

Meeting with ESWS

Date: Monday 13 September

Time: 1.30pm

Introductions:

- Dr Kim, Jin Sook (Dr Kim), President and CEO
- Mr Kim, Young Bok (Mr Kim), Secretary General
- Ms Park, Yoon-kyung (Ms Park), Director of the Child Care Department.

Meeting Objectives

- Develop good working relationship with contacts in ESWS – in interests of continuing to work together in the future.
- Discuss any program issues they want to raise.
- Discuss exit visa issue and seek resolution.
- Emphasise that we are willing to adopt older children (and children from adoption breakdowns if appropriate).

Speaking Points/Questions

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Background:

The Eastern Social Welfare Society (ESWS) is responsible for handling South Korean – Australian adoptions. ESWS was established in 1972 by Dr Kim, Duk Whang and deals with domestic and intercountry adoptions as well as a number of child welfare institutions and foster care homes through South Korea.

Dr Kim, Jin Sook was appointed as the new President in October 2007 after a period as Director of the Eastern Educational Foundation and Principal of Eastern Special School.

ESWS has had a longstanding and amicable relationship with Australia. The South Korean Adoption program is one of Australia's largest programs, and there are strong links between Australian – Korean support groups and ESWS.

Australian Korean Friendship Group (Queensland) provides funding to ESWS bi-annually. Funds are raised through raffles, auctions, sales and personal donations. On average, AFKG provide up to USD\$10,000 per annum.

In 2005, the South Korean program was examined as part of the review of the Bilateral Intercountry Adoption Arrangements by the Australian Central Authorities. The review concluded that the program generally complied with the standards and principles of the Hague Convention.

The South Korean Government has indicated an intention to become a signatory to the Hague Convention. South Korea has publically announced that it hopes to become a receiving country (rather than a sending country) by 2012. However, it seems that attempts to increase the incidence of domestic adoption are not as fruitful as hoped. Apparently domestic adoptive parents are provided a financial incentive for a short period after the adoption takes place, but once that allowance is stopped, there is a high incidence of adoptions breaking down. There have been reports that approximately 66% of domestic adoptions break down in South Korea.

In 2006, South Korea introduced administrative changes to the program which included a reduction in the annual quota that South Korea would accept from Australia, and an increase in fees.

In June 2006, responsibility for South Korean program was handed over from NSWCA to the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.

In August 2006, ESWS advised Australian adoption authorities that in an effort to promote domestic adoption, additional adoption applications would not be needed in 2007 and no quota would be issued.

In May 2008, the suspension was lifted and Australia was issued with a quota of 30 files. For the first time, ESWS requested that approximately one third of these files be for children with more complex medical backgrounds.

In February 2009, Australia was issued with another quota for 30 files (with one third for children with complex medical backgrounds). At this time we were also informed that the quota would no

longer be issued annually. While we thought this may mean more than one quota in a given year, the quotas have remained annual.

In March 2010, Australia was issued with a quota of 25 files. ESWS indicated that the number of children in need of intercountry adoption was decreasing, and that this would result in a continued reduction of Australia's quota by 10% per year.