



Pre-Placement Contact by Prospective Adoptive Parents (Including Travel to Countries of Origin)

This paper outlines the Australian central authorities' views on pre placement contact and travel prior to the finalisation of an adoption and provides advice for prospective adoptive parents.

What is pre-placement contact?

Pre-placement contact refers to any form of contact (including email, telephone and face-to-face) prior to an adoption being finalised, between a prospective adoptive parent (who has formally expressed interest in adoption) and:

- a child, who is or may be in need of intercountry adoption
- an individual or body responsible for caring for children who may be in need of adoption, or
- an overseas authority involved in adoption.

Australian central authorities' view

Australian central authorities only support pre-placement contact after confirmation from the country of origin *and* the relevant state or territory central authority that such contact is appropriate. Under the *Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption* (Hague Convention) prospective adoptive parents must generally not engage in pre-placement contact. This is because pre-placement contact may:

- be viewed as placing inappropriate pressure on or seeking to influence the decision of overseas governments and agencies
- if the child has already been placed with the prospective adoptive parent, affect the decision of the overseas authority to honour the placement of the child
- jeopardise the placement prospects for a child, and/or
- jeopardise the transparency or future of Australia's intercountry adoption program with the country of origin.

Under the Hague Convention, pre-placement contact may be appropriate in limited circumstances after a placement proposal has been accepted, including where:

- the child has expressed their consent, wishes or opinions for pre placement contact to occur
- contact with prospective adoptive parents is desirable or unavoidable
- the overseas authority requests prospective adoptive parents engage in pre-placement contact, or
- it is an intercountry relative adoption.

General advice for prospective adoptive parents

It is strongly recommended that, before making contact with a child, an individual or body caring for children or overseas adoption authorities, prospective adoptive parents seek advice from their local central authority.

Where the child's country of origin has different processes and procedures, it is important for prospective adoptive parents to exercise caution and seek advice from their local central authority.

Advice for prospective adoptive parents travelling to countries of origin

Prospective adoptive parents may travel to countries of origin as part of an adoption process or for reasons unrelated to adoption.

The appropriate time for prospective adoptive parents to travel as part of the adoption process varies between country programs. Prospective adoptive parents' local central authority will advise when this type of travel is required, when and for how long, as well as whether pre placement contact will be appropriate during the travel period.

Prospective adoptive parents travelling for reasons unrelated to the adoption process (such as to gain a greater understanding of a country from which they seek to adopt) must not have any contact with individuals or organisations that have care of children who may be placed with an Australian family for intercountry adoption. This is particularly important for prospective adoptive parents travelling to a country where they have a current adoption application.