

# Post Adoption News

## Inside...

- 2 Welcome
- 3 Article: Self Care Through the Holidays
- 5 From our Readers
  - My Adoption experience
  - Writing and Reflection
- 7 Australian Adoption Literary Festival Reflection
- 8 Adoption in the news
- 9 PARC & PASQ Updates
- 13 Contact us

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**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 in our final edition of the year we are focusing on and highlighting some selfcare 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 a restful end to 2023 and a restoring start to 2024 – PARC and PASQ Teams*

## Updated Service Hours:

PARC and PASQ are closed from 4pm 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023 (local time) until the 9:00am 27<sup>th</sup> December 2023 (local time).

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

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> December

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> December

We will be closed Friday 29<sup>th</sup> December 2023 for TBS Picnic Day and Monday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 for the public holiday.

All other dates,

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

PASQ are open Monday-Friday 8:30am-5:00pm (local time).

## Support Service Contact Information

**As the holidays are approaching we acknowledge that this time of year can bring difficulties for people affected by adoption. If you require assistance after hours please call:**

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) (4:30pm-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



# Self Care through the holidays

**Maddie Conway**

Self-care is the practice of intentionally engaging in activities that prioritises your wellbeing. This practice involves being aware of your own needs, wants, and desires when choosing activities as well as developing and maintaining healthy boundaries to protect yourself against factors that may get in the way.

Self-care can be any activity that adds to a sense of wellness and fulfilment and improves our ability to cope through situations. Common stereotypes associated with self-care is that the only way to practice is through hygiene or soothing activities such as bathing or meditating. However self-care can be any activity at all that has the desired effect. Each person is going to need a different form of self-care and no two people will experience this the same.

## DOMAINS OF SELF CARE:

- Physical
- Psychological
- Emotional
- Financial
- Spiritual
- Social
- Intellectual
- Environmental

## SELF-CARE HELPS TO:

- Build resilience
- Prevent burnout
- Improve mental health by reducing harmful symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and stress
- Improve physical health

- Improves the ability to communicate and form healthy relationships
- Improves self-awareness and decision-making
- Improves time management and productivity

## SIGNS YOUR SELF-CARE IS LOW:

- Displaying unhealthy boundaries
- Using passive or aggressive communication styles
- Frequently feeling tired or exhausted
- Low energy (even after sleeping well)
- Poor sleep
- Conflict in relationships
- Feeling low in mood
- High levels of stress
- Feeling the need to distract and be 'Productive'
- Viewing things in a negative lens
- High avoidance
- Isolating from others
- Physical pain or illness
- Changes in appetite
- Engaging in risk taking behaviours
- Consistent disorganization
- Acting from emotion rather than logic or critical thinking

Turn over to see some self care tips:

# 12 SELF CARE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

DEEP &  
PEACEFUL  
REST



Make a cup of tea



GO FOR A  
WALK



Talk to a friend



Listen to a podcast



LIGHT A  
CANDLE



BAKE  
SOMETHING



WRITE A  
STORY



Turn off your phone



Stretching or Yoga



WATCH THE  
SUNRISE



Meditate



# My Adoption Experience

Rhonda Lee

In my life, a remarkable event unfolded, an event that would catalyse profound personal transformation. This journey began when I, Rhonda Lee, a best-selling published author, contributed a chapter to the book "Resilience: Turning Struggle into Strength." Little did I know that sharing my deeply personal story of adoption would not only change the course of my life but also serve as a source of inspiration for others.

Growing up, I was plagued by an unshakable sense that something vital was missing from my life. I often questioned the world around me, feeling like an outsider who couldn't, quite fit in. Loneliness and a constant feeling of being unheard became my companions. I carried haunting memories of a young child peering through a fence, yearning to know what lay beyond, and of a man leaving in a taxi while my mother holding my hand stood watching him go. Leaving me with unanswered questions.

However, the lowest low I would ever experience came when I received a revelation that shattered the foundation of my identity. My mother, later in my life unveiled the shocking truth that the man I had always believed to be my father was not my biological father. This revelation sent shockwaves through my existence, unleashing pain, and confusion beyond measure. My mind's protective mechanisms kicked in, causing me to withdraw mentally and emotionally, lost in a sea of profound questions about my very essence. This revelation marked a turning point in my life, a moment when the truth, though painful, could no

longer be hidden. The veil concealing my past was lifted, and I was faced with the startling realization of my adoption. This was the moment that would propel me into a transformative journey of self-discovery.

The journey of self-discovery and healing led me to confront deeply ingrained fears and beliefs that had shaped my life. These include the fear of abandonment, a consequence of my upbringing where attachments felt fragile and uncertain. I grappled with a sense of low self-worth stemming from negative remarks and bullying. And a constant fear of rejection that had developed from the feeling of not fitting in. Trust issues loomed large, born from a his-

tory of hidden truths and deceptions, while emotional suppression served as a survival mechanism. The echoes of negative self-talk from years of belittlement persisted, and I wrestled with my identity after the revelation of my adoption.

An avoidance of conflict became a way to maintain a semblance of harmony, even when it was necessary for personal growth. My story stands as an inspiring testament to the human spirit's resilience and its boundless capacity for transformation. Through years of self-discovery and healing, I emerged from the shadows of my past, stronger and more empowered than ever.

My journey serves as a beacon of hope for those who, like me, have faced life's darkest moments. It demonstrates that even in the depths of despair, a glimmer of hope can guide us toward the light at the end of the tunnel.

I encourage you, to take a moment and reflect on your journey. What challenges have you faced? What fears and beliefs have held you back? know that you are not alone in your struggles. Seek the support and guidance you need to confront your deepest fears and embark on your path of self-discovery. My story shows that with determination, the right support, and a commitment to personal growth, you can emerge from your trials stronger, more resilient, and ready to embrace your true self. The power to transform your life lies within you, waiting to be unleashed. Let my journey be the catalyst for your own story of resilience and self-discovery.

To read my full chapter, click here <https://shorturl.at/yNV19> and secure your copy of 'Resilience: Turning Struggle into Strength' and embark on a journey of inspiration, healing, and personal growth.



# Writing and Reflection

Michael Grenfell

The inaugural Adoption Literary festival, the first of its kind in Australia has been a huge success

The day not only brought together the community across Australia but also included viewers from across the globe.



Recordings from the day will be available on the PARC Facebook page and The Benevolent Society YouTube channel.

For those wanting to start on their own writing, I thought I may share some reflections and my rationale regarding my writing practice.

Any creative outlet, be it painting, drawing, writing or singing can be extremely beneficial.

Those of us who have experienced trauma may be fearful of starting something new or be concerned about what others may think.

Unfortunately we are inundated by messages daily that we should always excel and do our best.

This does little to help when trauma is part of our history and just adds to the list of demands placed upon us.

What does help though is simple kindness, with the first person we need to offer this too is ourselves.

With this form of self-care in mind, a true intention, you may be surprised by what you can create.

The best part for me is being able to communicate with others and know that what I have written has had an effect.

The resulting catharsis has allowed me to relocate onto the printed page some of the previous pain and difficulty I felt that I carried with me daily.

Poetry allows me to put into words difficult thoughts and feelings I had otherwise been unable to communicate clearly.

So whatever artistic medium you may decide upon, I wish you the absolutely very best.

Michael

The poem 'Why I Write Poetry' was the result of a WestWords Masterclass with Ali Whitelock at Wedderburn Writer's Retreat..

Why I write poetry

Because of 3am questions that storm through my mind, attempting to find the truth or a picture of it,

Because of the Bass Strait and it's crooked distance,

Because of dropped phone calls and returned letters,

Because of custard tarts and many false starts,

Because of rabbit shaped easter biscuits,

Because of what was told,

Because of what was shared and what was taken,

Because of institutions filled with children, innocent and alone,

Because we are running out of time,

Because it is write or die,

Because of bent and broken backs,

Because of Bushy Park cemetery and what is buried there,

Because of paranoid people in positions of power,

Because of David,

Because of Geoff,

Because they are gone.

This poem was also recently shared as part of Adoptee Remembrance day which can be viewed at the link below:

[https://youtu.be/uun76F2JQpE?si=0Z\\_sBCsynnoz9p0w](https://youtu.be/uun76F2JQpE?si=0Z_sBCsynnoz9p0w)

WestWords offers many free classes and programs for authors of all ages and abilities in the Western Sydney area. <https://www.westwords.com.au/>

You can read some of Ali's poetry at <https://www.aliwhitelock.com/poetry/>

# Flipping the Narrative: Australian Adoption Literary Festival

PARC began Adoption Awareness Month by sharing the stories of post adoption that often get overlooked during the month. PARC worked in collaboration with a small working group of people with lived experience of adoption to bring this inaugural event to the adoption and wider community. This first Australian Adoption Literary Festival; Stories Stranger than Fiction was made possible by small grants gratefully received from the NSW Forced Adoption Support Service and the NSW Committee on Adoption and Permanent Care and the support of The Benevolent Society. The festival highlighted the voices of the lived experience of 11 panellists throughout the day who generously shared their creative processes and their journey through the literary world.

The first panel of Mixed Genre writers was hosted by experienced convenor and author, Suzanne Leal. Suzanne facilitated the discussion between writers Ryan Gustafsson, Meg O'Shea, and EJ Clarence. Ryan and Meg are both intercountry adoptees from South Korea and EJ was adopted within Australia during the forced adoption era. With three distinctive creative styles each panellist explored how their adoption influences their writing process.

You can find some of their works here:

Dr Ryan Gustafsson: <https://www.ryangustafsson.com/>  
Meg O'Shea: <https://megoshea.com/>  
EJ Clarence: <https://overland.org.au/author/ej-clarence/>

The second panel of the day was a discussion facilitated by Jane Sliwka, a social worker and adopted person who has worked in the post adoption space in various roles over the past 15 years. Jane guided mother and daughter Robin Leuba and Susannah McFarlane in the exploration of their book [Heartlines: The Year I Met My Other Mother](#) which openly documents their reunion. It was an insightful discussion offering up both sides of the reunion journey and the complexities of connecting many decades after the separation of mother and child by adoption.

The third panel of the day focused on the experience of mothers. Expertly hosted by Jacqueline Kent, author, and convenor she guided the rich discussion between Lily Arthur (Dirty Laundry), Gwen Wilson (I Belong to No One)

and Vivienne Timmermans (You Named me Sheree). You can read more of their works here:

Lily Arthur: <https://www.lilyarthur.com/>  
Gwen Wilson: <https://www.gwenwilson.com.au/>  
Vivienne Timmermans: <https://younamedmesheree.com/about/>

The fourth and final panel of the day explored the adopted person's experience. Hosted by Susan Francis, author of 'The Love that Remains' the discussion focused on the memoirs of Abraham Maddison (Crazy Bastard), Karen Ingram (Lifting the Lid; a memoir born of adoption), and Dianne O'Brien (Daughter of the River Country). Each writer generously shared some of their adoption and life experiences and discussed their writing process.

Abraham Maddison: <https://www.wakefieldpress.com.au/product.php?productid=1853>  
Karen Ingram: <https://www.kareningram.com.au/>  
Dianne O'Brien: <https://www.echopublishing.com.au/books/daughter-of-the-river-country>

We would like to thank all the authors who shared so openly, as well as the hosts for guiding the panel discussions. We also extend our sincere thanks to the working group, Elizabeth Walton, Gwen Wilson, Michael Grenfell and Jane Sliwka; without their collaboration this event would not have been possible, let alone the success that it was.

We dedicate this festival to the memory of Julia Kaylock, who planted the first seeds that would eventually grow into this important event. Julia is the author of 'A Child of the Clouds; A Memoir in Verse about Adoption Trauma and Recovery.' We deeply thank Julia for her invaluable contributions to the Australian Adoption literary landscape.

While we had hoped to have the recordings of the panels available to share with you all in this edition of Post Adoption News they are still undergoing some final edits. We will share the links as soon as they are live via our Facebook page and to all on our mailing lists.

- Clare Heasman & Sarah Burn

# Adoption in the News

## Listening, Reading, & Viewing

### Reading

Mothers subject to forced adoption of babies can apply for \$30,000 compensation in Victoria.

Victoria has started Australia's first redress scheme for mothers subjected to forced adoption. This scheme will allow mothers to access a financial redress payment, counselling and psychological support, and apology process.

You can read more here: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/oct/26/mothers-subjected-to-forced-adoption-of-babies-can-apply-for-30000-compensation-in-victoria>  
<https://www.vic.gov.au/redress-forced-adoptions>

### Viewing

The Australian Adoption Literary Festival will be shared on PARC's Facebook page and The Benevolent Society's YouTube channel.

## Listening—Adoption Podcasts



Thriving Adoptees -  
Healing, Inspiration &  
Empowerment For  
Adoptees  
[www.thrivingadoptees.com/](http://www.thrivingadoptees.com/)

The Adoption Chronicles  
[www.shows.acast.com/the-adoption-chronicles](http://www.shows.acast.com/the-adoption-chronicles)



Adopt Perspective  
[www.jigsawqueensland.com/adopt-perspective](http://www.jigsawqueensland.com/adopt-perspective)

My Unknown Truth—  
The Australian Adoption  
Podcast  
[www.adoptionpodcasts.us.buzzsprout.com/](http://www.adoptionpodcasts.us.buzzsprout.com/)





## Gold Coast Connection Group

The Gold Coast Connections last get-together for the year will be held on December 13<sup>th</sup> at 57 Billington St, Labrador at 5.30pm.

In 2023 many of our clients who sought search and intermediary support were successful in finding their biological family. Traversing the many issues associated with adoption can be challenging at times, and it's great to have a space for people to share their journeys. The group is predominantly made up of people who are adopted and birth family members, although we had other family members join us on occasions to offer support to loved ones. This is a very welcoming group, where people can share their personal journey and experience with peers who understand the trials and tribulations of adoption, searching and reunifications. At this stage we will look at re-starting the group on February 7<sup>th</sup> 2024, but we will confirm this date when we send out our new calendar invite for the year of 2024.

Here's looking forward to seeing both existing group members and new people looking for peer support in 2024.

**PASQ**  
**Update**

## 11th Anniversary of the Queensland Governments Apology for Forced Adoption Policies and Practices.

On Monday the 27<sup>th</sup> November over 40 people gathered to remember and reflect on the 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Queensland Governments Apology for Forced Adoption Policies and Practices. The day started with a reflection and rose laying at the Memorial Site at Roma Street Parklands, and was followed by a ceremony at The Normanby Hotel.

The event at the Normanby Hotel began with video addresses from Linda Griffiths, an adopted person and Executive Director – Child Youth and Family at The Benevolent Society, and also from The Hon. Craig Crawford – Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Seniors and Disability Services. Both dignitaries spoke of the importance of ongoing funding for services that support people impacted by forced adoption practices. The Anniversary working committee were honoured to have Dr Jo-Ann Sparrow as this year's guest speaker. Dr Jo Sparrow is an adopted person, Writer, Author, Researcher, President of Jigsaw Queensland and Host of the



Podcast - Adopt Perspective. Jo reflected on how so much had been achieved since the Apology in 2012, and how there is a need to continue to work on Senate enquiry recommendations yet to be implemented. Jo spoke beautifully of the Adopt Perspective podcast, relaying a number of stories from the podcast and how these have helped others to not feel so alone. She relayed that while the podcast was a tool born out of the pandemic, to allow people to stay connected, it had grown since it's humble beginnings, to become a successful podcast for people to connect on issues associated with forced adoption, both in Australia and from many places over the World.

Following the formalities of the day, attendees were invited to stay and enjoy some light refreshments together. It was wonderful to see people connecting and reconnecting, with many smiles and comradery shared. Each year, the anniversary event allows people to gather, to continue healing, remember and reflect on past practices, ensuring that the polices and practices are not forgotten and never repeated.

### 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](#)

## Welcome Karina!

As a relative newbie to living in Brisbane, having grown up in North Qld and lived at different times in central (coast) Qld, southwest Qld, Darling Downs and the Wollongong/Sydney/Newcastle trifecta. I am enjoying Brisbane, the PASQ team of lovely people and being closer to my kids and grandkids. I've had two careers so far. The first in Human Resource Management with big industry. The past 19 odd years counselling and supporting people in the human services field. Relationships have always been an area of counselling and support work I am drawn to, and for PASQ's clients these are part of the source of trauma and desired healing. It is an honour to work with you.



# PARC Update

## Farewell Brooke!

In November 2023 PARC farewelled long term team member, Brooke Bengston. Brooke had been with the PARC team for over 10 years, and is moving on to new challenges. Brooke had a warm and empathetic approach to her work with the adoption community and will be missed by many clients and the team. We thank Brooke for all the years of service she has given to the adoption community in her time with PARC and we wish her well on this next work/ life adventure where we know her experience, knowledge and skill will be an asset to her new role.

## Welcome Maddie!

### What attracted you to this role?

When coming across this role I was immediately drawn in by not only the organizations reputation but also the opportunity to explore the history and impacts of adoption. Having a personal experience with adoption I wanted to align myself with a client group that represented an area of interest for me, but also aligned with my own core beliefs and values. I am continuously fascinated by the area of adoption and the themes associated that historically have impacted individuals' wellbeing and sense of self and hope to provide support and care whilst also developing my own knowledge and skills.

### Is there anything that has surprised you?

It has been incredibly interesting to explore the history of adoption and the system/supports in place currently for those in the Post adoption space. Everyday so far has been surprising and has really highlighted that there is still so much progress society needs to make in the space in order to increase support and education.

### What would you like people to know about you?

Being the newest addition to such a small supportive team with long standing clients I feel it's important to give everyone my background in working in Mental health. I studied both Counseling and Psychology at uni which after graduation I used to begin working in both group and 1:1, providing therapeutic support to a range a client's & groups through modalities like DBT, CBT, and general psychoeducation. After working in private hospital settings, I shifted to community-based counselling working within NGOs. Being an extrovert with an interest in all things Mental health means I've found this line of work incredibly fulfilling and hope to move forward and bring this passion into PARC.

## ABC Groups March—October

*“Connecting with my tribe for the first time ever and the most effective healing I’ve ever experienced in my adoption journey. I no longer feel alone and as though I’m totally misunderstood.”*

In October PARC wrapped up our final ABC (Adoption, Belonging, Connection) Group for 2023. The focus this year was on the Seven Core Issues of Adoption, following prompts from the book of the same name, authored by Sharon Kaplan Rozia and Allison David Maxon. What originally started out as one, stand-alone group, quickly turned into three separate groups with each staff member involved, as we had a huge interest from the PARC community. Each month, the facilitators presented a different ‘core issue’ – and invited group participants to share their experiences. The issues we covered were: Loss, Rejection, Guilt and Shame, Grief, Identity, Intimacy and Mastery/Control.

While it can be painful to explore some of these issues in adoption, many group members found it to be a safe and welcoming space to express their inner-most feelings, and found great comfort in hearing the stories of others that they could resonate with. After the first few sessions, the groups began to create a sense of camaraderie, and each member offered support, laughter and compassion to one another. As a facilitator, my favourite part was seeing these connections evolve through everyone sharing their diverse adoption journeys.

PARC wishes to thank everyone who attended the ABC groups this year to make them a wonderful success. The feedback demonstrated how important it is to be able to connect with other adoptees, witness one another and learn and heal together. We are currently finalising our plans for online groups in 2024, so keep your eyes peeled for these opportunities!

- Sarah King

## PARC & PASQ Groups

### Mothers Group

PARC and PASQ run a regular online mothers' group, meeting every second month. Conversation occurs around a central theme. Recent themes explored have included *Managing when emotions overwhelm*, *Giving yourself permission* and *Speaking your truth*.

The group offers an opportunity for mothers who have lost children to adoption to come together, in a supportive online environment.

The next group will be in February 2024. Come and chat, share tools and activities that help us to feel less isolated.

### Therapeutic Parenting

PARC & PASQ jointly run the Therapeutic Parenting course for adoptive parents. The 6 week online course is currently underway and families often provide positive feedback about the valuable content and opportunity to connect with other parents. This course will run again in 2024.

### ABC Group

Both teams have separately been running their ABC groups online covering the 'Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency.' This has been a popular offering and many have found it helpful to explore these issues in the company of other adoptees. As we wrap up this series the focus will turn to what the group would like in 2024.

## Connect with PASQ & PARC

### Facebook

We would like to invite you to make use of our Facebook page where we are sharing more links and lots of interesting adoption related stories, articles and current resources.

### Online Groups and Videos

We are beginning the process of holding our connections groups online and are planning to bring you some adoption-centred videos via our Facebook page. We'll keep you informed of all we have coming up through email and our Facebook page. Please also let us know if there are topics you would like us to share or events you are interested in.

### Phone, Video Call, Face to face support

We continue to offer counselling and intermediary support via telephone or video call and will face to face support. If you find yourself in need of support, please reach out by phone or email.

### Feedback

We are always seeking feedback about how we can best meet the needs of those we work with. If you have any suggestions or feedback we'd love to hear them.

## Connect with PARC



[parc@benevolent.org.au](mailto:parc@benevolent.org.au)



02 9504 6788



[benevolent.org.au/services-and-programs/post-adoption-services/post-adoption-resource-centre-parc-nsw](https://benevolent.org.au/services-and-programs/post-adoption-services/post-adoption-resource-centre-parc-nsw)



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

## Connect with PASQ

[pasq@benevolent.org.au](mailto:pasq@benevolent.org.au)



07 3170 4600



[benevolent.org.au/services-and-programs/list-of-programs/post-adoption-support-qld](https://benevolent.org.au/services-and-programs/list-of-programs/post-adoption-support-qld)



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



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