
INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTEE VOICES



Inter Country Adoptee Voices

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11 February 2019

The Hon Paul Fletcher MP
Minister for Families and Social Services
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Fletcher

I am writing in support of International Social Services (ISS) Australia putting forward their proposal for re-funding the Federally provided Post Adoption Tracing & Family Reunification Services for Australian intercountry adoptees.

In Australia's recent history of funding intercountry adoption services nationally, I would like to point out that the Federal Government has funded \$33.6m in InterCountry Adoption Services from 2014 - 2019, under the decision making of the previous Prime Minister, Tony Abbott. This funding has provided services largely for prospective parents - the only exception being, we adoptees were eventually included (at our repeated requests) to access the LifeWorks counselling. As ISS Australia mentions in their letter, less than \$1m has been provided in this same timeframe to those who are impacted most (us adoptees). We number approximately 15,000 - 20,000 who have grown up since the 1970s, adopted under private and then centrally controlled adoption processes. We live the lifelong impacts of intercountry adoption.

I cannot state strongly enough how much it meant to us adoptees to have the Australian Government support our searching and reunion process by funding ISS Australia from 2016 - 2018. We were hugely disappointed at the decision to no longer renew the funding. Some of us were part way through the process and for many who will eventually reach the point in their journey of wanting to search, they have no opportunity for professional help and are left to the whims of individuals who can take advantage of our lack of understanding cultural and language complexities in this arena. We wrote to the Prime Minister and Minister at the time of the decision and met with Wendy Summers to request a reversal of the decision but to no avail. I've also written to State and Territory Ministers but as ISS Australia mentions, they do not have the funding within their

domestic post adoption organisations to facilitate complex search and reunion processes that cross international borders. They don't have the networks nor the understanding of intercountry adoption.

Our community has been devastated to have to return to our individual "hit and miss" methods of navigating complex process on our own since the end of the ISS Australia Tracing & Reunification funding in June 2018.

I'd also like to remind you that your department, along with the AGD, has overall responsibility to ensure Australia meets its obligations under the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of InterCountry Adoption (ICA). Post adoption support services are listed under Article 9 of the Hague Convention for ICA. The DSS & AGD website mention it but fails to have a substantial service attached particularly for services outside Australia. Australia is also a signatory of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Articles 8 & 20 specifically talk about the right for us to preserve our identities and to allow continuity in our upbringing with our ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

By considering and moving to reinstate ISS Australia's Tracing & Reunification Service, the Australian Government would show they take their role as signatories of the UNCRC seriously in helping us find, connect, and retain our true identities and origins where possible. You would also be leading the way globally in setting up a Post Adoption Service that listens to the voices of those with lived experience.

ISS Australia is the ideal organisation to continue on with building the network they began in 2016 - 2018 to facilitate this service. Searching across our birth countries is hugely complex and takes years to build up knowledge and contacts who are trustworthy and reputable. I personally know cases where ISS Australia have helped intercountry adult adoptees return and be reunited with their birth families during that 2016 - 2018 funded period. The adoptees involved have expressed how professional ISS Australia were, how amazing their support was and how important to ensuring positive outcomes in their adopted lives.

I truly hope the Federal Government will seriously consider meeting the needs of those most impacted in intercountry adoption and enable an organisation like ISS Australia to do what it does well, in our adoptee interests.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Long', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lynelle Long

Founder/Director

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www.intercountryadopteevoices.com
