



MAY
2018



What is adoption?

Adoption permanently transfers all the legal parenting rights and responsibilities from the child's birth parents (or anyone with parental responsibility for the child) to the adoptive parents.

What is open adoption?

Australia practises open adoption for both domestic and international adoptions, whereby children who are adopted grow up with an understanding that they have been adopted and, where possible, are supported to have a relationship with, or knowledge of, their family of origin and cultural heritage.

Will my adopted child have contact with their birth family?

Yes, whenever possible. Depending on each situation this could mean as an adoptive parent you support your child to meet with their birth parents and other family members regularly, and/or keep in contact via the exchange of letters and photographs.

Why is adoption so hard in Australia?

Past adoption practices in Australia, including forced adoption, secrecy about adoption, and the Stolen Generation, have caused damage to individuals, families and communities. In an attempt to prevent these travesties from reoccurring, adoption practices have changed to the extent that it is now very difficult to adopt a child in Australia. In addition, changing attitudes towards single mothers has meant that there are far fewer children being relinquished for adoption.

Am I eligible to adopt in Western Australia?

- Applicants must be over 18 years.
- If in a marriage or de facto relationship, the relationship must have existed for at least 3 years.
- If applying as a couple at least one person must be an Australian citizen and the other a citizen of a country that gives similar rights to adopted persons.
- Applicant must be a resident and domiciled in Western Australia.

Can I adopt if I'm single?

Single people are able to adopt in Western Australia.

If you wish to apply for intercountry adoption, you should be aware that many of Australia's partner countries do not accept adoption applications from single applicants. Countries that do accept single applications often have a policy of prioritising applications from couples.

Can I adopt if I'm in a same sex relationship?

Same sex couples can apply to adopt and have their suitability assessed. Adoption of a local child is possible if the relinquishing parent/s choose the same sex couple to be the new parent for their child.

Currently, no overseas countries accept applications from same sex couples.

Can I adopt an aboriginal child?

In Western Australia, some Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander birth parents choose adoption as the best option for their child. Whilst the adoption legislation provides a guideline of placement options and the priority they should be given, like all other local adoptions consideration is given to the wishes of the relinquishing birth parents.

Usually adoption from out-of-home care is considered unsuitable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle has been enacted to varying extents within the legislation of every Australian state and territory including Western Australia, giving priority to children staying within their family and community if they are unable to live safely with their birth parents. Preference is given to other long-term and permanent care orders rather than adoption.

How long does it take to adopt a child?

The amount of time an adoption process takes varies. It is usually a lengthy process, and waiting times of several years are not uncommon.

For overseas adoption the process currently takes about four to seven years to adopt a child under the age of two years. It is therefore advisable for the applicants to be no older than 40 years at the time of the first inquiry with the Department.

I am a foster carer - can I adopt my foster child?

Yes. Carer adoption is one option available to create a stable home for life for children. If a child has lived with you and you have cared for that child for at least two consecutive years, you are able to apply to adopt.

The numbers of children adopted from out-of-home care are still very low. In 2016/17 there were only two children adopted from out-of-home care in Western Australia.

Before making an application to the Family Court of Western Australia for an adoption order, the Chief Executive Officer of this department needs to approve the placement of the child with you with a view to adoption. The court will only make an adoption order if it is satisfied that adoption is preferable to other orders the courts are able to make.

Information about other permanent care arrangements for children in out-of-home care can be found on the Adopt Change website. <https://www.adoptchange.org.au/page/86/adoption-and-permanent-care-in-western-australia>

How are children and adoptive parents matched?

The needs of the child are the first priority when deciding which adoptive family they should join. There is no waiting list as such, but rather a 'pool' of potential families, from which the best possible match for each child will be made.

Who are the children who are in need of adoption?

In Australia there are a very small number of children, usually infants, who are relinquished for adoption by their birth parents.

Children from other countries who are deemed as being in need of adoption by an Australian family are increasingly older and may have special needs.

In Western Australia carer adoption is an option available to create a stable home for life for children. These are children who have been removed from their birth families for their own well-being and for whom it has been decided that returning home is not safe. A carer is able to apply to adopt a child after that child has been in their care for at least two years.

See *"I am a foster carer - can I adopt my foster child?"*

Can I adopt a young person once they have turned 18?

In Western Australia, a young person can apply to be adopted by his or her carer or a step-parent, immediately before they turn 18. Both the prospective adoptee and the prospective adoptive parent must consent to the adoption, and both birth parents of the prospective adoptee must be notified of the intention to apply for an adoption order.

From the age of 18 a person can apply to be adopted by someone who they can demonstrate was their carer before they turned 18 years of age.

What is intercountry adoption?

Intercountry adoption is a formal process that occurs when an Australian citizen or permanent resident (who is residing in Australia) adopts a child from overseas through the authorities in his or her Australian state or territory.

Who can adopt a child from overseas?

Potential adoptive parents will need to meet the requirements of their particular state or territory as well as those of the country from which they wish to adopt a child. Information on each program's eligibility requirements is available on the Intercountry Adoption Australia website. <http://www.intercountryadoption.gov.au/>



Which countries can I adopt from?

You can apply to adopt from a country with which Australia has an active intercountry adoption arrangement. See the Intercountry Adoption Australia website for a list of current partner countries. <https://www.intercountryadoption.gov.au/thinking-about-adoption/countries/>

The countries you can adopt from can vary between states and territories. Check with WA Adoption and Fostering Services (contact details are below) to find out which countries Western Australia has active agreements with.

People can apply to adopt a child from a country with which Australia does not have an adoption arrangement, but these requests (known as 'ad hoc' requests) are only considered in exceptional circumstances, as they are generally not consistent with Australia's approach to intercountry adoption.

What is the Hague Convention?

The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Hague Convention) aims to protect children and their families from illegal, irregular, premature or ill-prepared adoptions abroad.

A guiding principle of the Hague Convention is that, whenever possible, a child should be raised by his or her birth family or extended family. If this is not possible, other forms of permanent family care in the child's country of birth should be considered. Only after local solutions have been exhausted, should intercountry adoption be considered — and then only if it is in the child's best interests and with respect to his or her fundamental rights.

Australia only facilitates overseas adoptions if the principles and standards of the Hague Convention can be met, regardless of whether or not the partner country has signed the Convention.

Can I arrange an adoption myself from another country?

Adoptions must either be approved the Western Australian government, or meet Australian immigration requirements for expatriate adoption. If you arrange a private adoption that is not sanctioned by the Australian Government then you may not be able to bring the child to Australia.

In some rare cases it is possible to arrange an adoption outside the normal intercountry adoption processes. See the Intercountry Adoption Australia website for more information. <https://www.intercountryadoption.gov.au/thinking-about-adoption/apply/other-types-overseas/>

I am a dual citizen - can I adopt a child from that country?

You can only adopt a child from the country in which you habitually reside. If you have citizenship of, or rights to live permanently in, a country other than Australia, but habitually reside in Australia, then you must apply through the Australian intercountry adoption process.

What support is available for adoptive families?

The Department for Child Protection's professional staff at Adoption Services can help you with information, support and counselling related to the adoption of a child.

See the Adopt Change website for a list of other WA based support groups and organisations. <http://www.adoptchange.org.au/page/83/-wa-support-services>

Who do I contact to apply?

WA Fostering and Adoption Services is the first contact point for all adoption queries.

Street address:

GROUND FLOOR
189 ROYAL STREET
EAST PERTH WA 6004

Postal address:

PO Box 6334
EAST PERTH WA 6892
Telephone: (08) 9286 5200
Free call: 1800 182 178
Fax: (08) 9385 1920
Email: adoptions@cpfs.wa.gov.au
Website: www.childprotection.wa.gov.au