

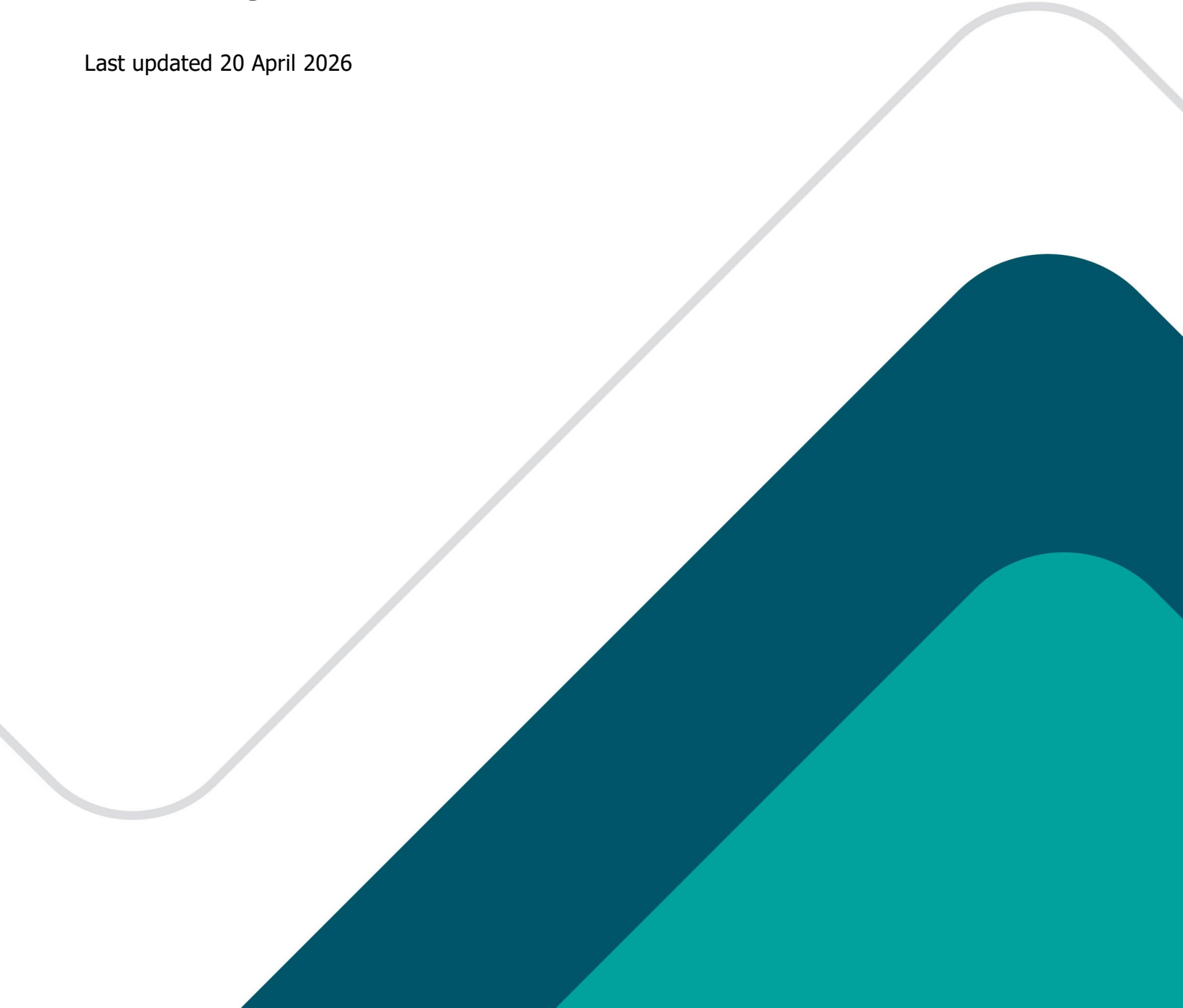


Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Investigation into historic Republic of Korea–Australia intercountry adoptions

Webinar Questions and Answers

Last updated 20 April 2026

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Purpose

This document sets out questions that were asked during the public webinar, hosted by the Minister for Social Services on 26 March 2026, on the Investigation into historical Republic of Korea-Australia intercountry adoptions (the investigation).

A video recording of the webinar is available on the [DSS website](#).

This document will be updated periodically to incorporate additional questions and answers, including when the Terms of Reference have been finalised.

Investigation scope

Why is Australia only investigating the South Korean program?

The Republic of Korea was one of Australia's largest adoption partners from the 1960s to 1990s. The Government's election commitment was to investigate historic intercountry adoptions from the Republic of Korea. This followed the findings of the Republic of Korea's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which found widespread human rights violations for intercountry adoptees under the Korean government of the time.

The investigation will accept the TRC's findings, which will be incorporated into the investigation's evidence base. It will also respond to concerns about whether any Australian authorities were aware of the practices found by the TRC, or failed to act on them.

Why does the investigation only look at adoptions between 1964 and 1999? What about adoptions that occurred after 1999?

The investigation is focused on historical adoptions between 1964 and 1999 as it matches the era examined by the Republic of Korea TRC.

This allows the findings of the TRC to be incorporated into the investigation's evidence base, as well as responding to community concerns about whether any Australian authorities were aware of the practices found by the TRC, or failed to act on them.

When are the Terms of Reference expected to be finalised and publicly released?

The Terms of Reference are being finalised and will be published on the Department's website in the coming weeks.

You can subscribe on the Department's website to be notified when the Terms of Reference are published.

What are the expected outcomes of the investigation?

The investigation is expected to produce a report this year.

Following receipt of the report, the government will review the findings and consider appropriate actions and any next steps.

Why is this just an investigation and not a Parliamentary Inquiry?

The investigation is expected to produce a report this year.

Following receipt of the report, the government will review the findings and consider appropriate actions and any next steps.

What types of evidence/information will the investigation look at?

The investigation will look closely at whether the relevant authorities complied with domestic and international regulatory frameworks, ethical standards, and child welfare principles of the time period.

It will look at how Australian authorities obtained information from the Korean government and their agencies, and measures to prevent irregular or inadequately evidenced adoptions occurring, with a particular focus on informed consent and documentation irregularities.

We will also examine whether any reports of illicit and illegal practices that were sent to Australian authorities were adequately investigated or escalated.

How will the investigation access individual files and records? How will consent processes be managed?

The Department is working through the legal requirements for examining individual case files and necessary consents. We will provide more information on this process through the Terms of Reference and through future updates.

Will the investigation examine the role of Commonwealth authorities, particularly since the late 1990s when federal oversight of intercountry adoption became centralised?

Yes. The investigation's first phase of work will look at the roles and actions of Commonwealth agencies, both before and after the Commonwealth ratified the Hague Adoption Convention in 1998.

What is the role of the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) in the investigation?

NSW was the lead state for intercountry adoptions from the Republic of Korea for much of the investigation time period and was the primary state for placement of adoptees from Korea.

We know that other states and territories had a role in adoptions prior to 1978. We are also aware that many adoptees were adopted into other states or territories, and have adoption files that they received from those states or territories. The Department is committed to working closely with all relevant parties that were involved in intercountry adoptions during the investigation period.

Will the investigation address private, expatriate, and independent adoptions that fall outside Hague Convention processes, including gaps involving immigration and agencies outside DSS oversight?

To ensure the investigation can deliver a robust report with findings, it is important that we investigate adoptions with supporting evidence so we can draw clear conclusions. This includes interrogating paper trails to see whether there was any wrongdoing.

For these reasons, these independent adoptions fall outside the scope of the investigation.

How many adoption cases is the investigation targeting to analyse?

What is the target sample size?

At this stage, we have not set a sample size.

During any file audit step, we will ensure we are using an appropriate sample size that is representative, and that provides us with a robust evidence base to make findings.

Will the investigation examine and compare the processes followed by each state and territory? Will it consider inconsistencies between the approval processes of different states?

While we've identified that we will need to work closely with NSW DCJ as they led the Korea program for much of the investigation period, we will need to cooperate with other states and territory governments if access to those jurisdictions' records or documents are required.

This includes instances where adoptions were processed by another state or territory.

The investigation will look at the policies, procedures and practices of relevant Australian authorities to understand whether they were followed and to identify irregularities or unethical practices.

Will the investigation review the current Commonwealth–State Agreement on intercountry adoption, particularly the gaps and confusion around responsibilities for post-adoption support and responses to illegal practices?

The investigation is focused on historical adoption practices between 1964 and 1999. It is not focused on investigating elements of the existing Intercountry Adoption Program.

Will the inquiry take similar steps to Denmark to investigate diplomatic pressure between the Australian and Korean governments on supplying children?

The investigation will consider potential failings in procedure or process within the relevant Australian government agencies, and any processes or practices which contributed to, or failed to prevent, the occurrence of misconduct in Australia.

The Korean TRC investigation reopened for further adoptee submissions earlier this year. Is the Australian Government engaging with the TRC?

The Australian Government is engaging with the Republic of Korea's Government about the new TRC.

The investigation will accept the TRC's findings, which will be incorporated into the investigation's evidence base.

Post adoption support

What is the government's plan for post-adoption support when Intercountry Adoptee and Family Support Service (ICAFSS) funding ends in June, given this investigation will continue beyond that date? Where will impacted individuals turn for support?

Funding for the ICAFSS program has been extended through to 30 June 2027.

This means that support services will continue to be available for the duration of the investigation, and that any individuals who participate in the investigation or are otherwise impacted by it will have access to appropriate support.

Why are there no mandated, ongoing welfare checks for intercountry adoptees after placement? Will the government consider introducing requirements to ensure the safety and wellbeing of adoptees over time?

The safety of children, especially those involved in intercountry adoption, is paramount. This is why the government introduced so many changes to ensure adoptees are safe and protected since we ratified the Hague Convention.

The investigation will look at historical practices in place during the period of the investigation.

Responsibility for intercountry adoption, including post-adoption support, is shared across state and territory authorities. These current practices are not a subject the investigation will be reviewing.

Are there any plans to facilitate Korean-Australian adoptees accessing their records, or assist with family finding and identity concerns?

The investigation is currently working through the file audit process, including access to records. We recommend subscribing to the mailing list so you can be updated.

In the meantime, the intercountry adoption process is managed by government departments in each state and territory known as central authorities. For further information about the adoption process, including access to your adoption file, you may wish to contact the central authority in the state or territory you or your child was adopted in.

Family finding and assistance with identity concerns is outside the scope of the investigation.

In instances where there is substantiated and reported evidence of child abuse against a Korean adoptee by the adoptive family, there has recently been a landmark case where an adoptee has successfully annulled their adoption. Will this be a process that may be investigated so that other adoptees can avail of this as an option more easily with information and supports available?

The investigation is focused on investigating historical intercountry adoption practices and is not designed to support individuals with adoption annulments. These are matters for the courts.

Community engagement

How can stakeholders or adoptees be involved in the investigation?

The investigation will include community engagement at every stage of the process.

You can subscribe on the Department's website to receive updates when engagement opportunities become available.

Will the investigation include input from adoptees, adoptive parents, and former adoption workers, particularly those who raised concerns but were ignored or silenced?

We are currently navigating the legal requirements of how this can be encompassed as part of the investigation. We acknowledge that the voices of these individuals are critical to forming the evidence base to inform the report.

You can subscribe on the Department's website to receive updates when engagement opportunities become available.

Can people other than adoptees and their family members contribute to this investigation?

Yes. You can subscribe on the Department's website to receive updates when engagement opportunities become available.

What should individuals who submit cases and testimony expect back from the investigation?

The investigation is expected to produce a report this year.

Following receipt of the report, the government will review the findings and consider appropriate actions and any next steps.

If we have submitted information or files to the TRC, can we engage in the investigation?

Yes. There are no restrictions on participating in the investigation for those who have submitted to the TRC.

How does the Minister and the Department of Social Services plan to communicate updates and outcomes of the investigation to adoptees?

You can subscribe on the Department's website to receive updates, including any progress updates on the investigation or its outcomes.

The Department is also engaging directly with key advocacy stakeholders as the investigation proceeds to ensure those organisations can provide any new information to their networks.

How will the investigation be designed and delivered in a trauma-informed way, particularly in minimising distress for participants?

The lead investigator, the independent auditors, and the investigation team in the Department received trauma-informed practice training to ensure the investigation's processes and interactions are conducted in a trauma-informed manner.

The Department is dedicated to ensuring that those who engage with the investigation receive appropriate support.

Participation in the investigation will only ever be on a voluntary basis from individuals or advocacy organisations.

How will the inquiry ensure this process does not cause further harm to adoptees if it fails to deliver meaningful recognition? If expectations are raised but not met, it risks adding another layer of trauma, especially as many Korean adoptees have already spoken in past processes without meaningful change.

We appreciate that the investigation can be challenging for adoptees and their families, especially when it may be reported on in the media. We are also aware that adoptees and their families who participate in the investigation may need additional support to process their experiences.

This is why the investigation is designed to be delivered in a trauma-informed, culturally-appropriate manner which upholds the highest ethical standards, and with appropriate support from dedicated services like the ICAFSS.

The Terms of Reference will outline the scope of the investigation, so people who choose to engage with the investigation will have an understanding of how their contribution will be considered.

The report and its findings will be provided to government for consideration.

Can the Department support community-led or peer support spaces that can assist adoptees and families to navigate the investigation process? Either led by adoptee groups or through ICAFSS?

To ensure the methodology of the investigation remains consistent, the Investigator will lead on these engagements.

Any engagement will be led in a trauma-informed manner, including referrals to the ICAFSS where needed.

How will the Government support those individuals and families who are experiencing high levels of distress and acute mental health concerns throughout this investigation?

The Australian Government funds the ICAFSS Program to provide an independent, nationwide support service to adoptees and their families. Please consider accessing this service if you feel distressed.

The investigation, and the lead investigator, will work with anyone participating in the investigation to ensure they feel supported. This may include direct referrals to the ICAFSS service.