



Jigsaw Queensland
Supporting since 1976

2026-2027 Budget – Stakeholder Submission

Jigsaw Queensland Inc.

We recommend that the Queensland Government allocate funding in the 2026-2027 Budget to establish a Forced Adoption Redress Scheme.

About Jigsaw Queensland

Jigsaw Queensland is the longest-running post-adoption support agency in Australia. For 50 years we have supported people whose lives have been impacted by adoption.

Jigsaw Queensland was established in 1976 as a volunteer organisation by passionate individuals determined to highlight the lifelong harm caused by the forced adoption era.

As an incorporated association and registered charity, Jigsaw Queensland is a lived-experience-led organisation delivering professional, trauma-informed services across Queensland, including the federally funded Forced Adoption Support Service (FASS).

We have consistently advocated for evidence-based reform in adoption law and policy, working closely with Adoption and Permanent Care Services in the Department of Families, stakeholder groups and post-adoption support agencies across the country.

We contributed our expertise to the 2011 Senate Inquiry into the Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, and the consultation processes that led to State and National Apologies for forced adoption.

We offer a range of services for adults impacted by adoption:

- emotional support by phone, email and in person;
- peer support groups for adopted adults, mothers, fathers and siblings;

- information and guidance on family search options and reunion;
- a podcast – Adopt Perspective – with a global audience in 26 countries;
- a social connection program – SS JIGSAW;
- referral to government and community agencies, and professionals; and
- since 2015, Queensland’s Forced Adoption Support Service, funded by DSS.

About Forced Adoption

Forced adoption practices occurred in every State and Territory of Australia from the late 1940s through to the 1980s as a systemic social response to unmarried mothers. Government legislation and policy enabled and regulated these practices, which were implemented by hospitals, welfare authorities, religious organisations and charitable institutions.

Unmarried mothers were pressured, coerced or misled into relinquishing their babies. Many were isolated from partners and family, denied accurate information about their rights, and subjected to practices that invalidated consent. These practices included intimidation, misinformation, sedation during childbirth, and the immediate removal of babies after birth.

Adoption records were often falsified or incomplete, and lifelong separation was legally enforced through plenary adoption orders that permanently severed identity, ancestry and kinship.

As a result, adopted people were denied agency, truth and access to information about their origins. Most grew up unaware of the circumstances of their adoption and discovered later in life that their separation occurred during the forced adoption era.

Fathers were excluded from decision-making, misinformed about outcomes, or denied recognition altogether.

Government Action

The 2012 Report on the Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices formally acknowledged these harms and concluded that forced adoptions were not isolated events, but the result of systemic failures in law, policy and practice.

The Report made 20 recommendations of actions required to address the harm caused by governments and institutions. Three recommendations relate to redress for people impacted by forced adoption:

Recommendation 6 - The committee recommends that formal apologies should always be accompanied by undertakings to take concrete actions that offer **appropriate redress** for past mistakes.

Recommendation 11 - The committee recommends that the Commonwealth should lead discussions with states and territories to consider the issues surrounding the **establishment and funding of financial reparation schemes**.

Recommendation 12 - The committee recommends that institutions and governments that had responsibility for adoption activities ... establish grievance mechanisms that will allow the hearing of complaints and, where evidence is established of wrongdoing, **ensure redress is available**. Accessing grievance mechanisms should not be conditional on waiving any right to legal action.

On 27 November 2012, the Queensland Parliament issued an historic formal apology for past forced adoption policies and practices that separated countless mothers, fathers, and children. Delivered by then-Premier Campbell Newman on behalf of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, the apology acknowledged that those practices were wrong, caused lifelong trauma, and should never have occurred.

On 21 March 2013, the Australian Government delivered a formal apology to people affected by forced adoption practices. Former-Prime Minister Julia Gillard made the National Apology for Forced Adoptions in the Great Hall at Parliament House, Canberra, acknowledging that forced adoptions created a lifelong legacy of pain and suffering.

Despite these recommendations and formal apologies, progress on implementation of redress has been slow. However, the adoption community draws hope from the States that have taken action:

- In 2024 the Victorian Government established a redress scheme with payments of up to \$30,000 to mothers, counselling and a formal apology. The Victorian Government estimated that 3,000 women would be eligible under the \$138M scheme.
- In 2024 the Western Australian Inquiry into past forced adoptive policies and practices recommended a comprehensive redress scheme for mothers, adopted people and fathers.

- In 2025 the Tasmanian Government announced a Forced Adoption Redress Scheme providing a \$65,000 one-off payment to eligible mothers, up to \$10,000 in counselling and wellbeing supports, a direct personal response, and an interim payment of \$10,000 for applicants with critical or terminal illness.

Our Submission

We recommend that the Queensland Government allocate funding in the 2026–2027 Budget to establish a Forced Adoption Redress Scheme, consistent with Senate Inquiry recommendations, that provides redress for mothers, adopted people and fathers impacted by forced adoption policies and practices.

This investment will address a longstanding gap in Queensland’s response to forced adoption, align Queensland with other jurisdictions, and reduce ongoing physical health, mental health and social service costs associated with unresolved trauma.

This investment is an opportunity for the LNP Government to demonstrate leadership in adoption reform and take the next important step following the State Apology delivered by Campbell Newman 14 years ago.

Queensland’s Forced Adoption Redress Scheme must include mothers, adopted people and fathers, not just mothers (as nominated by the Victorian and Tasmanian Governments). Evidence from inquiries, research and lived experience confirms that:

- adopted people experience lifelong impact including identity disruption, mental health challenges, intergenerational trauma and elevated use of health, justice and community services;
- adopted people are four times more likely to die by suicide than non-adopted people; and
- fathers were frequently excluded, misinformed or prevented from exercising parental rights, and continue to experience grief, loss and disenfranchisement.

Excluding adopted people and fathers from a redress scheme creates inequity, perpetuates harm and undermines the restorative intent of redress. Including all parties reflects contemporary human rights principles and the Senate Inquiry recommendations.

The complex trauma resulting from forced adoption contributes to chronic mental health needs, increased reliance on public health and community services, contact with the justice system, and intergenerational health issues.

Targeted redress, combined with funded access to trauma-informed counselling, peer support and records assistance, reduces long-term system costs while restoring dignity, trust and wellbeing.

Queensland already funds post-adoption support services. A redress scheme would complement these investments and maximise their effectiveness.

We recommend that the Queensland Forced Adoption Redress Scheme:

- provides financial redress to mothers, adopted people and fathers impacted by forced adoption practices;
- includes funded access to counselling, peer support and records assistance delivered by specialist services with no role in historical consent-taking;
- offers restorative options such as written apologies and facilitated personal responses; and
- is trauma-informed and overseen by an independent governance body comprised of people with lived experience.

In 2012 the LNP Government acknowledged the harm caused by forced adoption.

In 2026 the LNP Government can take the next natural step and establish a Forced Adoption Redress Scheme.

Jigsaw Queensland stands ready to assist with co-design, implementation and evaluation of this important initiative.