

Post Adoption News

Spring Edition
2022

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QLD: Post Adoption Support QLD
07 3170 4600 / pasq@benevolent.org.au

NSW: Post Adoption Resource Centre
02 9504 6788 / parc@benevolent.org.au

Welcome to Post Adoption News

For the Spring Edition of Post Adoption News, we explore the theme of Apologies. This year, both Queensland and New South Wales commemorate 10 years since both state governments issued apologies for Forced Adoption Policies and Practices. In addition, 21st March 2023 will mark the 10th Anniversary of the National Apology. In this edition, we consider the ways that apologies are given and received and explore what it means to say sorry at both a personal and political level. We also profile various memorials that have been created to accompany adoption apologies.

In this edition we also hear from our readers their thoughts on the theme. We have one article that questions whether apologies make a difference and another that stresses the importance of wording and terminology in apologies. One of our readers shares a poignant story of being touched hearing Julia Gillard's words but considers the availability of appropriate ongoing support after the Apology.

We also share some shorter reflections on the Parents theme of our previous edition. We thank our readers for generously contributing their words. In our PARC and PASQ Updates section we welcome new staff members, and share what both Teams have been up to and what we have planned for the coming months.

- PARC and PASQ Teams

Apologies—Guilt vs Shame

So many people who are affected by adoption talk about their feelings of guilt and shame. In fact, guilt and shame are documented as one of the 7 core issues of adoption.

Adopted people may feel a sense of loyalty or duty to their adoptive family and may even feel guilty for yearning for their lost family, or reuniting with them.

Parents who lost a child to adoption often report that they spent years asking themselves "is my child ok? Did I do the right thing? Do I have a right to reach out to them now?".

When we feel guilt, it is generally because we feel that we have done something wrong. We can usually assuage our guilt by engaging in repair and offering a genuine apology for our wrongdoing.

Offering an apology such as this may however be easier for a securely attached person in a stable, loving relationship and this is not always the case.

5 Steps to a Good Apology

1. Give a sincere apology "I'm sorry for..."

2. Acknowledge your actions and take responsibility.
"This was wrong because..."

3. Explain how you were feeling. "I was feeling..."

4. Think of a solution to fix the problem next time.
"In the future, I will..."

5. Ask for forgiveness. "Please forgive me?"

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In addition, when it comes to the adoption decision in the first place, it is generally accepted within Australia that wrong was not done by any of the individuals involved. The behaviour that led to the adoption was often not a conscious choice and it was not an individual decision but rather a systemic issue and practice. So, how do those feelings of guilt repair? Often they do not and so the guilt becomes shame.

In contrast to guilt, which is tied to a behaviour or action taken, shame is rooted in the context of relationship failure and cannot be repaired by the shamed person (Jacqui Amos). Shame is a persistent unconscious belief. It is often experienced as a sense of unworthiness to be in connection with the other, and as a deep sense of unlovability. Shame can only be repaired within a relationship as it is not a behaviour based feeling. The concept of shame is the loss of human connection and the conclusion that is drawn is – *there is something wrong with me.*

So why does adoption lead to feelings of shame? Fundamentally the break in the early attachment between mother and child prevents the message being sent between the two that they are each worthy of the others love.

The next time a behaviour occurs which results in disappointment or anger an apology is not effective. The conclusion drawn is “see, my behaviour is who I am. Bad”

HB Lewis says Shame is the emotion of unrequited love.

The key to healing shame lies in these quotes:

“In the midst of shame, there is an ambivalent longing for reunion with whoever shamed us. It is an expression of the unaware hope that the other will take responsibility to repair the rupture in the relationship”.

“When shame is not acknowledged it is almost impossible to mend the bond. In itself, unacknowledged shame creates a form of entrapment in one’s own isolation. If one hides this sense from the other, due to shame, it creates further shame, which creates a further sense of isolation.”

Healing has to do with:

- Being in relationship
- Being understood, accepted and feeling that you have a right and a place to belong (no matter what)
- Relationship repair needing to come from outside the person experiencing core shame.

Understanding you have done the best you can do is also important to healing as it lies in the forgiveness of self.

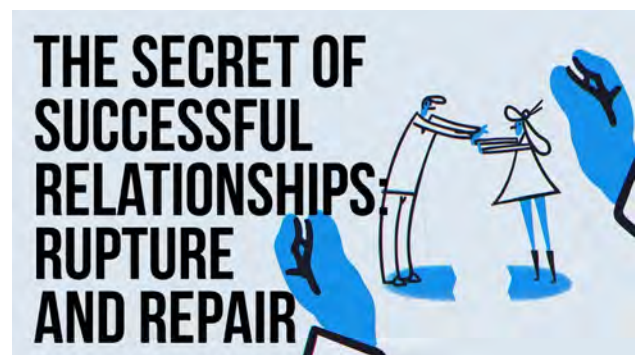
References

Amos, J & Pfueller, M. 2006,

Session 10: Shame, from a training programme developed by Jacqui Amos and Melinda Pfueller, South Australia



A video from The School of Life on the power of repair after rupture:



Click here to watch: <https://bit.ly/3fntbNS>



Overview of NSW, QLD and Federal Apologies

NSW Apology

On September 20, 2012, the Honourable Barry O'Farrell, NSW Premier at the time apologised for forced adoption practices in NSW that had "reverberated through the lives of tens of thousands of mothers and their children who were removed". You can watch the apology here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L80jSQpsxA>

The written apology can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/59p5ay6u>

QLD Apology

On 27 November 2012, then Premier, the Honourable Campbell Newman MP, made a historic apology for past forced adoption policies and practices in Parliament, on behalf of the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

A recording of the apology is not available online. However, PASQ holds a limited number of DVD copies of this apology in their library. Please get in contact if you would like to borrow it.

The written apology can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/4mb65wns>

National Apology

Coming up in March 2023 is the 10th Anniversary of the National Apology that was delivered by the former-Prime Minister Julia Gillard in Canberra on 21st March 2013. This powerful speech is a must watch and you can view it here: <https://parlview.aph.gov.au/mediaPlayer.php?videoID=190367>





Memorials

A number of memorials exist around Australia to acknowledge and commemorate the loss and suffering experienced as a result of Forced Adoption Policies and Practices. Here we profile the Queensland and NSW memorials that exist or are a work in progress.

Forced Adoption Memorial Plaque at Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, Brisbane

In 2012 the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH) was the first hospital in Australia to apologise for forced adoption practices and this action predated the State and Federal Government apologies. Professor Ian Jones, Executive Director of Women and Newborn Services at RBWH presented a written apology to mothers from ALAS Australia and to adopted people from the Association of Adoptees (formerly called WASH).

In 2017, with funding from the Forced Adoption Support Service (Jigsaw Queensland) Small Grants Program, a project worker was employed to consult with post adoption stakeholder groups to develop the content and a design brief for a memorial plaque. The plaque was professionally designed by Inkahoots Design who also consulted with the stakeholder groups to develop the final version.

In July 2018 a ceremony was held at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital to unveil the plaque which acknowledged the apologies given by the hospital for past forced adoption practices. A photo of this event and an article were published in the Metro Norths Health News which created broader awareness regarding forced adoption.

Metro North Health News Article: <https://bit.ly/3BKUZ6o>



After the unveiling, the plaque was hung in the main foyer of the RBWH so that as many people as possible would see it and be informed about forced adoption. The stakeholders had wanted the plaque to be a public acknowledgement of the history of forced adoption and a way to raise community awareness of these practices and the long-lasting impacts.

Since that time the plaque has been moved due to changes at the hospital. It is still hung in a space which is open to the public and has a high level of foot traffic, on Level 1 of the RBWH. You can find it near the main bank of elevators and between the cafeteria and newsagency.

Roma St Parklands

Queensland's 'official' memorial to commemorate Forced Adoption policies and practices is located within Brisbane's Roma St Parklands. This has been the site of many anniversary events hosted by Post Adoption Support Queensland over the years and will be visited again this year on 27.11.2022 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Queensland Government's Apology. You will find further details within this newsletter edition.



"Without Our Consent": A Queensland Story - A digital memorial

This digital memorial was created in 2018 by Jigsaw Queensland in association with the State Library of Qld.

Without Our Consent: A Queensland Story records interviews with Queenslanders personally affected by forced adoption practices. These are followed by interviews from representatives of post adoption support and advocacy organisations (ALAS Australia;

The Association of Adoptees; Jigsaw Qld; Origins QLD). Also featured are Tracy Davis, former Queensland Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and former Senator of Australia Claire Moore who was deputy chair of the 2012 Australian Government inquiry into forced adoption policies and practices.

To view the digital memorial, go to: <https://bit.ly/3DXKH5D>

Julia Gillard's 5 Year Anniversary Message

In 2018, Jigsaw Queensland collaborated with the Forced Adoption Support Service at Relationships Australia South Australia to organise a commemorative video message from former Prime Minister Julia Gillard to mark the 5th Anniversary of her federal apology for forced adoption policies and practices.

In this message she states "the apology only came about because people had the courage to share their stories and to demand change, and in particular to have their hurt acknowledged" and "I know that people are continuing to show incredible courage on their own journeys of healing but also advocacy for services and supports that are necessary, and also advocacy to make sure that we never forget this history. I want to acknowledge every individual who is raising their voice and thank you for doing so".

In this video message, Julia Gillard also shares her reflection that she feels that the apology was important "for people to feel that they had been respected, that their voices had been heard, that they were no longer being required to hide away, that this wasn't a question of personal shame but community acknowledgement of the wrongdoing of our nation through forced adoptions". She concludes the message with her hope that "it has become a little bit easier for people to tell their stories, I hope it has become easier for people to reach out and find help, and I also hope that it has become a little bit easier for people to find each other".

To view this very personal and heartfelt message, go here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCsBI3ym1kc>

St John's Anglican Cathedral Memorial, Brisbane CBD

A public apology for past forced adoption practices was given by the Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane, The Most Revd. Dr Phillip Aspinall in August 2012. The apology related to any and all past adoption practices that Queensland Anglican institutions were involved in. In September 2012 this apology was personally read by the Archbishop to a group of mothers who had advocated so strongly over many years.

Margaret Hamilton recalls "we asked if a special service to honour the mothers who had their babies taken could be held". The mothers met with the Very Revd. Dr Peter Catt, Dean of St John's Cathedral to discuss this and a liturgy service was also held at St John's Cathedral in February 2013. The service was attended by Church Leaders, Queensland Politicians, the Queensland Governor and was open to the public as well as those affected by forced adoption.

A plaque commemorating the St John's Diocesan apology was placed in the garden and a rose bush planted in St Martin's Place, St John's Cathedral, Brisbane CBD to honour those affected.

This beautiful memorial garden can be visited by anybody at any time.



NSW Memorial Update

The 20th of September this year marked 10 years since the delivery of the NSW State Apology for Forced Adoption Practices. A Memorial Consultative Committee of agency and individual stakeholders has been formed to collaborate in creating a place of active remembrance for people with lived experience of forced adoption. They hope to have further details to announce in 2023.

St Anthony's Croydon, Sydney

Saturday 24th September saw an event at the grounds of the former site of the St Anthony's Home in Croydon, NSW for the unveiling of a memorial sculpture 'Hidden Mothers, Lost Innocents; Beloved Mother and Child.' The event was well attended and powerful accounts were shared by those with lived experience at the home. The sculpture sits within the gardens of the site and includes a bench as a place of reflection and rest for those who visit. PARC staff were in attendance to lend support and acknowledge this important event.





St Mary's Home Memorial, Toowong, Brisbane

In 2019, a group of mothers, adopted people, family members, friends, supports and adoption professionals assembled at the former St Mary's Home, Toowong for a service to mark the opening of the Remembrance Garden. The Garden was established to acknowledge the experiences of the mothers who had resided there prior to losing their children to adoption, as well as those adopted people and family members also impacted by these events and practices of the past.

Also present at the Garden's opening was The Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane, Dr Phillip Aspinall who blessed the garden and repeated the Church's apology, describing the garden as "a recognition both of that legacy (of forced adoption practices), and of our commitment as a nation to do all in our power to make sure these practices are never repeated."

The site is now a facility providing Homelessness Services for Women and Families. The entrance of the garden includes the original, restored gates of St Mary's Home. Inside, a garden has been established, acknowledging the history of the site, including a plaque that replicates an open book displaying a statement that acknowledges the history of the home as well as a poem titled 'My Lost Love, My Lost Child' by Garrett W. Wheeler. There are also a series of small 'leaf' shaped plaques attached to the memorial where those affected can request to have mother and child's

names placed side by side. For some this is the only place where mothers and children affected by these practices are acknowledged as being a family unit, and the child's original name acknowledged.

The Garden was the result of tireless work and advocacy from mothers over many years, who went to Carol Birrell, the Facility manager at the site with the concept of a garden. In an article with the Anglican Focus Carol said "I kept going back to the mothers to consult and said I would like to support them to make it possible. I also made a commitment to them that I would continue to follow up until it happened"



You can read more about this story here: <https://ab.co/3SmrTRZ>

If you would like to organise a visit to the garden, or to find out more, please contact Carol Birrell on (07) 3377 3120 or at cbirrell@anglicaresq.org.au

Do Adoption Apologies Make a Difference?

Darryl Nelson

Queensland Adoptee

Author of 'A timeline of the injustice of Adoption Law' (Amazon books).

'The five Rs' of an apology.

In 2013 Prime Minister Julia Gillard, on behalf of the Australia Federal Government, made an historic apology to those people affected by 'forced adoption'.

Unfortunately, many of those impacted didn't know about the apology at the time, because it wasn't promoted by government. Nor did most of the media pick up the story, as later that day Gillard was rolled by her own party and that event became far more newsworthy.

There were others that missed the apology too. Those that have never even been told they were adopted. And of course, those adoptees still 'in the fog' (a term used by adoptees who describe having previously lived in a state of denial in relation to their true feelings about their adoption, sometimes out of fear, obligation or guilt).

I was one of the adoptees that never heard about the apology. At that time in my life, I knew adoption had affected me. It showed in my relationships, where I repeatedly tested them for fear of (or to confirm) rejection. I had never married, nor had children, because I couldn't trust I wouldn't be abandoned again. It was hidden in deep thoughts – I had to be perfect, otherwise I wasn't valuable as a person. It showed in other mental health issues including depression, suicidal ideology, underlying grief, hypervigilance and probably addictions too. But I hadn't connected the dots linking this to adoption until many years later whilst in therapy.

I had met my birth father, full blood brothers and sister 25 years before Gillard's apology. I had tried to form relationships but it was hard. I had lost a childhood, where those lasting familial relationships are forged. I never could meet my natural mother; laws prevented me from knowing who she was before she died.

Other laws prevented me from understanding the full truth about my foster care and adoption until 2019. The Salvation Army and the Queensland Government lost key records, and hid other files from me under 'privacy' laws. But I uncovered enough to piece together my history in spite of these barriers.

Around that time I had decided to Discharge my Adoption, something I was compelled to do because it could give me control about my identity. I could legally undo the false birth certificate the government had created, naming me as if born to my adoptive parents, and instead reinstate my original birth certificate, correcting my lineage and giving me a truthful place in the world.

It was then I saw the Federal apology on YouTube: <https://bit.ly/3CkK7xK>

Maybe I could try and explain my reaction to it by inventing an acronym; let's call it 'The Five Rs'.

1. Rage

Why did this have to happen to me? Where is the justice? Why was I plucked from my life and given a false one? I was too young to have any say - why did those who should've looked after my best interests ignore their duty of care? My very being changed through all of this – the way I think, feel. Who am I really? Who could I have been?

2. Recognition

Wow, finally they understand what they did to us. They get the trauma we suffer through. They've acknowledged their part. An admission of guilt.

3. Release

For all these years I thought it was just me. Now I know there's more to this. I can get on with understanding more about the effect on adoptees like myself. We seem to be alike, with similar issues. Almost a community – built on shared grief. This empowers me to find out more, to do more to help others.

4. Remorse

They've promised they will never do this again to others. They've promised to change laws, to allow access to the truth. A true apology should also be a request for forgiveness – yet how could I forgive these blank faces who ignored the pain in separating mother and child – or a government that built and endorsed the process?

5. Redress

Um, this seemed to be missing. The part that follows an acknowledgment of wrongdoing is usually followed by some remedy, or recompense. Atonement. But how can you compensate victims for a loss of their true life? Their identity, their heritage, their proper place in the world? The lifetime of suffering through mental health issues from this imposed trauma?

The apology was long. But it was unfinished.

There have been other apologies too. Another Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, apologised to the Stolen Generations, those indigenous children forcibly removed from family under a policy of racial eradication. And Rudd also apologised to the Forgotten Australians, those placed in institutional or out-of-home 'care' and subsequently abused in all manner of ways.

There have been apologies from State Governments too, who ignored our Human Rights. And by some in the Church, at the coalface of the policies, who apportioned God's so-called punishment to the unwed mother and her child. By social workers, occupied tirelessly with extracting the babies. By hospitals complicit in the processes.

And there has been silence from other players, no admission of guilt at all. To their everlasting shame.

Adoptees and Mothers of Loss also must deal with an uneducated majority of the population who have no empathy. They defend adoption as a selfless, benevolent gesture. 'Normal' people who dismiss our trauma through gaslighting, a form of psychological manipulation that distorts reality and forces victims themselves to question their own judgment and intuition. "But your adoption wasn't *forced*, was it", they say. Adoptees are so marginalised; we are expected to feel 'lucky' for the losses.

I think apologies can serve a great purpose, if they are heart-felt. The days of hollow excuses like, "If I have caused any offense, I apologise", have disappeared

thanks to the 'Me too' and 'Time's up' movements.

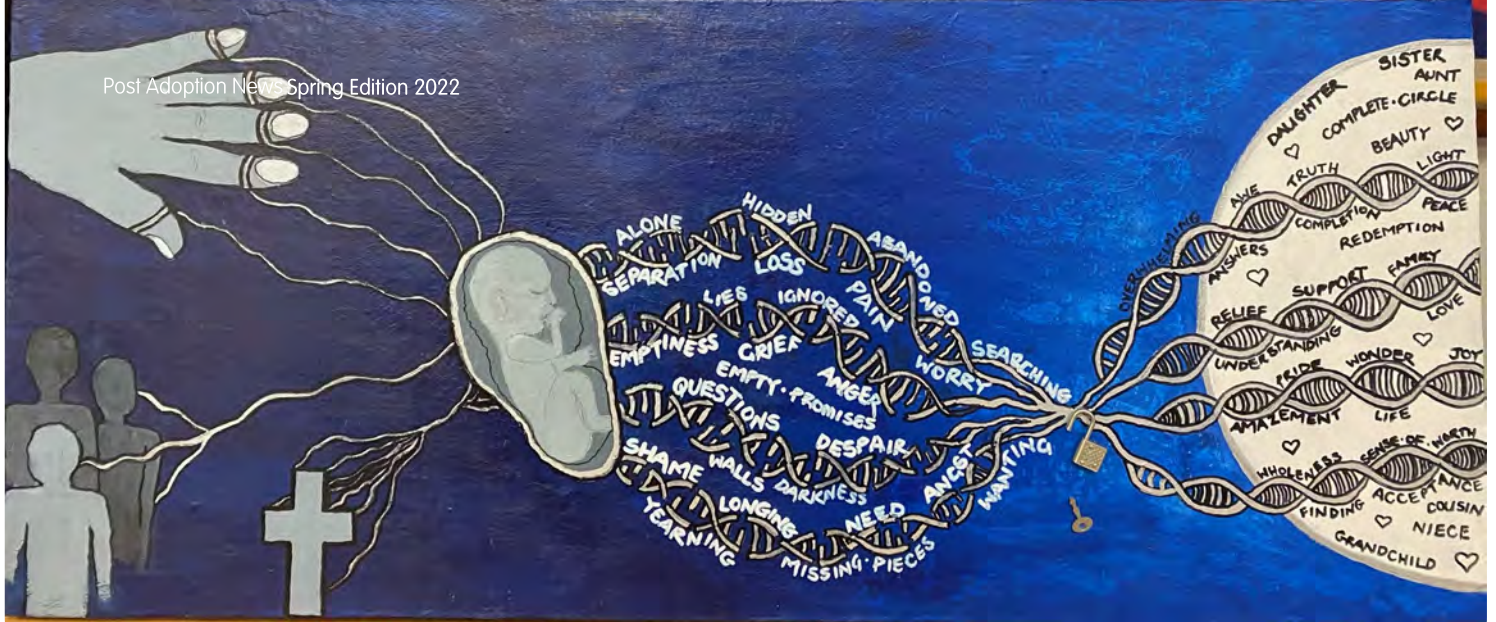
But with a heart-felt apology, naturally what needs to follow is some offer of redress, to make good whatever loss has been suffered by the person who has been the victim of wrong-doing. At a government level, it is inherent there should be a greater responsibility to demonstrate a willingness to compensate victims for human rights abuses brought about by policies it has designed. Not avoidance and legal speak.

Right now the very limited government redress schemes available seem to preference some victims over others. Those who have been sexually abused whilst in care can access redress while those mentally abused, denied sustenance or experimented on in the same institution cannot. Those sexually abused after being adopted cannot. Some stolen generation victims in some states have access to reparation schemes whilst other states and territories don't recognise them. Victoria is preparing to compensate mothers of loss but is ignoring the life-long impact on the children it separated from them. It should not be a competition that different parties to an adoption, different races, different forms of abuse should have to prove they are more damaged than others, in order to access reparation.

Laws should not create further barriers to justice, such as the Statute of Limitations preventing cases being brought, or that the burden of proof remains incumbent on victims even where documents have been denied, or players have since died due to delays in obtaining evidence.

And that redress must be of a financial nature, because ultimately that's only what governments understand, it's what stops governments and churches in the future from reinventing those abhorrent policies in other forms.

In all these Adoption apologies, number five of 'The Five Rs' seems to be conveniently missing. So without it, after almost a decade since, saying sorry rings hollow to me. Because I still live with the effects of this trauma, daily.



Broken Chains

Lyn Parker

My adoption journey from darkness to light...

The left-hand side of my painting depicts the unfair restraints placed upon unmarried mothers in the forced adoption era by family, society, state, and church. The lines represent the strings that were pulled in an attempt to make me 'compliant'. My mother was the ultimate puppet master.

The broken chains are the broken bonds between myself and my daughter when she was taken from me.

The open lock and key are when I finally found the courage and had the support of my husband and children to search for my lost child.

The right hand side of the painting shows the light that I finally found upon tracing my daughter and the wonderful relationship we have established over the past 25 years. It also shows the strengthened bonds and strong D.N.A. chains that are now complete.

The words express my emotions throughout my journey.

Through all of my loss and sorrow, I am finally whole, and free.

Your thoughts on: "Apologies"

In 100 words or less, we'd like to hear your views on the theme Apologies for our next Newsletter.

Submissions will be considered for publication in our next edition:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/apologiesnewsletter>



To and For

A 2022 review of the Australian Parliamentary Adoption Apologies made between 2010 and 2013.

By Gary Coles

To and For explores Gary's personal opinion of the Australian Parliamentary Adoption Apologies. We acknowledge that the various apologies will mean different things to different people.

The scope of this article is the various formal Apologies made by Parliaments in Australia. My primary reference point is the *National Apology for Forced Adoptions*.

Whilst I applaud the Australian governments, national, state and territory collectively for being the first in the world to make Adoption Apologies, I find I have an issue with *Forced Adoption*, as used above. This is because it refers to a process, unlike, for example, the *Stolen Generations* and *Forgotten Australians*, other cohorts that have been the subjects of earlier Parliamentary Apologies. Both these terms are people-centred (*Generations* and *Australians*) prefaced by descriptors (*Stolen* and *Forgotten*). By comparison *Forced Adoption* sounds remote, oblivious to the impact it has on the unnamed participants.

There are inherent difficulties in coming up with a term that embraces mothers, fathers and adopted persons

- family does not work, as in, say, *Separated Families*, because this phrase can be used to refer to severed families without an adoption context, e.g. the contestants in a divorce. Also, the *Stolen Generations* are a consequence of family separation. Likewise, the *Forgotten Australians*.

There is a fundamental difference between an apology that names a section of the community and one referring to harmful policies and practices. The former speaks to the heart, the other to the head. Put another way, it makes sense, from the perspective of engagement if 'who' takes precedence over 'what'. *National Apology for Forced Adoptions* got the 'what' but forgot the 'who'.

The South Australian and New South Wales headlines read *Apology for Forced Adoption Practices*; Queensland made an *Apology for Forced Adoption Policies and Practices*. The Victorian Apology was for *Past Adoption Practices*. The Parliament of Western Australia was the first (in 2010) to deliver an Adoption Apology for *The Removal of Children from Unmarried Mothers*. This pioneering Apology focused upon a practice and its impact on one of the participants. The Australian Capital Territory embraced multiple parties with the laudable but rather cumbersome *An Apology to People Affected by Former Forced Adoption Practices*; likewise, Tasmania with the *Apology to People Hurt by Past Forced Adoption Practices*.

When the culminating *National Apology for Forced Adoptions* was delivered it meant the people of all states and territories, bar the Northern Territory, had become the audience for two Adoption Apologies. Yet despite this exposure, when the phrase 'Parliamentary (or National) Apology' is uttered most of the population continue to relate it to the *Stolen Generations*.

The failure to name the people affected by adoption separation in the majority of state, territory and federal Apology headlines compromised their impact upon not only those to whom the Apologies were meant to be addressed but also the general public, who were left wondering 'to whom exactly is the Parliament apologising?' In isolation, the activity-related phrases *Forced Adoption* and *Past Adoption Practices* did not supply the answer.

A possible solution is to take *Forced Adoption* as the cause and seek an umbrella cohort-related term to embrace the effects. In my 2014 book *Made in Australia: The Adoption Apologies*, persuaded by the definition 'persons harmed, injured, tricked or duped', I made a case for *Apology to the Victims of Forced Adoptions*. However 'victim' is widely (even over-) used and has come to be associated with a manifestation of helplessness, the stain called self-pity. No longer am I convinced it is fully fit for purpose. So, I turned to the thesaurus for 'victim' alternatives.

National Apology to Forced Adoption Casualties has merit, particularly given that one meaning of 'casualty' is 'injured party'. This seems to be a good match and, as bonus, delivers a relatively crisp headline. Perhaps in 2022 *Forced Adoption Casualties* appeals to Australian states and the Australian Capital Territory?

I was the father representative in the Reference Group* charged with writing the *National Apology for Forced Adoptions*, delivered by Prime Minister Julia Gillard on 21st March 2013. From a 2022 standpoint, I regret a decade ago not taking account of the nuances referred to above. This oversight means that people were excluded from the headline. However, recompense followed. Of the nineteen paragraphs underpinning the National Apology, seventeen recognise the impact of

Forced Adoption upon one or all of mothers, fathers and adopted people plus their respective extended families. Another paragraph provides an undertaking to provide services and support to those affected and there is also a commitment to heed the lessons from the punitive not to be forgotten era of Forced Adoptions.

Setting aside my reservations, the ground-breaking Australian Adoption Apologies did deliver the long overdue Parliamentary recognition of adoption loss and grief. Consequently, the tenth anniversaries of their releases have become significant. As Jo-Ann Sparrow wrote on 17th March 2017, "One of the characteristics of forced adoption is that society didn't acknowledge there had been any loss. Honouring it now, through... anniversaries is important, not only for the grieving and healing process of mothers, fathers and adoptees... but also for broader Australia. This was a period when voices were silenced, and anniversary events are an opportunity for society to hear and honour them now and for the people affected to know that they are not alone and that they are heard" (*Sydney Morning Herald*).

*The full title was the *Forced Adoption Apology Reference Group*.

Gary Coles has also authored this kindle book, available online here: <https://amzn.to/3UJeXXO>



My Reflections on the Apology

Lyn - Tasmania

As children we learn to apologise to someone if we hurt them, either with words or deeds. Whether the act was intentional or accidental, we learn to say "I am sorry" and mean it, recognise what we did, and not do it again. I hope this is something parents are continuing to teach their children from an early age.

In life though, things don't always work out how we hoped or planned. Some of us had unimaginable experiences during what has become known as the Forced Adoption era, which after much dedicated and hard fought advocacy across the nation, would result in State and National Apologies finally being offered years after the event. But what difference has it made for us? Has it been enough? Has the Apology been accepted?

In the lead up to the Apologies many shared their stories, revealing often horrific, humiliating and degrading events that led to an ultimate indignity, with our child taken from us under the worst possible circumstances, and with little regard for the long term outcome for either mother or child. Each story is unique and heartbreaking.

I had learned to live with my past, not talk to anyone else about it, and I was not even aware of the Apology or its significance until afterwards. Perhaps I had blocked it out. On reading and then watching a video replay of the National Apology I was deeply touched by the well written and compassionately delivered Apology by then Prime Minister Julia Gillard. I was emotionally moved by the reaction of those who attended the Apology at Parliament House, those who had the lived experience.

Almost ten years on and I think about what difference has been made in the lives of those to whom this Apology was offered. Some have felt a sense of validation, that their experience had been finally

acknowledged, the treatment they experienced at the hands of family, a judgemental society, church organisations, health facilities and many more organisations and individuals, was no longer a shameful and secret practice. Their lives finally mattered enough for this recognition. Their truths were now out there. Some have since been reunited with children they thought were lost to them forever, others have made contact but no reunion was possible.

My concern though is for the psychological and emotional impact, the overall health and wellbeing of those touched by forced adoption, and whether the offers to continue to support and work with us, have been fulfilled.

I still see women angry, distraught, and unsettled, caught in a place that continues to rob them of so much and they remain deep in pain. Others, with the right support, have been able to find a level of acceptance and to live more peacefully with their past, but they do not forget.

We will never "get over this" as many of us were told we would—we can learn to accept that part of our past and how it changed our life forever, and try not to be defined by it alone.

Perhaps one of the legacies of the Apology is it revealed our truths, told the nation of our experiences, and enabled us to then openly reach out to others, seeking the kind of support, compassion and understanding we always needed but never received.

Just as you cannot unring a bell, what happened to us can never be undone, but at least the Apology gave us acknowledgement and validation.

The Apology also led to changes to Adoption policies and practices, and Australia opened the eyes of the world on a practice that needs addressing in their own countries.

By leading the way, as a nation, we acknowledged and apologised for what happened, meant it, recognised what was done, and took steps to ensure it does not happen again.

The Apology gave us the courage to open our hearts and release some of the pain we had carried.

It gave us hope for a different future.

Book Review

Why Won't You Apologise? Healing Big Betrayals and Everyday Hurts— Harriet Lerner

Jane Sliwka

Harriet Lerner has previously published some well known books such as 'The Dance of Anger' (1985), 'The Dance of Connection' (2001) and 'The Dance of Fear' (2004). In this 2017 book 'Why Won't You Apologise' she tackles an important subject, particularly for those affected by adoption whereby Australian governments have now apologised for past policies and practices and many have felt the powerful validation of this.

In this book Lerner focuses on how apologies work in close relationships as we try to heal broken connections and restore trust. She provides practical suggestions and outlines why some people are unable to apologise. She states "we're all apology-challenged with certain people and in some situations". Yet, she explains how important a simple but genuine apology is to healing hurt that we may have knowingly or unknowingly inflicted on another.

'Why Won't You Apologise?' can be found online here: <https://bit.ly/3E3D3Xo>



When I hear the words “Adoption” and “Parents”

In the Winter edition we asked you to share in your own words what you think of when you hear the words adoption and parents. Thank you to all our readers who submitted something and generously shared their thoughts. We are pleased to share the responses below.

Throughout my life adoption has always been there. Sometimes it takes centre stage and hogs the limelight. Others it's waiting in the wings like an understudy, quiet but always ready to jump in if there's a quiet moment.

Apart from in my early twenties when I had an ultimately unsuccessful reunion with my birthmother, it truly hit me when I gave birth to my two sons.

I had always wanted to have my own children. After struggles with infertility where acquaintances would often comment that I should “just adopt” (and couldn't understand why I wasn't keen on that idea) I finally fell pregnant.

I was swept up in the anticipation and excitement (and pain – sciatica!). Often my thoughts would go to my birthmother and the realisation that instead her overriding emotions would have been fear and disappointment. Antenatal classes were also telling – the importance of skin to skin contact and breastfeeding being emphasised as part of making that connection between a mother and child. Knowing that I never had any of this was incredibly sad – I feel that's the least that a child should be given by their mother. And I never received it.

But at least I could give it to mine.

Victoria

My birth mother was nineteen when I was born. She became an alcoholic during her life and had three more children. They said she was casual, indifferent and a dubious role model. My adoptive mother was 34 when I arrived, teetotaler, ex-WW2 Army, Red Cross worker, strict, hard working. Over protective to my sister and I. I was 30 years old when I had my first baby, social drinker, emotional, utilitarian. I determined to grant my two children more freedom than I was entitled. They were allowed experiences forbidden to me during my childhood and teenage years. Mother criticized me constantly for this.

Janis (Jo) Hughes

As an adoptee, I have mixed feelings about it. Part of me feels gratitude to the parents who have adopted children and what they do with little experience or guidance. Part of me scoffs at the idea that their love and patience will overcome any issues their adopted children have. Part of me thinks I would never adopt a child, I've got enough of my own adoption issues to still manage. Part of me thinks I should adopt because only I would truly understand an adopted child's unique challenges.

Anonymous

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)

PASQ and PARC Groups

Online Mothers Group—August

Our regular PASQ and PARC mothers group met in August to explore the theme; 'Moving through Stuckness.' It was a theme that seemed to resonate with the group as a number of our members have spoken at different times about feeling stuck in certain aspects of relationships, particularly in reunion with their now adult child. The group is facilitated by counsellors from PARC and PASQ but is largely driven by the group in terms of where the conversation needs to go. During the recent group the facilitators shared some simple body movement strategies from Jane Clapp. These simple activities support the principle of connecting with the body in the present moment and can help disrupt the rumination of negative thoughts. These body movement exercises can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vax1gt-T2kY&list=PLY5njSrCh26pEM1pJdNEubKh7BxsjXgGT&index=1>

Note: Please use a chair for stability if you are trying the balancing on one leg exercise and need extra support.

The group is small and supportive in nature. The group meet every 2nd month and we explore a new theme each time. The themes are chosen based on the feedback of group members.

The next group will be on **October 25th**.

If you would like to know more about our Mothers Group, please reach out to PARC (NSW) on 02 9504 6788 or parc@benevolent.org.au or PASQ (QLD) on 07 3170 4600 or pasq@benevolent.org.au

Therapeutic Parenting Course

This is a six week course for adoptive parents who are looking for help with parenting children who may have come from difficult backgrounds due to their break from biological family. The programme explains what an attachment disruption can look like and how a young adopted person might be experiencing the world. It helps them to parent differently in order to meet the needs of their child. It also provides the valuable resource of other adoptive parents facing similar issues.

This most recent course was conducted online over six weeks throughout August and September and was accessed by parents living in regional and remote areas, as well as those from Sydney and Brisbane who have not previously been able to access face to face help.

There were parents of younger children and parents of teenagers as well as a couple who have done the course previously but who felt they could benefit from it again as adoption issues and complications arise at lots of different stages of life.



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](https://www.facebook.com/postadoptionssupportqld)
[/benevolentsocietyNSW](https://www.facebook.com/benevolentsocietyNSW)

PARC Update

Contact us on **02 9504 6788** or parc@benevolent.org.au

PARC Groups and Events

10th Anniversary State Apology For Forced Adoption Practices—20th September

September 20th 2022 marked the 10th anniversary of the NSW State Apology for Forced Adoption Practices. An event was hosted by the NSW Committee on Adoption and Permanent Care in partnership with the Department of Communities and Justice at the Australian Museum in Sydney CBD. The Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Disability Services, Natasha Maclaren-Jones was in attendance and announced plans for a permanent public memorial to be constructed as a place of active remembrance and a central place to gather and reflect for people affected by past forced adoption practices. It is hoped this memorial will be unveiled in September 2023 to coincide with the 11th anniversary of the NSW State Apology for Forced Adoption Practices.

This date holds significance for many in the adoption community as a public acknowledgment of the harm that was caused for so many. There is still much work to do in assisting those who have lived the trauma throughout their lives and continue to seek healing and recognition of their experiences.

Many of those with lived experience of adoption were in attendance and there were a number of powerful first person accounts given about the impact of adoption on the lives of those who spoke and their families. The PARC team were in attendance at the event and PARC Team Leader Sarah Burn spoke to ABC Sydney Drive following the event about the meaning of the anniversary and proposed memorial for the many clients we serve.

Click here and scroll to 2:45:55 to listen to the interview <https://www.abc.net.au/sydney/programs/drive/drive/14052742>.

Sarah also shared her insights in this blog post: <https://www.benevolent.org.au/.../marking-10-years-since...>



Pictured above is The Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Disability Services Natasha Maclaren-Jones at the 10th Anniversary Event.

Canberra Connections Meeting—28th September

On Wednesday 28th September, two Counsellors from PARC drove down to Canberra to host our first in-person Connections Meeting since 2020. The meeting was held in the evening at the Corroboree Park Function Room. It brought together a range of people affected by adoption and was an occasion to share their lived experiences, hear others situations, and be among people who “get” the impact of adoption.

Coming Up!

Speakers Forum—November

PARC will be hosting our next Speakers Forum in November (exact date TBC). The aim of these forums is to focus on an area of interest, relevant to adoption and they are open to anyone affected by adoption. We would love to hear from you if you have any suggestions on topics that you would like to hear more about. Please email parc@benevolent.org.au or give us a call on 02 9504 6788.

PASQ Update

Contact us on **07 3170 4600** or pasq@benevolent.org.au

PASQ Groups and Events

The Gold Coast Group

On the 27th July and 21st September 2022, the bimonthly Gold Coast Connections group took place at The Benevolent Society's Labrador office. The group typically includes adopted people and mothers who have lost children to adoption. The group discussed the upcoming 10th Anniversary of the Queensland Government apology for past adoption practices and a copy of the apology was handed out to participants. One attendee shared a beautiful art work that she had created since the last group, which is profiled in this newsletter edition. Another theme that was discussed was 'nature vs nurture' and how this relates to adopted person's traits and the connection between mother and child when reunion occurs.

We look forward to seeing some of you at the next group that will take place on Wednesday 30th November 2022 from 5.30pm at 57 Billington St, Labrador. To register please contact PASQ on 07 3170 4600 or pasq@benevolent.org.au

Nambour Connections Meeting

PASQ travelled to the Sunshine Coast on 21st September 2022. An Adoption, Belonging and Connection group was held at the Nambour Community Centre. Seventeen people attended, including adopted people, a mother who had lost a child to adoption, and an adoptive father with a young adopted daughter. Four guest speakers shared their stories and many others contributed their reflections and commented on themes of adoption. Many participants commented on how it was a relief to meet an adopted father so aware of his daughter's adoption trauma and conscientious about doing everything in his power to support her now and in future (when reunion may occur). The team was pleased to be able to reach a different geographical area and bring together those in the adoption community. We will keep you updated regarding future events at the Sunshine Coast.

Anniversary Event

You are invited to two events in commemoration of the 10th Anniversary Queensland Government's Apology for Forced Adoption Policies & Practices

Formal Event:

Friday, 25th November 2022



10:00-11:30am, followed by morning tea

(Doors open at 9:45am)

Premier's Hall, Queensland Parliament House

Bookings are essential.

Bookings close: Monday 7th November.

Please contact PASQ on 07 3170 4600 or pasq@benevolent.org.au

Follow us and keep updated: www.facebook.com/QLDapologyforcedadoption

Sincerely, The Queensland Post Adoption Working Committee

Informal Event:

Roma St Parklands Memorial site
Sunday 27th November 2022, from 3.30pm
To commemorate the day that the Apology was delivered on 27th November 2012.
BYO picnic blankets, chairs and water.

PASQ Update

Contact us on 07 3170 4600 or pasq@benevolent.org.au

The AdoptTEA

The Post Adoption Support Queensland team are working with Stakeholder Judy Glover from the Association for Adoptees on the AdoptTEA campaign for the second time this year. The campaign aligns with Queensland Mental Health week (8-16 October) and aims to raise awareness of mental health issues that affect adopted people and why they are at increased risk as compared to the general population. The campaign also aims to reduce the stigma of reaching out and seeking support.

You can get involved by hosting your own morning tea and inviting family, friends or colleagues. You may choose to share an art work, piece of writing, song or video at your event. To begin this process, complete our registration form here: tinyurl.com/4wddu8ef

Closing dates for registrations are Tuesday 4th October.

To find out about events in your area, visit The AdoptTEA Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/theadoptea/> and Queensland Mental Health Week's Website: <https://www.qldmentalhealthweek.org.au/>

After you register your event with us, we will send you a digital resource pack that can be shared with others at your event. The PASQ team will be hosting an online AdoptTEA event for other teams within The Benevolent Society to learn more about adoption issues. Last year staff remarked they had learned a lot about the impacts of adoption from the event and were grateful for the knowledge shared.

For an infant, there is no greater pain than losing the first person they've ever known, needed, and loved. When life begins with heartbreak, grief is for a lifetime.

FERERA SWAN

AdoptTEA

The Tap Cats of the Sunshine Coast—Book Launch

Author: Christine Sykes

Published August 2022, Ventura Press

On Tuesday 20th September, two PASQ staff members attended the launch of this book at the Cooroy library. As the book includes an adoption theme, the staff spoke to the history of adoption in Australia and impacts on those affected, as well as distributing PASQ flyers.

This was a rare and valuable opportunity for us to raise awareness of adoption issues with a 'main stream' audience and provide information about support avenues. The author of this book Christine Sykes, liaised with PASQ Team Leader Jane Sliwka during the editing of her book to ensure that information presented in the book about the Forced Adoption era and subsequent apologies was accurate and true to life.



Welcome new PARC and PASQ Staff!

PARC Team is excited to introduce our new Counsellor, Annaliese.

When did you start working at The Benevolent Society?

I started in my role as a counsellor with PARC in August of 2022, just a few weeks ago! However, I have worked for The Benevolent Society previously as a Child and Family Practitioner (2017-2021).

What was life like before working in Post Adoption Services?

Prior to working in post adoption services, I worked as a Child and Family Practitioner, providing case management to children, young people and their families within Out of Home Care. During this time, I also studied and completed my Therapeutic Life Story Work Diploma. I am extremely passionate about Therapeutic Life Story Work, ensuring people are supported with a therapeutic, trauma informed and strengths-based approach in understanding and taking ownership of their life story. More recently, I spent time working as a school Social Worker, providing welfare support and therapeutic sessions to children, young people and their families.

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

I am very new to this role and while I have some experience working in the adoption space, I am really enjoying being able to learn from colleagues and clients about post adoption experiences, which are diverse and unique. I really look forward to seeing how my skills and experience can be best utilised to support our clients in this space.

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

I can't say there is one specific thing that I am looking forward to! I look forward to continuing in this new role with PARC and being part of a beautiful team. Now that we are past the period of COVID lockdowns, I

really look forward to just keeping an open mind and being spontaneous in taking advantage of exciting opportunities that may come my way. A holiday would be lovely!

What are some of your favourite self-care activities?

I love spending time outdoors, especially with my family, dogs and friends. While I can be quite active and adventurous, sometimes self-care also calls for a home movie and pizza night! I have learnt (and continue to learn!) to listen to my body and my mind, tailoring my self-care activities to suit what I need most at the time.

Welcome to our new PASQ Counsellor, Anna Kopeikin.

When did you start working at The Benevolent Society?

I've been active in the adoption community, both nationally and internationally, for the majority of my adult life. Over the past eight years I've collaborated with Post Adoption Support Queensland on a number of programs and projects. It has been an exciting milestone to officially join the PASQ team in August.

What was life like before working in Post Adoption Services?

Prior to starting with PASQ I came from the mental health and disability sector.

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

It is great to be working in a specialised sector that I have a lifelong passion for. To be able to work within a team that also exhibits genuine compassion and curiosity for those whom we have the privilege to work with. Working for an organisation that delivers training and provides ongoing professional development is greatly valued.

PASQ Update

Contact us on 07 3170 4600 or pasq@benevolent.org.au

Welcome new PARC and PASQ Staff!

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

Our family are excited to be welcoming a new bub in March and with every year that passes I find there's always opportunities to further learn and develop my own awareness and insights. I'm certainly excited to grow into my role with PASQ as I can foresee a window of opportunity to make some poignant changes and inspire greater understanding and recognition for people impacted by adoption.

What are some of your favourite self-care activities?

Spending time with my loved ones is always so enriching. Playing and spending time with my daughters is definitely a favourite self-care activity. I also have a deep appreciation for food, especially the sweets! I come from a graphic design background and find immersing my-self in my watercolour painting equally nourishing .

Welcome to PASQ's new Service Support Coordinator, Carolyn Rose.

When did you start working at The Benevolent Society?

I started with The Benevolent Society on 6th December 2021 with their Early Childhood Approach (ECA) team. During my interview I learnt the ECA shared offices with PASQ and I immediately set myself a goal of finding a position within that team – I didn't know how or when, but I did know it was going to happen...and 6 months later it did!

What was life like before working in Post Adoption Services?

Prior to joining PASQ I had always worked in jobs I "had" to do. I'd never had a role that motivated and inspired me...that was part of a cause I related to or deeply believed in.

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

As I've only been with PASQ a short time I'm still working out which aspects of my role I enjoy the most, but at this stage I am just so happy to be working with a group of incredible women committed to helping people impacted by adoption.

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

Discovering more about myself through the challenges of my new position and feeling a deep sense of satisfaction that comes with finally contributing to something meaningful. Oh, and I think I'm going to set myself a goal and travel to Italy (and/ or) Spain and Portugal in 2023!

What are some of your favourite self-care activities?

I love cooking and baking! One of my greatest joys is watching people come together around food I've prepared. It doesn't matter whether it's a cake I whipped up for a morning tea at work or a dinner party I spent days preparing for friends and family. I have a keen interest in interior design, so I get a lot of enjoyment in anything connected to that (reading design books, perusing Instagram for inspiration or even cleaning my house, ha!). At the end of the day you'll often find me unwinding in my courtyard, caring for my plants...usually with a glass of wine in hand.

Adoption—listening, reading and viewing.

Australian True Crime Podcast

In this podcast episode, Lily Arthur, author of 'Dirty Laundry: The Crimes a Country Tried to Hide', tells her story of being sent away to an unmarried women's home as a young pregnant woman, and then losing her child to adoption. Lily's story is one of resilience and determination and brings light to Australia's dark history of forced adoption. To listen to the podcast, click <https://apple.co/3RiyRWL>

Expert Voices in Adoption Webinars

Expert Voices in Adoption is a Webinar series where each month a different adopted person working in the human services and mental health fields presents as guest speaker. The topic of each session varies but all of them will focus on having a better understanding of the mental health needs of adopted people. To see the Webinar schedule and register go to this link: <https://bit.ly/3Snf2yQ>

'Adoption is not the answer to abortion'



This article was written by Korean adoptee, Cynthia Landesberg in response to the recent reversal of abortion laws in the United States. Landesberg argues against the notion that adoption is a practical alternative to abortion and condemns the lack of choice that women will have with the overturning of Roe v Wade. Landesberg explains that "adoption isn't a fairytale solution" for those who are unable to raise their own children, and does a good job at outlining the complexities associated with adoption for all parties

involved. To read the Washington Post article click here: <https://wapo.st/3SIJMQJ>

'My birth mother was not allowed to name her baby. But the name she gave me in her heart is real'.

Legislation took away the name adopted people were given at birth and denied them the knowledge of their history. Mothers were forced to sign papers against their will and to keep their baby a secret. This article explores how forced adoption locked away identities and denied family connections causing losses that will be felt for generations. To read The Guardian Article, go to this link: <https://bit.ly/3LQ7Bxv>

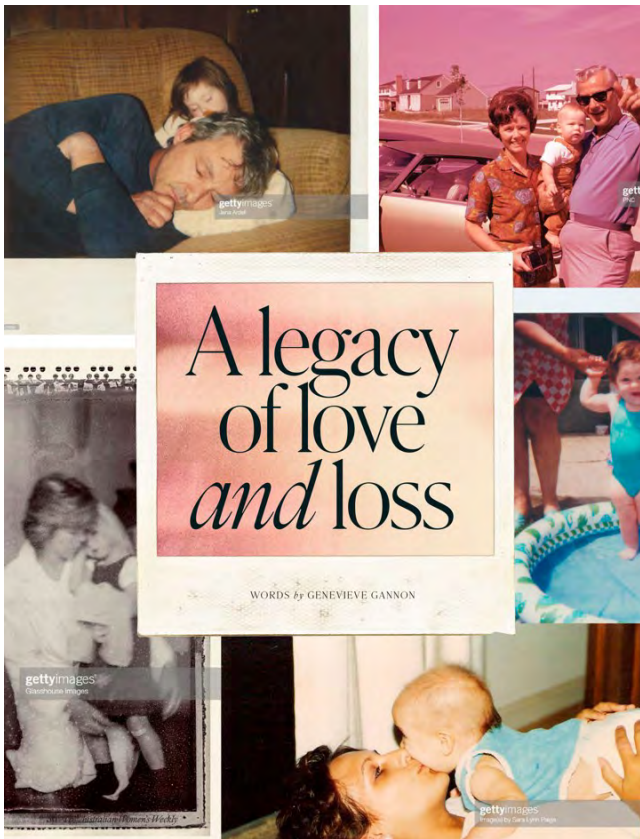
'King Edward Memorial Hospital removes 'offensive' forced adoption apology amid redress fight'



This article highlights the inadequacy of a formal apology issued by the King Edward Memorial Hospital to the victims of forced adoption. The Perth hospital removed the controversial apology from its website after a group of mothers and adopted people spoke out to the ABC about the 'lasting trauma' suffered by survivors of the forced adoption era. Distressing stories and claims of a lack of funding and support available to these women and their children has seen Libby Mettam from the WA Opposition support calls for a fresh inquiry. Read the article here to find out more: <https://ab.co/3SIlvEt>

Adoption—listening, reading and viewing.

Australian Women's Weekly Article



PARC and PASQ were featured in the September issue of The Australian Women's Weekly in an article that touches on different angles of adoption and how each situation has a different effect on those involved. The article can be read here: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.benevolent.org.au/ArticleDocuments/199/Adoption%20editorial%20feature%20AWW_20220816.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y

'The Myth of Adoption as a Social Good'

The New Zealand Government is consulting on changes to the 1955 Adoption Act, but there is no guarantee it will be retrospective – leaving as many as 100,000 adults adopted during Aotearoa's 'Baby Scoop Era' without the justice many seek'. This New Zealand article critiques the lack of existing pathways to address current adoption law and its continuing impact on those affected by the Baby Scoop Era (what is known as the

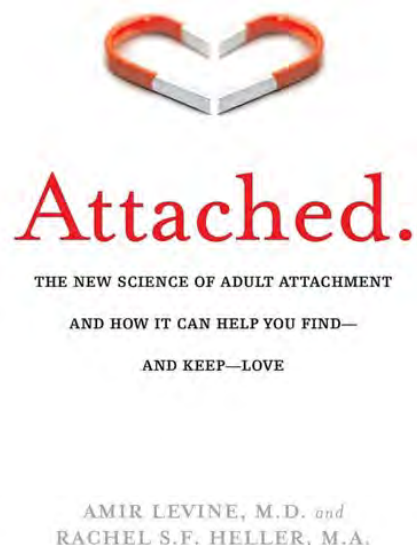
Forced Adoption Era in Australia). It also discusses the difficulties in obtaining adoption information from Government Departments. Unfortunately, a common story for many who have been affected by adoption. Read it here: <https://bit.ly/3BTmyu7>

TEDx Talk

Whilst American, this is a good talk that focusses on challenging adoption myths and raising awareness of the true complexities and challenges for adopted people, in particular life long struggles with identity and the role of search/reunion in assisting with healing. You might like to share this link with those you love: <https://bit.ly/3rd2T3z>

Attached: The New Science of Adult Attachment and How it Can Help You Find—and Keep—Love

A book by Dr Amir Levine and Rachel S.F. Heller which offers an insightful exploration into how our early relationships with our caregivers influence our ways or relating to significant others later in life and how we can work towards making wise choices to build stronger and more fulfilling connections.



**The Benevolent Society
National Office
2E Wentworth Park Road,
Glebe, NSW 2037**

**1800 236 762
customer@benevolent.org.au**

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