

Re Adoption Amendment Bill 2013

Dear Ms Mason,

I write to request that you convey to the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee the concerns of Vanish Inc about the proposed Adoption Amendment Bill 2013. I apologise that this letter is not on letterhead, but I am travelling today and the Vanish office is closed on Mondays.

Vanish Inc is a community not for profit organisation, funded by the Victorian Government to provide search and support services for people affected by adoption - principally mothers and adoptees.

We understand that the legislation is to be debated in the Assembly this week. However, we believe the debate should be deferred until the implications of the legislation are further considered. Vanish Inc was simply told the legislation would be introduced last week, but not consulted about the detail (although we have been offered some consultation about guidelines concerning implementation of contact statements).

Our concerns about the legislation are:

1. The legislation is discriminatory in that parents, especially mothers, may be precluded from making contact with a son/daughter by use of the contact statement or veto. This does not apply to people who were adopted. Our view is that contact statements should not apply at all.
2. The legislation is inconsistent with recommendation 15 of the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee report released in February 2012, although the Government purports that the amendment is based on this recommendation.
3. The legislation is unclear as to when the date for application of contact statements applies. For example, it would seem to extend into the period of 'open adoption' when the accepted principle is that it is in the interests of the adopted child to know its parents. At the very least the contact vetoes should be limited to the main period of closed adoption.
4. Other jurisdictions are rethinking the utility of contact statements and vetoes e.g. WA has ended their use.

For these reasons we urge the Committee to recommend that the Bill be further considered before being debated.

Yours sincerely,

Leigh Hubbard
Chairperson
Vanish Inc.