

Bits & Pieces

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Welcome to Bits & Pieces Winter 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 Services (FASS). If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please email us at support@jigsawqld.org.au.

In this edition we discuss the 30 years that have passed since Qld's landmark adoption legislation amendments, a reflective interview with Anne Warner, Jigsaw's 45th b'day and the Victoria Bridge light up celebrations.

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1991 The Year That Changed Everything

By Dr Jo-Ann Sparrow - President Jigsaw Qld

While the amendments took effect overnight, the battle to see them into fruition was the result of almost a decade of lobbying by advocates. A dramatic, eleventh-hour bid by a powerful lobby group called the Adoption Privacy Protection Group (APPG) threatened to see it all unravel.



Courier Mail - Saturday, 2 February 1991

This year (2021) marks the 30th anniversary of Queensland’s historic adoption legislation amendments that came into effect on 1 June, 1991. The changes to the 1964 Adoption of Children Act entitled adopted people and their biological parents to receive identifying information about one another, unless the other party had lodged an objection (veto).

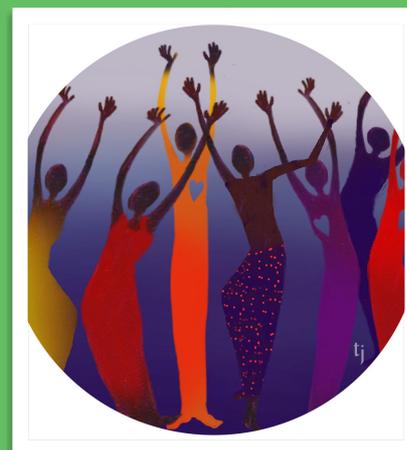


Original 'No More Secrets' brochure

COVID SUPPORT GROUP UPDATE

Jigsaw Qld are following all Queensland Health restrictions and directives with regards to our support groups and face-to-face services. To get the latest information, keep an eye on our website and Facebook page.

We are working on our first Open Information Event and will keep you posted about dates, topics and further events in 2021. For further information email support@jigsawqld.org.au or phone (07) 3358 6666.



The amendments initially had bipartisan support in cabinet, however, owing to the pressure of the APPG, compromises around vetoes were made and the amendments were eventually passed. While the final amendments weren't everything that lobbyists, then Minister Anne Warner and her Department had wanted, they were a significant beginning in the State's ongoing adoption reform.

read through past minutes and newsletters, searched news archives in the State Library of Queensland, collected stories, photos, documents and correspondence to educate ourselves and build a webpage dedicated to remembering this significant period in history.

It was a humbling experience for us. We are both adoptees who directly benefited from the amendments. Through the archives, we were able to walk the timeline of their experience. We found ourselves carried along with their successes and disappointments. We fist pumped when they rallied and shed tears when they encountered setbacks. Many of these warriors left Jigsaw and adoption lobbying entirely after the amendments were passed because the process had been so personally taxing.



Jigsaw Qld President & Secretary, Jo Sparrow & Lois Buch at the 30 Year Anniversary bridge light up.

Following the amendments there was an immediate rush on the Department of Family and Community Services (as they were then known) as they struggled to meet the demand of enquiries and applications and deliver on promised access. Many people affected by adoption have since been able to access their identifying information and more recent reforms have further widened that access.

Sadly, these reforms came too late for some, with family members having already passed away. Others have not been able to establish the reunion or connection they'd hoped for. And for some, the relationships they have built with their mothers, fathers, children or extended family have become a blessing to their lives.

To commemorate the 1991 amendments milestone, Jigsaw Qld Secretary, Lois Buch and I



Former Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, Anne Warner

We also interviewed Anne Warner, former Minister for Family Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Islander Affairs about her recollections of this period for a video and an Adopt Perspective podcast episode. You can view

the webpage and video here <https://www.jigsawqueensland.com/1991-30-year-anniversary>. We will continue to add to the page over time. If you have a reflection or documents you would like to share for the webpage, please send them to support@jigsawqld.org.au or call us on (07) 3358 6666.

Since 1991, there have been significant leaps forward in adoption reform, however there is still more work to be done.

Later this year, submissions will be invited as adoption legislation is reviewed again. Jigsaw Qld will be advocating for integrated birth certificates, a preference for guardianships over adoption and a move towards simple adoption rather than plenary adoption. Simple adoption transfers parental responsibilities from the child's original parents to their adoptive parents without permanently severing the child's legal relationship with their biological parents, unlike plenary, which permanently severs this legal connection.

This issue of *Bits and Pieces* is dedicated to the mothers, fathers, and adopted people who sacrificed their time and resources, often at great personal cost, to fight for the access to information and family that we have today. On their shoulders we stand.

Victoria Bridge Light Up

On 1 June, 2021 the Victoria Bridge lit up to commemorate the 30-year anniversary of the 1991 amendments and to celebrate Jigsaw Qld's 45th birthday. Jigsaw gathered on the banks of the Brisbane River at South Bank with former Minister, Anne Warner, former Director General of the Queensland Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, Ruth Matchett and others impacted by adoption. It was a peaceful night of quiet reflection where those present shared personal stories about what the amendments had meant to their lives.



Victoria Bridge Light Up for Jigsaw Qld - 1 June 2021

The Victoria Bridge lit up the river in shades of blue, red, grey and yellow, while upstream the Story Bridge was lit up in alternating patterns of red, yellow and black and green, white and blue colours for Reconciliation Week.

Thank you to all who joined us in person and in spirit to mark these occasions. If you would like to see more photos from the night, head to the 30 Year commemorative web page here: <https://www.jigsawqueensland.com/1991-30-year-anniversary>.



Anne Warner & Ruth Matchett join Jigsaw Qld at bridge light up.

Letter to my 22- year old self in 1991

By Lois Buch

(Growing up, I had not anticipated that one day the adoption laws would be amended.)

You weren't expecting this, were you? You think you've got adoption all figured out, but buckle up. I want to tell you a few things. This is just the start. Thirty years from now you'll realise there isn't a finishing line.

You won't meet her for six more months, but try not to be shocked into silence when you stand opposite her. It will be like looking into a mirror. Your reunion will be a memorable day, however at 22, you're going to be a bit judgemental. You'll find you are so alike and have much in common. However, because you're not used to seeing yourself reflected in someone else, you'll also come down hard on some qualities you don't like, because, let's be honest...you see them in yourself. You get your 'talking' from her.



Rhonda & Lois - January, 1992

She won't be around forever. She has suffered. She is sick. She is doing her best, just as you are.

She says she loves you - accept it!

She calls you her daughter - accept it!

She's not trying to step on your mother's toes. Don't lecture her. She's just never been able to call herself a mother until now.

Forgive her secrets, forgive yourself for the things you'll say to her, forgive family and friends who will do their best, but sometimes wonder why adoption and reunion is a confusing big deal. To them, you're a part of their identity too.

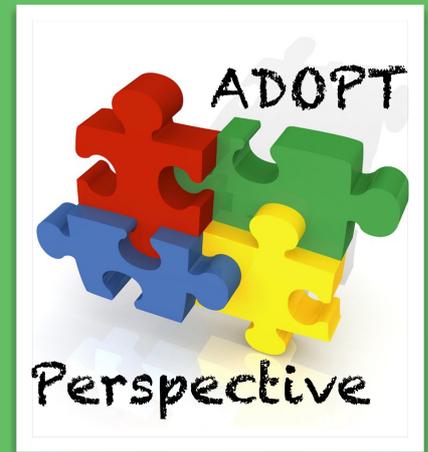
When she passes, you'll be confused and shocked. You'll put adoption in a box for a decade and not whisper its name.

Twelve years after she passed, in 2012 a lightbulb will go off in your brain. It will take just one short week for your world to be tipped upside down. Those little suspicions you had will be confirmed by her sister. You will draw the conclusion that you were placed in your family for safety, because your existence and conception will feel like they've come from a very dark place. But you ARE going to survive and even thrive.

One day, not too long after, you'll do something you never thought possible. You'll pick up a phone and ask for support. You've always thought you knew how to handle everything, but guess what? You don't! You'll see what I mean. The comforting voice on the other end of the phone will become the first person to listen to your story from start to present, and that will be a big relief. You'll move out of the darkness and into the light before you know it. Hang in there! It will take hard work and setbacks. What you learn about Rhonda will amaze you and

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.



you'll put her on the pedestal she always deserved.



Jigsaw Qld's Forced Adoption Support Service Team Leader, Andrea Lynch with Lois Buch

You'll meet a whole community of people with confusing and challenging stories like you. Their stories will make you cry. In time, you'll learn to call birth mothers, **mothers**.

You'll stand up in 2021 and just wonder how is it possible to be such a different person. You will also have found a familial tribe at Jigsaw. A place where everyone's individual experiences of adoption are welcome, respected and understood.

Adopt Perspective Reaches Wide Audience

It has been a huge six months for Adopt Perspective podcast. We have exceeded 4000 listeners across the world and continue to reach more people affected by adoption in regional areas, where it is more challenging to seek support and services.



Kevin Barhydt talks to us about adoption and addiction and his memoir, 'Dear Stephen Michael's Mother'

So far this year we've covered foundations for a meaningful life, healing through art and song, discharging an adoption, the AIFS study into past adoption experiences, the 1991 adoption amendments, adoption and addiction and

Podcasts and Deezer or can be listened to at www.jigsawqueensland.com/adopt-perspective.



Vivienne Timmermans talks to Jo about losing her daughter to adoption in 1980 and the support group she founded called, You Gave Me A Voice.

personal stories from mothers and adopted people. We have so much more coming in the next six months, so stay tuned.



Michael Costello shares about how he discharged his adoption

8th Anniversary of the Federal Apology for Forced Adoptions

The 8th Anniversary of the federal apology for Forced Adoptions was commemorated with an event at Events on Oxlade on Sunday, 21st March.

With Covid restrictions eased we were able to gather in larger numbers than in 2020 to hear *Lost & Found*, an original song about adoption performed by people affected by adoption. For those unable to attend, the event was filmed and can be viewed here <https://www.jigsawqueensland.com/8th-anniversary-fed-apology>



Suz Bednarz talks to Jane about losing her daughter to adoption in 1986

The podcast features a mix of personal stories and informational episodes and is available to listen to on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google



Lost & Found Choir perform at the anniversary event

Seeking mothers who were at Holy Cross in 1956

I am seeking contact with any mothers who spent time in the Holy Cross Home at Wooloowin during 1956 and who lost their child to adoption. My birth mother was at this institution between February and July 1956. However the Sisters of Mercy have kept minimal records from this time. I am hoping to learn more about the routine and condition for the young mothers and babies and would be grateful if anyone would be willing to speak with me or to share information or photos. Contact Chris on 0403 951 381.



Holy Cross Home at Wooloowin

2021 Events

Support groups are adhering to current government recommendations and directives. To get the latest information, please keep an eye on our website and Facebook page. The below dates are our scheduled meeting dates - restrictions allowing.

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).

Open Information Events - TBA.

Adoptee Support Group - 10 July, 11 Sept, 13 Nov.

Mothers' Morning Tea - 21 July, 15 Sept, 17 Nov.