

# Post Adoption News

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# Welcome to Post Adoption News

Welcome to our winter edition of Post Adoption News, where we explore the theme: the ebb and flow of connection.

In this edition we bring you several articles written by our readers that focus on this theme. We appreciate their generosity in sharing their stories and experiences with us.

We also provide an update on the various activities that have been keeping both the Post Adoption Resource Centre (PARC) and Post Adoption Support Queensland (PASQ) busy, including our six-week Therapeutic Parenting Course we ran back in February/March, our ABC monthly group on The Seven Core Issues of Adoption, a PARC trip to Canberra for the 10th Anniversary of the Federal Apology and our regular bimonthly Mothers Group.

As we move into the second half of 2023, we will keep you posted on what groups and events we have coming up, including very exciting news of Australia's inaugural Adoption Literary Festival which PARC has been working hard on with our committed working group made up of people with lived experience of adoption. We share details on how you can stay updated on the Literary Festival on page 18.

If you enjoy this edition of the newsletter or have any feedback, we would love to hear from you.

Happy reading and take care.

- PARC and PASQ Teams

## The ebb and flow of connection

When we think about the ebb and flow of connection, we can be exploring a few different aspects of the adoption experience.

The experience of reunion with family members can be up and down, with connection and communication waxing and waning, often in unpredictable ways. Within the adoptive family a sense of belonging and connection can also be a challenge for some. In another sense, our connection to ourselves and our sense of identity may be in a state of change at various points of our lives, ebbing and flowing. For many, it feels like they are constantly trying to feel better connected to their true self.

While no two adoption reunions are the same, almost all reunions will experience some sort of ebb and flow. There is usually a lot of apprehension and excitement in the lead up to a reunion and understandably, less thought may be given to what could happen a week, month, or year down the track. While the decision to contact a family member and the often-lengthy time it takes to search for them can feel difficult, usually the hard work comes in building the relationship after that initial contact. Much has been written about the 'honeymoon' phase of adoption reunion, where there is a lot of interest in each other, a desire to be around each other often and learn and connect as much as possible. However, we are also mindful that some people never have this experience of reunion for a wide range of reasons.

Following the initial connection, some feel disappointed when patterns of communication change, when text messages and phone calls slow down, or the other party retreats entirely. This may feel like a kind of rejection and can be deeply unsettling for all involved.

It is easy to focus on the negative feelings and emotions that come up as connection changes, however it's also important to remember why these shifts occur. Often, we need time to recalibrate during reunion, sometimes stepping back slightly and setting new boundaries with the new person or people in your life can be a way of protecting and taking care of yourself, particularly with complex relationships. In these instances, the natural ebb and flow can serve us well and we can make active choices about what we want and need from these new relationships.

As for connecting with ourselves, for people generally, but especially those affected by adoption - this will be shifting all through our life. There are times where we feel deeply connected to our sense of self, and at other times completely unsure of who we are and our place in the world. A stronger sense of connection to your own identity is built gradually over time and can be found by exploring your own interests and values, finding community, perhaps connecting with family members, being kind to yourself and remembering that who we are is always evolving.

In this edition we feature client stories that centre on the reunion experience. We share an excerpt of EJ Clarence's personal essay, *Dovetails*, that was published in the Literary Journal 'Overland' on her unique experience of finding and connecting with her mother as a teenager. We also have an article from Michael that is an accompaniment to his article published last edition that detailed the possibilities of DNA testing. This part of Michael's story focuses on what happens next, reunion - in all its complexities. We also share a poignant piece from Lyn on what brings hope.

## Dovetails

This is an excerpt of a longer essay by E.J. Clarence that was published on [Overland](#). To read the full story click here: [bit.ly/43Mxu9X](https://bit.ly/43Mxu9X)

My mother and father missed it all. Bunnykins to bomber jackets, dummies to cigarettes. I was raised somewhere else. Given another mum. A different dad. Handed around until I stuck like a stickle brick to my brand-new brother, who was also riding the magic carousel of secret adoption circa 1970.

Our shared reality was a fantasy land. All the colours cried themselves to a blur as our first families moved on without us.

I spent my childhood learning to speak like other people. Imprinting a way of dressing and eating and living like entirely other people. I was told to call them 'Mum' and 'Dad'. And I did.

Compliance was everything in the suburban household of Mum and Dad. I did whatever I was told until the tightly wound rubber band that bound me to my fictional family began to stretch and perish. At high school, it completely snapped.

At sixteen, all the other girls were playing records and watching *Home and Away*. Not me. I turned the TV off and followed the silvery streets and flashing lights all the way to the city to meet my mother.

Yes, that's right my mother. There, I've said it. My mother.

My *other* mother.

My *real* mother, my *biological* mother, or whatever it's fashionable to call her now. I was only ever born once, though the way I've lived I've had my doubts about how many times it's been. The whole routine has been confusing—for me, and for anyone else who's tried to follow along.

For most people, Mum and Mother are the same person.

For me they are as different as blood and air.

Mum raised me. But my mother birthed me.

Stuff that's usually bound up in the one package was split into two.

Bifurcated. Branched. Chaotic.

The whole idea of adoption is a mindfuck, really—especially secret adoption, or *forced adoption* as it's officially known—because it requires all the characters to pretend that a made-up story is real.

In the summer of the year that I turned 16, I put down the script. I went to Woollahra to meet my mother, and could not resist the force of her magnetism. I was drawn into a whole new life framed by iron-laced balconies and tessellated porches, beers after midnight and poodles pissing on every street corner on the eastern fringe of Sydney.

I made excuses to Mum and Dad. Told them I was going to town with friends, but there were no friends. My mother simply wanted me. She wanted to see me over and over and over, and I went.

She rang, she spoke, she hinted, and I went.

Walking. Waiting.

Catching buses and trains, I went, dragging my bags up the narrow lanes of painted terrace houses that lined the inner-city streets in messy rows.

It took two-and-a-half hours to get to my mother's house in the city.

A yo-yo unwinding.

Then two-and-a-half hours back to Mum's.

A yo-yo rewinding.

All that messy, looping string. A tangle of knots getting jammed in between.

At weekends the trip could take four hours, sometimes five, but that didn't stop me. A flick of the wrist and I was spinning, unspooling. Legs marching, arms swaying until I no longer knew

which town I was in. I practiced my hand-eye coordination until I could perform the whole trick and whirl from one existence to the other.

The train and bus routine kept my two worlds separate. It allowed both matriarchs to go on believing the other woman didn't exist. I had merely slipped into another room when I was out of sight, not another woman's house on the other side of town.

So little acknowledgement of the truth.

Swallowing the guilt made me sick. It was toxic. Poison. A vile medicine and I swallowed it down as a justified punishment for the crime of seeing my mother. I swallowed and swallowed, stepping out the recurring pilgrimage.

The buses from suburbia only ran now and then. Sometimes I had to start back almost as soon as I arrived in the city, but my mother never wanted me to leave.

Eventually I stopped going back to the suburbs at all. I was tainted by this extra life, this city life. I made my choices, and no longer felt so welcome in suburbia.

I took my shameful body with its shameful knowledge of this other life away on these shameful feet that led me to this shameful door of this other woman, and I made a plan never to step foot in suburbia again.

My mother seemed to think time could be caught in a paper cup, and she could drink in all the moments we'd missed. I skipped half a term of school while she told me all about her life, about the men who picked her up from her terrace house in chauffeur-driven limousines; about the lions she'd seen on safari in Africa; about the flights she'd chartered to the Snowies for weekend ski trips. She was not like the mothers of other kids at school.

The full article can be read online at Overland. Click the link here to read it: [bit.ly/43Mxu9X](https://bit.ly/43Mxu9X)

E.J. Clarence

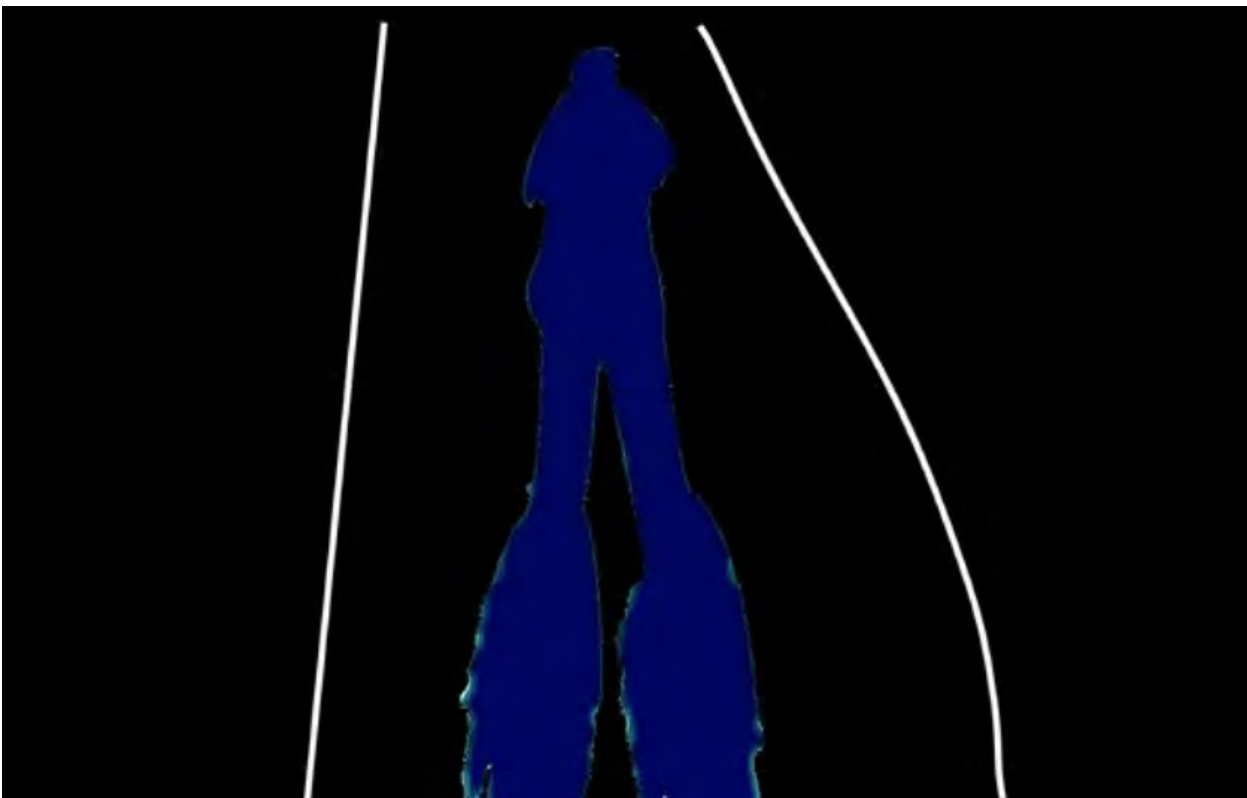
# My Body is a Public Space

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my body is a public space come in through the spinning turnstile punch in your token validate your ticket to a public square this public road takes you somewhere so you can modify whatever you want that's the deal when your name is a public space you can alter the look the feel go on take me I'm yours I'm anyone's really, activate your services so my owners get their cut no t&cs applied do as you please level up your demolition site unpack your pavers in the public place of my limbs then legally remove them deliver them claim them since my body is a communal space some place to hang out hang 10 hang your hipster tricks your narco trips your washing your socks your jocks hang it on me baby, open access, grab your family pass no limits no returns irredeemably yours since 1972 my body has been a public face upholding your decision on naming rights pull up a rug sit down on my grass roll out your towel all over my sand take my hand leave me where you want a stand in for your heritable aspirations my body is the perfect space to walk your poodle draw your doodle pin a tail on the donkey of your desire for social standing unimpeded unrestricted I'm your public domain no profit-a-prendre required my body is a space for your xmas tree your birthday glee a space for lunch or brunch your fruitful punch line no rights denied or asserted I'm your outdoor meeting room a pass off from someone else's womb my life is a public space for the unrestricted provision of hugs tugs kisses cuddles I'm you're modified improvement to the flaws in your genetic team your general scheme to whatever your behaviour usually means my urban redevelopment is yours too because my body is a specialised space no debate I'm your delegate your self-determination is my free enterprise agreement take two double the stakes make a centrepiece for your community integration my public space affects a lifelong benefit no need to demark my monument to your personal sacrifice you are the sole recipient of this private development opportunity from first conception to my inception my future always was a public space my arrival in the material form a convenient gate for you to latch or unlatch and yours to police or fleece your operational command obeyed my facility at your disposal my body is a public space

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E.J. Clarence's poem *My Body is a Public Space* was originally published on Adoptee Voices here: [bit.ly/42MC8mT](https://bit.ly/42MC8mT)





## The Ebb and Flow of Connection/ Reunion

In the last newsletter I touched briefly on some of the complexity in regard to reunion while giving a more detailed perspective of what a DNA test result may bring.

So where to now?

And that's the big question really isn't it.

**What is this thing called reunion?**

**What am I supposed to do or not do, as is often the case?**

The simple fact is that there is no guidebook or simple to do list here. In many instances we stumble blindly with thoughts and feelings outside our realm of experience and beyond our expectations. We are in a brave new world where the maps we have previously been accustomed too, are now, not only irrelevant but can also be deleterious. Every single adoption and reunion are unique and specific to the collection of humans entering into it. Even though every adoption shares similar themes and phases it is not a lineal or rational progression, and here's the rub. The actual start of the reunion may bring up a collection of unresolved emotions and unforeseen challenges. It is the proverbial Pandora's box! Feelings of loss, shame and guilt sit right next door to feelings of happiness and relief. The recognition of what has been lost and more

critically what has been taken, forces an identity disruption with the integration of this new information. This even doubly so if there is the knowledge that other family members knew and assisted in the adoption process or as in my case where no one knew; as I have been led to believe. This can be further complicated if a previous reunion was successful or not with the other parent. The only way I can describe this is if you can imagine a messy divorce, with 6 adults instead of the usual two; each competing for their own needs to be met; regardless of outcome.

Because I shared my story of search and rejection openly and the trauma involved, I believe this also scared people away. Each of my aunts (5) all stated if they had known they would have helped bring me up and that they believed that my grandmother, if she had known, would have done the same. This was nice to hear in some respects but also extremely painful with a lot of questions to ponder and imagine their outcomes and consequences.

Would my illegitimacy be hidden from me (and the wider community) with my grandmother or eldest aunt acting as parent and caretaker?

Would I have grown up thinking that my cousins were my siblings and vice versa?

Would I still be in the role of family scapegoat, and would I find out a history of untruth upon doing DNA?

And then what?

Would I have been allowed to grieve the loss of my mother, but more importantly would what happened to me be attended to appropriately?

Obviously, I have no answers to any of these impossible scenarios and immediately recognise this is not unlike the ghost kingdom of my childhood. See here: [bit.ly/46pMrAz](https://bit.ly/46pMrAz)

In contrast, my maternal aunt stated that if my mother had returned home pregnant, her parents would have thrown her out. Poverty and intergenerational trauma make horrible bedfellows. Though also painful, this knowledge allowed me to understand the lack of choice my mother had, coupled with removalist policy and practice of the early 70's. No help was offered to her. I have a copy of the statement she wrote at the time detailing her abandonment by my father including his promise to financially support her. As she was living a state away from any family or support structures, her lack of finances forced her decision in this way with the choice of no choice.

I was open with my desire to have my father's name added to my original birth certificate stating very simply this was to correct a historical wrong as well as him integrate the idea of taking ownership of the fatherhood he lost. This was not to be, and was misunderstood as a legalised attempt to collect some form of inheritance. This is a clear example of how the dominant narrative is so entrenched throughout the broader community and even in the adoption community itself. Unfortunately, this way of thinking is validated and supported within media and entertainment broadly with the damaged and malignant adoptee trope being so common. Cue The Joker, Loki, Dexter or the real-life Ted Bundy and Aileen Wuornos. For me, what this illustrates is the cultural recognition of the damage done developmentally through the premature separation of mother and infant. Problematically

though these stories then double down on this anti-social individual who bears the consequence of the failure of society in the first instance.

The inverse of this is the 'chosen one' trope, cue Harry Potter. In simple terms, Harry is entered (without consent) into a kinship care adoption agreement after the death of his parents. His maternal aunt and uncle were not only neglectful and hostile but lied to him regarding his origin, his parent's death and who he actually was. They were resentful and envious of Harry's parents and treated him with the same contempt. I see the comparison to what an LDA (late discovery adoptee) must go through that's all too painfully similar, gut wrenchingly so. Problematically, neither narrative illustrates clearly the intersection of policy and practice of removalist policy and the real-life experience of the child in care. The child in this case has no agency or choice and is simply the receiver of the choices made upon them. While the development of Harry in his hero's journey, integrating his history and newfound knowledge is beautifully written, we must pay particular attention to what was hidden from him in the first instance. 1 million points to Gryffindor I say.

So why enter into a reunion?

Even if you had asked me, I probably could not have given a definitive answer beyond the simple truth in knowing why I was abandoned in the first place. Most importantly the actual, real bare bones and ugly truth. In all instances the truth is always better than fiction when it comes to the lives we live. This is even more important when the truth is horribly painful. Difficult conversations are nothing in comparison to the lived experience of being so. In many ways I did not know what my needs were as this pattern was a default throughout my other relationships experiencing narcissistic abuse.

I recognise now my difficult honesty also activated their own unresolved trauma. I found that the emphasis and focus was more on where and how I may fit (or not) within the family structure as opposed to what my needs were. The important thing was to maintain an appearance of the status

quo with the communication with others staging he never knew. This was not true, and I simply shared the truth upon being asked.

The desire to manage the narrative and resulting conversation ultimately brought things to a standstill. I was given the ultimatum to talk and communicate specifically to immediate family members only or else. I calmly responded saying that by its very nature there will be a natural attrition rate here and the majority will return to their life unchained. This has proven to be correct. In addition, the facts as I saw them, was that we would not be where we were if it was not for my Aunt and our DNA match. I grew up without the knowledge of family and would not reject anyone wishing to communicate.

This has proven to be correct. That these changes were brought on quicker with arguments and (perceived) insults playing out over Facebook only added to the mix is something to consider. Social media is a great tool for connecting with others and in some instances, it may be the only way you are able to ascertain relationships. Obviously, this information alongside DNA may be the only way that a putative paternity be confirmed if the father is unnamed as in most cases. Communication is critical, and messenger is a great way to chat when there is distance between individuals. The option of video chat can add another dimension to communication, being able to see others and especially for us as a cohort to see and respond to family likenesses; in some cases, the first time in your life. As with all communication there can be issues. Unfortunately, social media may exacerbate arguments or misunderstandings. The adoptee is at a disadvantage here, not knowing anything about who talks to who, and who doesn't. Unfortunately, my arrival (and consequent departure) was affected in this way.

In doing DNA and my results going live, so to speak; I was met with the shock of not only finding a paternal aunt and cousins; but also receiving a message from my father's eldest sister, who was the eldest of the 9. I had not thought of any possibility of a 'match' because in my mind both

my mother and father had distanced themselves entirely. It just didn't cross my mind that my father would have siblings; I don't know how to explain this as I knew my mother was the eldest of four sisters. I can only think that in my mind my father was not as real as I did not have a lot of information (especially his last name) about him. What I did know about him was that 'he was mad about music', this little bit of information meant the world to me as I had always been enthralled and entranced by music beyond the norm. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree in this respect.

In doing my DNA, what made sense to me was to use my birth name for the account and result. I think this also makes sense genealogically speaking, in attempting to have true and correct identity documentation, with the option of entering a date for an adoption. My thinking and hope was that if I appeared in someone's results who shared the family name somewhere it might lead to a possible breakthrough; and it certainly did. Aunty's first message was simple enough stating we have lots of matches and that she was very excited, giving me her email to communicate directly; her second message stating she believed I was either a grandson or nephew much to her excitement. I know that neither of us slept that night, with me responding the next morning. It was a whirlwind of emails going back and forth with many questions and ultimately photos, finally seeing where I got my nose from.

Finally, I made contact with my father, and also his wife. At approximately the same time my arrival was announced to the other family members. This led to multiple friend requests over Facebook and adding me to a cousins and grandchildren's group. The issue here was that some cousins had made contact first before some of my sisters had the opportunity to do so. This was not handled well and added another level of anxiety to an already difficult situation; ultimately with my cousins being asked to take a step back. What I didn't know was the history of difficulties between my father's siblings and also competition and disagreements between my cousins. This was to have consequences later. During this time, we



communicated over the phone, via email and messenger with us having a video chat with all the family, including my sisters. I was totally floored. I could not believe how beautiful they were; and told them so through my tears. I have always worn my heart on my sleeve, much to my detriment.

Jan 04, 2018, my father and his wife flew to Sydney to meet us, with them staying at his brother's place an hour's drive away. They bought a large photo album with photos, dates and names, including my nieces and nephews. Not surprising, I was extremely emotional throughout the day together.

In all this, the adoptee is generally at a great disadvantage having to manage not only the expectations and relationships within their adoptive family but also the expectations and assumptions with the family entering reunion. This can be further complicated if the reunion was successful or not with the other parent. The only way I can describe this is if you imagine a messy divorce and there is no communication; now just imagine there are six parents in this picture.

I now have one sister and one cousin who still communicate with me on a regular basis, which I am extremely grateful for. We share bits and pieces of our lives and continue to do so; and it is really special.

Clarification - I categorically never use the grateful word, after being labelled an ungrateful little bastard throughout my life.

They are both traumatised by what has happened not only to me and themselves but also the actions of others throughout the family. Their lives and relationships are markedly different now because of this. Every now and then we will video chat and debrief and often laugh and cry together.

Other family members will like and comment on a post on social media, some when it is not about adoption and others will like most. And that is perfectly ok.

My reunion did not turn out as I wanted or how I thought it may. It has happened as it has and I can only manage the rest of what comes as it

does.

If you have survived reunion and continued to make a considered effort in holding space and allowing honesty and a growth mindset, my hats off to you! Doing this deep emotional, psychological, and biological work is painful but I think crucial. It may seem trite, but we can only heal what we feel. Denial and suppression lead ultimately to illness. In bringing light to the darkness of this part of shared family history and dysfunction we do the work to stop its continued legacy. As parents now we owe our children this freedom. Obliterating these family curses is the work, I believe; we are here for. For those of you who have had a reunion, and it has faltered or failed; I am so very sorry. Like most things in adoption, words fail us as there is nothing close to describing this experience. I would urge you to not give up and not give up on yourself because in the end whatever that may be, you are truly worth it.

Michael

## 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)

# Goodbye! Hello?

We never got to say hello, before you said goodbye.

We never got to live in truth, before you lived a lie.

Decades long of searching, have been my life's refrain,  
and when I finally found you, you were simply gone again.

The child that was unwanted, forsaken and denied,  
disallowed a mother's love or a father's pride.

Sorrow stained and broken down, moored in a sea of pain,  
Left to drift as dead, clinging to my mother's name.

You choose to quickly flee, and deny your promises,  
Packed them amongst your things and left everything unsaid.

What you failed to understand, to fathom or to see,  
was that you left your son behind, with a pain mythology.

The story I was given, and so adamantly told,  
was part of the exchange, with what was bought and sold.

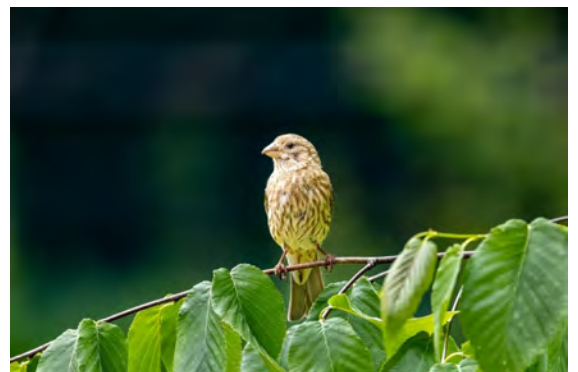
This never settled with me, because it wasn't true,  
It left me with a heart of hurt because there wasn't you.

My role was now a product, to fill a social need,  
To hide a bastard born and an infertility.

A mother is not replaceable and neither is a son,  
A father's not exchangeable, or maybe I am wrong?

Michael

This poem was originally published in a *West Words* publication. It was the *Living Stories* WINNER in the 18+yrs category.



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](#)

# What Brings Hope?

We all hope for something, a need for that one thing that will just make life better.

By being hopeful, we are more inclined to be motivated towards looking for ways to make that happen.

Dr. Judith Rich said **“Hope is a match in a dark tunnel, a moment of light, just enough to reveal the path ahead, and ultimately a way out.”**

As a little girl I had hope, high hopes, of growing up to be a teacher or librarian, finding my Gilbert Blythe and living in a quaint gabled cottage at Avonlea, just like Anne Shirley.

Clearly that never happened.

Sometimes Hope jumps off her end of the see saw and you fall with a thud. But even in those times when I was desperately sad, lonely, discouraged and afraid, I always hoped for something better, some good to come from the situations I found myself in.

Later I spent many years talking with cancer patients and their carers, trying to help them find hope, often in seemingly hopeless situations - remaining hopeful by trusting their health care team, the love of family and from the support networks around them.

## Hope meant not giving up.

A few years ago a friend from my writing group, whose journey through life was very different to mine, shared her amazing insight into how hope dramatically changed for her following a traumatic brain injury, and how she is adapting to this now vastly different life. I realised there really are times when hope disappears and we have to find other words and emotions to better understand and describe our feelings.

In relation to my personal adoption story, I always held onto hope, that one day the relationship would be accepted and understood. But how long can you wait, without acknowledgement, encouragement or a sign that will strike that match? How long do you put yourself through the pain?

I don't see it as completely hopeless, but I have learned to accept that sometimes hope does not spring eternal, and we seek out other avenues, other words or language to keep our dreams alive. I now try to look at the Potential, Possibility, or Prospect rather than live with doubt, despair, or discouragement.

Lyn—Tasmania



## Post-Traumatic Growth

In the lead up to the Spring edition of Post Adoption News we are asking if readers would like to share their stories of 'post-traumatic growth'

If you would like to write something please email us at **pasq@benevolent.org.au** and we can provide some guidelines for your submission.

# Book Review

## The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness & Healing in a Toxic Culture

Gabor Maté with Daniel Maté

The Myth of Normal is a big book. It is heavy, weighed down with years of Dr. Maté's experience, as a trauma-survivor, medical doctor and educator. This magnum opus is a bold diagnosis that our entire society is sick, suffering from chronic physical disease, mental illness and addictions. Maté strikes an evangelical note in this mission to diagnose what he labels our "toxic culture" for its materialism, individualism, patriarchal and racist foundations.

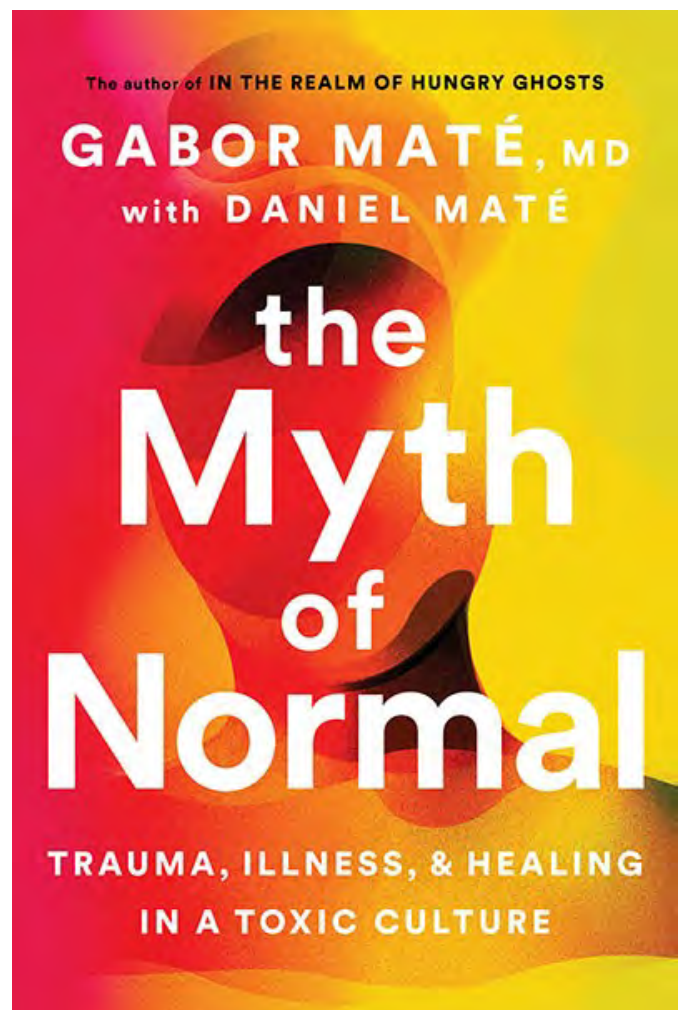
Dr. Maté begins by defining "trauma" in its Greek origin as "wound". He cites abundant evidence that links childhood trauma with later mental and physical illness. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study is used to map this trajectory from childhood trauma to disease, addiction and suicide.

Dr. Maté's chapter on Attachment vs. Authenticity rings true as he writes about how children adapt their behaviour to survive in their environment. What begins as coping mechanisms end in personality traits such as repression of anger, hyper-responsibility, compulsive concern for others while ignoring one's own needs. The coping styles from our earliest attachment relationship have been learnt and can be unlearned if we are willing to look honestly into our past and listen to our authentic self now.

After spending four parts of the book diagnosing the toxicities in our culture, Maté dedicates the fifth section to 'pathways to wholeness'. After chapters spent outlining what is wrong, the reader is ready for some hope, for a guide towards healing. In Dr. Maté's own words, 'The truth is, I don't know. In some ways I am more comfortable describing the problem than charting a course out of it.' This is patently obvious as he writes of having conversations with rheumatoid arthritis, following a cleansing diet to stop the spread of cancer and

finding Jesus through psychedelic drugs.

Perhaps the best advice Dr. Maté leaves us with is 'Compassionate Inquiry'; practicing non-judgement towards yourself and being curious about where your self-beliefs came from. Being as open, generous, patient and compassionate towards yourself as you would be towards a friend who is suffering. And finally, 'To Forgive is to grieve, for what happened, for what didn't happen and to give up the need for a different path. To accept life as it was and as it is.'



*The Myth of Normal can be purchased online. You may also find it at your local library.*

# Helpful Tools

Here are some ideas submitted by our readers recommending helpful tools that have assisted in their healing journey.

These may be things that you would like to explore yourself. Please feel free to share with us any other tools that have assisted you: [bit.ly/3pbPxau](https://bit.ly/3pbPxau)

## Breathwork: What is breathwork? And how could it help you?

Hi, my name is Nicky. I'm a transracial adoptee from South Korea. I've been on a journey of self-discovery and healing over the past few years and more recently I found the modality of breathwork.

Breathwork is a modality that can be relaxing, transformative and even healing. We can deliberately use our breath to activate or relax our nervous system. Inhaling is generally activating and energising. It activates our sympathetic nervous system. Exhaling is calming and relaxing as it activates our parasympathetic nervous system. So, taking in a deep breath and a big slow exhale can do wonders if we are feeling stressed or overwhelmed. Hot tip, make the exhale as slow as you can.

The kind of breathwork I enjoy and facilitate is like a journey. It's when a facilitator helps you identify a specific intention. For example, something you want to release, or you want to invite more of. Then over a period of time you use one or more repetitive breath patterns being guided by the facilitator's voice and accompanied with music.

The experience can feel relaxing, meditative, trance like, even be psychedelic, and sometimes using the breath pattern can just feel frustrating. It's different for every person and every time we breathe!

One of the things that comes up in the session are emotions. In our society, most of us don't get taught what to do with our emotions. So instead of allowing, processing, and releasing our emotions,

we end up suppressing and resisting them. The result of avoiding our emotions looks different for all of us, it can look like overeating, overspending, watching too much Netflix, drinking too much etc... So, when we have a place to allow and move through our emotions, there can be HUGE benefits. We can express and release our emotions with breath, potentially with sound and physical movement in a breathwork session.



The beauty of breathwork is that it's somatic (you use your body) and it's hard to avoid some of the benefits. They can include and are not limited to relaxation, bringing the body back to homeostasis, releasing tension and even reducing pain. We all experience trauma and stress in life, and I have come to understand that when we are not in the habit of expressing those emotions, they can be stored in our body.

The process of breathing with intention is a wonderful way to connect with our body and create healthier breathing habits.

The sessions can vary in length, and the types of affects are wide and different. At about the 8 minute mark we can drop into a meditative state which can help us connect with our intuition and

create clarity. Participating in breathwork can be a really enjoyable, pleasurable experience, it can also feel challenging, and it is always important to check that you don't have any reasons that might exclude you from safely practicing this beautiful modality.

You can read more on Nicky's website here:

[bit.ly/3NqsT7A](https://bit.ly/3NqsT7A)

## The Insight Timer Course - The Wisdom of Our Wounds - Healing from Trauma with Dr Megan Kirk Chang

Katherine shares her experience of the Insight Timer Course.

Trauma comes in all shapes and sizes and is largely denied by most of us unless it is as obvious as a rainy day. However, I have come to recognise my own trauma, while working through physical pain, anxiety, and an inability to cope with difficult and unresolved aspects of my life (as an adopted person) within the adoption triad. Finding myself in a constant state of anxiety and exhausting a plethora of tools, I came across Dr Megan Kirk Chang's course on Insight Timer.

Her Canadian, soft on the ear, accent and by revealing her own very real trauma, she creates a safe and trusting environment for each of the 15 days of the course: starting each session with the science behind trauma and its locations in the body and finishing with practical exercises, from breathing, bodily sensations and connectedness exercises you can take into your daily life. I'm on my second round of the course to consolidate my learning and to assimilate the exercises so that they become second nature to me in the moments I need them most.

## ICAFFS Mentoring Program

The national Intercountry Adoptee and Family Support Service (ICAFFS) operated by Relationships Australia is establishing a mentoring program in each state. The purpose of this program is to build connections between younger intercountry adoptees (under 18) and adult intercountry adoptees who will serve as mentors. The program may also include mentors from a CALD background who are not adoptees but who can share aspects of their culture with intercountry adoptees to support and enhance their cultural identity.

The program will take place through trauma informed, fun group activities that will allow safe, trusting, and positive relationships to form organically, and training for Mentors will be provided.

We are seeking mentors who are committed to providing consistent support over a period of time through regular attendance at group activities and who can demonstrate a readiness to become a mentor to younger adoptees.

If you would like to express interest in participating in this program, please contact Jane Sliwka on [J.Sliwka@rasa.org.au](mailto:J.Sliwka@rasa.org.au) to chat about this further.



## PARC & PASQ Update

### Therapeutic Parenting

Earlier this year, PARC and PASQ together facilitated a 6-week online evening course, 'Therapeutic Parenting', for parents of adopted children. Therapeutic Parenting is based on the principle and understanding that parenting children who may have experienced adverse early life experiences may have challenging behaviours that require a different set of skills and knowledge, to that of children with secure and safe beginnings.

The course covered themes such as brain development, impact of trauma and attachment disruption, regulation and dysregulation, triggers and the models and tools of Therapeutic Parenting. As reflected in the feedback, participants appreciated that the group offered a

space for psychoeducation, peer support and connection. If you are interested in attending a future Therapeutic Parenting Course, please email PARC ([parc@benevolent.org.au](mailto:parc@benevolent.org.au)) or PASQ ([pasq@benevolent.org.au](mailto:pasq@benevolent.org.au)) to be added to our mailing lists.

### Mothers Group

PARC and PASQ run a regular online mothers' group, where every second month we meet online, and conversation occurs around a central theme. In April we discussed the theme *managing when emotions overwhelm*, and in June we talked about *giving yourself permission*.

Our next group will be on Tuesday 8th August 10am—12pm. Get in touch with PARC ([parc@benevolent.org.au](mailto:parc@benevolent.org.au)) or PASQ ([pasq@benevolent.org.au](mailto:pasq@benevolent.org.au)) if you would like to

## PASQ Update

Contact us on 07 3170 4600 or [pasq@benevolent.org.au](mailto:pasq@benevolent.org.au)

## Groups and Events

### Adoption, Belonging & Connection (ABC)

PASQ has started the year with a series of groups focusing on the 7 core issues and their impacts on people who are adopted. Together we have worked through some tough topics including Loss, Rejection and Shame. The groups have allowed for participants to share their experiences and stories on the topic, and also how they support and empower themselves in their day to day lives. Despite the diversity in their experiences of adoption in the group, each member shows up with courage, vulnerability, and strength to share. It's been a hugely inspiring group, where we not only create space for the difficulties but also actively practice the self-compassion and self-acceptance we are all so deserving of. If you'd like to find out more or attend our next group on Grief please email [pasq@benevolent.org.au](mailto:pasq@benevolent.org.au) or call us on 07 3170 4600.

### Coming Up! Gold Coast Connection Group

The Gold Coast Connection Group runs bi-monthly throughout the year. The dates for the remaining groups are August 2, October 4 and December 13. The group is for everyone impacted by adoption. It provides a safe place for all members to discuss their journey. Feedback from group members about the benefits of this group are 'that it allows them a safe space to talk about the issues associated with adoption with people that truly understand how they are feeling'. There is no 'set agenda' for each meeting, facilitators provide a safe space for members to talk about current policy changes, issues impacting forced adoptions and their personal journey. Last group meeting we had two very talented group members who brought in their artwork and poetry which depicted their journey through the forced adoption era. For more information or to register to attend our next group in August, contact us on [pasq@benevolent.org.au](mailto:pasq@benevolent.org.au) or 07 3170 3600.

# PARC Update

Contact PARC on 02 9504 6788 or [parc@benevolent.org.au](mailto:parc@benevolent.org.au)

## Commemoration for the 10th Anniversary of the National Apology

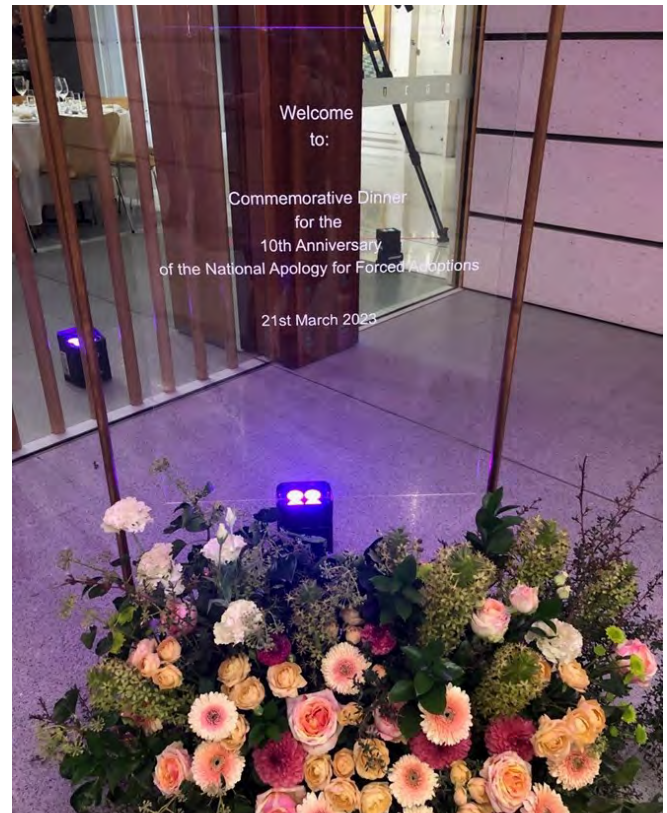
On Tuesday the 21<sup>st</sup> and Wednesday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, an event to mark the 10th Anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoptions was held in Canberra. To begin proceedings, a live panel discussion was held at the National Archives offices to examine *"Saying Sorry: Do National Apologies Change the World?"* The panel was moderated by Paul Barclay from ABC's Big Ideas, and the speakers were former Minister, Jenny Macklin, the Hon Nahum Mushin AM, Professor Michelle Arrow, and Ms Rosemary Baird.

There was lively debate about the impact of adoption and whether adoption is still relevant when kinship or guardianship orders would allow a child to keep their identity and maintain the link to their family and heritage. To view a recording of the panel discussion and hear more about the speakers, follow this link: [bit.ly/43SWHPV](https://bit.ly/43SWHPV)

On Tuesday evening, a Commemoration Dinner was held at the National Portrait Gallery. A speech was made by The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Social Services, on behalf of former Prime Minister the Hon Julia Gillard AC, who was unable to leave the UK with COVID. She spoke of the Apology in 2013 and reiterated Ms Gillard's words, labelling the practices of forced adoption illegal and shameful.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, guests were escorted to the House of Representatives to hear a Statement, again delivered by Minister Rishworth. It was announced that \$700,000 would be made available to access adoption-trained mental-health professionals in aged care, Allied Health, and Forced Adoption Supports Services across Australia.

Bipartisan support was reaffirmed by Prime Minister, The Hon Anthony Albanese, MP, and Leader of the Opposition, The Hon Peter Dutton MP. To read Minister Rishworth's Statement, click this link [bit.ly/42RkHSd](https://bit.ly/42RkHSd)



While there were mixed emotions around the event and the Statement delivered in Parliament, attendees described this as an opportunity to draw strength from each other, be understood by others with lived experience and continue to advocate for the rights of the adoption community to be heard and recognised for the suffering they have endured.



# PARC Update

Contact PARC on **02 9504 6788** or [parc@benevolent.org.au](mailto:parc@benevolent.org.au)

## Groups and Events

### Mother's Day Morning Tea

On Tuesday the 9th of May, PARC hosted a small online Mother's Day Morning Tea. Understanding that Mother's Day in the adoption community is a complex day, we were pleased to be able to provide a space for mothers to come together to provide and experience peer support. We unpacked the questions "do I have the right to call myself a mother?" and "what does being a mother mean"? Checking in around how our mothers might look after themselves on the day, some said spending time with family or friends is helpful while for others, choosing to be alone to honour their loss was important. All agreed it was an important day to practice compassion for self.

### Adoption, Belonging & Connection

The ABC – Adoption, Belonging and Connection – group, has been meeting the second week of every month since March. There was so much demand for this group that the PARC team had to split it into three sessions; across a Wednesday afternoon and Thursday evening. Each group is centred around a theme from 'The Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency' by Rosia and Maxon. So far, we have discussed Loss, Rejection, Shame & Guilt and Grief. The next few months will cover Identity, Intimacy, Mastery & Control and finally, a wrap-up session in October. The groups are made up of a diverse mix of people who have been walking with PARC through their adoption stories, some new arrivals and others, seasoned travellers. The wisdom that is brought to each group, the empathy extended as others share their stories, is a privilege to witness. Thank you to each participant.

## Coming Up!

### Parramatta Connections Meeting

On Thursday 29th June PARC is heading to Parramatta for a Connections Meeting. This is an opportunity for people affected by adoption and their family members to come together and connect. The meeting will include an introduction from PARC, some informal discussion and the chance to ask questions of the PARC facilitators. This meeting is open to people who are adopted, parents, adoptive family members and other loved ones. If you would like to come along, please contact the PARC Team on **02 9504 6788** or [parc@benevolent.org.au](mailto:parc@benevolent.org.au). RSVPs are essential.

### Literary Festival, Save the Date!

In November, PARC in partnership with a working group of people with lived experience of adoption are hosting Australia's first Adoption Literary Festival. The festival aims to showcase the varied adoption experiences and stories in an Australian context, amplifying the voices of lived experience and highlighting the lifelong nature and complexities of adoption.

The festival will include a day of panels on Saturday 4th November 2023 and will be hosted online. There will also be a writing workshop on 26th November. There will be limited spots for this workshop, more details on how you can purchase a ticket will be available shortly. To be added to our mailing list for the Literary Festival please email [parc@benevolent.org.au](mailto:parc@benevolent.org.au).



# Adoption—reading, listening and viewing

## Scotland's Apology

First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon has issued an apology to people affected by the practice of forced adoption. *"Adoption UK now calls on other UK governments to follow Scotland's lead in issuing a formal apology to all those who have been affected by forced adoptions, and to meet the needs of all adopted individuals who would benefit from support."*



The apology in Scotland follows others around the world. In 2013, Australia issued the world's first government formal apology for forced adoption, taking responsibility for the practice.

You can read more about it here: [bit.ly/3pdly0G](https://bit.ly/3pdly0G)

## Welsh government apologises for 'immoral' forced adoptions.

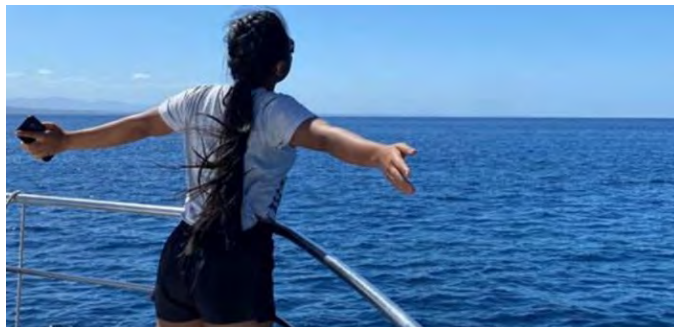
The Welsh government has formally apologised for the "life-long heartbreak" caused by forced adoptions. The Welsh government's apology came a month after Scotland's former First Minister Nicola Sturgeon's apology on the same issue, and 10 years after Australia said sorry for forced adoption practices. You can read more about it here: [bit.ly/42J8xuJ](https://bit.ly/42J8xuJ)

## 'Why a childhood holiday was the most meaningful event of Anna's life'

"Anna was adopted from the Philippines at 10 years of age to Australia. The adoption did not work out and she was placed into emergency

care when she was 12. A second adoption when she was 13 also fell through. Anna, who is now 18, says moving from place to place left her with depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). An innovative program that aims to provide vulnerable children with human connection, stable relationships, and positive emotional memories has assisted Anna begin to heal from the trauma she has endured."

You can read the full article here: [bit.ly/3Xf015m](https://bit.ly/3Xf015m)



## 'As a 'closed adoptee', family trees are stressful'

*"When my daughter announced a school family tree project, I felt exhausted from the years I'd spent searching and all the unanswered questions I had. We all pay the price of closed adoption: a lifetime of forced family separation."*

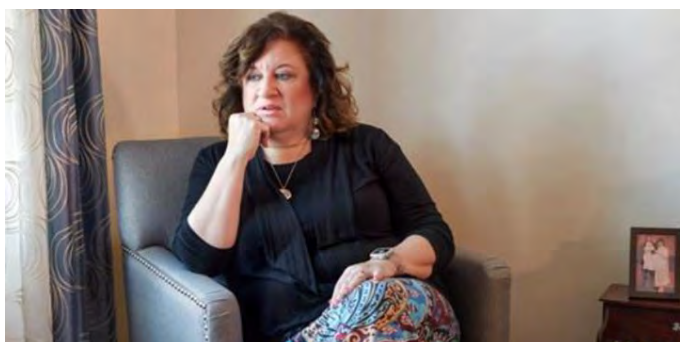
In this SBS Voices article, Sandra Moon writes about her experience of adoption and the ongoing effects it has on her life. You can read the full article here:

[bit.ly/3NDtQcQ](https://bit.ly/3NDtQcQ)

## 'Living in Adoptions Emotional Aftermath'.

"In order to be adopted you first have to lose your entire family," Deanna Doss Shrodes says. A powerful and heart wrenching piece from the New Yorker that articulates the complexity of adoption for all involved." You can read the full article here:

[bit.ly/3Naxqto](https://bit.ly/3Naxqto)



# Adoption—reading, listening and viewing

## Government marks ten year anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoptions.

On the 10th Anniversary of the Australian Federal Government's Apology for Forced Adoptions, an announcement was made by Minister for Families and Social Services, Amanda Rishworth that additional funding will be made available to support those impacted by adoption. You can read the full article here: [bit.ly/42PdLF2](https://bit.ly/42PdLF2)

## 'I went to the forced adoption apology with my daughter'.

In this ABC article, Sandra Moon shares her experience of attending the 10th Anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoption in Canberra earlier this year. Moon decided to bring her daughter to the apology to give her an insight into what happened to her. You can read the full story here: [bit.ly/42lqh9q](https://bit.ly/42lqh9q)

## Sydney Film Festival



The annual Sydney Film Festival was hosted earlier this month, and the program this year included a number of stories on family separation and adoption. We hope some of them will be released in cinemas and on streaming sties in the coming year so keep an eye out for the following films:

***Kindred*** (Directed by Adrian Russell Wills, Gillian Moody)

'A journey into the emotional landscape of family, love and loss of two close friends, both Aboriginal, who were adopted by white families and have connected back with their bloodline families.'

Read more about it here: [bit.ly/3Joj5sd](https://bit.ly/3Joj5sd)

***The Last Daughter*** (Directed by Brenda Matthews, Nathaniel Schmidt)

'A poignant documentary co-directed by and featuring Wiradjuri woman Brenda Matthews on a journey to find her white family – and uncover the truth about her abduction.'

This film is now on general release in cinemas.

Read more about it here: [bit.ly/42N8mOR](https://bit.ly/42N8mOR)

***The Quiet Migration*** (Directed by Malene Choi)

'A Korean adoptee, raised in the pastures of rural Denmark, struggles with identity and dislocation in Malene Choi's surreal meditation on transracial adoption. Berlinale 2023.'

Read more about it here: [bit.ly/3XfsEPW](https://bit.ly/3XfsEPW)

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