

Federal Attorney General
Robert McClelland
cc State Attorney Generals
cc Prime Minister

20/10/08

Dear Mr. McClelland,

The attached letter is written on behalf of the Apology Alliance. This particular letter is also supported by the Intercountry Adoption Network (ICAN): a support group for intercountry adoptees.

Many who have been traumatised by these past practices are being re-traumatised by seeing once again adoption promoted. It seems that celebrities such as Deborra-Lee Furness have easy access to both politicians and the media to promote their agenda. Her cry to save orphans is misleading. The NSW Law Reform Commission and other such inquiries that reported to various State governments have established that there are not enough orphans to satisfy the needs of those wishing to adopt from the West. Furthermore the demand for infants creates black markets and trafficking in children. Having just apologised to one stolen generation I would have thought it a good idea to cautiously embark on a path that could lead us to creating another. The more than 30 Indian children trafficked into Australia, I believe, will prove to be just the tip of the iceberg. It is not surprising to us who have lived through these past practices of baby-taking that illegal and unethical practices abound in the international trade of children. The laws in this country did not assist us, but instead, in the main, were used against us.

Furthermore Furness never adopted internationally her adoptions were from poor, young, unwed mothers from the United States. The kind of adoptions she engaged in were the same the NSW Law Reform Commission issued warnings against. Ex-nationals, particularly from the US taking advantage of lax laws that do not offer the same protection to natural mothers that our laws now do. For instance Furness and Jackman were at the births of their adopted children. In Australia this would be considered illegal because of the level of coercion and that it presumes consent whilst the mother is still pregnant. That, I would argue, would neither be legal under the Hague Convention on International Adoption. The mother of Furness's older adopted son committed suicide because it was reported that promised access to her son was withdrawn. Surely this is not the way we want to go here. When Furness repeatedly states publicly that adoptive parents should have to wait no longer than 'gestation' - I wonder in whose interests is this form of adoption.

Furness and her supporters have set up a website to promote 'Adoption Awareness Week.' Bronwyn Bishop MP and Tanya Plibersek MP are featured on the site. I spoke with members of your Department: Chris Colette and Amy Rosnell on October, 13. I was assured that this is not an initiative of the government but the impression gained from the website, is unfortunately, the opposite. The spate of interviews and media stories wherein Furness states she has met with various politicians who support

her calls to 'overhaul adoption laws', combined with the website, certainly give the general public the impression the Government supports the initiative. For instance many distressed women have contacted me with concerns that we are returning to the past. The problem, as we perceive it, is that if the government does not clarify its position, then by omission it is assumed that it is supporting the expansion of adoption programs both intercountry and domestically. Additionally it sends the message to the community that adoption once again is about saving children who then should be grateful for the privilege. It will then, not be the very vocal minority calling for more children to be bought in from overseas, but the general public who have no idea of the complexities inherent in intercountry adoptions.

We look forward to your response re our concerns.

Kind regards