

Post Adoption Information Sheet No 15

Parents affected by a Contact Veto in NSW

For those parents considering making contact with the child who was placed for adoption, knowing that their son or daughter has lodged a contact veto can be devastating.

The initial reaction may be one of shock, disappointment, disbelief and anger. This may give way to a long period characterised by a sense of ongoing grief. Your long held hopes, fantasies or dreams which revolved around a meeting may be instantly dissolved to be replaced by fears and self-doubt. The veto may bring to the surface many painful memories from the past, relating to your pregnancy and the birth of your child. You may feel the same sense of powerlessness and lack of choice that you experienced all those years ago.

Feeling angry towards your own parents is not uncommon and you may blame them for not offering you more support at the time of the birth. Your parents in turn, will have to cope with their own feelings of sadness and sometimes guilt, if they had longed for a reunion with their grandchild or belatedly come to reproach themselves for the decision in which they had so major a part. Alternatively, they may be angry with you for wanting to “rake up the past” and may accuse you of trying to interfere in your child’s life.

You may spend a lot of time agonising over why your child does not wish to see you: “Why do they hate me if they have never met me?” “What did my child grow up to believe about me over the years?” It is not unusual in these circumstances to feel some anger towards your child’s adoptive parents, but no two people will react to the news in exactly the same way.

The children of now older parents were placed for adoption in a climate of secrecy when ‘illegitimacy’ was regarded as shameful and adoption was not openly discussed as it is today. Some adopted people, accepting the family conspiracy of silence, don’t feel happy to search for their birth family until after the death of their adoptive parents. This may be a reflection of their loyalty and devotion towards their adoptive family, or the belief that to attempt to search would be seen by their parents as a form of betrayal. Particularly if the parents are elderly and frail, the adopted person may feel strongly protective of them, reluctant to do anything which would disturb them or to act behind their backs.

Do remember that you are the seeker and you have had many years to anticipate and prepare yourself for a reunion. Your son or daughter, to whom the whole idea is new and, in some ways threatening, may not be ready to meet you now, but they may well feel differently in time.

2019 © The Benevolent Society Post Adoption Services. This material may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes provided the author of the material is identified with the copyright notice.

In some circumstances adopted people who have lodged a veto may later approach the Adoption Information Unit for information. It is worthwhile registering your name on the Reunion & Information Register at the Adoption Information Unit within the Department of Communities and Justice (ph: 1300 799 023) so that you can easily be contacted by the Department. You may also like to leave a letter and photos on the Register so that your adopted child knows you are available despite the veto.

These thoughts provide a brief sketch of what might be the background and the significance of the Contact Veto. Having read this, having agreed or disagreed with what has been written, having new questions now about your own situation, you may find the need for further discussion.

Here, at the Post Adoption Resource Centre we would be very happy to hear from you, to have a discussion with you on the phone, to arrange an individual appointment or to perhaps provide a group where you might meet other people also struggling with their complex reactions to a veto.

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

Post Adoption Resource Centre (PARC)

Mail: Locked Bag 6002,
Hurstville BC NSW 1481
Phone: 02 9504 6788
Email: PARC@benevolent.org.au
Website: www.benevolent.org.au

Post Adoption Support Queensland (PASQ)

Location: Ground Floor, 189 Coronation Dr,
Milton QLD 4064
Phone: 07 3170 4600
Email: PASQ@benevolent.org.au
Website: www.benevolent.org.au