



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard Tuesday, 21 August 2007

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTIONS

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—Lib) (9.59 pm): Across Queensland parents wishing to adopt children from other countries are up in arms about proposed increases in the fees imposed on families seeking to adopt children from another country. I have received a raft of letters, both directly and from my coalition colleagues, written by Queenslanders who are deeply upset about the regulatory impact statement released on 3 August 2007 by the Minister for Child Safety.

The minister claims that current fees recover only a fraction of the costs of providing adoption services and that charges had not been increased in line with the consumer price index since 2002. By imposing these unfair and discriminatory fee increases through regulations, the minister is certainly making up for lost time as she intends to implement fee increases of 250 per cent, which in dollar terms is a rise from \$2,053 to a whopping \$5,060.

This money-grabbing move by the Beattie government does not reveal why families prepared to adopt children from overseas are being prejudiced against. The government's regulatory impact statement states—

The increased fees are expected to generate additional revenue of \$201,800 in 2007-08, increasing to an additional \$493,000 in 2010-11.

Queensland has decided to take a leaf out of its neighbouring comrade's books—that is, New South Wales—by whacking a similarly massive hike onto the cost of intercountry adoptions. I question the motives of the Beattie government in respect of these increases and ask why is it punishing people who seek to adopt children through the intercountry adoption process? Is it because it wants to promote its One Chance at Childhood initiative to permanently remove toddlers and babies from their families, thus making intracountry adoptions a more attractive option than overseas adoptions?

People quite rightly are asking why the charges are not indexed to CPI of 2.1 per cent as promised in 2002. One concerned person said—

We are ordinary people holding down ordinary jobs and working EXTRA ordinarily hard to assemble the huge sums of money which will allow us to welcome a child born overseas into our families. Most of us have been through IVF—a lot of money and an ocean of tears—all in the hope of realising the dream of becoming a family.

Another says—

Our family has been touched by infertility as have many in Queensland for whom adoption is the only way we can form a forever family. As prospective adoptive parents we pay fees and charges that other users of the Child Safety Dept don't pay. This is clearly discriminatory.

On behalf of these decent and emotionally strained Queenslanders, I lodge an objection to these inflated and prejudicial fee increases. I further call on the minister to explain why this situation exists in Queensland and to truthfully detail how the funds from this revenue-raising money grab are going to be disbursed.

It is unacceptable for this Labor government to target intercountry adoptive families, particularly as they are small in number, with extensive emotional investment and fear that any move to complain about the cost increases will result in the denial of their dream to become a family. In 2004 the New South Wales Labor government moved to increase adoption fees by 270 per cent which caused the then opposition to put up a motion stating that it did not approve of the government's decision to increase fees by this amount, citing a lack of compassion for people affected with infertility.

Time expired.