

Submission  
No 152

## INQUIRY INTO ADOPTION BY SAME SEX COUPLES

**Organisation:** Women's Action Alliance (NSW)  
**Name:** Mrs Jane Beard  
**Date received:** 12/02/2009

---

## ***Women's Action Alliance (N.S.W.)***

---

P.O. Box A757, Sydney South, NSW 1235  
Email: [waa-nsw@womensactionalliance.com.au](mailto:waa-nsw@womensactionalliance.com.au)

Phone (02) 9659 9036  
Fax (02) 9659 9037

### **INQUIRY INTO ADOPTION BY SAME SEX COUPLES NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON LAW AND JUSTICE SUBMISSION WOMEN'S ACTION ALLIANCE (NSW)**

Women's Action Alliance is a national women's group, established in 1975, which has had active representation in New South Wales since this time

Our aims are twofold

1. To raise the status of women in the Australian community
2. To strengthen Australian families as the basis of our society

To further these aims we encourage women to be well informed, to analyse issues, and to participate in areas where opinions are formed and where decisions are made.

WAA(NSW) appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. We will be confining our comments to items *a.* and *d.* in the terms of reference.

The DoCS website indicates that the number of children available for adoption locally is approximately 10-20 per year<sup>1</sup>. In fact, in 2006/07, there were only twelve local and 112 intercountry adoptions for the year.<sup>2</sup> There is certainly no shortage of couples willing to adopt and there are many stories of couples who, having been through the stringent selection criteria, still wait years for a child, often unsuccessfully. Many turn to intercountry adoption, which can still take years to process.<sup>3</sup>

Currently, the criteria for eligibility makes adoption open to couples in married or de facto relationships for at least three years. This would seem to be the bare minimum we as a community should require of adoptive parents.

History shows us that the tried and true method of child rearing is in a long term committed relationship between a mother and a father, usually in the form of marriage. While the love of a mother has long been acknowledged as vital for a child's psychological development, we are only now realising the important role the father also plays in his child's development.<sup>4</sup> Surely this is the very least society owes adopted children.

The HILDA Survey, released in 2006, revealed that children from intact families grow up to achieve higher levels of educational attainment, income and wealth, than those from single parent families.<sup>5</sup> This is but the latest in a long line of research confirming the benefits to children of intact, mother/father families.<sup>6</sup>

The first two objects of the Adoption Act 2000 make it clear that the primary concern in all cases of adoption must be the child, and the child's best interests. WAA(NSW) would be opposed to any loosening of eligibility criteria, simply to appease those who choose alternative family arrangements. In the circumstances of adoption, society has a duty to provide for the child the very best possible outcome, ie: a long term committed relationship between a mother and a father.

In the words of one adoptive parent:

"The eligibility criteria and assessment process should be focused on the best placement for a child. As nature intended, a child should have a mother and father. The adopted child will have many issues to face during their lives and if this review is proposing allowing homosexual couples to adopt then we believe that this will only add to those issues. As an adopted child grows and learns more about their background they will, even with the 'Openness in Adoption' formula face issues of abandonment, loss, self-doubt, identity amongst others. Would it really be fair to have that child also face another factor that makes them different from others in the form of same-sex parents? This would place far too much stress on the child and we believe that it will have a negative impact in later life, especially the teen years. Children are our nation's best asset and we should be focusing on ensuring their journey to adulthood is as smooth as possible and not be using them as test cases."<sup>7</sup>

In the context of homosexual couples, the American College of Pediatricians says:

"Heterosexual parenting is the normative model upon which most comprehensive longitudinal research on childrearing has been based. Data on long-term outcomes for children placed in homosexual households are very limited and the available evidence reveals grave concerns. Those current studies that appear to indicate neutral to favorable results from homosexual parenting have critical flaws such as non-longitudinal design, inadequate sample size, biased sample selection, lack of proper controls, and failure to account for confounding variables. Childrearing studies have consistently indicated that children are more likely to thrive emotionally, mentally, and physically in a home with two heterosexual parents versus a home with a single parent. Therefore, the burden is on the proponents of homosexual parenting to prove that moving further away from the heterosexual parenting model is appropriate and safe for children."<sup>8</sup>

The College concludes;

"The research literature on childrearing by homosexual parents is limited. The environment in which children are reared is absolutely critical to their development. Given the current body of research, the American College of Pediatricians believes it is inappropriate, potentially hazardous to children, and dangerously irresponsible to change the age-old prohibition on homosexual parenting, whether by adoption, foster care, or by reproductive manipulation. This position is rooted in the best available science."<sup>8</sup>

WAA(NSW) agrees. Adopted children should not become the guinea pigs in a social experiment. We as a community owe these children, who have had such a difficult start, the very best chance for a happy and productive life.

**ENDNOTES**

1. [http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/parents\\_carers\\_and\\_families/fostering\\_and\\_adoption/adoption/want\\_to\\_adopt/thinking\\_about\\_adoption.html](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/parents_carers_and_families/fostering_and_adoption/adoption/want_to_adopt/thinking_about_adoption.html)
2. Adoptions Australia 2006-07, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2008, Canberra
3. <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/fhs/adoption/subs/sub028.pdf>
4. The Importance of Father Love: History and Contemporary Evidence, Rohner, Ronald P. & Veneziano, Robert A.  
<http://academic.uofs.edu/student/sitoskis2/fatherlove.html>
5. Families, Incomes and Jobs: A Statistical Report of the HILDA Survey, 2006  
<http://www.melbourneinstitute.com/hilda/statreport/statreport2005.pdf>
6. see Maley, Barry: Wedlock and Wellbeing, 1996, CIS Publications
7. Megan Turner, adoptive mother of Annaliese, Sanctuary Point, NSW
8. American College of Pediatricians website: Homosexual Parenting; Is it Time for a Change?  
<http://www.acpeds.org/?CONTEXT=art&cat=10005&art=50&BISKIT=2640549867>

February, 2009