

From: [Elizabeth O'Keefe](#)
To: [HCDSDFVPC](#)
Subject: SUBMISSION Re Adoption and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016
Date: Friday, 23 September 2016 1:34:51 PM

Dear Sir/Madam

I would like to make a submission about the proposed changes to the Adoption Act 2009.

My name is Elizabeth O'Keefe

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

1)

- expand who is eligible to have their name entered or remain in the expression of interest register for adoption to include same-sex couples, single persons and persons undergoing fertility treatment

I support expanding the legislation to bring the legislation up to date with society's changing face. I would like children to be cared for by responsible adults, who will treat them with due care and respect.

2)

- remove the offence and associated penalty for a breach of a contact statement for adoptions that occurred before June 1991

I believe it is everyone's right to know who they are and how they came into being. It is an important part of our identities and especially for our mental health. I believe removing this breach of contact statement would make life much easier for adopted people/natural parents. If people wish no contact, (which I believe is rare), there are other alternatives. Also counselling should be offered to those who are worried about contact.

3)

- improve access to information by:
 - o enabling the chief executive to consider the release of identifying information without the consent from adoptive or birth parents in exceptional circumstances

I believe a person's information belongs to them and not their adoptive parents or their birth/natural parents. This brings adoptees' rights in line with other members of society. Another way of bringing legislation up to date with society's changing face (all people then have equal rights). This can be extremely important in cases of severe health problems and the "need to know".

- o broadening the definition of relative for the purposes of accessing or consenting to the access of information to include future generations and persons recognised under Aboriginal tradition and Torres Strait Island custom, and

This would be important for people researching their family ancestry and also for identification of Aboriginality, and also help extended family members to search.

o expanding the information that may be provided to an adopted person about a person who may be their biological father

Finding out who their biological father is, is an extremely important part of a person's identity and again impacts on mental health. As we are finding out these days with previous anonymous sperm donations, people need to know who their biological parents are and will go to great lengths to achieve this. It is an instinct and necessary for identity and feeling secure about oneself.

4)

- require the court to be satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist before including a change to a child's first name in a final adoption order

I believe that changing a child's name is a huge step. This is an important part of their identity and should not be done lightly.

5)

- enable the chief executive to facilitate contact between parties to an adoption, during an interim adoption order

Contact should be maintained between natural parents/adoptive parents and be continue to be maintained for the sake of the child, wherever possible.

6)

- improve processes for adoption of a child by a step-parent, and

A step-parent adoption seems to be the most common form of adoption these days in Australia and it is a way to bring security to families. In some cases though, appointing a step-parent a guardian would be just as effective. Some families though, like the child of another father to have the same name as future children. I think this should be, as much as possible, done with the consent of that child and the natural parent.

7)

- make minor and technical amendments and require a review of the operation of the Act in five years' time.

I think there is always a need to improve laws, and a 5 year review is a wonderful idea. As people and society come into the changing face of society, I hope they recognise a person's complete and necessary right to know their identity : who they are, who their parents are and why they may have been adopted or appointed a guardian.

This concludes my submission, but I would also like to mention that I think adopted people should have easier access to records, as they have to resort to dna testing to locate missing relatives. If they are given records, this would be less restrictive and there would be much less secrecy, especially because past adoptions were something which was forced on people in the past and people in the present should not be suffering from past restrictions, which impact on their mental health and their need to know their identity and their self esteem.

Adopted people can struggle daily with their identity/self esteem issues, which can lead to depression. In the case of natural parents, I believe most want contact with their child that was adopted and some may suffer from ongoing trauma from losing this child. I believe meeting this child would greatly reduce their trauma for both the natural parent and adopted person.

Liz O'Keefe

