

# Post Adoption News

Summer Edition  
2022

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**QLD:** Post Adoption Support QLD  
07 3170 4600 / [pasq@benevolent.org.au](mailto:pasq@benevolent.org.au)

**NSW:** Post Adoption Resource Centre  
02 9504 6788 / [parc@benevolent.org.au](mailto:parc@benevolent.org.au)

# Welcome to Post Adoption News

As we wrap up a big year at Post Adoption Services we acknowledge the difficulties that the holiday season can bring for people affected by adoption. So in our final edition of the year, we are focusing on boundaries and highlighting some self care tips to help provide joy and comfort.

As always, thank you to our readers and contributors for sharing your thoughtful writing with us.

We wish you all a restful end to 2022 and a restored start in 2023.—*PARC and PASQ Teams*

## Updated Service Hours

PARC and PASQ are closed from 4.00 pm on 23rd December 2022 (local time) until 28th December from 9.00am (local time)

There are only two business days that PARC and PASQ will be available with limited coverage.

Wednesday 28th December

Thursday 29th December

We will be closed Friday 30th December for TBS Picnic Day and Monday 2nd January for the public holiday.

All other dates,

PARC are open Monday—Friday, 9:00am — 5:00pm (local time).

PASQ are open Monday—Friday, 8:30—5pm (local time). Excluding public holidays.

## Support Service Contact Information

Call **FriendLine** if you need to chat on 07 2103 3170 (10am – 8pm, 7 days) or online at [www.friendline.org.au](http://www.friendline.org.au) (4pm – 7.30pm, Monday, Wednesday & Thursday)

***In an emergency, please call 000***

For urgent support contact:

**Lifeline:** 13 11 14

**Suicide Call Back Service:** 1300 659 467

**Beyondblue:** 1300 22 4636

**MensLine Australia:** 1300 78 99 78

**Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800

## 12 Self-Care days of Christmas

*Whether this time of year brings joy or difficulty we hope these ideas on self-care support you during this time.*





## Boundaries and Self Care

Whether you celebrate the festive period or not, as the year draws to a close it is a good time to give some thought to your personal boundaries, and what control you have over how you will look after yourself during this time of year. While there will always be things that we can't predict, nor control, we do have some choices we can make to incorporate some self-care.

We acknowledge that the festive season is not necessarily a happy and exciting time for all. This time of year can be complex. It can be a time of increased triggers with many finding the holidays to be a difficult time to endure. Some can be overwhelmed by the commitments they feel they must fulfil, others may feel saddened by what is missing and losses can surface with a renewed intensity.

Boundaries can be a way of caring for yourself and helping to regulate your emotions through the holiday period. Choosing to spend more time on things that nourish and support you and drawing boundaries where possible can assist in reducing some of the more difficult feelings that can surface.

It can be beneficial to spend some time thinking about the following:

- What/who supports me?
- What can I say no to in reducing feelings of overwhelm?
- Who do I want to spend time with?

- What do I want to spend my time and energy doing?

**In a previous edition of Post Adoption News, we gave some tips for setting healthy boundaries (Modified from the book: *Boundaries: Where You End and I Begin*, by Anne Katherine)**

- When you identify the need to set a boundary, do it clearly, calmly, firmly, respectfully, and in as few words as possible.
- You are not responsible for the other person's reaction to the boundary you are setting. You are only responsible for communicating your boundary in a respectful manner.
- At first, you may feel selfish, guilty, or embarrassed when you set a boundary. Do it anyway and tell yourself you have a right to self-care.
- Learning to set healthy boundaries takes time. It is a process. Set them in your own time frame, not when someone else tells you.

However, not all boundaries involve another person, and some boundaries can be established quietly, and privately. Boundaries can also look like self-care strategies, such as:

- Limiting the time you spend on social media for a period of time, particularly if you know that other people's posts may be a trigger for you.
- Being kind to yourself and your experience.

Acknowledging any pain and difficulties you may be experiencing.

- Reminding yourself of the supports that are available to you and reaching out to your supports, both personal and professional supports as needed.
- Establishing the small things that you can do to take care of yourself, eat a fulfilling meal, have a bath, walk in nature, swim, light a candle, read a book.

Be gentle with yourself as you navigate this holiday period and seek support as needed.

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## Lyn's Reflection on the Mothers Group

Every second month PARC and PASQ host our online Mothers Group. One of our regular attendees, Lyn has kindly shared her reflections on what the group means to her.

For over 15 years I had facilitated a health related peer support group, yet had never thought to seek that same level of support for the one area of my life that had remained a secret for over 50 years. It was only after an author friend from America, who has her own adoption story, suggested I seriously consider looking for a support group that I discovered PARC.



Approaching the Mothers group with a little anxiety and uncertainty, I was relieved to find a group where I felt warmly welcomed and embraced. This immediate connection with others who did not judge, who understood, and listened to each other with respect and a quiet dignity, made me feel I was sitting

amongst a group of friends. Although our stories have similarities, there are also many differences, and to be able to share these experiences with others who provide empathy rather than sympathy, who quietly nod in agreement, or shed a tear, who feel the pain, but support and provide each other with acceptance, and validation is a powerful contribution to our overall health and wellbeing.

It is not easy to facilitate groups that can be highly emotional at times, but the skilled facilitators from PARC and PASQ are able to gently guide the group through each session, stepping in when necessary but allowing each of the participants to contribute as little or as much as they need. I appreciate this component of the group and believe it is one of the reasons why women continue to attend.

The level of trust that exists between everyone makes it easier to relate those parts of our stories that have been hidden or not talked about for so long. In the sharing of our stories, and in listening to others, we realise that we are not alone, and we will always have this unique bond between us that others will never understand.

Lyn

Tasmania

If you would like to know when the next Mothers Group is, please go to page 11 or contact the PARC Team (NSW) on 02 9504 6788 or PASQ Team (QLD) 07 3170 4600 to be added to our groups mailing list.

Follow us and stay connected

Did you know that both Post Adoption Support Queensland and the Post Adoption Resource Centre have a Facebook Page with adoption related stories, posts, updates and events?



[/postadoptionssupportqld](#)  
[/benevolentsocietyNSW](#)

## From our readers

### Threads of Adoption

#### The tangled thread of my baby's adoption?

It's always hard to know where to start, what parts to tell and who you can trust with such a delicate story laced with all its fragility. It's a story shared with few, due to the time, the place and taboo around adolescent pregnancy.

Complicated by small town gossip and the fear of ridicule, it became a secret and I was swiftly removed from my regional town and relocated out of sight, into the Sisters of Mercy mother and baby home.

It was devastatingly painful, a relentless emotion of fear, sadness, and loneliness that hovered. Learning to live with the complexities of teenage pregnancy and adoption was no easy task at the age of 14, a cross to bare for life.

The secrecy begins from the day my parents find out I was pregnant at the age of 14, not by choice, frightened scared and alone, the confinement of my pregnancy begins, a pathway chosen for me.

Abruptly removed from school, my friends, my home, my family of 6 siblings, all that I had known and loved, to be placed in a home run by the catholic church, for teenage pregnant girls and this was I felt, my sentencing for being pregnant.

The childhood was over and the vibrant, thirsty for life, athletic, fun and easy going teenager would be lost forever. 14 years old, anonymous, in a big city, trying to understand the complexities of what my life had

become, I have never felt more scared and alone and ashamed.

The five months of confinement slowly rolled by, the Maternity hospital located very conveniently across the road from the home. One can only think this location was very strategically planned by the Powers To Be!!

I was visited weekly by my case worker from the Catholic Adoption agency and she was the main support I had through this time. But obviously she had her job to do and that was to coach me throughout the pregnancy to put the baby up for adoption.

At 37 weeks I had become unwell with pre-eclampsia so it was determined at my ante-natal visit that the baby was to be induced that day.

Oh my God I wanted to run away, I begged and pleaded for the doctors to let me go back to the home so I could get my bag, and I think in my mind I was planning my getaway, to run as far away as possible but of course that didn't happen and I was rushed into a ward and the induction began.

### Birth Trauma

This birthing experience would alter and map my life and reproductive health dramatically and ongoing, which would impact my ability to conceive and have a family in the future and would continue to require surgical procedures ongoing to date.

The details of the delivery are gruesome and barbaric and now as a mature and educated women, I can only say that I received poor qualitative care. These healthcare professionals had an ethical, legal and

professional obligation to provide safe and respectful care which they did not fulfil.

It was a long complicated drawn out labour and my vague recollection of this moment, was that my baby was delivered and taken with no information imparted. I lay on that table for what was hours while they worked on mopping up the mess they had made of my fragile body. I was then transferred to the intensive care ward, where I remained for a further two weeks, while they stabilised my blood pressure and blood loss. It was a slow recovery and I became more and more withdrawn as the days went on, my total disconnection, raised concerns.

**I wanted to see my baby,**

**I wanted to know if I had delivered a girl or a boy.**

**I wanted to know that the baby was ok...**

Against the powers to be, I got to see my little baby boy, I held him so tight, not wanting to ever let him go, because I knew once I did, I would never see him again!!!

**The years of grief**

The years were hard,

I was different,

I had changed,

I had a dark sadness and a secret that I struggled to process and I held that within me, which I had to learn my own coping mechanisms for.

I had to disguise my truth and how I really felt and try and understand and manage this all on my own.

It's a feeling that seems to be an irreversible sadness,

a loss,

a void,

a secret with a suffocating silence, which I just had to learn to live with.

As I matured and pursued my career in Nursing, I devoted my self to my work, nursing mothers and babies to good health and setting them on their journey of positive parenting.

In supporting women in the post partum period, to a degree, it filled the void and somehow was restorative to my own pain and suffering.

I went on to marry and have two beautiful daughters, whom I love and adore, but the 15 years of trying to have a family took its toll on my own health and of course the marriage. My two Rainbow daughters were born and now grown young women of 21 & 23 years of age. They truly are the sunshine in my every day. Having girls and raising them through that teenage period was fraught with enormous emotion and fear, there was absolutely no way they would go through what I did in those teenage years, I worked tirelessly at breaking the cycle of adolescent pregnancy, and I did...

**The reconnection of Mother & Child after 41 years**

The many years have passed, forty-one in fact, not a day went by that I didn't think of my son. The day of strength, courage to face my fears, and longing to know him had arrived, the time seemed more perfect than ever to begin the search after 40 years of wondering about my baby boy. But of course this was no longer a baby but an adult man who has developed himself and his life, and his adjustment to being adopted. This search was laced with a myriad of emotions: Lots of tears, fear, excitement, vulnerability,

My son was so anxious to connect that he contacted the case worker out of hours and begged her to contact me and give permission for my contact details to be released to him on this very pertinent day; Mothers Day!

And so the connection began with gusto and his tears, from both sides we were fuelled with just raw emotions, openness and honesty. This continued for six wonderful months, lots of texting and sharing of feelings, life stories, photos, face time calls, Instagram and also the deflated arrangements of meeting, which didn't eventuate due to covid.

Trying to contain and approach this contact as calmly, sensibly and with containment of emotion was always my goal. It was so important in creating the building blocks for a relationship/friendship to develop.

Allowing space for this young emotional man, enabling him to lead and not make any demands of him, and just allowing the relationship to evolve organically.

It's a strange but a wonderful feeling, there's this intense love for this person, this child of mine that I don't even know. We spend hours discussing nature versus nurture and cannot believe the genetic similarities.

As time continues we learn more and more about each other, we share on a more personal level, I discover there are two little children, grandchildren! We are equally as eager to meet and then one day it just STOPS, a grinding halt, with no explanations.

I have to believe he will come back in his time and I have to respect this and not take it as a form of rejection or personal insult.

It's hard not to fall back into that space of grief, loss and sadness but I have to assume my role as the parent, the mother figure, and be patient and give space to that young man, my son, and his inner child's trauma and clearly his own struggle. Feelings that he potentially has to confront and understand and process. Maybe he will need to explore feelings that he hasn't at this depth in the past.

No one can understand that struggle better than me, his biological mother!

A mother's love is unconditional and eternal, it's a lifelong bond that unites the two of us forever. Regardless of contact or not! A mother's love will never end. It is there from beginning to end.

Through this unbelievably extraordinary life experience, I have gained an insight beyond the average person. It has given me the compassion and empathy and patience and endurance beyond a saint and for that I am grateful. It has given me a great commitment to the things and people I love and believe in.

It developed my commitment to my own parenting and that every life is precious, and furthermore to educating couples on their journey of parenting and embracing the joy and love that children bring.

So this is a story of

self discovery,

not sadness,

not pity,

I am a survivor.

Written by Janey.

# When I hear the words... Adoptions and Apologies.

Last edition we asked readers to share what they thought when they heard the words adoption and apologies. We are pleased to share some of the responses below. Thank you to everyone who responded and shared their thoughts.

The action 'to apologise' is performative. It is: to seek forgiveness - to ask can you forgive? And how one may make amends. It is an action requiring a response. The person/s receiving an 'apology' choose whether 'to accept' or 'to reject' words of 'apology'. Acceptance may be conditional upon further action/s. The 2013 Apology acknowledged unlawful practices and the ongoing impacts of trauma, grief and loss, but it did not ask: DO YOU ACCEPT THIS? IS IT ENOUGH? WHAT DO YOU WANT/NEED US TO DO NOW? The promise of 'freely available access to records' and 'specialist counselling services' was ignored by subsequent government/s. It currently takes approx. 2 years for adult adoptees just to receive their AO from (the old) FACS NSW. When I hear the word 'apology' I think...!ll believe it when actions speak louder than words

Alison Ingram

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An apology for intercountry adoptions hasn't even happened yet despite almost 2 decades of my constant advocacy to meet the needs of the victims who continue to suffer with no recognition or supports. Why is it that Australia provides an apology for the Stolen Generations, the Forced Adoption era, and the Forgotten Australians, yet for us intercountry adoptees ... We haven't even gotten to the point of recognising the wrongs in our lives yet! I hope I live to see the day for an apology for our cohort of impacted people. We were forcibly removed from our country, culture, language, people, religion, and race yet so far, we are miles from having an apology.

Lynelle Long—Founder, InterCountry Adoptee Voices (ICAV)

## Book Reviews

### Life Poetry of an Adopted Baby, Poems of Spirit and Transformation

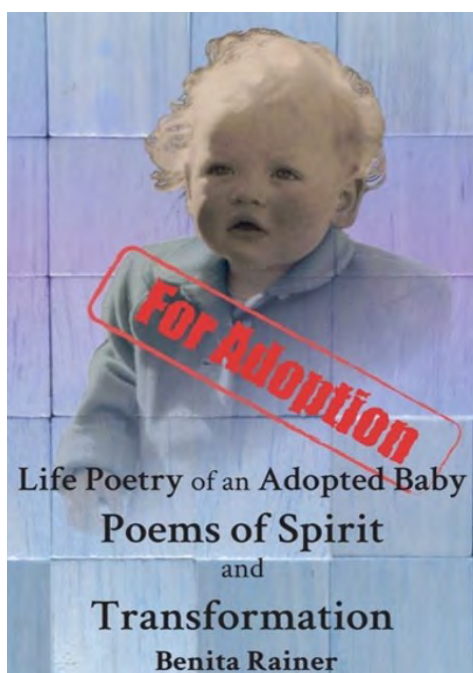
By Benita Rainer

Benita Rainer was adopted as an infant. In this book of poems, Benita begins by writing that when a newborn baby is permanently separated from their mother 'You have lost all sense of who you are, where you come from, where you belong. Perhaps it is the same as losing part of your soul.' These moving words foreground this generous book of over 200 poems, written by Benita and organised into several themes: Alienation, Celebration, Humour, Love and Dualism, Nature and Celebration, Social Commentary and History and Spirit and Transformation

Benita's poems are well written, creative, and moving. Scattered throughout the book is Benita's visual art, and zodiac imagery from Jeremy Blake. Some of these artworks are bold, taking up nearly the whole page, while others are smaller images, thoughtfully nestled in between poems, all of which add additional meaning and colour to the poetry Benita has carefully crafted

Many of the themes conveyed in Benita's poems will resonate deeply with those affected by adoption.

'Life Poetry of an Adopted Baby' can be purchased on Booktopia: [bit.ly/3FwTSKD](https://bit.ly/3FwTSKD)



### Light on Adoption

By Rabekah Scott-Heart

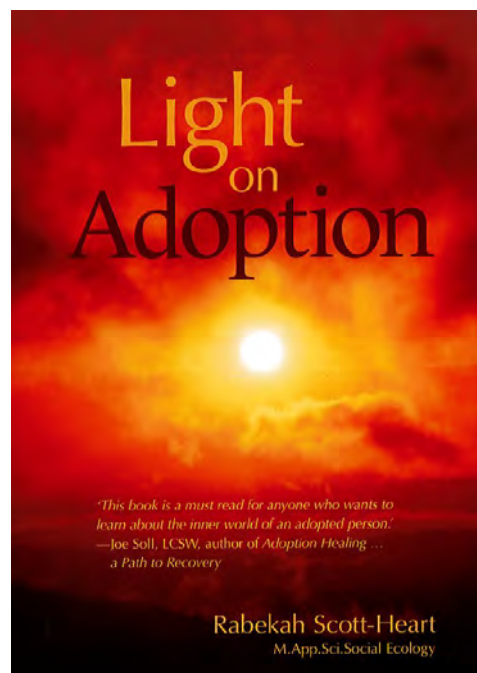
Rabekah Scott-Heart gives an insightful look into the inner world of an adopted person in her book 'Light on Adoption'. There are passages that pack a powerful punch and will resonate with others who are adopted; it may assist others to feel less alone and validated by her words. She is careful to acknowledge that while there are commonalities amongst people who are adopted her experience may not be that of everyone and that each person's experience is unique.

The book outlines clearly the impact of adoption on Rabekah and others as she weaves personal anecdotes of her life and of those she has met on her journey. The personal stories highlight the reach of adoption complexities across the lifespan and into relationships.

Rabekah is widely read and shares the books and quotes that have meaning for her throughout the book as a reading list of sorts that may help others to further explore for themselves.

This is a book to share with friends and family if they have interest in understanding the inner world of an adopted person.

Light on Adoption can be purchased on Booktopia: [bit.ly/3Hd5d3F](https://bit.ly/3Hd5d3F)







## Adoptees Connect

Hi there, my name is Monique Pangari. I am an adoptee and was born in 1972 at the height of the 'Forced Adoption Era' when 10,000 babies were adopted in Australia that year alone. I have been through the highs and lows of Reunion four times over three decades. I first met my mother when I was 21 years old. She lived in Perth where I was born, and grew up, in Qld. Over a couple of years, I was able to meet my maternal grandmother, uncle, and cousins. My mother contacted who she said was my birth father, they reunited and got married all within 6 months of me contacting her. This began my second reunion. I met his mother, sister and two children and developed relationships with them over my 20s. In my early 30s whilst I was pregnant with my second child, I was given some information that my mother had been dating someone different before I was born and they suggested I do some DNA testing. So, I went on my third search and found out that the family I had been in reunion with for ten years, were not my biological family at all, so that began my third search and reunion journey. I was able to track down the man that my mother had been dating and he was very willing to do a DNA test, which proved that he was my father. I was able to then connect with him, my two sisters and my paternal grandmother just before she passed away. During that time, I found out that she may have had some Aboriginal history, although no one was really sure. So, in my late 30s I went on my 4th search through Link-Up which is still continuing today, and found out that I have a rich and

interesting paternal heritage of Aboriginality.

Throughout the past three decades of search and reunion journey's, I felt terribly alone, depressed and experienced times of suicidal ideation. Whilst I did reach out to Jigsaw and attend several groups for Adoptees (which I found very helpful), none of it was easy and I had no personal support at all, other than the many books I read to help me make sense of 'the primal wound' and my search for identity.

During 2020, after having worked as a counsellor at PASQ, I sought out an online writing group with an adoptee writing coach in the US. This led to joining a year-long writing group with other adoptees in 2021. Each week about 20 other adoptees and myself logged onto zoom for two hours. We were given writing prompts, time to complete them in class, and then time to read our responses out loud to one another. It was one of the most profound journeys I have been on. The impact of being with other adoptees every week and hearing my experience echoed in their writings shifted something in me. I started to see that I was not alone in my responses, my questions, my challenges. I became very clear that the impact of relinquishment trauma and adoption created wounds that were common across our group and that could not be denied. We have continued meeting weekly online every week in 2022 and have just recently all met up in person for our first Adoptee Camp, in North Carolina in the USA. It was an amazing experience to finally all meet in person.

This experience of finding adoptee community, was so life-giving for me that I decided to look into ways that I could create community for myself and my fellow adoptees in my own community on the Sunshine Coast, Qld. I found Adoptees Connect, which is a world-wide organisation whose mission is to create community for adoptees, so that we are not left feeling so alone in our journey. So, along with my partner Evan (also an adoptee), we decided to acquire the first-ever Adoptees Connect licence in Australia. It is our aim to increase belonging, support and encouragement for adult adoptees living in South East Qld.

We will be holding our first monthly meeting early in 2023 in Maroochydore. We would love to see as many adoptees 18+ attend our first meeting. For more information and to stay up-to-date with all things '**Adoptees Connect, Maroochydore**', you can follow our Facebook page, '[Adoptees Connect – Sunshine Coast](#)', and our Instagram Page, '[AdopteesConnect SunshineCoast](#)'.

To contact me directly, please send me an email at [adopteesconnectsc@gmail.com](mailto:adopteesconnectsc@gmail.com).

## Calling Mothers of Forced Adoption—Two Hearts, One Love

Have you ever stopped to consider what it would be like to be able to tell the story of your pregnancy, birth, and life thereafter, regarding your child given for adoption.

Something that can touch their heart, with your voice, your image, sharing the honesty of your experience. A message that you could leave for your child(ren) and their family to know of you, your situation, and the circumstances of how their life came to be. A story of such depth that helps connect you to your child, allowing your voice to be heard, and understood, as their mother. Something that you get to leave, as a legacy of your love. A message of love expressed from the depth of your soul, for your loved one(s).

My name is Michelle Patterson, a mother of forced adoption c.1986 and an advocate for women's empowerment, because of this experience. Not all mothers get to successfully reunite, depending on each situation, and their life's journey. This message comes with an honouring for Mothers of Forced Adoption, who would love to be interviewed for the purpose of capturing your story. This project aims to be a secure platform of mothers' recorded stories as likened to a cross between Ancestry.com and This Is Your Life. I can be reached for expressions of interest via our FB community group: **Empowering Forced Adoption Mothers (EFAM)**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/159703594382317>

I am also appealing for contributions for those inspired by these courageous women, endowing an education platform for women's leadership in wealth and wellbeing, creating the ripple effect for families and future generations.

# PARC and PASQ Update

## Therapeutic Parenting Refresher

On Tuesday evening the 22nd of November, PARC and PASQ held an online Therapeutic Parenting course refresher for adoptive parents. It was an opportunity for previous attendees and new participants to review the premise of the course, being how to parent a child with trauma and attune to the specific attachment needs that come with being an adopted child. Feedback indicated that participants enjoyed an inclusive and non-judgemental experience and they commented on the strength of the course being talking with other parents about how to best support their children. There will be a full course offered in 2023.

## Coming Soon! Book Group

Would you like to be part of a Book Group in 2023? PARC & PASQ will be hosting a quarterly book group in the New Year. Help us choose the titles that you might like to explore with us.



If you would like to be involved, click the poll below to let us know your preference on which book you want us to read. [bit.ly/3UEwmjh](https://bit.ly/3UEwmjh)

These are a selection of titles that clients have mentioned have been helpful to them, we understand that some may be of more interest than others. If you have other suggestions, please feel free to put them forward.

Depending on the size of the group participants in the group will need to access copies via their local library, kindle, or hardcopy themselves. PARC has a small resource library where we may have one to two copies available to borrow. If you are interested in

joining our library please reach out to the PARC Team on 02 9504 6788 or [parc@benevolent.org.au](mailto:parc@benevolent.org.au)

## Mothers Group—End of Year Catch Up

To mark the end of year we will be meeting online on Tuesday December 13th to share a cup of tea and exchange best wishes for the festive season.

Our bimonthly Mothers Group is an opportunity for mothers who have been separated from their children through adoption to come together to meet and chat with other mothers in a supportive online environment. Come and chat, share tools and activities that help us feel less isolated.

Time: 9.30am—10.30am (QLD, AEST)

10.30am—11.30am (NSW, AEDT)

To RSVP please contact the PARC Team (NSW) on 02 9504 6788 or [parc@benevolent.org.au](mailto:parc@benevolent.org.au) or the PASQ Team 07 3170 4600 or [pasq@benevolent.org.au](mailto:pasq@benevolent.org.au)

## Poll for our Readers

In the lead up to the new year, PARC/ PASQ are reviewing their communication channels with our client groups and wish to seek your input on the best ways to receive information.

Please let us know via the poll your preferences for receiving information about our groups and events and other items of interest to our adoption communities. Click the survey link here to let us know your preferences:

[bit.ly/3XVmEf4](https://bit.ly/3XVmEf4)

Please feel free to share the survey link with your networks.

Please note. While our newsletters will often contain information regarding groups, events, and news items, as it is only quarterly, we will often be sharing information regarding groups and events in between newsletters that we would like to make people aware of in more timely ways. We thank you for your feedback.

# PASQ Update

Contact us on 07 3170 4600 or [pasq@benevolent.org.au](mailto:pasq@benevolent.org.au)

## PASQ Groups and Events

### The 10th Anniversary of the Queensland Government's Apology for Forced Adoption Policies and Practices

Throughout 2022 PASQ worked alongside the Queensland Government's Adoption and Permanent Care Services and stakeholder groups (Alas Australia, The Association of Adoptees, Jigsaw Queensland, Origins Queensland, and You Gave Me a Voice) to organise this important commemorative event.

On Friday 25th November 2022 the event took place at Queensland's Parliament House with approximately 115 people in attendance. These included people affected by past adoption practices; those who have supported them over many years; and a range of important guests including current and former MPs, departmental staff and executives.



It was a beautiful and moving occasion. One highlight included hearing two songs with lyrics written by Kerri Saint (adopted person from The Association Of Adoptees). These songs were titled 'A Crime Not Known' and 'Chasing Rainbows'. Kerri has made these songs

available for download from her Bandcamp site for \$1 for those who wish to continue to enjoy them - <https://kerrisaint.bandcamp.com/>

As we listened to an instrumental version of 'A Crime Not Known', those in attendance had the opportunity to write a reflection or message on a card and place it with a candle alongside a copy of the apology that was delivered on 27th November 2012.

We also heard a moving personal reflection by The Honourable Robert Tickner AO former Minister of Australia for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs who is also an adopted person. He shared about his personal experience of meeting his mother and father, and the adverse effects that past adoption policies and practices had in their lives.

The Honourable Campbell Newman AO former Premier of Queensland also spoke and shared that delivering the apology was something of which he was most proud in terms of what he achieved in his time as Premier of Queensland. The Honourable Leanne Linard, Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, also spoke of her commitment and that of current Director General Deidre Mulkerin (who was in attendance) to remembering the painful legacy of forced adoption when making decisions in the present.

The event was recorded and can be viewed here: [bit.ly/3h3nsOz](https://bit.ly/3h3nsOz)



# PASQ Update

Contact us on **07 3170 4600** or [pasq@benevolent.org.au](mailto:pasq@benevolent.org.au)

There was to be a second gathering at the Roma St Parklands memorial site on Sunday 27th November 2022, however this sadly had to be cancelled due to a severe weather warning. However, this memorial can be visited at any time by members of the public.



## The Gold Coast Group Adoption Belonging and Connections Meeting

On the 30th November 2022 the final Gold Coast Connections group for 2022 took place at The Benevolent Society's Labrador office. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect, reflect on 2022 and look to 2023 with purpose and hope. The first Gold Coast group for 2023 will be held on Wednesday 8th February from 5.30pm to 7.30pm at the same location. To register your interest in attending please email PASQ at [pasq@benevolent.org.au](mailto:pasq@benevolent.org.au) or phone 3170 4600.

## The AdoptTEA Campaign and Events

The Post Adoption Support Queensland team coordinated the AdoptTEA campaign in association with Judy Glover from The Association of Adoptees for the second year in October 2022. This campaign occurs during Queensland Mental Health week and seeks to raise awareness of the fact that Adopted People sadly experience significantly higher rates of mental health concerns when compared to the general population. The campaign also seeks to reduce the stigma of reaching out and seeking support.

On Tuesday 11th October, Post Adoption Support Queensland hosted an online event for other employees of The Benevolent Society who work across Queensland assisting individuals and families across a range of settings such as Intensive Family Support pro-

grams and Early Years Centres. Sixteen staff attended and remarked that the session increased their understanding of the impacts of adoption in the lives of their clients.



*PASQ Staff at their AdoptTEA Morning Tea.*

As a part of the AdoptTEA campaign, PASQ shares a digital resource pack with individuals and organisations who would like to host their own AdoptTEA event. This year there were four other official events. One of these was hosted at Jigsaw Queensland's retreat for adopted people that took place in October. Additionally, Jigsaw Queensland staff took to the streets of New Farm to raise awareness of adoption issues in a very creative way.



Additionally, Judy Glover (The Association of Adoptees) and Colleen Bernard (Origins Queensland) hosted an event in Brisbane and Kerri Saint (The Association of Adoptees) hosted an event at the Sunshine Coast.

# PASQ Update

Contact us on **07 3170 4600** or [pasq@benevolent.org.au](mailto:pasq@benevolent.org.au)

## Farewell Jane Sliwka, PASQ Team Leader

It is with mixed emotions that I leave my role as Post Adoption Support Queensland's Team Leader on 8th December 2022. It has been a privilege to work alongside you in this role for the last 18 months and previously as a counsellor with The Benevolent Society's PASQ service from 2014 to 2016. In fact, my work with PASQ began when I was a Social Work student in 2013 and as an adopted person myself I wanted to 'try out' working in this space as a professional. The support of the then team leader and PASQ team was and still is truly appreciated. Some of you may also know me from my various roles at Jigsaw Queensland since I was 20 years old and served on Jigsaw Queensland's Management Committee and as a peer support volunteer, before working in a professional role with the Forced Adoption Support Service from 2017 - 2021. Whilst my roles within post adoption support have been varied, all of them have been deeply rewarding as I have had the privilege to work with all of those parties affected by adoption who have shared their vulnerability, pain and also resilience with me over these 15 years. It has been moving and fulfilling to be able to assist individuals to reconnect with lost family or to sit with them in some of their hardest moments when reconnection has not been possible. Other highlights for me have included:

- Establishing PASQ's first Adoption, Belonging and Connection group on the Gold Coast (in 2014) which is still running today as a bi-monthly support group.
- Co-hosting Jigsaw Queensland's Adopt Perspective podcast from 2020 – 2021.
- Delivering lectures to social work students at the University of Queensland since 2017 to raise their awareness of the complexities of adoption. Their openness and insight always astounded me and gave me hope for the future.

- Working with stakeholder groups to organise state and federal commemorative events to honour the state and national apologies for past adoption policies and practices. Bearing witness to these apologies and subsequent commemorative events has given me great hope that by speaking the truth with persistence, our government and community can take accountability for wrongs that have occurred.

Whilst it will be sad and a transition for me to leave my professional role in adoption, I am excited by the possibilities of having more time to spend on creative pursuits, advocacy and education which is what I am most passionate about contributing to within our shared adoption community.



Artwork by Michelle Madsen Hinton

# PARC Update

Contact us on 02 9504 6788 or [parc@benevolent.org.au](mailto:parc@benevolent.org.au)

## PARC Groups and Events

### Music Therapy Group

“Music is powerful. As people listen to it, they can be affected. They respond” – Ray Charles.

At PARC, we are always open to exploring and offering our clients a range of effective, therapeutic experiences. When Music Therapist Student and adoptee Mil Brooks approached PARC with her passion and desire to run both individual and group sessions, we were instantly engaged by this unique opportunity.



With the support of a PARC counsellor, Mil ran both individual and group music therapy sessions over several weeks. Mil’s warm and bubbly personality, along with her guitar, voice and drums made participants feel comfortable and welcome as they emerged themselves in the therapeutic experience. The sessions consisted of several musical experiences, of which no experience was required. Some of these included drumbeats for regulation, improvisation for self-expression and mindfulness creative activities for self-care and stress reduction. Group attendees reported to have particularly enjoyed listening to a piece of music, allowing themselves to freely draw or write down thoughts and memories that presented for them. Music is incredibly powerful in the way it can lend support

to our physical, mental and emotional health. After sessions, participants shared in their feedback that the group was “light hearted, while being able to focus on the music and have a sense of enjoyment” and that they felt “really happy and relaxed afterwards”.

Both Mil and group attendees thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to have this experience with an alternative therapeutic intervention. We wish Mil all the best as she concludes her studies!

### Speakers Forum: DNA

On the evening of November 16th PARC hosted a Speakers Forum in Glebe and online on the topic of DNA. We were very lucky to have Peter O’Brien and Diane Cuff as our guest speakers, who were generous in sharing their time and expertise with us all.

Peter developed his skills in DNA searching when he was looking for his own birth father many years ago. Since then, Peter has volunteered as a Friend of PARC, assisting other people affected by adoption in making connections with their birth families through DNA. He gave helpful tips on some of the best ways to make use of DNA sites, emphasising the importance of having your DNA on as many sites as possible for the best chances of matches.

About five years ago Diane set up a Facebook page called Adoption Search Australia. She now has a team of ‘search angels’ and research assistants who are allocated cases that they work on until solved. Diane spoke of her sensitive approach to searching, emphasising the importance of conducting searches discreetly and privately, always aiming for the best possible chance of a successful reunion.

After Peter and Di’s presentation we had a Q&A period where attendees had the chance to ask questions they had about DNA and searching.

Thank you again to Peter and Di and all who attended our Speakers Forum.

We also have an information sheet on DNA on our website, click here to read it: [bit.ly/3Bg5G1a](https://bit.ly/3Bg5G1a)

# PARC Update

Contact us on 02 9504 6788 or [parc@benevolent.org.au](mailto:parc@benevolent.org.au)

## ABC Group

On the 6th of December, PARC facilitated an ABC group for adopted people – Adoption, Belonging and Connection. It was well attended and everyone agreed that the online format allowed many of them to attend who would not have access to a TBS office. In preparation for groups next year, we brainstormed about what they would like. It was suggested that each meeting could unpack one of the “seven core issues of adoption”, (Loss, Rejection, Shame and Guilt, Grief, Identity, Intimacy and Mastery and Control). Also opportunities for peer support, psychoeducation, and sharing. We are looking forward to getting meetings started in 2023 and providing a space for people to come together and be with others “who get it”. This continues to be the strength of any groups we support and the PARC team is grateful to our clients who inform our practice.

## Upcoming Groups and Events

### End of Year Client Catch Up

The PARC Team invite you to come along and share best wishes for the festive season on **20th December, 10.30am—12pm** at The Benevolent Society, Hurstville.

Contact the PARC Team for more details, [parc@benevolent.org.au](mailto:parc@benevolent.org.au) or 02 9504 6788.

### Speakers Forum January 2023

PARC will be hosting an event in Sydney with Emma Estrala, Brazilian intercountry adoptee from the UK, who has studied the Wim Hof method and will be sharing her experiences.

Date to be confirmed, mid-late January.

Here is a YouTube clip where Emma talks about her experiences.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNQguhfxCPY>

## Meet the PARC Team, February 2023

The last 12-18 months has seen much change within the PARC Team with three long standing team members farewelled as they entered retirement and another who has moved on to new things. We will be hosting a small morning tea to introduce the new faces who have joined us. We appreciate that change is often difficult and many of our community had long standing connection to individuals within the PARC Team who have since left. We welcome you joining us and getting to know this new PARC Team.

Date: Wednesday 8th February 2023

### Welcome to new PARC Counsellor, Sarah King!

#### *What was life like before working in Post Adoption Services*

I decided to take a break from counselling after the Sydney lockdowns and found myself going on a variety of random adventures; travelling the beautiful east coast in a van, flood relief volunteering, pet-sitting, waitressing and generally slowing down, laying in the grass and trying to be away from screens. It was a pandemic-recovery year! Prior to this I worked full-time as a grief counsellor at Canteen Australia.

#### *What are you enjoying about the work you do at The Benevolent Society?*

It's early days, but I know I am going to enjoy building steady therapeutic relationships, providing space to uncover what needs to be brought forth, and being part of a lovely counselling team.

#### *What are you most looking forward to over the next year?*

Discovering the many different ways that learning, healing, grieving and integrating can take place.

#### *What are some of your favourite self-care activities?*

Time to move slowly and create a sense of spaciousness, ocean swims and cooking roasts.



# PARC Update

Contact us on 02 9504 6788 or [parc@benevolent.org.au](mailto:parc@benevolent.org.au)

## Farewell Reflections, Margaret Watson

My connection with Post Adoption Resource Centre (PARC) began in 1991. With the commencement of 1990, I had learned at age 40 for the first time of my adoption. I subsequently became PARC's first Late Discovery Adoptee (LDA) client. In the ensuing years, I moved from being a client of PARC to volunteering in various roles—providing media interviews, writing articles on the devastating impact of Late Discovery, being a public speaker for PARC events and co-facilitating a Late Discovery support group.

In 2013, I applied for a counselling position after PARC was assisted with enhanced 3 year funding to provide extra support to those affected by adoption following the Federal Apology for Past Forced Adoptions. I was successful and joined a team of passionate, committed, compassionate and skilled counsellors, all with vast professional and personal experiences of the impact of adoption.

Now after almost 10 years working with PARC, it's time for me to say farewell and retire from my position. It has been an enormous privilege and honour to work with many clients during those years. It has been humbling to be trusted to support people with the courage to bring their life challenges into counselling, wanting to understand how adoption has affected them, their relationships, families and life in general. It's been a delight to see many clients grow, develop and be willing to dig deep into themselves to understand their grief, loss, sadness and challenges created by adoption and separation from biological family.

In those years, PARC has also changed enormously in how services are provided. Our Team gains much satisfaction from being able to reunite families where parties involved want that. We enjoy conducting various groups – Connections Meetings, Film and Book Clubs, Adoption Belonging and Connections group, Therapeutic Parenting and Speakers Forum - where

people came together to share their adoption stories of searches and reunions, and their highs and lows, learning new information and research to support them. Past individual PARC Retreats for groups of adopted people and mothers were highly valued by participants, coming together for mutual support, education and facilitated support by the Team.

As COVID created such enormous changes in all our lives, the PARC Team went online, creating new platforms for greater participation and opportunity for a wider reach geographically and regionally. Of all the recent changes, people engaging with DNA and Ancestry testing has meant an increased opportunity for connection and reunion for adopted people and biological family members along with associated complexities as people navigate and create new relationships.

So I say "farewell" with mixed feelings at the end of December. I love working with clients - seeing people become more confident, grown and develop and alive to the possibilities they create in their lives and relationships, the uniqueness and upheavals of family reunions, the warm connections and energetic "buzz" when people with a common experience meet in person, supporting and listening to each other's similar experiences at our Connections Meetings.

I leave PARC and the Team as it was when I arrived - with dedicated, compassionate, caring, kind and highly skilled professional counsellors at your service. I will miss my colleagues yet know they are dedicated to supporting people in the post adoption area.

Margaret Watson

<https://www.survivingsecrets.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/SurvivingSecrets>

# Adoption listening, reading and viewing

## 'How a cancer diagnosis helped me find my biological dad'



*Pictured above, Andrew and his father Gary.*

One of our clients, Andrew, featured on the SBS program Insight earlier this year. Andrew was 46 when he was diagnosed with bladder cancer. As an adopted person, he began to wonder if it was hereditary. With the help of our services, he was able to find his biological dad. Click here to read Andrew's story: [bit.ly/3iwQS7Q](https://bit.ly/3iwQS7Q)

## The absence of fathers on birth certificates

A recent article published by the ABC highlights the ongoing complexity of adoption across a lifetime. It focusses on the fact that it is common for father's names to be missing from the birth certificates of adopted people and the emotional and social repercussions of this. Click here to read it: [bit.ly/3VOABK9](https://bit.ly/3VOABK9)

## The lifelong impact of being adopted

On Tuesday 22nd November 2022, PASQ Team Leader and adopted person Jane Sliwka spoke to Radio National along with Dara Read, adopted person and children's author. Listen here: [bit.ly/3Vo2msY](https://bit.ly/3Vo2msY)  
Jane spoke further of her experience, and the work PASQ does in this blog post here: [bit.ly/3hcecYh](https://bit.ly/3hcecYh)

## A group of Queensland women giving voice to those who have experienced forced adoption

This article profiles the story of a Queensland mother, Vivienne Timmermans who along with Joyce Westerman (another mother of adoption loss) established the Queensland support group 'You Gave Me a Voice'. The voice meets regularly in Esk. Click here to read it: [bit.ly/3B2o2D1](https://bit.ly/3B2o2D1)

## A psychologist's perspective on the mental health crisis

Whilst not adoption specific, this article acknowledges the systemic issues that influence mental health at an individual level, making it very relevant to those impacted by adoption. Click here to read it: [bit.ly/3VLn06k](https://bit.ly/3VLn06k)

## Without Our Consent: A Queensland Story

In 2018, Jigsaw QLD worked with the State Library of Queensland to produce this video that looks at past forced adoption policies and practices and gives a voice to the stories of those who were affected by them. You can view the film here: [bit.ly/3UC4j3U](https://bit.ly/3UC4j3U)

## Ireland opens access to adoption records

Effective from October 3rd, records are now open to adopted people in Ireland. An online service has been launched that will allow adopted people to access any information the state holds about them. You can listen to a short interview about the changes here: [bit.ly/3Bf16k6](https://bit.ly/3Bf16k6)

### Need Support?

PARC and PASQ both offer counselling and intermediary services for people separated by adoption. If this article has raised anything for you, or you would like support around the impacts of adoption, then please contact your local service:

PARC: **02 9504 6788** (NSW)  
PASQ: **07 3170 4600** (QLD)

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