

Australia queries 'moral responsibility' over abandoned Down's baby (Update)

August 2 2014

Australia's Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said Sunday a question of "moral responsibility" should determine the fate of a baby born with Down Syndrome, reportedly abandoned by an Australian couple with its surrogate mother in Thailand.

Morrison's comments came as funds raised online by an Australian charity to pay for the infant's medical care rose above \$190,000 after a flood of international goodwill over the infant's plight.

The boy, Gammy, and a twin sister were born to Thai woman Pattaramon Chanbua in December after she was reportedly paid Aus\$16,000 (US\$14,900) to be a surrogate.

An unnamed Australian couple took the sister, who was healthy, but left Gammy behind, according to media reports.

The baby boy also suffers from a life-threatening heart condition, and 21-year-old Pattaramon had earlier said she could not afford to pay for the medical treatment he needs.

"I think this is an absolutely heart-breaking story, it really is," Morrison told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"I think perhaps this may fall more into the territory of what people's moral responsibilities are here.

"I note there was a comment earlier that the mother of this child, baby Gammy, wants the child to remain in Thailand and that mother's wishes also have to be absolutely respected."

Pattaramon's mother, 53-year-old Pichaya Nathonchai, told AFP Sunday Gammy had been in a private hospital in Chonburi province, about an hour from Bangkok, since Thursday and his condition was "improving".

"He is a quiet, calm boy ... his mother and I are taking turns to see him at the hospital," Pichaya said, adding her family was relieved donations were coming in.

"Although we have benefited from the 30 baht (US\$1) health scheme, it does not cover everything he needs," she said, referring to Thailand's universal health care scheme.

Peter Baines, the founder of Hands Across The Water, the charity managing the donations, told AFP Gammy was in hospital as he was "still very ill and suffering from a lung infection at the moment".

He said the donations had far exceeded the initial \$25,000 target, and he would be flying to Thailand from Australia in the next few weeks to coordinate how the money is used to fund Gammy's healthcare and his family's needs.

"I'll meet with the family and then we can meet with our representatives on the ground and get a good understanding of what are those needs over the next six months, and then three years, and then beyond," Baines said.

'I forgive them for everything'

Pattaramon told Fairfax Media late Saturday she wanted to take care of the boy in Thailand, saying: "I'll take care of Gammy on my own. I'll not

give my baby to anybody.

"I wish they will love my baby ... I forgive them for everything. That is the best thing I can do, forgive ... it is best for everybody," she said of the Australian couple.

"I want to see all my children back together again. I don't really think too much about the Australian couple. I can't blame them ... I don't feel upset or angry about them anymore. They might have their own problems too."

Morrison said the surrogacy case had some "serious issues" that needed to be managed very carefully.

"But this whole issue I think is fraught with all of these difficulties and I can understand the longing and anguish of parents in this situation who want to be parents, but equally there are some serious issues here that have to be managed very carefully," he said.

Fairfax Media earlier reported that a surrogacy agent who helped coordinate the agreement between Pattaramon and the Australian couple told her to abort the pregnancy after doctors learnt one of the twins had Down Syndrome.

Pattaramon told the newspaper she refused the abortion because of her Buddhist faith.

Donors to the fundraising website criticised the baby's abandonment.

"Poor innocent baby. He did not ask to be deserted. I hope that he can be cared for and loved and live," wrote one donor, who added that she had an "adorable" daughter with Down Syndrome.

Commercial surrogacy, in which a woman is paid to carry a child, is not permitted in Australia but couples are able to use an altruistic surrogate who receives no payment beyond medical and other reasonable expenses.

However, Surrogacy Australia said more couples choose to go overseas than find an altruistic surrogate at home, with 400 or 500 each year venturing to India, Thailand, the United States and other places to do so.

© 2014 AFP

Citation: Australia queries 'moral responsibility' over abandoned Down's baby (Update) (2014, August 2) retrieved 17 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-08-australia-surrogacy-abandoned-syndrome-baby.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.