

INFORMATION FOR PROFESSIONALS

Working with people affected by adoption (incl forced adoption)

1. Research into mental health impacts of past adoption experiences

In 2012 the Australian Institute of Family Studies conducted research to improve the understanding of the impacts of past adoption practices. The report (Post Adoption Experiences) can be found at:

https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2012/past_adoption_experiences_report_2012_0.pdf

The study included:

- 505 mothers who had lost children to adoption
- 823 adopted people
- 12 fathers.

The findings for mothers

“Mental health and wellbeing measures used in the survey indicate a higher-than-average likelihood of these mothers suffering from mental health disorder compared to the general population, with close to one-third of the mothers showing a likelihood of having a severe mental health disorder. Mothers rated lower quality of life satisfaction than the Australian norm, and over half had symptoms that indicate the likelihood of having post- traumatic stress disorder” (p. xiii)

The findings for adopted people

“Compared to Australian populations estimates, adoptees responding to the survey had lower levels of well-being and higher levels of psychological distress” (p. xiv). One in 5 respondents was likely to have severe mental health disorder. (p106)

“Regardless of whether they had a positive or more challenging experience growing up within their adoptive family...most participants identified issues relating to problems with attachment, identity, abandonment and the parenting of their own children.” (p. iv)

The findings for fathers

Only a small number of fathers (12) who lost children to adoption participated in the study. “One third of the fathers were likely to have poor mental health. Almost all of them showed some symptoms of post- traumatic stress (64% with severe PTSD symptoms and 37 % likely to have PTSD). The impacts of fathers has not been well recognised by professionals or the community.

2. Senate Inquiry into former forced adoption policies and practices

Senate Inquiry into former forced adoption policies and practices

In February 2012, the Senate Community Affairs References Committee released a report on the [Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#).

The report found the policies and practices that resulted in forced adoptions and the removal of children was widespread throughout Australia, particularly during the mid-twentieth century. The Senate Committee received submissions from hundreds of individuals who have suffered from the effects of forced adoptions and found there were many different ways in which forced adoptions occurred. The accounts range from personal experiences of mothers drugged and shackled to beds, to social workers failing to advise mothers of the government payments available at the time to support mothers to keep their child.

Forced adoption practices impacted a large number of Australians and caused significant ongoing effects for many people, particularly mothers, fathers and adoptees. The report estimates there were 140,000 to 150,000 total adoptions in the period between 1951 and 1975, and as many as 250,000 total adoptions from 1940 to 2012. The report concluded it is impossible to know the exact number of people affected by forced adoptions.

As a result of the inquiry, **the Australian Government delivered a formal apology to people affected by past forced adoption or removal policies and practices on 21 March 2013.**

The National Apology was delivered by the Prime Minister Julia Gillard in the Great Hall at Parliament House, Canberra. The apology acknowledged the experiences of those affected by forced adoptions, which created a lifelong legacy of pain and suffering. To read the transcript or see the video recording of the apology go to:

<https://www.ag.gov.au/about-us/national-apology-forced-adoptions>

3. Recommended training for professionals in post adoption counselling

Both the Senate Inquiry and the AIFS study highlighted the need for mental health and counselling services from professionals trained in providing post adoption support to those affected. Given the numbers of people affected by past adoptions and the long lasting mental health impacts, mental health professionals are very likely to see clients who have been affected by adoption.

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) was funded to provide training to mental health professionals in working with people affected by past forced adoption. This training for professionals is available on line through the APS- see the link below.

<https://psychology.org.au/Event/16082>

4. Other information/resources

- **Working with Adopted People** by Dr Susan Green. This article is available online <https://www.psychology.org.au/inpsych/2014/august/green/>
- Silverstein, D. N. and Kaplan S. “**Lifelong issues in adoption**” describes the 7 core issues (loss, rejection, guilt and shame, grief, identity, intimacy, mastery and control) experienced by members of the adoption triad (birth families, adoptees, and adoptive families). This is an essential reading for professionals and can be found on the Jigsaw website under the information tab.
- **Late Discovery of Adoption** – an article about this topic can be found on the Jigsaw website under the information tab.
- The Australian Government Department of Social Services provides information about forced adoption including **basic fact sheets about working with people affected by forced adoption.**
<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/programs-services/forced-adoption-practices>

<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/programs-services/forced-adoption-practices/supporting-people-affected-by-forced-adoptions>
- **Forced adoptions History project**
This website has been created to support those affected and to increase awareness and understanding of forced adoptions. People can learn the history of forced adoptions; share information about forced adoption experiences; learn about the effects of forced adoptions; find support services.
<http://forcedadoptions.naa.gov.au/>
- **Without or Consent: A Queensland Story -available on You Tube or via the SLQ website**
This oral history film produced by the State Library of Qld and Jigsaw Qld includes interviews with people affected by forced adoption, activists and politicians
<https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/blog/without-our-consent-queensland-story>
- **The “Adopt Perspective” podcast** produced by Jigsaw Qld is available through the Jigsaw website and includes interviews with people with lived experience of adoption as well as practitioners. Avail on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts & Deezer.
www.jigsawqueensland.com



5. Jigsaw Queensland provides post adoption support

Jigsaw Qld has delivered services to people affected by adoption for over 40 years.

Jigsaw Queensland has been funded to provide post adoption support services in Qld including the forced adoption support service. Services are delivered throughout Queensland by telephone, face to face and on line. Jigsaw Qld provides:

- Information about how to access adoption records
- Assistance with searching for and contacting relatives
- Support in managing post contact relationships
- Emotional support
- Referrals to other services
- Peer support groups
- Workshops and events
- Information via website, Facebook and newsletters
- Small grant program to build community capacity
- Community and professional education

Phone: 1800 21 03 13 (from within Qld) or 07 3358 6666 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm)

Email: support@jigsawqld.org.au

Website: www.jigsawqueensland.com

Hard copy brochures can be provided on request.

6. Other Specialist Services in Qld for people affected by adoption

Adoption Services in the Dept. of Child Safety Youth and Women provides access to records of adoption to eligible people.

Ph. 07 3097 5100 or 1800 647 983 (free call within Qld)

<https://www.qld.gov.au/community/caring-child/adoption/post-adoption-support-services/how-request-adoption-information>

Benevolent Society's Post Adoption Support Qld (PASQ) provides information, intermediary services and counselling for people affected by adoption. **Ph. 07 31704600**

<https://www.benevolent.org.au/services-and-programs/list-of-programs/post-adoption-support-qld>

Relationship Matters Intercountry Support Program provides support for people adopted from overseas and their adoptive families. **Ph. 1300 543 396**

<https://relationshipmatters.com.au/all-services/icasupport/>

Link- Up Qld provides services to Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people who have been separated from their families through adoption.

Ph. 07 36380411 or 1800 200 855 (free call)

<https://www.link-upqld.org.au/>

Find and Connect provides services for people who were in foster care or an institution (and may have been adopted after being in care). **Ph 1800 16 11 09 (free call).**

<https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/contact/queensland/>

7. Post Adoption Support Services throughout Australia

Forced adoption Support Services (FASS) have been funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services in each state and can be contacted on 1800 21 03 13. This phone number will direct you to the service in the state you are calling from. FASS provide information, support and referrals to other services

Other interstate support services are listed on the Jigsaw website

8. Reading

Books including text books are listed in the Jigsaw website and are available for borrowing by members. Academic readings and information sheets are also available on the Jigsaw website.

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www.jigsawqueensland.com