



**New South Wales
Committee on Adoption and Permanent Care Inc**

Chairperson Damon Martin
Secretary Lisa Vihtonen

All correspondence to:
Barnardos Find-a-Family,
PO Box 548, St Marys 1790
Phone: (02) 9833 8877

ABN 33 750 826 395

2nd November 2011

National Adoption Awareness Week Media Release

To mark the fourth anniversary of National Adoption Awareness Week, the NSW Committee on Adoption and Permanent Care Inc (“the Committee”) wishes to acknowledge that families are formed and reformed in different ways and that awareness and sensitivity regarding this fact is necessary.

The Committee is a non-profit organisation, with membership comprising of government and non-government agencies, support groups and individuals interested in, involved in, or affected by adoption and permanent care or related issues.

In Australia, the intercountry adoption process is governed by the Hague Convention, which describes the best interest of a child as paramount in any case where a child’s permanency is in question. Adoption has changed over recent decades, and in Australia it is currently considered that there is less of a need to separate children from their families and countries of origin. With regards to overseas aid for children, there is more of a focus on building resources in countries where there are children in need, in the hope of developing the best care option to meet the interests of the child. Although it is important to address the placement needs of the children in NSW, and Australia, vulnerable and orphaned children around the world are equally as important.

UNICEF defines ‘orphan’ as any person under age 18, who has lost one or both parents. Therefore statistics surrounding orphaned children do not reflect the type of care required for these children. It is imperative that our Government firstly assists with resources, programs and policies that keep children within their country of origin in appropriate placements, and if it is deemed that children need placements overseas, then ensure the intercountry programs are managed ethically and that intercountry adoption is solely a service that meets the child’s best interests.

In NSW alone, there are over 17,000 children in care in need of permanency and stability. Therefore it is important to acknowledge that there are a variety of options available to create permanency and stability for children in need; these include adoption as well as long term foster care, kinship care and sole parental responsibility. Which option is pursued is dependent on the needs of the child. For a child, stability is critical to the development of emotional security, a sense of belonging and a feeling of general well-being.

Research has demonstrated strongly that adoption has a much better record than foster care of providing stability for a child whose birth family is unlikely to be able to provide adequate care. Current adoption practises in NSW have changed significantly in the past 25 years, in which we now have embraced ‘open adoptions’. Openness minimises the grief and loss as well as the questions surrounding one’s identity that inevitably came forth from past closed adoption practice.

In regards to adoption, moreover, its paramount purpose is to meet the lifelong best interests of the child and adoption is always first and foremost to be regarded as a service for the child.

Regards

Damon Martin
Chairperson
NSW Committee on Adoption and Permanent Care Inc (CoAPC)
Phone +61 2 9267 0300
Email damon.martin@iss.org.au

c.c. Lisa Vihtonen – Secretary