

The day has finally come. After 26 years in operation the IAA will cease provision of core frontline services today, 30th November 2017 at close of business.

Over the 26 years, the IAA has faced many challenges but the past 18 months or so have been the hardest. Without financial support we must close our doors. The IAA has always been a 100% membership funded organisation. We were not State funded. Membership is at an all-time low and the membership funding model is not working and has not for a while. In general it would appear the Community do not see the value in membership and would rather pay an excess premium to attend events that their family will benefit from rather than pay the €80 membership. A few factors contribute to low membership, numbers of adoptions have dramatically reduced over the years in Ireland, families in general are not pursuing a second adoption and families are busy parenting and do not realise their need for services until the child is older. We have lots of people who come back to us at the onset of teenage years. Unfortunately the IAA cannot wait until then. We have tried every possible avenue to seek funding from both the adoption community and the State but to no avail. The State Agencies advise that they either can't or won't fund us. Intercountry adoption is not a priority for our Government.

In short and for your information we have to cease today because we simply have run out of money to continue the IAA in its current format, a registered charity, a limited company, a rented office, a part-time employee and all the associated costs and overheads. The IAA cost just under 40,000e per year to run. Many say this is a small amount but without it we cannot function. As an accredited body we have requirements to meet, such as audited accounts, professional insurance plus standards to maintain as set out by the Authority. We have legal obligations under the Companies Acts not to trade recklessly.

What can I say? You have seen the letters from Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and Tusla. You know we have had numerous meetings with the Authority and you know we called out early last year, 2016, to the community and some stepped forward but to be honest without one very large donation from a member we would have closed in 2016. The AAI and the Department insist they are not funding bodies. Tusla is responsible for all funding and not only will they not fund, they won't even engage with us. We have applied for various grant applications and always receive the same message, "too many applicants, small pot of monies and adoption is not a priority". We had a glimmer of hope under the Dormant Funds award but alas not, the IAA would have to apply – along with other accredited bodies – through a procurement process with no support to keep going in the interim.

I first got involved in the IAA in 2003, and in that time I have seen 7 different Ministers for Children, well 6 actually, the current Minister Katherine Zappone, I have never formally met despite repeated requests. I have dealt with various officials from both the Adoption Authority and the Department and worked with amazing committees and volunteers and of course you the members. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Geoffrey Shannon's personal commitment to the IAA and our Community, since long before he was appointed Special Rapporteur for Children.

It has been a pleasure to engage with you all.

After years of calls, emails and meeting you at events, I feel like I personally know many of your families. Before we leave you today I thought I would share a quick overview of the IAA's achievements over the last 26 years.

IAA and Irish Intercountry Adoption Families

Formed through intercountry adoption, **5000+ Irish families.**

Adoption should be always be in the best interests of the child and 6,697 children were adopted into Ireland from approximately 28 countries from 1991 to 2014. Already in 2017, 48 children have joined our families. The IAA has assisted many of these families on their journey to adopt a child from overseas. No two adoption journeys are ever the same and the knowledge and expertise we have accumulated from families and personal experience has equipped us to support prospective and post adoptive parents over the last 26 years.

IAA's Education, Information, Social & Cultural Programme



National Conferences



20 is the figure of National Conferences. The **IAA National Conference** is highly regarded by both professionals and the Community, and had become a hub for communications between pre and post adoptive parents, voluntary organisations and the state sector. The IAA has engaged speakers of international acclaim over the last 26 years with enormous benefit to our community.

Our last event was the 2017 National Conference a few weeks ago and thanks to all who attended and made it a wonderful memorable occasion. Thanks to those of you who were not free to attend but sent us “good luck” messages before and on the day of the event.

National Helpline

The IAA provided a 25 hour per week “**Advice Line**” phone service to anyone who needs support or guidance at any stage in their adoption journey. This Advice Line was a confidential telephone enquiry line operated by a member of staff with both a professional and personal experience of domestic and intercountry adoption. Upon special request and in certain circumstances this service was offered as a “Face to Face Advice” meeting.



The Future

For me personally this is not goodbye. For my family, adoption is for life, it is not a once off event that happened in a court-room in a foreign land.

We ask that in the absence of the IAA, you the Community be vigilant in ensuring that the funds secured by the IAA under the Dormant Account Funds for the provision of a programme *“to provide a secure and confidential setting for children who were the subject of an intercountry adoption (ICA) to meet with a view to build positive self-esteem rooted in cultural and ethnic identity and to highlight the importance of cultural socialisation for ICA adoptees”* is in fact spent on such service provision. Please do contact Tusla, who will be allocating the Dormant Account monies, to advocate on your children(s)’ behalf to ensure that the relevant projects take place and that our intercountry adoption children benefit from such ring-fenced funding over the three year programme.

In late 2016 the IAA had written to President Michael D. Higgins asking him to consider the ICA community when planning his garden parties for 2017. I now leave you today with the words of our President when he spoke to families representing the ICA Community at the “Welcome Party” in Áras an Uachtaráin, earlier this year.

“Indeed, today is a greatly joyous occasion and I am delighted to have this opportunity to formally acknowledge and welcome those who contribute so much to the creation of a diverse and inclusive Ireland and who will, I am confident, play their own important role in shaping the Ireland of the future, the Ireland that we will hand on to a new generation.”

In the absence of the IAA, the only accredited national support group for our ICA Community, the provision of these frontline services falls to the State. For all intercountry adoption related queries you can contact:

The Adoption Authority of Ireland

on (01) 2309 300 and press 3 for the Intercountry Adoption Unit

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Adoption Policy Unit on (01) 647 3000

Tusla Child and Family Agency

National Manager Adoption Services on (01) 7718500

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Accredited Body under the Adoption Act 2010

100% funded by our Members

1991 – 2017 Serving our Community

