



38 Derwent Street
Island Bay
Wellington 6023
Aotearoa New Zealand

Annual General Meeting 18 April 2013

Convenor's Report

It is now two and a half years since incorporation in September 2010.

In July 2011 we filed proceedings with the Human Rights Tribunal claiming that the Adoption Act 1955 discriminates on a number of different grounds in respect of which discrimination is unlawful under the Human Rights Act 1993 and the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990. We are seeking a declaration to this effect from the Tribunal.

In the last part of 2012 we had some good progress on the Part 1A claim after the mediation process was complete. Robert Ludbrook, Emma Smith and Tim McGuigan have been working extremely hard on discovery of the documentation provided to us by Crown Law. All three are continuing with that work.

This month Adoption Action filed an amended Statement of Claim which now includes eleven points of claim asserting that our adoption laws discriminate on the grounds of sex (2 points of claim), marital status (3 points), race (1 point), disability (1 point), age (2 points) and sexual orientation (2 points).

The case has been set down for hearing in the **Hearing Room 1, Tribunals Unit (Level 1, 86 Customhouse Quay, Wellington) for two weeks commencing on Monday 18 November 2013** and is likely to attract publicity highlighting the pressing need for reform of our adoption laws to bring them into accord with current social attitudes and values as well as human rights. The hearing will be open to the media and members of the public.

Adoption Action was pleased to learn this month that the Human Rights Commission has indicated that it wishes to make submissions to the Tribunal on Adoption Action's claim. It is our intention to have several members of Adoption Action Inc. each making submissions on a different point of claim. We are also heartened to have received valuable advice and support from senior Victoria University Law students (through the Wellington Community Justice Project) and senior members of the faculty of law at Otago University. We acknowledge and thank those people for their valuable assistance.

Adoption Action will argue that Government should not be free to discriminate by retaining old laws which are blatantly discriminatory under our human rights law, when ordinary citizens who do so can be restrained and ordered to pay damages.

We continue to build on the relationship with the Wellington Community Justice Project and are very thankful for the voluntary contribution that Emma Smith and Tim McGuigan have made to the Part 1A claim since beginning the discovery process six months ago. Their assistance has been invaluable.

In addition to the Part 1A claim, Board members spent considerable time advising Kevin Hague of the Green Party on his member's bill Care of Children (Adoption and Surrogacy Law Reform) Amendment Bill which would integrate adoption law in the general law as to the care of children and make many of the changes to adoption law made by the Law Commission in 2000. Committee members have provided considerable input into the drafting of the Hague Bill and we are hoping it will be successful in the ballot before very long.

Louisa Wall's Marriage Equality Bill was passed in Parliament last night. It would allow same-sex couples who are married to adopt a child jointly.

In August 2012 we joined the world wide web securing the domain adoptionaction.co.nz. Our website went live that month also. We are continuing to improve and build the website and we now have all the back issues of Adoption News and Views up on the site.

Adoption Action's proposed conference was put on hold while the mediation process proceeded and will be deferred until after the Part1A hearing. The timing of the conference will likely be early 2014.

We are very grateful to Buddle Findlay for allowing us to use their facilities during this past year to hold meetings.

I would like to acknowledge and thank each member of this Board and committee for the work you continue to do to towards meeting our aims.

Fiona Donoghue
18 April 2013