

Intercountry Post Adoption Services

What are The Benevolent Society's post adoption services?

The Benevolent Society is a non-government organisation. It began providing post adoption services in NSW in 1991 through the Post Adoption Resource Centre (PARC). PARC is a state-wide service originally intended to assist with the implementation of the NSW Adoption Information Act (1990) which enabled adopted people and parents to find each other and make contact. In February 2010, The Benevolent Society launched Post Adoption Support Queensland (PASQ) funded by the Queensland government due to the enactment of the Adoption Act 2009 which has made it easier for parents and people who were adopted to find each other in the state.

Our post adoption services offer counselling to anyone affected by adoption, assist in the search process, act as intermediaries, assist local mutual and peer support networks and educate the community and helping professionals on adoption issues. In recent years we have become more involved with people who were adopted from overseas and with parents who need support in their parenting.

What is our position regarding inter-country adoption?

Our focus is exclusively on the post adoption needs of all parties, as we have no role in assessment or approval of applicants for adoption. Philosophically our position is that adoption should be essentially child-centred, and that frequently the most effective way of meeting the needs of a child is by supporting the family. We acknowledge the principles outlined in the Hague convention. We believe that every child deserves a supportive family in which to grow up. The preferred option is that a child be raised in their original biological family, but if this isn't possible, they should join another family, preferably in their country of birth, but otherwise in another country.

We fully recognise that the great majority of children adopted from overseas grow up well-adjusted, but a significant minority experience distress arising from the added challenges of being adopted. Our research is showing that the availability of professional post adoption services in these circumstances is generally experienced as most inadequate. Where there is access to services, specific expertise regarding transracial adoption may be lacking, or parents sometimes feel judged by professionals from whom they seek assistance, hence creating added barriers to receiving help.

We're keen to develop working relationships with others in the adoption community, with a view to expanding the provision of much-needed services responsive to the needs of intercountry adoptive families.

What has The Benevolent Society provided so far?

1. Counselling

Qualified social workers, counsellors and psychologists, experienced in this specialised field, are available to talk through issues of loss, identity, family relationships, parenting and its challenges and the various impacts of being a transracial adoptive family.

2. Therapeutic Parenting Workshops

Parc runs a Therapeutic Parenting Programme for parents of children adopted from overseas and who have come from a traumatic background. This programme is a 6 week course with follow up and an opportunity to connect with other parents in the adoption community. The programme was developed in South Australia and is based on Bonding and Attachment Theories.

3. Library, including postal library

We have a postal library which has expanded to include a range of books on topics of parenting, attachment, cultural/racial identity, racism and the more practical aspects of intercountry adoption.

4. The Colour of Difference

This book was a PARC project, intended to give voice to the experiences of 27 Australian people who had been adopted from overseas, and ideas on how to best make intercountry adoption work. This has been the basis for speaking at a number of forums in other States around Australia.

5. Referral

We assist people to find services which meet their specific needs in the area they live in

6. Internet-based services

We offer support via e-mail and have a number of articles on our web site relevant to intercountry adoption. We welcome personal stories, accounts and articles from those affected by adoption.

7. Research

Our research into the service needs of intercountry adoptive families and people who were adopted has involved a survey, interviews, study of literature and research, and data collection on services currently available.

8. Resources:

We compile resource lists which can be used by self-help networks regarding potentially useful services, therapists, books and articles.

9. Advocacy

We see our role as including advocacy for improved provision of services.

10. Feedback

We're always happy to receive feedback on our existing services or ideas for new service development.

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

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