

Bits & Pieces

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Welcome to Bits & Pieces Summer Edition

Bits & Pieces is a quarterly newsletter produced by Jigsaw Qld. In each edition we aim for a mix of stories and information encompassing various perspectives relating to adoption. It also includes stories & information about our Forced Adoption Support Service (FASS). If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please email us at support@jigsawqld.org.au.

The summer edition demystifies peer support, FASS CEO Trevor Jordan questions 'how much we want to know?', and Queensland commemorates the 11th anniversary of the apology for forced adoptions.

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Demystifying Peer Support

Remembering that every volunteer and group facilitator in Jigsaw Qld has been affected by adoption, it's no wonder that the regular monthly meetings receive consistently positive feedback from past and present participants. If you are concerned about these meetings, please don't be. They are a safe and caring space, even if you're not sure why you are there. No one is made to contribute their story, no one has to 'do' anything, but attendees seem to be able to get just what they needed to help them on their journey. Each person has their own reason for coming and also their own reaction and benefit from being involved. As we listen with respect, we find commonalities and differences in our stories. Our pains and joys are not the same as those of others, even though they may be founded upon similar experiences of grief and loss. Listening to each other's stories we find hope that change and growth are possible.

Jigsaw Qld facilitates three free support groups in the ground floor meeting room of our headquarters - SANDS House, 505 Bowen Terrace, New Farm. There is free parking in the surrounding streets and the closest bus stop is #13 on Merthyr Road, New Farm - approximately a 5 minute walk away.

When you arrive at the SANDS house you'll notice the chain link gate behind the right side driveway is open and a welcome sign will point you through the green timber gate under the house and into the open door of the meeting room. We'll have tea, coffee and biscuits set up for the meeting.

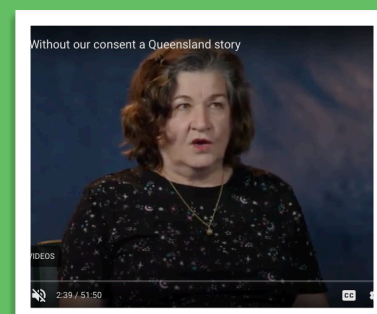


SANDS House - the ground floor meeting room entry is to the right.

Mothers' Morning Tea is for mother's who have experienced separation from their children by adoption. It is held bi-monthly from 10am to 12 noon on the 3rd Wednesday of Jan, March, May, July, Sept & Nov.

Have you watched the *Without Our Consent: A Queensland Story* oral history yet? The interviews feature a mother who was forced to give her child up for adoption (Anne), an adoptee (Jo), and a father who was coerced into placing his son for adoption (Alan). It also includes interviews with representatives of post adoption organisations and Queensland politicians.

This video is a must watch for anyone affected by adoptions between 1950 and through the 1980s. You can watch it here: <https://www.jigsawqueensland.com/without-our-consent-a-qld-story>





Follow the arrows.

Adoptee Support Group is a group for adopted persons. Many attendees have told us that attending this group is the first time they have felt understood. The Adoptee group is held from 1.30pm to 3.30pm on the 2nd Saturday of Jan, March, May, July, Sept and Nov.

Open Support Group is open to anyone affected by adoption. You are even welcome to bring a partner or a friend along for support. It is an opportunity to hear from other



The meeting room is through the green gate behind Heather.

perspectives in the adoption triangle. Open meetings are held from 1.30pm to 3.30pm on the 2nd Saturday of Feb, April, June, August, October & December.

Our meeting guidelines are:

- Always listen with respect.
- Only one person speaks at a time.
- Be considerate of those present.
- Everyone is responsible for their own contribution.
- It's always your choice whether to contribute or just to listen.
- We agree to maintain confidentiality, nothing leaves this space.
- We are here to talk about adoption.



Tips on getting the most out of Jigsaw Support Groups:

Attend a support group before you NEED to attend a support group. Don't put it off! Things can sometimes happen quickly in adoption. You will not only learn some new things, but also make some good connections that could prove helpful in the future.

Come more than once. Jigsaw support groups are open to the public and all people affected by adoption to attend. It is hard to form a judgement about the benefit of the group for

yourself without coming to at least a few meetings.



Meeting room set up for our recent open day.

Appreciate similarity and difference. Everyone coming to a Jigsaw support groups has been affected by adoption in some way. Many of us have common experiences, but our individual stories can also be very different. Some are hopeful and even excited about their search and reunion, while others can be sad, despondent and, perhaps, even angry. In the group we support each other in allowing these feelings to be expressed in positive ways that keep us moving forward.

Know why you are attending. We all come to the support group for a reason. For some, it is because we have only just started to think seriously about searching for a relative and the possibility of having a reunion. Others are not sure this is what they want and seek an opportunity to listen to others who've been down that road before. And others come because they have already been contacted by a relative. Adoptees and mothers sometimes find it easier to attend their respective support groups at first. Attending the Open Support Group meeting can help us understand what it looks like from the other side.

Are you a facts or feelings type of person?

Some come to a support group very task focussed - seeking help on how to get their information and looking for tips about how to find people. Others come for emotional support, taking the opportunity to share their feelings with others. We call these the outward and inner journeys of adoption. Whatever your reason for coming, be assured: you are on *both* journeys.



“There is something comforting about being in a room with a group of people and not having to say a word to know that they genuinely understand what I am feeling.”

Support is a two-way street - keep coming. In the initial stages you may be seeking a lot of support from the group, but it is a good idea to keep in mind that your attendance encourages others as well. Continuing to attend a group, even after your own immediate needs are met gives something back, and we can always be surprised by the new thing we learn at each meeting.

Do homework. Literature is available at all meetings. Read what you think will be suitable to you. The group facilitators can make helpful suggestions.

Further help is available. Support groups cannot meet all your emotional needs. Some will want to explore issues at a deeper level. Jigsaw's Forced Adoption Support Service (FASS) is available Mon to Friday from 9am to 5pm and group facilitators can provide you with names of other organisations familiar with adoption-related issues who can provide face-to-face counselling.

While we would love to facilitate more peer support groups in alternative venues and in regional areas, our facilitators are trained and experienced volunteers who commit to regularly giving up their free time to ensure consistency and this limits our capacity.

How much do we want to know?

By Dr Trevor Jordan

As adopted persons, we can become very preoccupied from time to time with the seemingly simple question: "Who am I? 'It's a question that other people rarely have a need to ask themselves.



Our personal identity is the combined product of two things that have shaped us: our story and our network of relationships. For example, when someone asks us who we are, or wants to get to know us, we sometimes simply start by telling our story, a kind of capsulised biography or progress-to-date report. Another way to answer the question is to say who we are related to. And

describe the network of relationships that we are a part of.

For adopted persons, both these quite normal approaches can be a problem. When we share our story, the early chapters are often missing. Significant characters in our story are also missing. A classroom exercise as simple as doing a family tree can create panic or sadness for an adoptee and we have family orchards rather than family trees.

It is not surprising, then, that adoptees are quite driven when it comes to finding out the truth and getting as much information as they can about their history and their family of origin. This can be equally important to parents who lost children to adoption, because the system asked them to keep a significant part of their story secret and denied them knowledge of their children.

These secrets and broken relationships can disrupt our personal identity and by finding out the truth we can both re-story and restore relationships. It is not surprising that we should want to know everything and to believe that this is a simple road to family reunion and a blissful overcoming of our past disappointments.

But how much are we really prepared to know? Through my own journey and working as a peer support person at Jigsaw for over twenty years, I know that our answer to this can change over time and that our ability to handle whatever truths come our way requires some emotional maturity and levels of self-awareness that can swiftly abandon us in the sometimes turbulent and emotion-laden waters of adoption search and reunion.

I am not saying we need to retreat into our emotional closets. But we do need to be better prepared.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

Do you have a story to tell? If so, we'd love to hear from you. We regularly feature personal stories, poems and articles in our newsletter and on the website, or you can submit a form to be interviewed on the podcast. Email us at support@jigsawqld.org.au or go to www.jigsawqueensland.com/adopt-perspective to fill in the podcast prospective guest form.



Some things that might help.

1. Think about attending a peer support group where you can hear a variety of stories from people like yourself who have had often widely different outcomes. Learn about the real highs and lows from real people and how they coped. Share your story and your hopes but also listen and learn. In fact, if your support group members all have the same experience or pressure you to have the same experience, or you find yourself agreeing or changing your story just to fit in, it's probably time to leave because groupthink has set in.

2. Be hopeful but keep fantasies in check. Finding out the truth and making connections can be incredibly healing, but the truth can be brutal and sad sometimes. Without losing hope, manage your expectations. Have personal, professional and peer supports already in place to help you deal with positive and negative outcomes.

3. Some truths are only for sharing with trusted friends. Expecting the whole truth without first building a trusting relationship is unrealistic. If you are treating your relatives as a data mine, they will feel used. They are not an information resource, they are people. And don't overshare. People don't have to know everything all at once. Take time to build a relationship.

4. It's a two-way street. It's surprising how many people ask us to help them find out everything we can about other people but don't want a relationship or even to give the other party any information.



5. Try to build an adult-to-adult relationship, not a parent-child relationship. I know, you are a parent and child, but you are a parent and adult child. It is better to let parent and child mutual responsibilities emerge naturally. Approaching a possible reunion expecting to be reparented is letting your inner child take control. Reunions

are for grown-ups. If you've had a difficult adoption experience, get support and work on it, don't let a messy past mess up your present.

6. Nobody is perfect. Take time to forgive yourself and others. Remember adoption has lifelong impacts and past adoption experiences can be traumatic. We are all wounded storytellers in the adoption community. Sometimes we have dealt with the past in unhelpful ways through avoidance, denial, overthinking, and addictions. It's time to be open-minded and open-hearted and just give ourselves and others a chance to make mistakes and try again.

Dr Trevor Jordan awarded OAM



The Management Committee of Jigsaw Queensland is thrilled to share that our CEO (and former President), Trevor Jordan is the recipient of the Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia in the General Division for service to the community through a range of roles.

We congratulate Trevor for guiding our organisation for more than two decades. Articulate, humble, influential and ethics-



Trevor receives his OAM medal from the Governor of Queensland, The Hon Dr Jeannette Young.

focused, Trevor has had a positive impact on the adoption community in Queensland and nationally.



Dr Trevor Jordan OAM pictured with his proud family.

We acknowledge that he also had his own adoption journey to navigate while continuing to support others on many Saturday afternoons at our support groups. Congratulations!

11th anniversary of State Apology Anniversary



Jigsaw's Heather Hermann, Jo Sparrow and FASS CEO Trevor Jordan at the 11th anniversary event.

A morning tea was held at The Normanby Hotel following a rose laying ceremony at Roma Street Parklands on the 27th of November to commemorate the 11th anniversary of the Queensland Apology for Forced Adoptions.

Following the rose laying ceremony, more attendees gathered at The Normanby Hotel where video messages were delivered from the Benevolent Society's Executive Director of Child, Youth & Family, Linda Griffiths and The Hon Craig Crawford MP, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Seniors and Disability Service.

Jigsaw President Jo Sparrow also spoke at the event about the importance of information and support and the impact Adopt Perspective podcast guests sharing their stories has had around the world. The annual event is funded by the Queensland Government and is organised

by the Queensland post adoption working committee - the Benevolent Society's Post Adoption Support Queensland (PASQ), Association for Adoptees Inc, ALAS, Origins & Jigsaw Queensland Inc.

2023 / 24 Events

The below dates are our scheduled meeting dates for 2023 / 24.

To keep up with the latest information or changes, please keep an eye on our website and Facebook page.

Adoptee & Open Meetings and Mothers' Morning Teas are held on the ground floor of SANDS House, 505 Bowen Terrace, New Farm.

Participation at the groups is free for members (suggested \$5/head donation for non-members).

Open Support Group - (1.30pm to 3.30pm) 9 Dec 2023 (Christmas break up, bring a plate to share). 2024 - 10 Feb, 13 April, 8 June, 10 Aug, 12 Oct, 14 Dec.

Adoptee Support Group - (1.30pm - 3.30pm) 2024 - 13 Jan, 9 Mar, 11 May, 13 July, 14 Sept & 9 Nov.

Mothers' Morning Tea - a regular morning tea from 10am to 12 noon (address above) 2024 - 17 Jan, 20 Mar, 15 May, 17 July, 18 Sept & 20 Nov.