signatories and comments received from individuals who signed the online petition, which can be viewed at <http://www.adoptionaustralia.org/>

Over 2300 signatures where received since the petition was publicised on the 21st of March 2008.

We hope that changes to Australia's adoption system can finally be achieved as a result of the combined efforts of thousands of people from both the government and public sectors. We wish to acknowledge and thank everyone for their contribution. This includes all the NGOs and individuals who have been lobbying for change for more then two decades as well as all those who overcame the fear factor and gave evidence at the *Federal Inquiry into adoption of children from overseas*.

The petition is endorsed by a number of organisations from around Australia

- Australian Families for Children - NSW
- Australians Adopting European Children – NSW
- ASIAC - Tasmania
- Adoption Support for Families & Children - WA
- Australians Caring for Children -NSW
- AACASA - NATIONAL
- Friends of FANA - NSW

We appeal to the Federal government to implement the recommendations of the *Standing Committee on Family and Human Services Inquiry report on Overseas Adoption in Australia* headed by Bronwyn Bishop, which received bipartisan approval back in 2005.

This petition calls on the Federal government to make it easier for Australians to adopt by approving adoptions from more countries, supporting adoptions of older and special needs children, making it

more affordable by reducing fees and providing tax concessions; and assisting with the accreditation of NGOs to facilitate intercountry adoptions.

We ask that the report recommendations be addressed with priority & diligence & hope that further recommendations to be initiated by the newly formed Peak Body will be acted on with haste.

Yours sincerely,

Ricky Brisson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ricky Brisson', written in a cursive style.

Deborah Brook

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Deborah Brook', written in a cursive style.

On behalf of *Adoption Australia*

Annexure 1 - The petition

Annexure 2 - The signatories



THE PETITION

The Australian intercountry adoption system has been in crisis for many years. There are more than an estimated eleven million orphaned and abandoned children in the world, yet **Australia has the 2nd lowest adoption rate in the developed world.**

In the Standing Committee on Family and Human Services Inquiry report on Overseas Adoption in Australia released by Committee Chair, Bronwyn Bishop, in November 2005, numerous issues were raised with the path to resolution clearly outlined. Enlightened recommendations were made, approved by the then government and implementation was begun. However, it seems activities have stopped since the announcement of the election in late 2007 and the election of the Rudd government.

The bottom line is:

- **The Federal Government should make it easier for more children to be adopted into Australian families.**
- **The process needs to be more accessible, affordable and streamlined.**
- **Adoption waiting lists need to be reduced - they are far too long and the process takes too long.**
- **Australians should be allowed to adopt from more countries - and non government organisations (NGOS) should be supported to set up private not for profit adoption agencies.**

There are numerous issues that need urgent attention and action. We have identified what we feel to be the major initial changes required, and to this end we call on the Federal Government **to act with haste on the following:**

1. The Federal Government **should as a matter of urgency implement** the recommendations of the *Standing Committee on Family and Human Services* report **Nov 2005** - [click to download a copy of the recommendations](#) - see page 17.
2. The Federal Government should without further delay, **finalise and distribute** for consultation, the revised **Commonwealth /State agreement (Recommendation 1** of Standing Committee on Family and Human Services report Nov 2005 - [click to download a copy of the recommendations](#) - see page 17.

3. While a start has been made by the Attorney Generals Department, the Federal Government should expedite **the establishment of new adoption programs** and increase the number of countries from which Australians are permitted to adopt. **NGOs should be involved in the program establishment process.**
4. The Federal Government should establish a **national accreditation system to enable NGOs** to deliver adoption services. **Seed funding should be provided to enable NGOs to establish accredited adoption agencies.**
5. The Federal Government should quickly complete the establishment of the national **peak body for adoption support organisations.**
NEWS ITEM : ON 30 MAR 2008 THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PEAK BODY
6. The Federal Government should **waive the present \$1390 Australian entry visa fees for the adopted children.**
7. As promised prior to the election, the Federal Government should **remove the age limit for adopted children in relation to the maternity allowance.** (**Recommendation 9** of Standing Committee on Family and Human Services report Nov 2005) - [click to download a copy of the recommendations](#) - see page 17.
8. The Federal Government should introduce legislation that will allow the issuing of an Australian birth certificate to all adoptees. (**Recommendation 12** of Standing Committee on Family and Human Services report Nov 2005)
9. The Federal Government should **offer tax deductions** or offsets for adoption expenses.
10. The Federal Government should act to ensure that adoption **laws and criteria** are consistent in all states and are compatible with internationally accepted standards. This should include the adoption of older children and sibling groups, disclosure of information regarding waiting children and adoption by single applicants.
11. Adoptive families should be acknowledged as equal to families with biological children in regard to work leave benefits & entitlements.