

Post Adoption News



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Welcome to Post Adoption News

This edition focuses on the theme *Parents*. We know that adoption creates lifelong issues for all parties affected. This can affect how individuals feel when they become parents. It can also forever alter relationships with one's own parents and how we might come to learn that we need to 'parent ourselves' well, as part of our healing.

In our key article we reflect on many of the ideas brought up in Bethany Webster's book 'Discovering the Inner Mother'. Emma shares what it meant for her as an adopted person when she became a parent. We share poems written by a father whose child was lost to adoption and a deeply personal poem written by a mother shortly after her daughter was born and lost to adoption. The poems are followed by reflections by a mother and by an adopted person on the deep impacts of adoption.

We are also excited to share a number of contributions in response to our last issue where readers were invited to share 100 words or less on the theme 'secrecy'.

As always, thank you to our readers for generously sharing their thoughts and experiences.

In this edition we also share what PARC and PASQ have been up to over the last few months and what we have in store for the rest of this year.

As the seasons change and things are getting cooler, we hope you can rug up with a cup of tea and enjoy reading this edition of Post Adoption News!

- PARC and PASQ Teams

Discovering the Inner Mother/Parent

It has been documented that adopted people often grow up with a strong fantasy mother, father and/or family, particularly if they lack any information about their origins. The fantasy parent can manifest as an internal concept or vision of the 'perfect parent' that may arise particularly when an adoptive parent falls short (as all parents do). Alternatively, the fantasy parent may be based around an adopted person's attempts to understand their identity and in the absence of concrete information. For example, they may see somebody on TV that resembles them and fantasise that this is their real parent and attempt to 'fill in the gaps' that exist in their knowledge of themselves and their origins. When a reunion occurs later in life, the fantasy can come crashing down as a 'real person' cannot live up to the 'ideal mother/parent' fantasy. This can involve a grief process as the person comes to terms with 'reality' and learns how their 'real' biological parent may fit (or not fit) within their current life. For some, they never seek to engage in search or reunion at all because their fear around the risk of losing their 'fantasy parent' is too great.

In her recent book 'Discovering the Inner Mother' (2021), Bethany Webster explores these ideas generally and suggests that they exist for the population at large, not only those affected by adoption. Whilst her book specifically focusses on intergenerational trauma passed down from mother to daughter (particularly relevant to the history of Forced Adoption in this country and the silencing of women's voices and rights) these ideas can be extrapolated to both genders. She uses the term 'the mother gap' to describe the discrepancy that exists between one's 'ideal mother' and the experience of their mother in reality. The only difference for adopted people is that they actually have two mothers, so the issue becomes more pronounced. However, they may find during reunion that a 'mother gap' exists in their relationship with both of their mothers,

because there is no such thing as 'ideal' – people are human and will all have their own strengths and limitations.

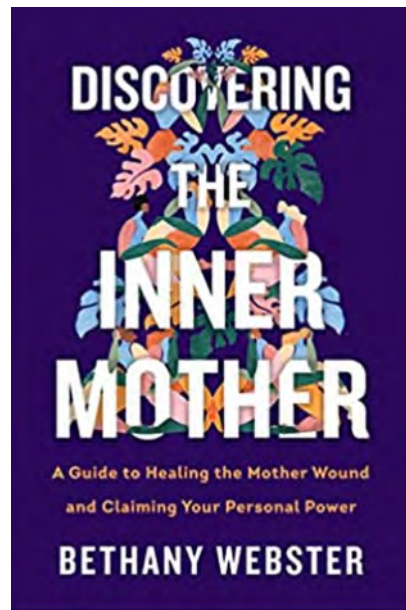
Bethany Webster's book may also be very helpful for mothers and fathers who have lost children to adoption and indeed anybody who has a parent (all of us). Mothers and fathers who have lost children to adoption often felt let down by their own parents failing to support them at the time that the adoption occurred. Many feel that had they received better support, they would have been able to keep their child. As a result of these experiences, many parents report that their relationship with their own parent was never healed before their parent's death and that the family system was irreparably damaged.

For siblings, whose own parents lost children to adoption, the 'non relinquished' sibling of the adopted person may struggle to understand their parent or grandparents choices and might suffer the effects of growing up with a parent who is dealing with a lifetime of grief and pain as a result of the loss of their other (adopted) child.

For adoptive parents, they may struggle with the fact that their child does have another set of parents. They may find that at times their child idealises the 'missing parent' or the biological parent, who the child has sporadic contact with. They may feel devalued as the parent who must discipline the child and set limits as a normal part of parenting.

Bethany Webster's book outlines that while not all of us become parents, we all have our own parents. Her position is that the healthiest thing that we can do is to reflect upon the way we did feel let down by our own parents or continue to feel let down. She encourages us to embrace the reality that there is no 'perfect parent' (or indeed partner later in life) that will 'save us' from this painful reality. However, she outlines that a very important part of our own healing is to become a loving parent to ourselves. This is the best thing that we can all do to cope with our own lives and to be better parents, partners, family members and friends to other people in our lives and to improve the world at large. This is because as we allow ourselves to feel empathy for our own inner

child (who has often experienced trauma) we may find this frees us up to have more empathy and compassion for other people in our lives.



For the rest of our lives, there will frequently be times when wounds of the past will be triggered. However this book suggests that we begin to see these triggers as opportunities to make new choices that we could not make as children because as adults we have a greater sense of agency. As we begin to make different choices we may begin to trust our own self-knowledge, observations and intuitions to a greater extent.

To conclude, in her book, Bethany Webster includes some practical strategies and questions to reflect on that can assist us, such as messages that we can tell ourselves. These are simple, but so important to remember in times of challenge:

"I'm so glad you were born"

"You are safe"

"You can do it!"

"It's ok to have needs"

"It's ok to make mistakes"

"I love you as you are no matter what"

"What do you need right now, in this moment?"



From our readers

My parenting experience as an adoptee

In this article, Emma reflects on the challenges she faced when becoming a parent for the first time.

I always thought parenthood would be challenging and rewarding for obvious reasons, but it turned out to be even more so for reasons I never expected. Over time as I faced the challenges, I can see the meaningful role motherhood has played in healing my adoption wounds.

Firstly, some background information may provide helpful context. I was adopted at three months of age and grew up with an adopted brother who was two years younger than me. My adoptive parents were always open about us being adopted and had advocated for adoptee and mothers' rights. They understood the loss and trauma of adoption and were open and compassionate about its potential impacts on us, but still at times seemed surprised by what my brother and I would say. For example, my brother would say his birthmother was dead even though she wasn't, and I remember telling my adoptive mother that I would never adopt a child. I think this may have hurt her, but it was how I felt at the time given the pain of adoption. I was

mostly positive and optimistic about being adopted however at times I felt confused, lost, alone, scared, and angry.

"The challenge – becoming a mother retriggered my adoption trauma"

I never had a strong drive to become a mother, maybe out of self-protection, however I had a feeling that if I didn't try it may become a regret later in life. In our early thirties, my husband and I were settled in life so decided to try for a baby. Fortunately, I became pregnant quickly and it was an exciting but also an anxious time for me. So many unknowns and with an adoptive mother who could not have children I was aware that this was probably going to be a sensitive time for me and her but for different reasons.

In my second trimester of pregnancy, I was diagnosed with a rare autoimmune condition called pemphigoid gestationis which was my first challenge. But there was more to come, the delivery didn't go smoothly either so I had an emergency caesarean, my son had a tongue tie and difficulties with breastfeeding, silent reflux and sleeping. Over the next two years I become overwhelmed with anxiety, every time I had to leave my son I felt like I may never see him again, fear was overtaking my life. I was too scared to let anyone know the extent of what I was thinking

or feeling in case I was seen as an unfit mother and my baby was taken away, so I found myself feeling confused, lost, alone, scared, and angry like I had periodically during my childhood and adolescence.

Unfortunately, a psychologist that I saw for a few months throughout this period dismissed the role adoption may have played in my anxiety when I raised this with her. However, she provided me with strategies to manage my anxiety related symptoms so I continued on with my mum life and keeping up appearances as best I could. I also had other experiences with child health nurses, which made me think adoption was not viewed as a trauma, so the support I received was inadequate in my opinion. I was offered and completed a Circle of Security parenting course rather than counselling for my unresolved feelings which would have been more beneficial in my case.

Fortunately, my second pregnancy including a planned caesarean, went more smoothly. However, deep down I knew something significant was being triggered in me after having children because I felt a lot of inner tension that was showing up as critical, controlling and irritable behaviours. I continued on with my mum life and keeping up appearances as best I could.

“The reward – becoming a mother as an adoptee changed the way I experience life”

Having children was a very profound experience for me, it added a new level of significance to being adopted. How does a mother survive without her child/ren? I know after holding my children, this is a question I don't have the answer to and hope never to need to find the answer to. However, I know that my love and protectiveness of my children is fierce and that the empathy for my birthmother grew even stronger.

My compliant nature (possibly because of being adopted) came to the fore as well. In hospital, I remember waking to my baby not being in my room with me and a nurse telling me they had

taken him to the nursery to feed him a bottle. I felt so angry and upset but I continued to be polite and friendly, as though my survival depended on getting along with others and that others' feelings somehow mattered more than mine. I'm now letting go of what others may or may not be thinking or feeling and focusing on being true to myself.

I also started to feel more connected in the world because for the first time I was experiencing shared DNA with others. Sometimes I find myself intently observing my children possibly looking for who I am in them. However, I've found it challenging to have a view on how they look like me, I don't know if this is because I never grew up with the genetic mirroring that occurs in biological families, so maybe I am still working out exactly what (and whom) I look like.



When my children were 3 and 6 I decided to reach out to my birthparents via The Benevolent Society since the urge to connect with them had intensified after becoming a mother. I also had a newfound confidence that I could face whatever the outcome of the process was. I have met my birthfather and I am yet to meet my birthmother.

For me there was some shift in my inner tension as part of the reach out process that made me feel calmer.

However, I was still mostly parenting from a place of fear which for me meant I was hypervigilant, seeking all the latest parenting advice, and constantly looking for validation from others.

Having regular access to a counsellor that specialises in adoption has been so valuable. It has helped me understand re-traumatisation and provided a means for me to peel back the layers to become aware of a part of myself which I didn't know existed. A much calmer part that is at ease rather than in struggle. A place where I can be present and accepting of myself and situations as they are right now rather than struggling against how I wish they were. A deep knowing and trust that everything, including me, is okay.

It has also helped me understand how my experience has been different from my children. I am self-regulating more rather than unnecessarily restricting my children's curious behaviours, letting go of the perceived risks of not always being compliant. I can be more objective about when to let them be, when to guide them and when to intervene rather than reacting to my trigger of feeling unsafe.

Being present provides me with the opportunity to (mostly) parent consciously from love rather than reacting from fear. My sons are turning 6 and 9 later this year so it has taken time to get to this point but the calmness I now (mostly) feel has changed my experience of life and relationships, especially with my children and husband. Not having your mother is serious for a baby and this seriousness has translated into my experience of life, I am now allowing a playfulness and lightness permeate my life more. My perspective has shifted, there is meaning in why I was adopted and became a mother, because they have enabled me to experience life more openly, freely, and effortlessly from a foundation of love not fear.

A Child to Call My Own: A Study of Adopted Women and Their Experiences of Motherhood

In 2003 the Post Adoption Resource Centre (PARC) released a research report, 'A Child to Call My Own: A Study of Adopted Women and Their Experience of Motherhood'.

Much has been written about the many different aspects of the adoption experience. However, there had been no research on the impact of being adopted on the next generation until PARC's 2003 study. The lack of knowledge about adopted women as mothers encouraged the PARC research team to explore how adoption is related to pregnancy, birth, and motherhood. The resulting research report contributes towards a clearer picture of how, if at all, becoming a mother impacts on adopted women's views of adoption, their family relationships and the kind of mother they become.

190 adopted women took part in the project, of which 149 had children and 41 did not.

The women were able to tell us about the sort of mothers they are and the changes in their own beliefs about adoption since becoming a parent. The research is full of personal reflections and gives a unique insight into the world of the adopted person.

This report has recently been digitalised and uploaded to our website. You will find it at the link below under the heading, [Impacts of Adoption](#).

<https://www.benevolent.org.au/services-and-programs/post-adoption-services/information-and-resources>

Lyn's Poem

I wrote this poem to my daughter in 1970, not long after she was born, and on the day I was forced to sign the adoption papers. I was 17.

I carried it hidden in my wallet, just in case I ever met her and could hand it to her.

I was finally able to give it to her in person 27 years later, hoping that she could understand how it was for me, and that adoption was not my choice.

Not by choice, for that was not to be
Options not given, nor willing, nor free
Standards to keep, knowing looks, peering eyes
Heartstrings were pulled, puppets moved, family ties
Decisions were made by those above
No understanding was given, no kindness, no love
Left all alone in that scariest place
No hugs or kisses, just a bland white face
"You made your bed, now lie in silent disgrace"
In the night she came, when most were asleep
Don't utter a sound, suffer, silently weep
They had other chores more important to tend
Those nuns with their habits, rules couldn't bend
Go back to your hell-hole and wait for the sun
After prayers and suchlike, they would possibly come
Crawling down corridors long and dark for someone
To help me, for what was this thing I had done
To be treated like this, left so alone and afraid
One other scared girl dared come to my aid
To be hustled away with a hushed remonstrations
Left alone while the godly returned to their station
Later on you were silently taken from me

Bundled up and removed before I could see
Hours of waiting for family to come and see me
Hurried visit, no concern for my sanity
All over they think, normal life will redeem
Whispered excuses of where errant daughter had been
Then that quick stolen visit when no-one was near
Couldn't touch you or hold you, too much to bear
That one long look had to last for me
From then through all eternity
A picture of wonder, those eyes so blue
Rosebud mouth, dark hair, all of you
You were mine for that moment, no-one else loved you more
Then they sent me away, broke my heart, shut the door
Sent to the city all alone in despair
To sign papers that legally said I didn't care
I was told that where you were was not my concern
My one consolation, my one way to turn
Was that those who had taken you, needed you so
And promised to treasure you, that's all I could know
I loved you and didn't want to let go
But had no-one to turn to and nowhere to go
So I picked up my life, and went on, so they thought
But my emotions were shattered, my heartstrings were caught
By that wonderful being, I think of each day
My beautiful daughter, who I gave away.

Lyn Parker



Gary's Poems

Gary Coles (a father who lost a child to adoption) has shared the following poems with us. They will appear in his forthcoming book *'Well Disposed'*. Introducing these poems, Gary has written:

"During 2020, Victoria, Australia was in lockdown for much of the year.

Being confined to home, I decided for the sake of my mental health to take on a writing project, which became spread over several months. In September alone I wrote a poem a day, many of which appear in the section called 2020 Visions.

By 2021, lockdown fatigue had set in, and I was less productive. Twenty-three contributions appear in a second section, The Ripple Effect.

For the sake of completion, included in the book are also a few poems from my previous books Very Much So and The Lure of the Trail

Well Disposed covers a range of topics; adoption is but one".

Upon the loss of a child to adoption

This poem coincided with my preparation for a podcast on the impact of adoption on fathers.

Well the onion layers of my tears
Heavy grief pulsating at the core
The past once lain deeply bound
Thus denial caught in a steely trap
To unburden those hidden years
Buried solitary clogged and raw
Courage has need to be found
First resolve then mount the attack

Relief comes from work done inside
To release the soothing to my pain
Guilt that can no longer be denied
At last the releasing of the shame

My child blesses the mending of the years
Since I peeled away the source of all my tears.

September 2020

The primal bond

An acknowledgment of the strongest bond of all.

While mateship is what draws blokes together
Easy female understanding has a wider embrace
Family connections are defined by duty also blood
Sadly they may also provoke guilt or a lasting feud
Yet rising above the fray there is no stronger tie
Than that exists between a mother and her child
No wonder so deep the loss the unrelenting grief
Of a weeping primal wound from this broken
bond.

September 2020

The shuttered men

A reality of post-adoption matters is exposed.

Adoption is often perceived
To be solely women's business
Which is by no means accurate
Because men are affected too
Truly both male and female
Adopted persons are dislocated
And don't forget the fathers
Who grieve for their lost child

But men are heard from
Generally rather less often

For many a product of being
Less connected with their feelings

Then others acutely aware of
The remarked gender imbalance
Stay safely in the background
Until invited to have their say
Let us realise any opportunities
For these men who have suffered
The impact of adoption separation
To add their voices to the conversation
And help expose the present shuttered view.

February 2022

Your thoughts on: "Adoption and Parents/ Parenting"

In 100 words or less, we'd like to hear your views on "adoption and parents/parenting" for our next Newsletter.

Submissions will be considered for publication in our next edition:

[https://
www.surveymonkey.com/r/
newsletterspring](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/newsletterspring)

Books in the PARC Library about the experience of fathers.

There is limited literature about the experience of fathers. However, two authors have made a significant contribution.

Since 2004 Gary Coles has published a number of books in Australia which have been a welcome addition.

Ever After—Fathers and the Impact of Adoption—
Gary Coles

Clava Publications SA 2004

Gary lives in Australia and wrote this book combining his very personal experience as a father whose child was adopted to the broader experiences of men who have lost their child to adoption. It is a sensitive account of the repercussions of an adoption over time for all members, with a particular focus on birth fathers.

Transparent—Seeing Through the Legacy of Adoption—Gary Coles

Clava Publications SA 2005

This follow up book to Ever After is an interesting collection of essays from a perspective not often heard - that of a birth father. It explores themes that are familiar to all people affected by adoption.

The Invisible Men of Adoption

BookPOD 2010

While drawing on his two earlier publications, Gary zooms in to focus more closely on the impact on fathers whose children were adopted and the role they played then and can play now and in the future.

Made in Australia: The Adoption Apologies
2014

Gary's fourth book on adoption focuses specifically on the Adoption Apologies in Australia. This book will be of significance to those with personal adoption experience as well as policy makers and practitioners.

Disturbing Adoption: The Collected Pieces
2015

Disturbing Adoption is Gary's fifth book about the impact of adoption. Following on from Made in Australia, this book includes chapters connected to the Apologies, as well as chapters of broader scope and personal perspective.

Gary Cole's books can be purchased through [Amazon](#).

Gary Clapton is an academic in the UK and has worked as a post adoption counsellor. Gary interviewed 30 fathers separated from their children at birth.

Birth Fathers and their Adoption Experiences

Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2003

Gary's pioneering study gives insights into the experiences of fathers. He writes about the causes and consequences of adoption and the implications throughout the life stages.

Gary Clapton's book can also be found on [Amazon](#)



Where Do We Fit?

Sandra Martin writes about her relationship with her son who she lost to adoption, and reflects on the question—where do we fit on the family tree?

I lost my son to adoption in 1965 and was fortunate enough to be reunited with him in 1988. Our reunion would be classified as “successful”. Our relationship was wonderful, then terrible, exciting and disappointing and over the 22 years since I found him again our relationship has found equilibrium. We have a comfortable unspoken arrangement of open access and communication.

We are not close enough to discuss his feelings or opinion on the outcome of either the adoption or reunion but from observation I believe he discovered a lost part of himself when he got to know me, his half siblings, my brother and mother. Having no ongoing relationship with his adopted family he found his primary family unit in marriage and being part of his wife’s large, gregarious family and becoming a Dad himself.

I lived in New Zealand when he was adopted. He and the other family members mentioned still live there. Sydney has been my home since 1969. So,

the dynamics of communication are weighted by distance and whilst it seems unfair to me that I rarely hear from him these days no doubt that is a contributing factor.

To summarise, he is part of our family and mine part of his. He talks on the phone to my brother and they visit from time to time. My other two children and I sometimes see him and his family when we go to NZ. I phone occasionally. A similar relationship, one would think, to one I would have with my other son if he was 46, married with a child and had lived overseas for 20 years.

But it isn’t the same! Not at all!

The hope of becoming “Mum” is swiftly dashed when reuniting with an adult after missing their entire life up until then. No amount of talking and physical similarities makes up for those lost years as we had hoped. So we build a relationship beginning at reunion. Our children are adults and we are looking at retirement. A relationship like no other that begins with both parties overwhelmed with anticipation and hope, insecurities, doubt and regrets, unrealistic expectations and unexpected realities. Bound by life’s strongest emotional bond, birth, and yet

confronted with an enormous void and the overwhelming desire to repair the damage contained within.

“Birthmother” doesn’t even come close to describing the emotional energy that has gone into the relationship before reunion, not to mention after. So where do we fit in each other’s lives?

I was excited to be introduced to my son and his wife’s extended family group for the first time at his 40th birthday. Acceptance at last! But, it was unexpectedly awkward. Not for me, or my son, but for them, the relatives. I realised it was confusing and awkward for everyone. We don’t have an accepted position in society and no one knows quite what to say or where we belong. We are in uncharted waters. It’s the first time in history mass reunion has occurred following long term separation by adoption. It represents a significant milestone in social maturity for a Government to publicly apologise for social wrongs whilst the effected parties are still living.

I think the closest existing relationship to the “Reunited family” is perhaps a step- family. So, when divorce and remarriage became popular in the 70’s and 80’s, did someone invent the addition of “step” to “brother” so those kids moving into the family home have a clearly defined place within the existing family to help them feel comfortable? Someone needs to create a new position in the family demographic for birth relations. We need guidelines of position, status, appropriate behaviour and a meaningful title! It has been hard enough keeping the secret all these years wouldn’t it be wonderful if acceptance could be made easy?

Personally, I need clarification and guidance.

I know I belong on the family tree somewhere, I’m just not quite sure where!

Sandra Martin

Vicki’s Story

Vicki shares her story and how ‘parenting her inner child’ has assisted her healing as an adopted person.

My name is Vicki,

I’m adopted. I was given up when I was a baby. About 4 to 5 months later I was adopted out to a family who already had another child who was also adopted.

I had a good childhood, but I always felt something was missing inside of me and back then I couldn’t understand why. When I turned 18 I tried to find my real mother but she had put an objection order in, which at first hurt and angered me, until I realised why she did it. Then I ended up forgiving her and I felt at peace.

I started to get some health issues and I didn’t have any information. I was pretty lucky when my real mother allowed my full identifying information out. I got all of my answers which I was totally grateful for, but for some reason I still felt like I was in a total rut and still had questions.

So, I decided to get help by seeing a counsellor from my job. They helped me a lot, but there was one thing I could never do. If anybody asked me, how does it feel being adopted I would change the subject. That’s when I realised, I have never gotten over being adopted. Now I’m talking about being adopted with a counsellor and this totally helped me because of my inner child. My inner child has never grown up and now she’s starting to grow. When I started all this my inner child was only around 6-7 years old. Now she’s 15-16 years old.

I know it’s hard to show people who you are especially to people who are not adopted. It’s okay to let people see you, but it’s up to you to make people understand what you have been through. People who are asking how I got through all this. I believe in myself and I can achieve anything I put my mind to. Good luck and best wishes to everyone who is going through this.

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

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

“I knew that my daughter had placed a little girl (my first granddaughter) for adoption in the early ‘90’s. I have never understood why she insisted on doing this. Perhaps being a single parent with two little boys was too much for her, I will never know. Over the years I begged her to contact her or at the very least allow me to contact her. My begging was always met with a resounding ‘no’. Sadly my daughter passed away a few years ago, which left me with the opportunity to search for my granddaughter. After filling in the requested forms I then had the agonising wait for news. After only a few short weeks a lady from the Govt. phoned me about my application. She was very understanding and helpful. But she asked me the strangest question: “are you just enquiring about the one adoption”. In my naivety I

said “yes”. When I asked her what she meant, I was given the mind shattering information that my daughter had had another child some years later and had placed this little boy for adoption as well. Apparently this little boy’s adoptive parents had been trying to make contact with my daughter over the years, but she would not respond. I enlisted the assistance of Post Adoption Support Queensland to liaise with the families on my behalf. The support I received at this extremely difficult time was amazing. They were able to successfully contact all parties involved on my behalf and I am very happy to report that I have now met my two other grandchildren and their families and have a wonderful relationship with them all. So, I guess the moral of the story is that out of great sadness of losing my daughter, I now have two more beautiful young grandchildren. I feel truly blessed.”

“I was determined to find my family when the adoption laws changed. I was a teenager when I met my biological half sister who is only 15 months older than me, she was also adopted.

Around the same time I found my birth mother & her two children. On first contact with my bio mother I told her with much enthusiasm I have located your other daughter only to be abruptly met with "I only ever adopted out one child and that's you, it must be a clerical error". At 19 I believed the woman who was "my mother" & told my "sister" there was a mistake, she wasn't my sister as "my mother" assured me of only ever having adopted out one child. My sisters adoptive mother berated me with "if your sister had of been the one to find your mother then you would now be the one being denied" I carried that shame & torment with me for the next 32 years. It was 25 years later "my mother" after years of badgering admitted that she had in fact adopted out a daughter prior to my adoption.

"32 years passed before I was able to reunite with my sister again, in fact it was just last week we finally had the chance to meet in person & make up for decades of lies that denied us both of a relationship."

It cuts deeply when someone, "your mother" firstly abandons you in a hospital but then insists on lying to you because of her shame, her past actions & inability to process those truths & hence turn everyone & everything into a dirty little lie that denies both your existence & hence your sovereignty. The whole ironic part of this story is that 5 years ago I attended my half sisters wedding only to have my biological mother phone me the night before the wedding to ask me "who are you going to say you are tomorrow as I haven't told anyone about you"? Yet again her shame, guilt & lies had caught up with her - I said "I will say I'm your daughter" needless to say I got off the phone and cried all night. At the wedding I was not acknowledged by my aunts nor was I included in the "family" photos. And of course

there was the moment I had anticipated where a table of guests were looking over and pointing me out as the "adopted one". Adoption is nothing more than a continuous life long nightmare that just throws the unbearable weight of others & their perpetual shame & lies at you with relentless disappointment. I haven't even mentioned what happened when I found my biological father 3 months ago...yes you guessed it, yet more lies, denial & heart wrenching disappointment."

BIRTH MOTHER

Bruised

Inside

Raw

Torn

Haunted

Momentous

Overwhelm

Transformation

Herstory

Enduring

Resilient

"My mother Angela was placed in the care of The Mission of Hope, Croydon London and later adopted by a widow in her fifties. The impact on Mum's life was immeasurable. Most significantly she felt unwanted. Not knowing the truth led to a life feeling she didn't belong and ongoing anxiety. To bring comfort to her existence she lived in a fantasy world of who parents may have been. This became so real to her that her children began to believe these imaginations were true. Mum was never at peace so at 92 I shared with her that I would find her birth family connection in the UK. After many months of research and later guidance

from the Benevolent Society Mum was connected with her nieces and nephews in England. They embraced her in the last year of her life. Mum died knowing in fact *she was loved by her birth Mum* who never forgot the baby she had to give up. The joy it brought to the new found family was overwhelming. Mum died in PEACE."

"Many before me knew my secret. Mum said even neighbours were checked in the 1950's. My aunts, uncles, and cousins knew. One of them said "You are not one of our family". This upset me. Through the secret "Adoption Order" document Mum kept I found my birth mother. When her secret was exposed, she threatened me. But the Government had my birth father's badly recorded name on a secret paper sent to me. I have to wait 100 years from his birth date for information. I will be 81 years old then. That secret I shall have waited all my life to know."

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)

"Too many people spend their lives being dutiful descendants instead of good ancestors. The responsibility of each generation is not to please their predecessors. It's to improve things for their offspring."

-Adam Grant

Survey– Creating a place of active remembrance for people affected by Past Forced Adoption Practices in NSW

The NSW Committee on Adoption and Permanent Care in conjunction with the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and other agencies are inviting stakeholders to be part of an inclusive consultative process to consider and share their ideas on the creation of a place of active remembrance for people affected by Past Forced Adoption Practices in NSW to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Apology by NSW Parliament.

We are inviting people in NSW with lived experience of adoption in the forced (closed) adoption era to complete a survey and provide their perspectives on how the remembrance can provide a meaningful place for reflection.

The link to the survey is here: <https://forms.gle/iJdM9arbHezRPjwP8>

PARC Update

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

Farwell Fiona

The PARC Team are sad to be saying goodbye to our Team Leader, Fiona Cameron.

Fiona has been with PARC for over 12 years and as the Team Leader for 6 years. She has run a very happy stable team who work well together and she has always had the best interests of the PARC clients at the forefront of her focus and work. She has advocated for post adoption support across the state and in particular has acknowledged the need for all persons impacted by current open and past forced adoptions to have access to PARC services.

She has coordinated the 25th and 30th Anniversaries of PARC, including ensuring the funding and production of video resources to accompany these events. She has ensured that PARC was able to attend the National Suicide Prevention Conference twice and created a poster on Adoption is Trauma which was highly regarded and focused attention on the mental health needs of the adoption community. She also presented at the ACWA (Australian Community Workers Association) in 2018, again providing education and insights for the needs of all people affected by adoption issues. With the onset of the pandemic Fiona did not miss a beat and so neither did the PARC client group. Her easy encouragement of staff to move to online platforms and stay connected ensured the team could offer groups and counselling support to people across the state, despite the isolation and uncertainty of the times. The clients readily took up the online groups and they will continue to be a feature of PARC's work into the future, giving us the ability to provide services to clients in regional areas who were previously unable to access in person groups held in the city and suburbs.



PARC staff describe Fiona

“the good mother” – always consistent, patient and present for and with her team members and clients. Accepting, supportive, never judging, fair minded, critical thinker, compassionate and empathic, respectful of all, an outlook that is far reaching and objective.”

The stability of the Team is a sure sign that Fiona has been a professional and caring leader who encourages her staff to continue their own professional development, and to support students in the workplace.

We wish her the best in her retirement and will miss her wisdom, guidance and lovely sense of humour.

PARC will be hosting a morning tea to farewell Fiona on Tuesday 19th July.

For catering purposes please contact PARC on 02 9504 6788 if you would like to attend.

PARC Update

Connections Meeting

On Tuesday 12th April PARC hosted a Connections Meeting for adopted people in rural and regional areas. Since the pandemic we have not been able to travel to conduct meetings for people affected by adoption outside Sydney but have developed our skills with online platforms and were pleased to see the numbers of people attending this MS Teams group and sharing their experiences of adoption and making connections with each other.

PARC is pleased to be able to continue to offer online groups and to note how savvy and comfortable our client group is with evolving technologies. It is important that we hear from you all about your adoption experiences and what we can do to support you. We acknowledge that adoption is lifelong and complex, and these meetings aim to encourage discussion about the changing effects adoption has across the key transition moments of your lives.

If you have suggestions for future groups, we would love to hear your thoughts through the survey below.

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



Mother's Day Catch Up

On Tuesday the 10th of May, PARC invited all mothers who have lost a child to adoption to have a cuppa online and chat and connect in a supportive environment. The mothers said they appreciated receiving a teabag and card in the post, for this occasion.

A few themes emerged during the morning

including: acceptance around what can't be changed, finding gratitude in each day and being aware of what you can tolerate and putting boundaries in place to honour that. These came from a discussion about how the mothers were looking after themselves, understanding that Mother's Day is not a celebration for everybody. PARC is very privileged to work with these strong and inspiring women.

SBS Insight - Meeting Family Later in Life

SBS Insight hosted a discussion panel featuring people affected by adoption and donor conception who had met family later in life. As a national show they selected participants and ensured that there were panelists from across the country sharing their insights and experiences of meeting biological family. PARC staff member Jane Adams had the privilege of participating in the show as a worker in adoption, though the real experts were the individuals telling their stories and sharing the wisdom that comes from their complex and sometimes heartbreaking journeys.

This is a valuable resource for people experiencing their own reunions and we hope that you will have a chance to see it.

You can watch the episode on SBS On Demand here: <https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/watch/2031654979524>



PARC Upcoming Groups and Events

Therapeutic Parenting Course

Starting on Tuesday 26th July PARC will be running our six-week Therapeutic Parenting Course online. The course is a great opportunity for parents of adopted children to come together and connect with other families with similar experiences and learn helpful skills and knowledge.

Therapeutic Parenting is based on a principle that parenting children who have different backgrounds, and may have challenging behaviours, require some different skills and knowledge to that of parenting children with safe and secure backgrounds.

Please contact PARC at parc@benevolent.org.au or **02 9504 6788** if you have any questions or would like to RSVP.



September Mothers Group

The next Mothers Group will take place in September. We will send out further details closer to the date.

Once every two months a small group of mothers join facilitators from PARC and PASQ online to come together and chat in a supportive environment.

New members are always welcome. Please contact PARC at parc@benevolent.org.au or **02 9504 6788** if you have any questions or would like to be included on our mailing list.

Father's Day Morning Tea

On Wednesday 31st August, PARC will join PASQ in hosting an online morning tea for Father's who have lost a child to adoption to connect and share their experiences with one another. The event will be facilitated by PASQ and PARC counsellors.

Please contact PARC at parc@benevolent.org.au or **02 9504 6788** if you have any questions or would like to RSVP.

Adoption Literary Festival

Would you be interested in being part of an Australian Adoption Literary Festival? We would love to hear from you!

Julia Kaylock (published author) in conjunction with the NSW Post Adoption Resource Centre (PARC) and Post Adoption Support Queensland (PASQ) are looking for people impacted by adoption, who are interested in being part of a working group to contribute ideas and assist in the planning of an Australian Adoption Literary Festival.

This project is in the beginning stages, and we would be interested in hearing from you and your ideas of what you would like to see from an event like this.

The event will be a National Event and welcomes participation and input from interested persons Australia wide.

We encourage you to get in touch using the details below.

Email: parc@benevolent.org.au

Phone: **02 9504 6788**

PASQ Update

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

Gold Coast Connections Group

In mid May the PASQ team hosted our bi-annual Gold Coast group on a rainy evening. Even though only three group members were able to make it, it was a wonderful night of sharing and laughter. One group member shared that she was so glad that the group was not cancelled as it always provides her with valuable support.

Mother's Day was the topic of the group and each member shared what that meant for them. One member shared a poem which she had written to her daughter soon after given birth and gave it to her 27 years later when they met for the first time. You will have the pleasure of reading this poem in this newsletter edition.



Online Mothers Group

On Wednesday 20th April PASQ and PARC facilitated the bi-monthly online Mother's group to support and connect Mothers who have lost children to adoption. The group started in 2021 and so far has explored themes such as Parenting after Loss, My Identity as a Mother and My Authentic Self. These themes develop out of the feedback shared by the group after each session.

The feedback shared with us has been very positive and illustrates the importance of providing a safe and empathic space for Mothers to share their personal stories, as well as their wisdom and support. It is a privilege to be a part of this group and witness courageous women tell their stories openly and honestly, across their screens and into the homes and hearts of those who understand, who don't judge and who know the importance of being heard.

"Thank you and your team for making the subject of adoption and the impact we feel more acceptable - being ostracised by family from a young age has a lifelong impact on the way we feel rejected/accepted (especially by our parents and siblings and later our children) and I appreciate all the effort to help us to make some sort of sense of it." - Adrienne

Parenting Adopted Adolescents Workshop

In early May PASQ hosted a special workshop to support parents of adopted adolescents. The workshop was focused around supporting parents to understand the very important role adolescence plays developmentally and how the impacts of adoption can show up at this stage of life. Through the lens of therapeutic parenting, we unpacked the 7 core issues of adoption, the adolescents changing brain and how parents can best support their children through this delicate period of life. There were lots of a-hah moments, sharing, learning from each other and great empathy from all our parents.

PASQ Upcoming Groups and Events

September Mothers Group

For those who have lost a child to adoption.

The next Mothers Group will be in September. We will send out further details closer to the date.

Once every two months a small group of mothers join facilitators from PARC and PASQ online to come together and chat in a supportive environment.

New members are always welcome. Register at the link [here](#).

For existing PASQ clients, you can register by emailing pasq@benevolent.org.au or 07 3170 4600 if you have any questions.

July Gold Coast Group

For anybody affected by adoption.

The next Gold Coast group will take place on 20th July 2022 at The Benevolent Society's Labrador office – 57 Billington St, Labrador.

This group is always a wonderful opportunity to share experiences, wisdom and to unpack relevant adoption theory such as the 7 Core Issues of Adoption, how we are impacted adoption but also how we can heal.

To register – complete our form [here](#).

Or, if you are already a PASQ client, email us at pasq@benevolent.org.au or call us on 07 3170 4600

July and August Therapeutic Parenting Course

Starting on Tuesday 26th July PASQ will join PARC in running a six-week Therapeutic Parenting Course online. The course is a great opportunity for parents of adopted children to come together and connect with other families with similar experiences and learn helpful skills and knowledge.

Therapeutic Parenting is based on a principle that parenting children who have different

backgrounds, and may have challenging behaviours, require some different skills and knowledge to that of parenting children with safe and secure backgrounds.

To register—complete our form [here](#).

Father's Day Morning Tea

For fathers who have lost a child to adoption.

On Wednesday 31st August, the PASQ and PARC teams will host an online morning tea for Father's who have lost a child to adoption to connect and share their experiences with one another. The event will be facilitated by PASQ and PARC counsellors. Email pasq@benevolent.org.au to register your interest in attending.



Adoption Literary Festival

Julia Kaylock (published author) in conjunction with PARC and PASQ are looking for people impacted by adoption, who are interested in being part of a working group to contribute ideas and assist in the planning of an Australian Adoption Literary Festival.

This project is in the beginning stages, if you would like to be involved please contact PARC.

Email: parc@benevolent.org.au

Phone: 02 9504 6788

10th Anniversary of the Queensland Government's Apology for Past Adoption Policies and Practices – save the date.

PASQ has commenced consulting with stakeholder groups and together, planning for the 10th Anniversary of the Queensland Government's Apology for Past Adoption Policies and Practices. The then premier Campbell Newman delivered the historic apology on 27th November 2012.



The ten year anniversary commemorative event will take place on Friday 25th November at Queensland Parliament House from 10am. A formal invitation will follow, with RSVP details later in the year.

Additionally, on Sunday 27th November 2022 PASQ staff, stakeholders, clients and other special guests are invited to attend Roma Street Parklands from 3.30pm at the memorial site (City View Saddle) for an informal gathering to share, reflect and remember. Further details will follow later in the year.

You're invited to contribute -

As a part of preparations for this event, we are inviting those affected by past adoption practices to share adoption related artwork or photos (that might pertain to previous anniversary events, the day of the apology or other advocacy efforts over the years that contributed to the apology event). Email pasq@benevolent.org.au with your contributions and we will send you a media consent form that is required for any contributions and to be signed by anybody who appears in photos.



Adoption—listening, reading and viewing.

Aidan and his Dads– Podcast

An episode from ABC's radio program, Days Like These.

This podcast follows Aidan's experience of meeting his biological Father in his late 20s: the mixed emotions he felt, the desire to know his heritage and the pull of loyalty to his adoptive father. As a stand-up comedian, telling jokes is his trade but the defining story of his life happened before he was born: when his mum was in her 20s, returning home after backpacking around South America and realising she was pregnant to her Colombian boyfriend. You can listen to the program here: <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/days-like-these/aidan-and-his-dads/13806638>



Our Father - Netflix Documentary

This Netflix Documentary depicts the true story of an American fertility doctor who used his own sperm to impregnate unsuspecting women (his patients) without their consent during the 1970s and 1980s. There have been reports that similar practices have occurred in Australia and in any case there are big complex ethical issues that exist in relation to donor conception practices around Australia and indeed the world. It is worth considering the overlaps between these practices and practices that occurred during the Closed Adoption era within Australia and being mindful of learning the lessons of the past to make the future better for those affected.

Ferera Swan

Ferera Swan is an Austin, Texas based adopted person, adoption activist, singer-song writer, recording artist, pianist and violinist. She grew up within the closed adoption system. Her songs tackle hard truths such as grief, shame, secrecy and trauma. Ferera wrote her first song about adoption at age 10 after learning she was adopted. Her most recent song-releases (March 2022 and April 2022) similarly tackle adoption themes. However, she says that her songs now come from a place of strength and self-awareness, hard fought for after years of pain and confusion.



In her song '[How to Love](#)' she addresses the legacy of abandonment trauma that adopted people live with. She says "Navigating trauma isn't a linear process. There are very complex, sometimes contradictory emotions, and two different things can be true at once". Ferera says that through allowing herself to explore what hurts, she's found purpose, self-compassion and the meaning of courage.

Adoption—listening, reading and viewing.

In another song titled '[To Say Goodbye](#)', Ferera Swan addresses the reality of many adoptees: that no matter how fulfilling their lives may be, they live with grief. She says "We grieve our mothers, families, our roots. I believe it's in allowing ourselves to hold grief and gratitude simultaneously - the integration of both - where we can truly discover healing".

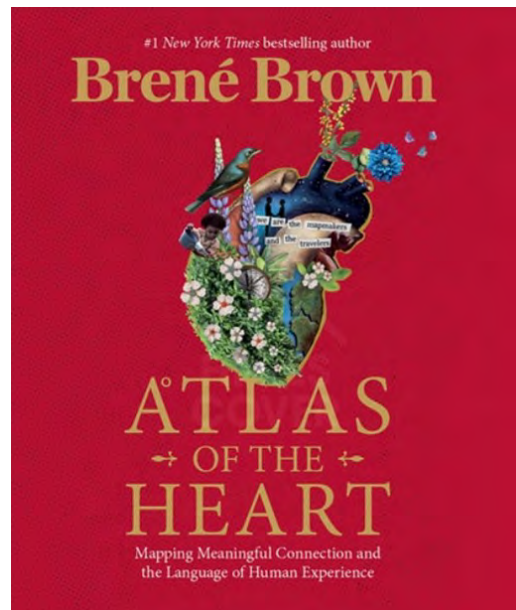
Cruella

This 2021 film tells the fictional untold backstory of one of Disney's most notorious villains Cruella de Vil. Spoiler alert - there is an adoption connection. The film does an exceptional job at highlighting the true to life struggles that many adopted people experience in trying to reconcile their two identities - biological and adoptive. The film is empowering as it highlights one possible way that this can be resolved: when the adopted person takes back their personal power and asserts who they choose to be as an adult (e.g. what their name will be and who they choose as 'family').



Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience - Brené Brown

Brené Brown's latest book has been described as "the framework for meaningful connection". In it, she explores eighty-seven different emotions that she believes, defines what it means to be human. She offers tools, skills and knowledge to guide her readers towards building more meaningful relationships and connection.



Need Support?

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

PARC: **02 9504 6788** (NSW)

PASQ: **07 3170 4600** (QLD)

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