



Speech by
**Mr DENVER
BEANLAND**

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPIILLY

Hansard 4 October 2000

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTIONS

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (11 p.m.): For those couples wishing to adopt a child, it is a most personal and sensitive issue. It is one of the most significant steps that a couple can undertake and brings with it a lifelong range of responsibilities. In recent years, intercountry adoptions have come to the fore as Australia has signed a number of agreements with other countries. However, under this Government, the range of obstacles and delays that are placed in the way of couples is endless. The delays in the process itself are endless.

The processing of an application appears to take considerably longer in Queensland than it does in other States. I regularly get complaints from couples that they telephone the department but fail to get a response to their queries. Couples believe that the adoption office is understaffed by the Government to ensure that the process goes more slowly than would otherwise be the case. Couples also believe that it is the Government which puts these obstacles in the way of their being able to adopt a child.

In relation to foreign country adoptions, the speed of processing in southern States is much quicker. It is worth while noting that in the 1998-99 financial year—the most recent figures available—in relation to intercountry adoptions by States and Territories, in Victoria there were 59 adoptions; in Queensland there were 36 adoptions; in South Australia, there were 45 adoptions; in Tasmania there were 12 adoptions; and in the Australian Capital Territory there were 11 adoptions. Those figures indicate that, per head of population, Queensland is certainly dragging the chain. Victoria had almost double the number of placements than we had in Queensland—59 compared to our 36. South Australia had far more placements than we had in Queensland—45 to our 36. Of course, South Australia has only a fraction of Queensland's population.

It is also fair to say that in coming years Queensland's population will surpass Victoria's. Therefore, those adoption numbers do not speak well for Queensland's position. Tasmania had 12 adoptions compared to 36 in Queensland. Of course, we have far more than 300% of the population of Tasmania and, I might add, that State's population is decreasing. The Australian Capital Territory, which has a population of less than half of Brisbane's population, had 11 adoptions compared to 36 in Queensland. That comparison also highlights that the number of Queensland's intercountry adoption placements is very poor indeed when compared to the numbers that are occurring in other States and Territories.

There are also major problems for those couples who are seeking to adopt an older child rather than a baby. Parents have a range of reasons for wishing to adopt an older child. Often, parents want the age difference between a child they have possibly adopted already and their next adopted child to be kept to a few years—perhaps only two or three years. I am aware of one case that involves a couple in Queensland who want to adopt a child from Ethiopia. Meanwhile, their friends in New South Wales, who applied to adopt a child from Ethiopia after they did, have their files in Ethiopia and are well on the way to adoption. However, after 15 months the Queensland couple's application is going nowhere. They are also concerned about a number of important issues, particularly home study, which is one of the assessments of the suitability of a couple to adopt a child from another country.

I call on the Government to show some compassion and care to couples wishing to adopt and actively work towards assisting them with their adoption. The only excuse from the Government is the old standard excuse that the time taken to process intercountry adoption applications has extended as

a result of the increasing number of people in Queensland applying to adopt children from other countries. I think that the figures show that we are well behind the eight ball of other States and Territories. When we look at the intercountry adoption figures of the other States and Territories, we see that that excuse does not hold up at all. The couples who wish to adopt have every right to complain about the delays of this Government.

Time expired.
