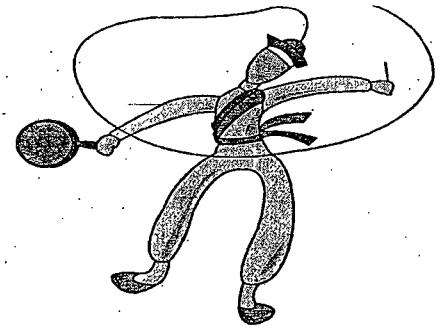


Han-Ho Kids' Club Inc

Reg. No. A0036488X

Email: hanho_kids@bigpond.com



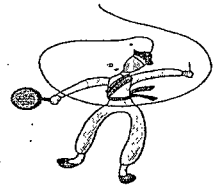
Every year, a specified number of South Korean babies - currently that number is 23 - are adopted by Victorian families. All of those children come to us via the same agency, Eastern Social Welfare Society in Seoul. Our children are allocated to us as infants and the average age of our babies when we return home with them is 5 months.

Korean adoption to Victoria began over 20 years ago - when the children adopted were older, and fewer in number. Yet, even then, adoptive parents felt the strong need for support in raising their Korean born children. So, what we now call Han-Ho Kids' Club Inc (Han-Ho) was founded more than 15 years ago. As the number of intercountry adoptions has grown, so too has the role played by volunteer-run support groups such as Han-Ho. Our name, Han-Ho is made up by the joining together of parts of two Korean words. Hanguk meaning Korean and Hoju meaning Australian. Thus the name Han-Ho is Korean and Australian combined into one - like our children, like our families. We thank you for this opportunity to be heard,

Han-Ho Kids' Club Inc currently represents almost 250 Korean adoptive families in Victoria. We keep in touch with them via a simple newsletter sent 3 times per year, at large social functions and our monthly culture club designed for children aged up to 10.

The stated purposes of the Han-Ho Kids' Club Inc are:

1. To assist the adopted child to develop a positive Korean identity that is integrated with their Australian identity.
2. To assist the adopted child to feel proud of being Korean born.
3. To increase its members' knowledge of Korean culture, past and present.
4. To assist its members in developing friendships with other children adopted from Korea and their families.
5. To expose its members to positive Korean adult role models.
6. To raise funds in whatever manner the Association deems fit for the Association or for other organisations or causes which act to benefit the interests of children in need of a family and/or adopted children and/or their families.
7. To carry out any other activities which are of benefit to children in need of a family and/or adopted children and/or their families.



Some of the most time-consuming duties fall under Point 7 above. In addition to on-going support on issues specific to adoptive families, volunteer parent organisations participate actively in the compulsory education process and support of all prospective adoptive couples, those awaiting allocation (who we call parents-in-waiting), and those waiting to travel to collect their child. (Some of us are even involved in speaking at IVF support groups.) For early applicants, volunteer parent organisations provide:

- country specific and practical information about culture, what to expect during the process, at travel and overseas,
- assistance with documentation,
- advice on how to access a child's culture group in Victoria,
- an impartial contact point if any problems or worries occur during the process of assessment and waiting,
- emotional support during the application and waiting process.

So, whilst we cannot provide much by way of verifiable data, parent groups such as Han-Ho have a wealth of anecdotal evidence of the issues and frustrations that occur for intercountry adoptive families in dealing with various Government offices during the adoption journey. These include:

- Confusion at DIMIA when lodging Forms 40CH and 47CH about how intercountry adoptions should be handled (people have given up and gone away).
- Inconsistencies in the treatment of our children by Medicare prior to their becoming Australian citizens - some agencies require that the child be issued a separate card; mail applicants have been able to have the child immediately listed by the name they are to be called rather than their original name; and variations in the documentation required.
- Problems at DIMIA when applying for a child's Evidence of Australian Citizenship (applicants have been asked to produce originals of documents which we never have and required to produce a plethora of adoption related documents when the child has already been issued a Victorian birth certificate).
- Arguments at Post Offices when adoption documents are demanded in order to process a passport for a child who has both a Victorian birth certificate and an Evidence of Australian Citizenship document.
- Being required to provide a copy of the child's original entry visa (which is often in a name no longer used for the child) when enrolling a child at a Victorian State Primary School.
- Inconsistencies in information provided about eligibility for Family Tax Benefit and Maternity payment.



Additionally, we have experience with families who move to Victoria because rules for eligibility and time-lines for adoption are more attractive here than in other states; and Victorian families who are relocated interstate and encounter difficulties with finalising adoptions or in making second applications.

Perhaps the most striking imbalance here in Victoria is that the fees payable to Department of Human Services, Inter Country Adoption Services (ICAS) are \$6250 for a first adoption and \$4950 for subsequent adoptions whilst there is no fee for a local adoption. Families approved for both overseas and local adoption who are allocated a locally born child are not refunded any of the fees paid.

Fees paid to ESWS in Seoul are currently US\$8500 and we are provided with a breakdown of how those expenses are utilised (see Attachment 1). Nothing so transparent is available from ICAS.

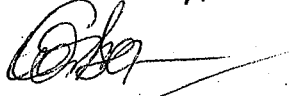
Because it has a positive impact on funding from the Korean Government, ESWS requests that adoption fees be sent in two separate bank drafts, one of which is designated as a donation to ESWS, Seoul. At present, the Australian Taxation Office will not accept that donation as a deduction.

Pursuing intercountry adoption incurs huge costs that other families do not face. (See Attachment 2) It also involves many potential difficulties that other families do not face. This is a choice that we adoptive parents make. We extend our mortgages, sell our car or invest the non-preserved amounts of our superannuation in having our children. Yet many Australians who would be able to provide relinquished children with loving homes, safety and education are unable to meet the costs of overseas adoption. Tax deductibility of fees paid, as certainly occurs elsewhere in the world, would go some way to addressing this situation, as well as providing some relief for adoptive families. Removing the DIMIA fees would also help. Perhaps this could be seen as part of the Australian Government's overseas aid as much as it is support for tax paying Aussies.

Couples choose intercountry adoption for a number of reasons; some are philanthropic but most are motivated by the desire not to save the world but merely to complete their family. In Australia, multi-ethnic families abound. Adoptive families face many challenges as part of that abundance. We bring our children away from their Motherlands and into a new homeland with the firmest belief that they will be treated as equals in a society that values difference. We trust that your work will reinforce this belief.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to be acknowledged.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wendy Carlson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Wendy Carlson - President Han-Ho Kids' Club Inc.

Attachment 1: Required Expenses For Intercountry Adoption, Eastern Social Welfare Society - Seoul

Date: Dec. 27. 2004

Items	Dollars
1. Reception Expense	
a. counselling	\$ 203.67
b. escorting	\$64.22
c. other	\$ 45.87
sub total	\$313.76
2. Foster Care	
a. foster care fee	\$ 2752.29
b. baby's care fee	\$137.61
c. feeding, clothing, diapers, towels soaps, etc.	\$ 605.50
d. transportation	\$45.87
e. other	\$ 46.97
sub total	\$ 3588.24
3. Medical Expenses	
a. initial medical exam	\$ 41.28
b. visa medical exam	\$ 55.05
c. hospitalization or medication	\$667.89
d. immunization shots	\$ 45.87
e. other	\$ 27.52
sub total	\$ 837.61
4. Legal Processing Fees	
a. passport	\$ 45.87
b. visa	\$ 368.81
c. legal documents	\$ 11 0.09
d. notarization	\$44.04
e. photos, document prints, etc.	\$107.8
f. other	\$91.74
sub total	\$ 768.35
5. Administration	
a. personnel expenses	\$2347.71
b. communication	\$ 45.87
c. heating CI - building management	\$165.14
d. promotion	\$ 192.66
e. social welfare facilities operation	\$ 183.49
f. other	\$ 92.66
sub total	\$3027.53
Total	\$ 8535.5

~~Application~~ Sub received public hearing 3/8/05
Mable Anderson

Attachment 2 -
Additional Costs for Korean Adoption

Medical

2 x Detailed medical reports for each applicant \$ 200
(At time of application and when documents are sent to Korea.) This is a non-rebate item, usually costing more than a regular doctor's visit.

2 x pregnancy tests (At allocation and again at travel if more than 2 months after acceptance of allocation. \$ 80

2 x visits (minimum) to Bronwyn Francis – Paediatrician – after return with baby, plus various blood tests \$ 220

Banking

2 x bank drafts in US currency \$ 32

Courier

1 x set of documents from ICAS to ESWS at approval \$ 100
1 x set of documents from DIMIA at acceptance

Notary Public

Affidavits of support at acceptance \$ 300
(Costs vary between \$180 and \$500. This is average.)
Copy of Aust Citizenship sent to ESWS at finalisation. \$ 40

DIMIA

Overseas Adoption Visa \$1305

Legalisation

Court Fee \$ 190
Birth Certificate \$ 17
Australian Citizenship Certificate \$ 55

TOTAL: \$2539

PLUS

Fees to Intercountry Adoption Services \$6250

PLUS

Fees to Eastern Welfare Society, Seoul US\$8500

PLUS

Cost of travel to Korea and accommodation c. \$4000