



Speech by

Hon. Desley Boyle

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard Wednesday, 5 September 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Intercountry Adoption

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.27 am): Last Friday was the closing date for submissions to the regulatory impact statement on proposed changes to adoption fees. By Monday we had received 96 submissions which, interestingly, is less than 10 per cent of those to whom the department had mailed direct information. These submitters are all opposed to the fee increases for intercountry adoptions. The decision to adopt a child from overseas is not a decision made lightly or quickly. There are lengthy assessments and a difficult wait while the country of origin makes its own assessment and hopefully identifies a suitable child. The costs are considerable. The majority of the cost is associated with the other country. For example, to bring a child home from China costs up to \$25,000 when airfares, accommodation, legal costs and fees are considered.

Over recent years the Queensland charges have been \$2,053. Under the proposed fee changes, this would rise to \$5,060. This includes an increase in the assessment fee for intercountry adoption from \$2,000 to \$3,500 and a new postplacement supervision fee of \$1,500 to meet the requirements of the country of origin. However, the proposed fee changes would still leave Queensland with lower fees than other states. New South Wales charges \$9,700; South Australia, \$8,512; Northern Territory, \$6,600; and Victoria, \$6,561.

Some critics have suggested that the government is trying to raise revenue by these changes. That is a long way from the truth. It is estimated that for every intercountry adoption finalised this financial year the Queensland government will spend about \$16,800. The current fees only recover about 15 per cent of the cost to government and the increased fees will still only recover about 30 per cent of the cost to government.

Another of the criticisms has been that the charge for couples wanting to adopt Queensland children is not being increased. This is true and is because the state government has the primary responsibility to find a home for the small number of Queensland children available for adoption each year. The submissions will now be examined in detail and all issues considered prior to the final decision.