

INTRODUCTION

Intercountry adoption is a relatively recent development in Australia, which has increased over a period when the number of locally born children surrendered for adoption, has dramatically fallen.

Adoption is the process by which a child ceases to be a member of one family and becomes, legally and permanently, a member of a new family. The Adoptions Unit of Family Services is responsible for adoption arrangements for children who are adopted from overseas within the ACT. This unit is located with Service Development, at Callam Offices, Woden. Its functions are determined by the ACT Adoption Act 1993.

Intercountry adoption is governed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption which place obligations on both the country of origin and receiving countries. The Commonwealth Government of Australia has ratified both these conventions.

State and Territory Welfare authorities do not generally support privately arranged adoptions including children who are relatives. They will also not help sponsors to meet the requirements of the migration regulations for granting a visa to an adopted child.

OVERSEAS PROGRAMS

Australian States and Territories facilitate adoptions both, from donor Hague Convention countries and specific countries with which Australia has established government to government bilateral agreements.

In 2002 children arrived to the ACT community from China, Ethiopia, Korea, India and the Philippines. Please contact the Adoption Unit staff for information on other existing programs. Please note also, that all programs are subject to change.

ACT REQUIREMENTS TO ADOPT FROM OVERSEAS

People considering an application to adopt a child from overseas are encouraged to seek as much information as possible about the unique challenges, demands and rewards of adoptive parenthood. In line with adoption legislation and national guidelines, there are a number of eligibility criteria that apply to prospective adoptive parents.

Applications for assessment and approval as adoptive parents are only accepted after people have attended an information session and seminar program.

OVERSEAS PROGRAMS' REQUIREMENTS

All adoption programs vary in their requirements with regard to age, marital status, health and in some cases religion. In summary, all programs require that couples are able to demonstrate their ability to provide for the emotional, social and economic well being of an overseas born child until maturity. Please contact the Adoption Unit staff for detailed information on overseas programs.

PROCESS OF OVERSEAS ADOPTION

Overseas adoption is neither simple nor quick! The entire process can take from between one and four years.

Applicants wishing to be approved as adoptive parents are assessed by a Consultant Social Worker and have a number of checks made regarding their suitability. If approved in the ACT the applicants file is sent to the overseas country of choice for further approval and allocation of a child.

Upon the child's arrival in Australia the overseas countries require at minimum three post placement reports to be provided over a period of months. For some countries finalisation of adoption is then required to be effected in the Supreme Court of the ACT.

COSTS

Cost varies between countries but can be estimated to be between A\$20,000 and A\$45,000. The fees are charged throughout the process and do not occur as a lump sum payment.

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS OF INTERCOUNTRY PARENTING

- Capacity to provide a loving, consistent and stable family environment
- Willingness to establish and maintain links for the child with their cultural origins and identity
- Commitment and respect for the child's biological heritage
- Capacity to embrace life as an identified interracial family

For further information please contact the Adoption Unit on ph 6207 1080.