

Marian Jacobs

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Marian Jacobs, is an adoptive mother in Melbourne.

* *My husband had a business in the Philippines for many years, and we have been to the Philippines many times prior to adopting our two children (a boy, 10yo and a girl 5 yo).

The process is the issue I'd like to talk about.

We have two adopted children , a boy and a girl. It took eight years to adopt both our kids who came to Australia 4 years apart from each other. The process was difficult, lengthy and intrusive. However now that we have the children it has been all worthwhile but it would be great to un-complicate the process for those who want to adopt and make it a more positive experience.

Our social worker was lovely but quite naïve, immature and we felt that it was not easy to be assessed by someone who was a lot younger than us, and had never travelled outside Australia.

The education sessions we attended only emphasised the negative aspects, although we understand the reality of loss, grief and attachment need to be addressed we found the overall experience not very motivating to prospective adoptive parents. For example, during one of the days we had to watch a movie, and the facilitator handed out a box of tissues and explaining that this was going to be a very sad movie, my husband and I went oh no. I don't mind crying, we all cry, but like you (interviewer) said they were pre-emptive...

The education sessions should be half days, most people work full time and it takes too much time away from the weekend. The seminars could be more interesting, fun and not so negative whilst still covering all the issues. That must be possible.

We received no support from the department. Not during and not after the process. During the long wait after you are approved as an adoptive parent (for some countries this can be up to 7 years) you are not contacted by the Department of Human Services. When we did contact the department to check the status of our case, it was at the time difficult to get information and assistance. The department should be more supportive, even a phone call every so often would have been good, if only to know you are still 'in the system'.

When we adopted the second time we had to go through the whole process again. Even our oldest child was made part of it and had to do a drawing and talk about how he felt about us adopting again. He was only five.

We had the same caseworker the second time round. We found out during the assessment period that she had problems at home which meant she caused a delay in providing the necessary assessment reports to the Department. There was nothing we could do about it. Other families also had difficulties with their case workers. When they raised their concerns it only made things more difficult. So we just had to be patient and ensured we would not share any information with the social worker which could affect our case.

We are lucky we have made friends with another family who have adopted from the Philippines, in particular with one family who lives in our area. Our children get along well and the eldest boys are doing gymnastics together and hip hop classes. I would love to find a little girl friend for my daughter. Finding a Philippina seems harder, as mostly boys are available for adoption.

PPSS does have good support for parents. I know that there are for example a Korean and Chinese support group but we don't have one (yet) for the Philippines, I thought about setting one up, but it is time consuming and as a working parent I can't do this at this point in time.

We have been back to the Philippines with our children a number of times. During one of those trips my son and I met his foster mother which was a fantastic experience for all parties. We remain in close contact with both our children's foster parents by email.

I believe ultimately it would be the best for the children if they could have stayed with their birth parents in their home country. But we all know that the reality of poverty, relinquishment and abandonment create a situation where it is best for the child to be raised by a loving family.

Upon return from one trip to the Philippines my oldest child asked me if he could Google his mum. I explained to him that this is not possible, as we do not have any details on either parent at all. He understands this now, and I am not sure how he feels about this.

We met one couple who wanted a white baby from Romania. It seemed that they preferred this as it would not be so obvious that they had adopted a child. I believe that if you feel you want to 'hide' your adoption you should not adopt a child.