



Speech by  
**Mr DENVER  
BEANLAND**

**MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY**

---

Hansard 1 December 1999

**ADOPTIONS**

**Mr BEANLAND** (Indooroopilly—LP) (11.21 p.m.): More and more I am receiving complaints about the Department of Family, Youth and Community Care's Adoption Services Branch. This is particularly so in the Intercountry Adoption Unit of the Adoption Services Branch, where there is a significant shortage of staff and resources. I understand that at present this area of adoptions has some 400 applications, which is three to four times the number of applicants at the beginning of the decade. That is apart from the general adoption area where there is a wait of more than 10 years because of the lack of children available for adoption. I am told that it has become most difficult to even have communications with the Intercountry Adoption Unit, with telephone calls going unanswered. I am not blaming the staff. They can only work with what they are given.

Last financial year, non-relatives adopted 36 children from overseas. This is less than half the number of applications that were processed by the State of Victoria during that period. At present I understand that Queensland has a quota for children from Ethiopia and Korea, while Romania has no quota system. Therefore, the Government should be able to obtain many more adoptions for Queenslanders from that country. In the near future, following an agreement with China, the number of children for adoption from that source should surpass all others. Therefore, the crisis will become even more acute.

One of the areas of most concern currently is that of home study, which is the assessment of the suitability of a couple to adopt a child from the country in which the child lives. Because of a lack of resources and staff to undertake that home study assessment, which is undertaken by the department but which I understand in some States is outsourced, there is at least a 12 month delay. In addition to the delay caused to applicants in foreign countries, this can add years to the waiting time.

Meanwhile, the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care's time frame means that after the application is first processed there is more than a 14 month wait for an education course and there is more than a 12 month wait for the home study before final approval is given. There is a further wait of one to three years, or even more in some countries, for a child to be allocated, depending on the country of choice, specific requirements and current Government policies.

The issue of adoption to those couples seeking to adopt is very personal and emotive. It is one of the most important and sensitive courses that a couple can undertake. Therefore, I call on the Minister to ensure that there is adequate staff and funding so that applications are speedily processed and the home study assessment is undertaken so that those applicants who are approved to go forward can do so rapidly, not two to three years after their application has first been received by the department. All 400 of the applicants on the waiting list in Queensland deserve to have their applications handled expeditiously.

Instead, when I recently raised the matter in Parliament, the Minister proceeded to blame a respected former public servant, Mr Graham Zerk, who was given very senior appointments in the Public Service by former Governments from both sides of politics. He was appointed to the Office of the Public Service to establish the senior executive service and to establish the administrative arrangements for the Criminal Justice Commission when it was first set up. The Minister and the Beattie Labor Government must accept responsibility and ensure that this branch of the Minister's department is adequately resourced to do the job for the people of Queensland.