



Sending gifts and care packages in the period between allocation and travel

The allocation of a child for adoption is an exciting time. The Australian, State and Territory Central Authorities understand that you may like to send your child a gift to welcome them into your family, or may wish to assist with your child's care until you take custody of them. In addition, some of Australia's partner agencies expect families to send items to their child once the allocation has been accepted. When well considered, sending particular items can assist a child to understand the concept of adoption and help the child to become familiar with their adoptive family. This is particularly important in programs where the waiting period between allocation and travel may be several months or more.

However, some families may be unaware of the potential difficulties associated with providing toys, food or clothing, particularly where children are living in an orphanage or group home. Often clothes and bedding are bulk-washed, and children share the same meals and toys. Many of our overseas partner bodies are already understaffed and are unable to manage large quantities of personalised gifts or care packages, or to ensure that items are provided for the exclusive use of a particular child. If you send your child an item, you should be aware that they may not bring it with them when they travel home to Australia.

Sometimes, despite the best intentions of families, the provision of care packages can be misconstrued. There have been some instances where families have received additional updates about their child after sending gifts or care packages. This can lead to families feeling increased pressure to provide more items.

Where consistent with the requirements set by the overseas authority, you are encouraged to send one of the following valuable tools to assist with preparing the child for adoption:

- A photo album (A5 or smaller) containing 10–12 photos with simple English captions, translated into the child's native language: *Appropriate for all country programs.*
- A simple storybook and DVD of your family reading the story: *Appropriate for some country programs.*
- A small soft toy which has been carried close to your skin and carries your scent: *Appropriate for limited country programs only.*

Your caseworker will help you to determine which items are appropriate to send your child. This will usually depend on whether your child is living in an orphanage or group home, or with a foster family, and whether the adoption authority in that country has any restrictions or requirements regarding sending items. You are asked to refrain from sending any other items to your child in the period between allocation and travel. In particular circumstances, and where there are significant delays between allocation and travel, your caseworker may talk with you about whether other items or an updated album, DVD and/or storybook can be sent.

Your State or Territory Central Authority will forward your album, DVD and/or storybook to your child at a nominal cost. Independent agencies overseas may offer to send items to an orphanage on your behalf. However, sending gifts outside of official avenues is contrary to Australia's approach to intercountry adoption.