

# BITS & PIECES

JIGSAW QLD INC | NEWSLETTER | 2018 SPRING EDITION

## 2018 Events

To keep an eye on Jigsaw's events for 2018 and beyond, visit [www.jigsawqueensland.com/events](http://www.jigsawqueensland.com/events).

## Upcoming Groups

Jigsaw's support groups have experienced an increase in numbers since late 2015. Meetings are held on the ground floor of SANDS House, 505 Bowen Terrace, New Farm from 1.30 - 3.30pm.

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

**Adopted Person Support Group**  
- 10 Nov

**Mother's Support Group** - 17 Nov  
*(For mothers who have experienced separation from their children by adoption).*

**Open Support Group** - 13 Oct, 8 Dec (this meeting will double as an end of year celebration).

**Sunshine Coast Adoptee Group** - 20 Oct, 15 Dec at Maroochy Neighbourhood Centre, 2 Fifth Ave, Cotton Tree.

## Jigsaw Queensland Inc.

Understanding, Support & Information for all those with adoption in their lives.



## Remembering the legacy of forced adoption

**Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH) has unveiled a plaque and honoured the people who campaigned to raise awareness of forced adoption practices that were once prevalent throughout Australia.**

RBWH led the way in 2009 by being the first hospital in Australia to apologise for forced adoptions.

The Royal's Executive Director of Women and Newborn Services at the time, Professor Ian Jones, was instrumental in issuing the apology on behalf of the hospital and returned to unveil the plaque along with then Women's and Newborn Services Nursing and Midwifery Director Noelle Cridland.

The project to develop a memorial plaque began in 2017 was funded by the Australian Department of Social Services. The project committee included stakeholders from Adoption Loss Adult Support (ALAS), Association for Adoptees, Jigsaw Qld and Origins Qld.

The plaque, designed by Inkahoots Design in association with stakeholder groups, will increase public awareness of forced adoption practices of the past.



Professor Ian Jones and Senator Claire Moore joined members of stakeholder groups to unveil a plaque honouring those who campaigned for the recognition of forced adoption

(cont...) The plaque is located on the ground floor foyer of the hospital near the volunteer's desk so many members of the public will see it.

## Salvation Army Family Tracing Service Closes

For many years the Salvation Army has assisted people affected by adoption to trace family.

We have been advised that this service is no longer operating.

People affected by adoption who need assistance with family tracing can still contact either the Forced Adoption Support Service at Jigsaw Qld (Ph 1800 210 13 13 or 07 3358 6666) or the Post Adoption Support Queensland (Ph 07 3170 4600)

## Farewell to Chris Mundy

Since the Forced Adoption Support Service (FASS) started in 2015 Chris Mundy has provided support to hundreds of adopted people, mothers, fathers and other relatives of those affected by adoption.

Chris brought great empathy and compassion to his work with clients. We nicknamed him 'super

sleuth' because of his skills in searching and he helped many clients find their relatives. Chris also had a particular talent for acting as an MC at events which was greatly appreciated. Chris has been doing postgraduate studies in community development and has now moved on to a job in which he will be able to use these skills more. He is greatly missed at Jigsaw.



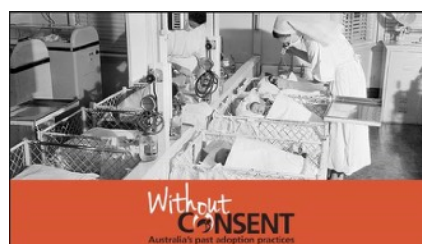
May the force be with you in all your new endeavours Chris Mundy!

## Without Consent Exhibition to open in Hervey Bay

The next stop of the Australian Government's Without Consent

Exhibition will be the Hervey Bay Regional Gallery (166 Old Maryborough Rd, Hervey Bay) from 7 December 2018 until 6 February 2019.

The National Archives of Australia exhibition - Without Consent: Australia's past adoption practices opened in March 2015. It shares moving experiences of heartbreak and resilience by people impacted



by Australia's past adoption practices.

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Ministry for the Arts' Visions of Australia program.

There is also an excellent website at [www.forcedadoptions.naa.gov.au](http://www.forcedadoptions.naa.gov.au)

## Movement for an Adoption Apology in the United Kingdom

by Evelyn Robinson

For me, the story of the effort to obtain an adoption apology in the UK began in 2005, when I booked the town hall in my home town (Renfrew) in Scotland to talk about adoption. At the end of my presentation I was approached by Jean, a mother who had been separated from her daughter by

adoption, She asked if she could spend some time with me afterwards. Jean and I have been friends since then.

Jean was a member of the Natural Parents network (NPN) in the UK and over the years I have kept her up to date with what was happening in Australia.

When I told her that I had attended the adoption apology in Western Australia, she talked to other committee members of NPN about whether or not they could try to get a similar apology from the British government.

These discussions led to the formation of Movement for an Adoption Apology (MMA) in 2010. They asked me to be their Honorary Consultant and I accepted. Since then I have been keeping them informed about what has been happening in Australia and our National Apology for Forced Adoption in 2013 spurred them on to increase their efforts to receive a similar apology in the United Kingdom.

Since that time, they have worked very hard to urge Members of Parliament in the United Kingdom

to consider such an apology.

## Movement for an Adoption Apology



MAA

There is not one Adoption Act for the United Kingdom, as Scotland and England have always had different legislation and practice in relation to adoption. Scotland prides itself on the fact that since the first Scottish Adoption Act was passed in 1930, adults who were



British Parliament discuss an apology in July 2018

adopted as children have always had the right to access their original birth certificates when they reached adulthood (currently at the age of sixteen).

At that time they can also receive their adoption records and court records. In England this right only became law in 1976. In neither jurisdiction do parents who have been separated from their children by adoption have any right to any identifying information about their children. In spite of the different legislation, it seems likely that the British Parliament could

deliver an apology which would cover the whole of the United Kingdom (ie Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

I have sent many letters to politicians in Scotland and in England over the years, asking them to make changes to their adoption policies, particularly in relation to access to adoption information. In recent years I have also written to them about the possibility of an apology for past adoptions.

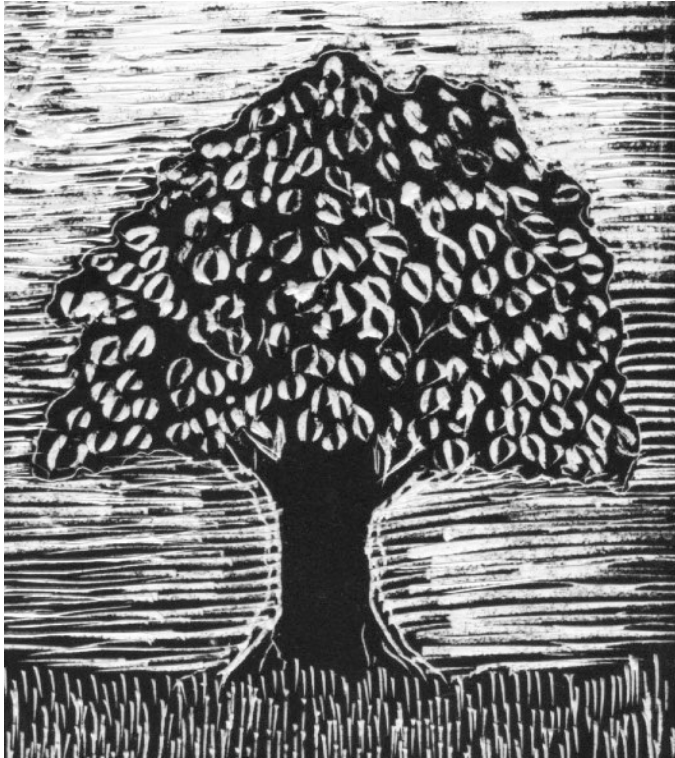
The most recent and most significant event in the MAA campaign for an apology was a discussion in the British Parliament

on the 12th of July this year. Alison McGovern, MP for Wirral South, moved:

***“That this House recognise the pain and suffering that the historical practice of forced adoption caused many women and children; and calls on the Government to issue an apology to women and children affected by that practice.”***

She was supported by the following Members of Parliament: Stephen Twigg, Alex Sobel, Bambos Charalambous, John McNally and Emma Lewell-Buck. I have been in contact with all of





these Members of Parliament, as has MAA, and we await further developments.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi made a statement and Stephen Twigg replied and put the case for ‘...some kind of process, be it a public inquiry or some other process leading to an apology now’. Mr Zahawi then agreed to meet with mothers and some of the MPs who had raised the issue.

MAA members are now waiting for this meeting to be arranged. the session closed with the Parliament accepting the resolution moved by Ms McGovern.

I have been in touch with all of the Members of Parliament who spoke on that day, as well as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, whose portfolio includes adoption

matters and have sent them copies of my books as well as information about the National Apology for Forced Adoptions which was delivered in Australia in 2013. I know that the MAA members are very much looking forward to meeting with Mr Charalambous and I await further developments.

Australia has set such a wonderful example to the rest of the world and, as my son was born and adopted in the United Kingdom, it would be very satisfying to me personally to see them follow our example and issue a formal apology for past adoptions.

## Welcome to Rachel Bell

This Spring we welcome Rachel Bell to our Forced Adoption Support Service. Rachel joins us as a Post Adoption Practitioner.

Rachel is an adoptee who became aware of Jigsaw’s services in the past when she obtained some assistance with search and reunion.

She studied Social Work in the UK (BA Hons Community Care Management) and since graduating in 2003, worked there in drug and alcohol and mental health services for over 10 years.

Since returning to Australia 3 years ago, Rachel has been working in domestic violence and homelessness services.

Rachel has a good understanding of the lifelong issues associated with adoption and is excited to be a new member of the Jigsaw team.

She is looking forward to providing support, information and advocating for all those affected by adoption.



Forced Adoption Support Services welcomes Rachel Bell

## Sunday at 2pm

(A story of reunion) by Linda Stewart

**The calendar says it's early autumn; the humidity that it's still summer, while my heart whispers springtime. It's an average, sunny Sunday on the street. Across the road Frank is washing his blue Ford Falcon. The people on the corner are pruning shrubs. Everything is normal routine, when there should be bunting or band playing. Because today she is coming back to me.**

I've cleaned the house, bought little cakes from The Shingle Inn and put a bottle of champagne in the fridge. I have the house to myself.

It is 1.30pm. Half an hour to go. The hands of the clock crawl towards the hour; my heart beats faster. Almost there. What's another half an hour on top of fifty years?

I boomerang between the lounge and bathroom, steal another look in the mirror. This will have to do. No time for face-lift now. I give my hair another blast of spray. Back in the kitchen, I set out the best cups and saucers, so everything is ready. No more wasted time.

Five minutes to two. Deep breath, stand up straight, go over the emotional safeguards again. *What if I don't like her or she doesn't like me? If we simply have nothing in common? I can't miss something...someone I've never had, right? Wrong. If it doesn't work out, at least I'll know what she looks like and we'll never have to see each other again. So, it's all upside. Yeah?*

Pushing the blinds apart, I peep through the upstairs window. Idly, I watch Frank for a minute performing the last stage of his weekly car-cleaning ritual: the polishing - when an early-model white Holden rounds the corner and pulls up at exactly two o'clock.



A woman steps out of the passenger side of the car. A girlish figure in a red dress, hair still dark. She pauses for a moment to look up at the house. Quickly, I pull back behind the curtain, heart pounding, take another deep breath, count to ten and descend the stairs thinking; calm, composed, confident.

And there she stands at the front door, a smile on her face and both hands gripping the strap of a black shoulder bag like an escape cord. Fingers fumbling, I unlock the screen door and she steps over the threshold and into my life in a whiff of floral perfume.

Introductions. An awkward embrace. A small-boned body which holds - as I later learn - a big heart. Her hands in mine are cool despite the soaring temperature.

'Your hands are freezing.'

'They often are, 'Oh well, cold hands, warm heart,' a favourite saying of Dad's. Surreptitiously, I wipe my own clammy paws on the back of my trousers.

She crosses the carpet and the years with tentative steps, dainty toes with crimson-painted nails peeping through strappy sandals. I glance down at my own sensibly clad feet in lace-up shoes thinking that my

toenails could probably shred lettuce.

'Take a seat, Judy.' I gesture towards a chair, sit opposite her.

We look at each other being careful not to openly scrutinise too much, when all we want to do is stare and stare. Then we laugh, saying we would have passed each other in the street without a second glance; both of us are petite with short dark hair but we are not mirror images.

'What's your natural hair colour?' I ask and she laughs again.

'You're looking at it.'

Carefully, I extract one comfortably shod foot from my mouth.

We play the question and answer game. Although I am able to answer most of her questions, others will forever remain a mystery. There's a flurry of photographs - not too many as it's all so much to take in.

The next two hours pass quickly and pleasantly. Tea and little cakes are served, and for once I have no idea whether the cake I'm nibbling is chocolate, passionfruit, strawberry or kidney-flavoured. Conversation flows easily because I have decided beforehand that there will be no awkward silences during this meeting.

There are no silences at all, as I am talking, talking, talking, ensuring words cover more than the missing years.

Judy has had a happy childhood, despite the death of a much-loved adoptive father when she was ten. She's been one of the lucky ones, finding a happy home with parents she related to and loved and who reciprocated those feelings. No horrendous tales of abuse or neglect here; no feelings of isolation; no regrets or identity issues just occasionally a feeling of curiosity, of wondering. After hearing this, I lean back into my armchair, relax my shoulders, breathe a little easier.

Inwardly, I congratulate myself on how well things are going, how well Judy's doing, how well I'm doing. So in control of my feelings; there's nothing to be sad about ... It's all good. Concentrating not on what has been lost, but what has been found. While we're exploring the past today, I refuse to let it drag me into a maudlin mire of 'if onlys' and 'might have beens'. We cruise the pleasant scenery of the present towards destination... happiness? While I'm babbling on, Judy reminds me that her husband will collect her at 4pm.

'Time for a celebratory champagne?'

'Just a small one, thanks.'

I leave her examining some photographs of my...no... our maternal grandparents, marvelling again at how much our grandfather resembles her younger son at a particular age.

Out of sight in the kitchen, I pluck the tissue from my back pocket and dab at a few traitorous tears, pour two glasses of champagne, gulp back half of mine, top it up and carry both glasses through to the lounge-room.

We click the champagne flutes together, smiling into each other's eyes: hers kind and clear behind the stylish glasses, brown eyes like Dad's. Mine misty, grey like Mum's.

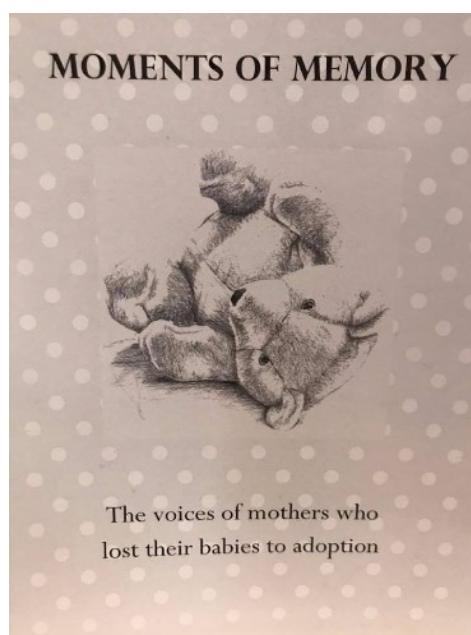
'Pleased to meet you, Sis.' I say. 'At last.'

## Moments of Memory

### The voices of mothers who lost their babies to adoption

Earlier this year, Adoption Jigsaw in Western Australia published an anthology of stories written by mothers who lost their babies to adoption. The anthology is a poignant reminder of a time when the unmarried mother was stigmatised as a 'fallen woman'. Her child was illegitimate and in the eyes of society, illegitimacy was tantamount to criminality. Forty, fifty and sixty years later some of those unmarried mothers wrote of their experiences, still vivid and influential in their lives today. For some, this is the first time they have spoken out loud.

With permission, we have included below a small selection of these stories. The full ebook can be purchased at [amazon.com.au](http://amazon.com.au) - enter *Moments of Memory: The voices of women who lost their babies to adoption* in the search field.





## 'Changed' by Lorna

"You are pregnant."

Once those words fell from his lips, the walls of the doctor's surgery seemed to suddenly take on a life of their own, creeping in on me, getting closer and closer. I remember that his eyes told their own story and I heard his unspoken words. *You have been a naughty girl, and you have been caught - and now that you have been caught you are fair game.*

I felt ashamed and violated. My initial thought that he was a doctor I could trust lay shattered. I left the surgery and walked home. Past the glass fronted office blocks; past the trees bursting into the newness of their spring colour; past the bustling office workers. the world was the same yet now seemed so very different, and I knew, on a fundamental level, that what had changed was me.



## 'Isolation' by Ann

I remember so little; I was told to forget.

I had exiled myself in a city I did not know well with a few acquaintances and several distant relatives who didn't know I was there. I had nowhere to live but someone gave me a mattress on the floor for a while. I was pregnant, unmarried and on my own. My parents had drilled into me that I was insignificant and worthless. I knew I was living their prophecy and accepted that this was the punishment for someone like me.



An agency that provided temporary jobs found me work in a legal office where I had to use an electric typewriter, which was a new experience for me. It was so important that I kept the job and yet it required skills I had to learn as I worked. As a legal typist I knew errors were not acceptable. My swollen appearance showed my past error and I felt my employer was watching and waiting for me to fall again.

I had one dress that fitted me and I wore it every day. I was intimidated and ashamed. I stayed silent and did my work. I needed the money for rent and food.

After several weeks working I went to a mission home in the suburbs for unmarried pregnant girls. I don't know how I got there or who suggested this place. My memories are scant.

The building was double storey, red brick, dark blank windows, with heavy wooden double front doors. I stood outside understanding that this was all part of the punishment. I had on my one dress and I carried my suitcase with my few belongings. I was shown up a wide jarrah staircase to a cubicle. One of many. Curtains for privacy, a bed and a cupboard. There were other girls, some very pregnant; others not showing so much. I must have talked to the other girls but I have no memory. I was alone and in my head living in a twilight of half-life.

What I do remember was assembling at the chapel each day to pray for forgiveness; working in the

kitchen, the laundry and the living quarters; and caring for babies and young children who were in a section apart from where we lived. I had no visitors. No-one knew I was there. I wrote to my parents describing a life of fun and good times.

The days passed. Girls left to have their babies and more were admitted. I spoke very little with the inmates or those who worked in the home. Within me the child grew. A doctor came to the home and examined us. He told me nothing about pregnancy or birth and I was too frightened to ask. In my silence I did not think of the child I carried as being my baby. I was living a nightmare of incarceration but in the end I would be free to leave and return to my home state, to the life I knew.

When the labour pains started I was taken to the hospital and abandoned.

I was put into a ward with other women. At some point I was wheeled across to the labour ward. The pain was excruciating but I made no sound. A foreign lady in the next cubicle screamed and swore and people ran to her aid. Nobody ran to mine.

I felt the blade that cut into me to enable the child to be born. I lay watching the surgeon at the end of the bed with his needle and thread repairing the damage after the birth.

I wasn't shown my son. I didn't ask and I didn't ever see him. No one mentioned a baby but I think I can remember hearing him cry. This baby was not mine and yet my whole body screamed out to hold and nurture him.



I was blindsided by the maternal feelings I had, but from inside my twilight zone I fought them into submission.

### **Don't Wear My Old Shame by Marlie**

I see you carrying my baggage  
My guilt, my anger, my despair  
These feelings chained my soul for so long  
They are not for you to wear  
WEAR MY LOVE

I see you wrapped in our separation  
Believing your birth was your cross  
It was judgement from a cruel society  
That punished us both by our loss  
WEAR MY PRIDE

I see you in my arms, so small  
My love overcoming my pain  
This baby of mine needing only his Mum  
Yet taken for other's gain  
WEAR MY JOY OF YOU

Years passed by in unspoken grief  
You came back to your rightful place  
My baby boy, now a shut-down man  
With only a rare smile on your face  
DON'T WEAR MY OLD SHAME

### **Untitled by Bev**

People chose to play God and  
we didn't fit like we would have done.  
He is my son, yet not my son.

I am his mother,  
but my place is not as his mum,  
no matter how much I want it to be.

Two different people  
created by adoption,  
from adoption.