

## **Post Adoption Information Sheet No 1**

### **Information for parents who are thinking of searching for their adult sons or daughters in QLD**

#### **To search or not to search**

Concerns about whether to search are common for parents whose child was adopted. Many parents express worries that their child may not know they are adopted, will not want to have contact with them or that they will disrupt their child's life in contacting them. Other parents talk about feeling that they don't have a right to search because they gave consent to their child's adoption or feel judged by society for wanting to search. Some parents have never told anyone about the birth of the child that was adopted. Everyone's experience of adoption is different as are motives for obtaining more information and tracing.

Many parents were told they would never be able to have contact with their child, and to forget that they had a child. These messages that may have been given long ago, have often had long lasting and serious consequences and very often birth parents will have considered the possibility of tracing their child long before making any inquiries. This preoccupation is often not discussed for fear that it may arouse feelings of anxiety or judgement. At Post Adoption Support Queensland (PASQ) we have been impressed by the sensitivity which parents show towards both their adopted child and their adoptive parents.

Searching is a step-by-step process which might be quite quick and in other instances, can be long and frustrating. It is important that you decide your own pace and allow yourself time to absorb new information and assimilate new feelings.

#### **How do I find out about my adopted son or daughter?**

For adoptions that occurred in Queensland, the *Adoption Act 2009* provides all parents and adopted persons the right to obtain identifying information about each other once the adopted person is 18 years of age.

You can make an application for adoption information to Adoption and Permanent Care Services (APCS) in the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, about your son or daughter and their adoption once s/he is 18 years of age. APCS will conduct a search of the adoption records held and review your eligibility to receive this information. APCS will contact you to advise if a contact statement has been provided by your son or daughter. A contact statement can be lodged with APCS by a person affected by adoption and expresses their wishes regarding contact with other parties to the adoption (see below information about contact statements).

If eligible, APCS will then prepare a letter containing information about your son or daughter's birth and adoption which will include identifying information (names) and non-identifying information (descriptive information such as appearance, occupation) from the information available in the adoption records. You will also be provided with a copy of prescribed documents which may include documents such as the consent form and the adoption order.

APCS carefully reviews all records to ensure that information is accurate before sending it to you in a letter. APCS will discuss sensitive issues with you and will provide you with support from an Adoption Officer or will refer you to Post Adoption Support Queensland (PASQ).

### **If your son or daughter is under 18 years old**

Identifying information can be exchanged when an adopted child is under 18 years of age, however the consent of both parents and adoptive parents must first be provided. APCS will involve all people who were involved in the adoption in an assessment and may look at the development of an adoption plan (if not already in place) which will look at a gradual progression for contact via correspondence before direct in-person contact. The assessment needs to also ensure that the sharing of information is not likely to be contrary to the child's wellbeing and best interests.

### **Adoption and Permanent Care Services - Queensland**

Address: Level 1, 111 George Street Brisbane Qld 4000

Postal address: Locked Bag 3405, Brisbane QLD 4000

Phone: 07 3097 5100 or free call on 1800 647 983 (Queensland only)

Fax: 07 3006 4065

Email: [ads@csyw.qld.gov.au](mailto:ads@csyw.qld.gov.au)

Website: <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/adoption/past-adoptions>

### **Contact statements**

A contact statement sets out a person's wishes regarding having contact with another party, or parties, to the same adoption that occurred in Queensland. For example, it may state that a person wishes for contact to happen only by telephone; or for in-person contact to happen only at a neutral place in the presence of a mediator; or the person's wish not to be contacted. There are important things to know about contact statements:

- Information and contact objections that were in place under the *Adoption of Children Act 1964*, prior to 1 February 2010 automatically became a contact statement expressing the person's request not to be contacted.
- These objections which are now contact statements expressing a wish for no contact do not have to be renewed.
- A contact statement remains in force until revoked by the person who lodged it, or until that person dies. However, a person can update, revoke or replace their contact statement at any time.

- A person can also use a contact statement to provide information about the person's reasons for not wanting to be contacted.

### **Requesting information if a contact statement is in place**

If your son or daughter has a contact statement in place this does not necessarily prevent you from accessing identifying information. Under the *Adoption of Children Act 1964*, information can be released after: an Adoptions Officer has spoken to you in person or via telephone to discuss the contact statement and the reasons for this (if this information is recorded), If there is no explanation recorded for the contact statement, they will discuss the typical reasons of those who do not wish to be contacted.

In some situations, APCS may deem it necessary to delay sending the requested information in order to advise the person who has issued the contact statement that information is being requested. In addition, delays may also occur in order for the Adoptions Officer to clarify if the person wishes to provide any other information about their reasons for not wanting contact.

### **Court order restricting access**

The Children's Court can make an order preventing the release of identifying information to another person, if doing so would pose an unacceptable risk of harm. For example, if a person who is seeking identifying information is known to be violent, and previous comments or actions suggest he or she is likely to harm the other person. In such cases, an application can be made to the court for an order to prevent the release of the identifying information by APCS. Please contact APCS for more information about this process. It is recommended that people seek independent legal advice for all court matters.

### **Searching options**

#### ***The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages***

Once you have received identifying information and details of your son or daughter from APCS, you will also receive the authority to obtain a copy of your son or daughter's original and adoptive birth certificates from the QLD Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. If specifically requested, the registry will also search their records of marriages and deaths. A marriage search is particularly important if you are searching for a daughter who may have changed her name after marriage. There is a fee for searches conducted and for certificates provided by the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. You can contact the Registry at:

Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages  
Level 32, 180 Ann Street, Brisbane  
(Office hours: 8.30am-4.30pm Monday-Friday)

Telephone: 13 74 68 or +61 7 3405 0985 (international)  
Website: <https://www.qld.gov.au/law/births-deaths-marriages-and-divorces>  
Email: [bdm-mail@justice.qld.gov.au](mailto:bdm-mail@justice.qld.gov.au)

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### **Electoral Rolls**

Once you are sure of any change of name for your son or daughter, you can search for their current address by way of an Australia-wide Electoral Roll search. You can only conduct an Australia-wide search at one of the main Electoral offices. A list of these offices can be found on the Australian Electoral Commission's website:

[http://www.aec.gov.au/About\\_Aec/Contact\\_the\\_AEC/](http://www.aec.gov.au/About_Aec/Contact_the_AEC/)

### **State Libraries**

Australia-wide information can be researched at the Family History section of each state's State Library.

### **Other options include**

Public Records: Telephone books or online  
Internet Search engines

### **Searching Support**

Searching can at times be a complex process and become overwhelming for those involved. PASQ counsellors are skilled at searching and navigating public records in order to assist you in your search for relatives. PASQ can either guide you in conducting your own search or search records and online databases on your behalf. For more information about how and where we search, you can speak to one of our counsellors.

### **How do I make contact?**

Having located your adopted son or daughter and checked the information you have, you may then wish to make contact with them. It is at this point that parents often feel the need to discuss with an experienced counsellor the various ways of making contact and the pros and cons of each. You may wish to read Information Sheet 11 *Writing to an Adopted Person* to assist in your decision making.

### **Should I use an intermediary?**

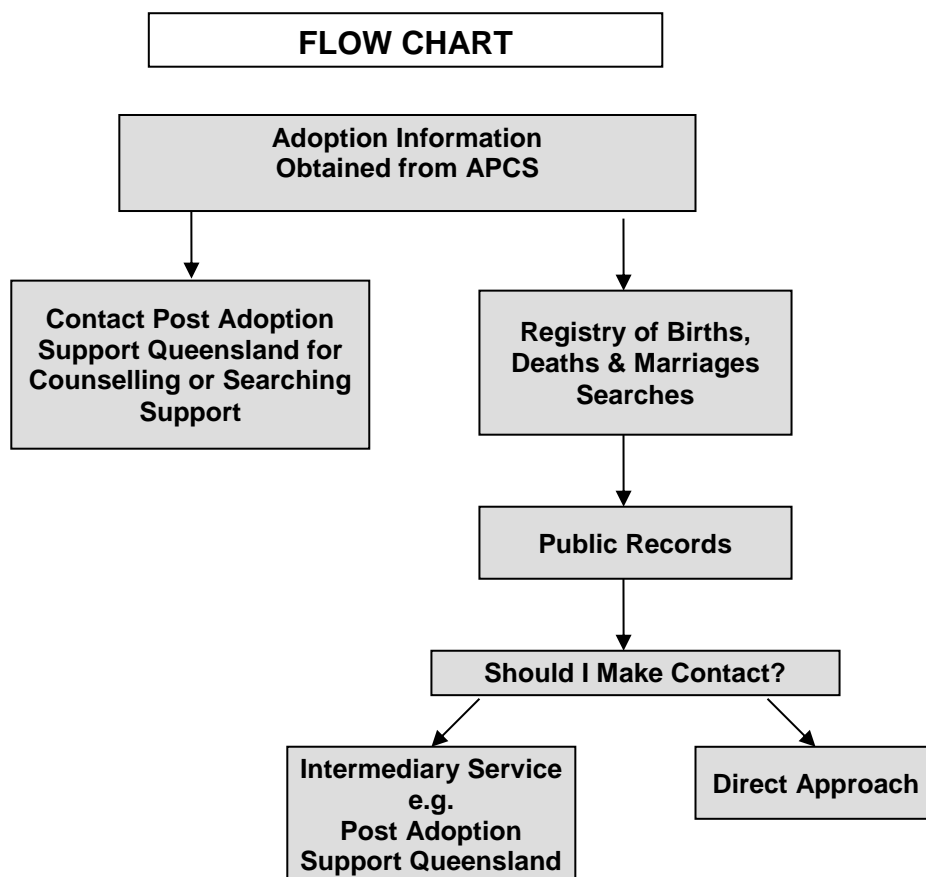
PASQ offers an intermediary service which provides supportive counselling for both parties. Ask for further details of this if you are interested. You may, on the other hand, prefer to enlist the help of a trusted friend or relative or of a support group. Whatever method of approach you choose it is important that you give yourself time to consider your own hopes and expectations and that you allow the person you are approaching time to consider their response. You may find Information Sheet 32 *Intermediary Service* helpful in deciding how to go about making contact. The Benevolent Society's Post Adoption Resource Centre in NSW undertook a piece of research in 2000 entitled *At Least Now I Know* about the experiences of people who have made contact. You can request an electronic copy of this. A summary from the results of the research showed that those people who contacted their birth relative indirectly either through an intermediary or by writing a letter were generally more successful in their reunion.

experience. It is usually a good idea to take things slowly and consider the situation from all the different points of view.

**Getting help**

The experience of some parents is that they have not been able to discuss their feelings with anyone for fear that they may be misunderstood or their motives misconstrued. The opportunity to hear other people's experiences, to discuss things individually with a counsellor or with other people who share a common interest can be very helpful and supportive. These are all services that PASQ offers.

Below is a flow chart of the basic steps that need to be undertaken in searching for an adopted person. If you would like assistance with your search, you can talk to PASQ about your specific situation to see whether we can help.



Please phone us if you wish to talk further about any issues raised in this information sheet.

**Post Adoption Support Queensland (PASQ)**

**Location:** Ground Floor, 189 Coronation Dr,  
Milton QLD 4064

**Phone:** 07 3170 4600

**Email:** [PASQ@benevolent.org.au](mailto:PASQ@benevolent.org.au)

**Website:** [www.benevolent.org.au](http://www.benevolent.org.au)

**Post Adoption Resource Centre (PARC)**

**Mail:** Locked Bag 6002,  
Hurstville BC NSW 1481

**Phone:** 02 9504 6788

**Email:** [PARC@benevolent.org.au](mailto:PARC@benevolent.org.au)

**Website:** [www.benevolent.org.au](http://www.benevolent.org.au)