



## HARDSHIP POLICY – INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTIONS

A new pricing structure for fees for intercountry adoptions was gazetted under Section 200 (2) of the *Adoption Act 2000* for introduction from 1 July 2004. (Please refer to the Information Sheet on Fees and Costs for Intercountry Adoptions for further information on the fees.)

The Department of Community Services acknowledges that there are circumstances where the fee structure may disadvantage applicants with lower incomes. It has developed this policy based on average earnings and median household income to assist lower income households.

The policy offers fee relief to applicants with household incomes comparable to the lower half of all Australian households. It combines two income thresholds, with a 50% discount applying up to the first threshold and a 25% discount applying up to the second.

Fee relief may be applied for at the three stages of the process.

It will also be offered to applicants who experience an unexpected decrease in income that would have made them eligible for fee relief had it occurred before an application was lodged.

The Hardship Policy and fee relief provisions relate only to DoCS fees and charges. Adoption and Permanent Care Services (APCS) cannot waive or reduce overseas country costs or any other costs, for example travel, that are associated with the adoption of children from overseas. Applicants will be required to provide full details of their financial circumstances and to demonstrate an ability to save for the overseas costs if they do not have the required savings. This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Information Booklet 'Considering Adoption' in relation to anticipated financial requirements for intercountry adoptions.

### **How it works:**

Under the two-stage hardship policy, applicants will currently be eligible to receive 50% fee relief if their household income is less than \$39,100. Applicants with a household income of less than \$46,400 would be eligible for 25% fee relief. The table below explains this further:

Fee Structure for 1<sup>st</sup> Time Applicants

| Stage         | Information Stage | Assessment | Allocation Stage | Total   |
|---------------|-------------------|------------|------------------|---------|
| Unit Cost/Fee | \$640             | \$4,260    | \$4,800          | \$9,700 |
| 25% discount  | \$480             | \$3,195    | \$3,600          | \$7,275 |
| 50% discount  | \$320             | \$2,130    | \$2,400          | \$4,850 |

Fee Structure for 2<sup>nd</sup> and subsequent applicants

| Stage         | Information Stage | Assessment | Allocation Stage | Total   |
|---------------|-------------------|------------|------------------|---------|
| Unit Cost/Fee | \$0               | \$2,100    | \$4,800          | \$6,900 |
| 25% discount  | \$0               | \$1,575    | \$3,600          | \$5,175 |
| 50% discount  | \$0               | \$1,050    | \$2,400          | \$3,450 |

### ❖ For a 1<sup>st</sup> time applicant, this means:

If your household income is less than \$39,100 you would be eligible for 50% fee relief. The total fee of \$9,700 for a first time adoption would be reduced by 50% to \$4,850.

If your household income is less than \$46,400 you would be eligible for 25% fee relief. The total fee of \$9,700 for a first time adoption would be reduced by 25% to \$7,275.

❖ For a 2<sup>nd</sup> or subsequent adoption applicant, this means:

If your household income is less than \$39,100 you would be eligible for 50% fee relief. The total fee of \$6,900 would be reduced by 50% to \$3,450.

If your household income is less than \$46,400 you would be eligible for 25% fee relief. The total fee of \$6,900 would be reduced by 25% to \$5,175.

**What is 'household income':**

For the purposes of this policy, household income is the taxable (assessable) income of the applicant/s in the last financial year.

**Applying for assessment for fee relief:**

You can apply for assessment for fee relief at any of the three stages of the adoption process.

It will also be offered to applicants who experience an unexpected decrease in income that would have made them eligible for fee relief had it occurred before an application was lodged.

Approval for fee relief cannot be back-dated or applied to stages of the adoption process which have already commenced.

If you consider you may be eligible for fee relief:

1. Send a letter to the Director, Adoption and Permanent Care Services explaining how you are eligible for fee relief and requesting assessment under the hardship policy. The letter is to be signed by the applicant/s.
2. Include a copy of the Australian Taxation Office 'Notice of Assessment' which shows the taxable income for each applicant. Provide this information for the most recent financial year available.

**Assessing eligibility for fee relief:**

Adoption and Permanent Care Services will assess eligibility for fee relief based on the financial information you have provided against the threshold levels for fee relief detailed in this policy.

A caseworker will assess your application for fee relief. After assessment the caseworker will make a recommendation to the Director, Adoption & Permanent Care Services.

The Director, APCS will inform you of the outcome of the application.

**Note:** The information provided for assessment for fee relief may be reviewed against financial information provided at later stages of the adoption process, including assessment and allocation and placement stages. This includes:

- the general financial information provided in the adoption application
- Adoption Assessment Reports, which provide a comprehensive evaluation of the applicants' financial circumstances.

Families are invited to ring 9716 3000 and speak to a caseworker to clarify any aspects of the Intercountry Adoptions Hardship Policy.

**If you wish to apply for fee relief please write to:**

Intercountry Adoption Program  
Adoption and Permanent Care Services  
NSW Department of Community Services  
P O BOX 4028  
ASHFIELD NSW 2131