

## **Queensland Must Act on Overdue Adoption Law Reform**

Today marks the 12th anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoptions. It's an important day — a day of reflection, recognition, and a renewed call for action. I want to start by acknowledging the strength and resilience of all those impacted by forced adoptions and thank you for taking the time to listen to this vital issue.

Between 1940 and 1980, it is estimated that between 150,000 to 250,000 adoptions took place across Australia. Many of these adoptions involved unmarried mothers who were coerced and forced to relinquish their children. These were not isolated cases — they were systemic practices, rooted in shame and secrecy, that tore families apart. At the height of the forced adoption era in 1971, as many as 200 babies a week were taken from their mothers.

The emotional and psychological scars left behind are profound and lifelong — not only for mothers but also for fathers, adoptees, and their extended families. Forced adoptions took away a child's identity and denied parents the chance to raise their children. Decades later, that pain remains.

Here in Queensland, adoption practices are governed by the Adoption Act 2009. This legislation was supposed to be reviewed in 2021, yet, more than three years later, that review has not even commenced. Queensland is now falling behind other states, leaving thousands of people without the reforms they desperately need — reforms that were recommended over a decade ago.

One of the most critical reforms is the introduction of Integrated Birth Certificates — or IBCs. The 2012 Senate Inquiry into Forced Adoptions recommended that all jurisdictions create IBCs, which acknowledge both an adopted person's birth and adoptive families on their birth certificate. This is a matter of identity — of truth. Every person deserves to have a legal document that reflects their full, authentic history.

South Australia, New South Wales, and Victoria have already made this change. Queensland remains behind. Worse still, there has been no serious commitment to harmonizing state records or creating a national access point to birth, death, and marriage registers, making it even harder for adoptees to access the truth of their own identity.

Another crucial step toward justice is financial redress. In 2024, Victoria introduced a redress scheme specifically for mothers affected by forced adoptions. Western Australia recently completed an inquiry that recommended a similar scheme for both adoptees and parents.

Queensland, once again, lags behind. There is no redress scheme here — no financial recognition of the devastating harm that was inflicted. Survivors are left without compensation, without acknowledgment, and without the justice they deserve.

So today, I'm calling on the Queensland Government — specifically Minister for Child Safety, Amanda Camm MP — to take action. We cannot wait any longer.

I urge Minister Camm to initiate the long-overdue review of the Adoption Act 2009. Queensland must bring its legislation in line with the rest of the country.

I urge the Government to introduce Integrated Birth Certificates, ensuring that adopted people in this state have access to a document that reflects their full identity — both birth and adoptive families.

I urge Queensland to establish a financial redress scheme — one that recognises the lifelong trauma caused by forced adoptions and provides meaningful compensation to those affected.

Jigsaw Queensland stands unwavering in our commitment to supporting individuals impacted by past adoption practices. We will not stop advocating for the reforms that are necessary to promote healing and justice.

Queenslanders affected by forced adoptions deserve more than apologies and promises. They deserve action. They deserve dignity. They deserve truth.

Dr. Jo-Ann Sparrow  
President of Jigsaw Queensland Inc.

ENDS