

# BITS & PIECES

## JIGSAW QLD INC | NEWSLETTER | 2019 SUMMER EDITION

### 2019 Events

Christmas can be a complicated time for people affected by adoption. Losses are often on our mind and negotiating festive gatherings can be challenging. Don't forget that you can call us in the lead up to this season to discuss these issues.

### 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** - (2019 Dates) 12 Jan, 9 Mar, 11 May, 13 July, 14 Sept & 9 Nov.

**Mother's Support Group** - (2019 Dates TBA)  
*(For mothers who have experienced separation from their children by adoption).*

**Open Support Group** - (2019 Dates) 9 Feb, 13 April, 8 June, 10 Aug, 12 Oct, 14 Dec.

**Sunshine Coast Adoptee Group** - (2019 Dates) 16 Feb, 20 April, 15 June, 17 Aug, 19 Oct & 21 Dec at Maroochy Neighbourhood Centre, 2 Fifth Ave, Cotton Tree.

### Jigsaw Queensland Inc.

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



## “Without Consent” Exhibition on display at Hervey Bay Regional Gallery

**Funded by the National Archives of Australia, a busload of people affected by adoption travelled from Brisbane to Hervey Bay for a private tour of the “Without Consent” exhibition in early December. The exhibition, produced by the National Archives of Australia is showing at the Hervey Bay Regional Gallery until 6 February.**

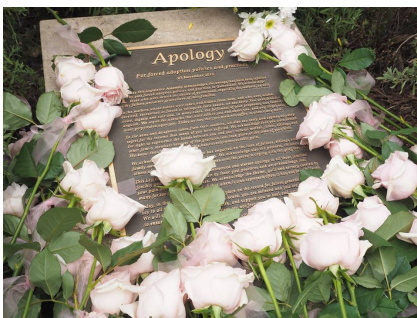
Support staff from Jigsaw Queensland's Forced Adoption Support Service (FASS) also travelled to Hervey Bay to raise awareness of forced adoption and train gallery staff on how to support people attending the exhibition. They spoke to Channel 7 and ABC Radio Wide Bay to spread the word that support is available to people in the Wide Bay region during and after the exhibition.

“Without Consent” was developed by seeking contributions of people affected by Australia's past forced adoption policy and practices. It is a moving mixture of history and memorabilia that highlights what happens when societal expectations, morality and authority collide. Hervey Bay Regional Gallery is located on 166 Old Maryborough Road, Hervey Bay, (opposite University of the Sunshine Coast Fraser Coast Campus).



People from Brisbane tour the exhibition prior to its opening. Ch 7 Wide Bay talk to Jigsaw Queensland about their free Forced Adoption Support Services.

## Queenslander's Reflect on Forced Adoption Apology



The Queensland Post Adoption Working Committee (Jigsaw Queensland, The Benevolent Society, ALAS, Origins and Association for Adoptees Inc) hosted a commemorative morning tea on 27 November to acknowledge the 6th anniversary



Like Jigsaw Post-Adoption Centre on

of the Queensland apology for past forced adoption policies and practices.

The commemorative event took place in the beautiful surroundings of Roma Street Parklands at City View Saddle, beside the permanent Memorial Plaque.

The event opened with a touching address from the Hon. Di Farmer, Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence.

Heartfelt reflections followed from the Post Adoption Stakeholders: Trish Large (Adoption Loss Adult Support Australia Inc.), Kerri Saint and Judy Glover (Association for Adoptees Inc.), Colleen Bernard (Origins QLD) and Heather Hermann (Jigsaw QLD).

The reflections and rose ceremony provided a space to acknowledge the ongoing impact of these past injustices and recognise those who have

been agents of significant change for a better future for all.



Thank you to Chris Mundy who did a wonderful job as MC and the courageous clients who were in attendance. It was an extremely moving, supportive and enjoyable morning shared with special



people.



The historic apology was made in the Queensland parliament in 2012 in front of hundreds of affected men and women, with the hope it would ease some of the resulting pain and raise awareness of the long-term impacts of past forced adoption practices.

The 2012 Commonwealth Senate Committee Inquiry found that forced adoptions which compelled or forced women to give up their children to adoption were widespread in Australia during the 1950s - 1970s. The emotional damage caused by these practices remains prevalent to this day.

Between 1951 and 1975 an estimated 140,000 to 150,000 adoptions took place in Australia, but it is unknown how many of these were forced adoptions. The apology acknowledged the shame, guilt and secrecy carried for too long in silence.

Jigsaw President, Trevor Jordan said the apology gave people who were affected an opportunity to speak about their experiences and feel believed.

"For many, rebuilding relationships and identities shattered by the forced adoption experience is emotionally and practically difficult," he said.

"They may need help accessing records from government agencies who were formally responsible for past adoption. They may also need both peer support from someone who shares their experience and

support from professionals who are fully informed about forced adoption and its impacts.



"Jigsaw Queensland provides such peer and professional support to Queenslanders affected through its Forced Adoption Support Service on 1800 21 03 13."

## Membership / Donations / Bequests

Jigsaw is a non-profit organisation, relying on a mix of trained volunteer helpers and professional support to provide a range of services to all those affected by adoption.

We rely on membership and donations from individuals, business and government grants to achieve our objectives and to help us provide ongoing services to our members and the community at large.

We are grateful for one-off or regular tax-deductible donations and can assist you to make a bequest in your Will. A bequest is a very real way to make a positive

difference. A donation or bequest to Jigsaw Qld can help us in all areas including to influence government policies for changes to legislation and to educate future leaders about adoption-related issues. Find out more at the membership and bequests pages at [www.jigsawqueensland.com](http://www.jigsawqueensland.com) or call us on (07) 3358 6666.

## Christmas Message

Christmas is a time when there are many cultural messages about families getting together and being happy together. The reality is often different. People who are adopted and have had a reunion may find it very stressful trying to juggle 2 families and feelings of "not belonging" can also arise. Mothers and fathers may feel sad if their adult child is not with them. For mothers and adopted people who have not had contact or those who have lost contact, it may be a time when they feel the loss more acutely.

Some tips for managing the Christmas season:

Have a plan for contact with family/friends and try to space it out so it is not too overwhelming. You do not have to see everyone on the one day or everyone, every Xmas.

Remind yourself that you have the right to decide how you want to spend your Christmas and say "no" (politely) to things that are too stressful or overwhelming. You



may decide to only go to an event for a short time or have a plan about leaving if things get too stressful. Sometimes this may upset people but remind yourself that other people's feelings are their responsibility.

Have a plan for making time to care for yourself with exercise, getting out into nature, doing things you find pleasurable and avoiding too much alcohol.

If our emotions are triggered, practice slow breathing for a minute (breathe out for 3 counts and breathe in for 3 counts, 6 times) to help calm yourself. Doing this at regular intervals during the day can be very helpful.

If you are experiencing distress, anxiety or depression try to find a supportive person you can debrief with – friend, family member or contact a counselling hotline.

Jigsaw will be open until Christmas Eve and will reopen on 2 January, 2019. For crisis support contact Lifeline 131114. While we are closed, phone counselling is available through Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636

## Forced Adoption Support Service (FASS) News

This year the FASS team has assisted many mothers, fathers, adopted people, and other family

members with information, emotional support, family tracing and intermediary services and



referrals.

Our small team of part-time staff have provided services to 467 people delivering 2649 client contacts during the 2017-2018 financial year (242 more than last year).

The FASS team provided intermediary services and made contact with 33 biological relatives on behalf of clients this financial year (5 more than last year).

## Up Close and Personal with Adoption Exhibition

Jigsaw Qld volunteers and Forced Adoption Support Service staff had the pleasure of attending the opening night of the Up Close and Personal with Adoption and

Fostering Exhibition at St John's Cathedral, Brisbane recently.

The exhibition, titled 'The Artists' Perspective' was the work of Victoria Fitzpatrick and Almeta Lennon and attendees of a recent workshop, that was funded by a small grant from the Department of Social Services.

It was an exploration of the adoption & fostering experience with two artists through the media of portraiture & story telling. The

exhibition has now closed.

On page 5 is a portrait of FASS worker, Jane Sliwka and her accompanying story and more pictures from the night.

### 'It's That Simple' by Jane Sliwka (portrait by Victoria Fitzpatrick)

*I was adopted in 1987. I don't remember being told that I was adopted and feel that I have always known. However, from my earliest memories, the topic of adoption would provoke intense anxiety within me. I can only remember a handful of times it was spoken about during my childhood.*

*I remember being 9 years old and my Mum holding a pink envelope in front of my face. It had the name 'Natalie' printed neatly on the front. She explained that this was the name that my birth mother had*

given me and that she had written me a letter, which I could read when I was 'old enough'. I sat there frozen, unable and unwilling to respond.

For years, I yearned to know the letter's contents but felt unable to express this. It was only when I was 15 that I summoned the courage to do so.

A week later, I sat in my bedroom clutching a cup of tea, whilst staring at the embossed words on the card my birth mother had purchased 15 years earlier..."I love you, it's that simple".

It really was that simple. There was a beautiful letter from my birth father too, as well as a gold necklace to remember them by. This altered my sense of self and I believe, the course of my life, filling me with comfort and hope for the future.

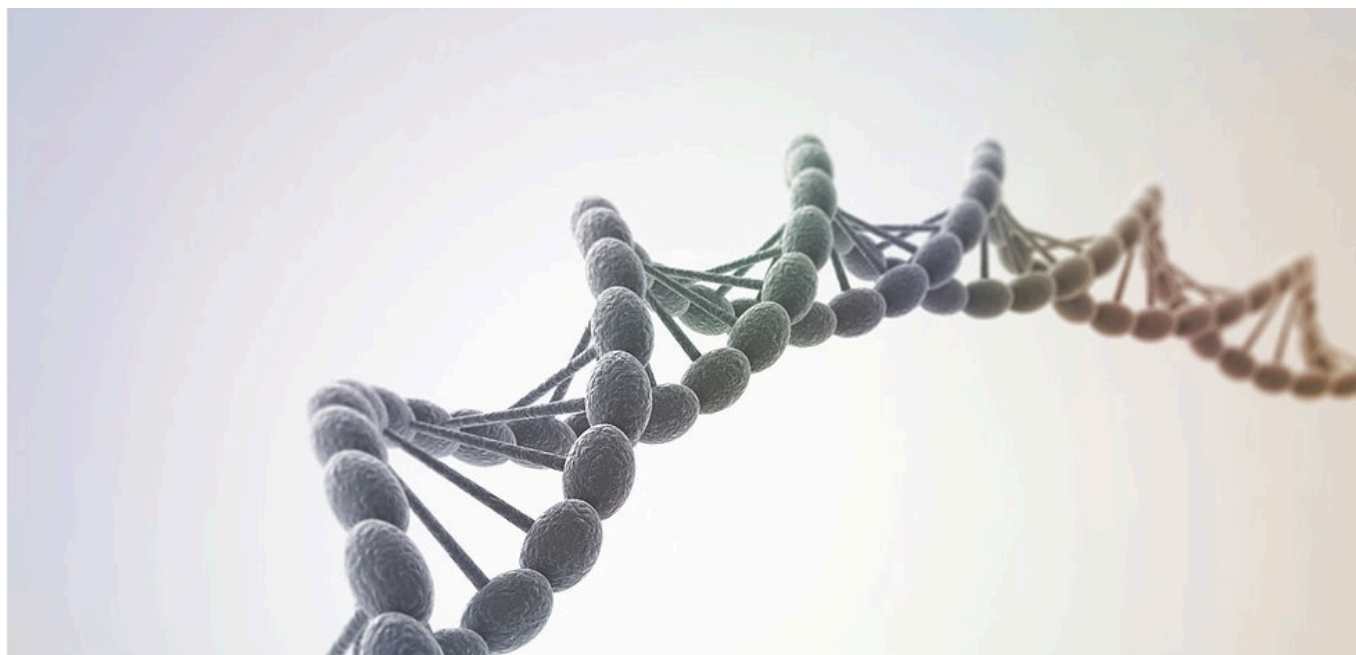
When I was 18 and the law permitted me to meet my birth parents, I discovered they had married and I have a brother and sister. It's been an up and down journey but my life is fuller and richer with them in it.

Now, with my Psychology and Social Work degrees in hand, I work for Jigsaw Queensland, helping other adoptees and parents to re-connect with each other.

Adoption doesn't define me, but it has been a defining experience in my life.







## Adoption and DNA

**DNA tests have played an increasingly important role in the lives of adopted people. In the past decade, as testing has become more financially accessible and our ability to understand and use the results has increased, more people are taking the tests and using them to fill in gaps in their family tree.**

Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) testing is the most accurate paternity and family relationship testing method currently available. DNA is a molecule that carries the genetic information for each person. Every person has unique DNA information or DNA 'fingerprint'. We all inherit on average half of our DNA from our biological father and half from our biological mother. DNA testing tries to discover the fifty per cent match between the child's and the parent's DNA profiles to prove or disprove the blood relationship.

DNA parentage testing is considered to be 99.9 per cent accurate. A DNA test can be obtained from saliva or blood sample.

For adopted people DNA testing can knock down genealogical brick walls, but it also requires a sensitivity to the complexities for adoption and issues that may arise.

Ethnicity plays an important role in the formation of human identity. For adopted people, the lack of

information about their ethnic heritage can hinder their ability to enjoy and celebrate their cultural identity and thereby establish a personal identity. It can also play an important role in determining the likelihood and severity of diseases.

Fathers were not required to consent to past adoptions and it has been estimated that fewer than five per cent of original birth certificates for past adoptions record a father's name. A father's name was sometimes obtained during an interview process with a social worker at the time and for various reasons the name recorded may not have been accurate. In some circumstances the father was also not made aware the mother was pregnant or that an adoption happened.

In some cases, where a father has a common name and no middle name is given, it may be difficult to establish which person is the father. A DNA test can match the genetic "fingerprint" of a person to their true father, or validate that the person is not their true father, if both parties are willing to participate in the testing. DNA tests can also be performed with a sibling or immediate relative to match family members when a parent had died. If the person is deceased, samples may be obtained posthumously if available (e.g. previous blood tests held by a lab) with permission from the next of kin.

A lot of sensitivity is required throughout the process of trying to obtain a DNA test from someone. Requests

for DNA tests can sometimes be interpreted as being intrusive or mistrusting. If a mother has disclosed the name of the father she may feel she is not being trusted. Requesting DNA tests sooner rather than later in the reunion relationship is advised. DNA tests give peace of mind when someone is unsure about the information provided. It is also important to know that whilst a DNA test may be able to establish biological paternity for adopted people, it in no way creates legal paternity.

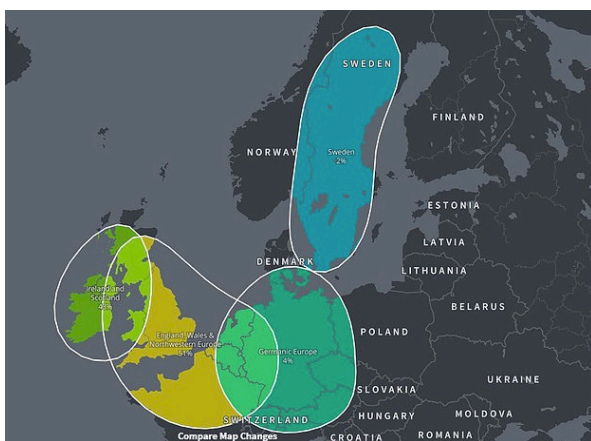
We'll be discussing two types of DNA tests - a laboratory DNA test and a genealogical test.

A laboratory DNA test uses saliva samples and can establish paternity. They are often called a 'peace of mind' test. These tests specifically answer if the people who provide samples are related. These start at around \$270 (for a two person test).

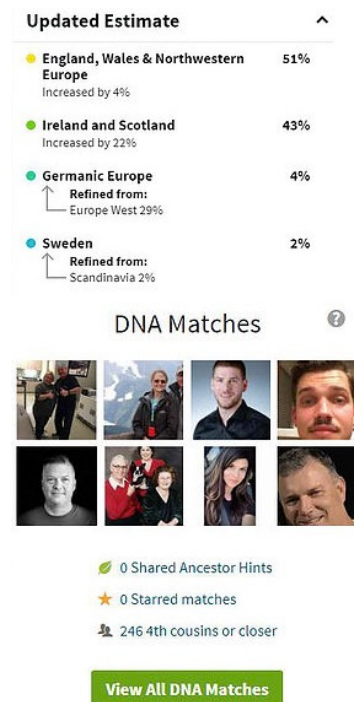
For paternity testing to be accepted for legal purposes, e.g. putting a father's name and birth certificate, a more expensive test is required.

Discussion needs to take place as to whether the DNA test costs will be met by one party or both parties. The costs are usually met by the one requesting the test or the one needing peace of mind.

A genealogical DNA test looks at a person's DNA and compares it to a DNA database obtained from specific locations. Results give information about genetic



connection and personal ancestry and can be useful in developing and confirming a family tree. In general, these tests compare the results of an individual to others from the same lineage or to current and historic ethnic groups. For example, a person can order a DNA



test from 23andMe, Family Tree DNA and [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com) for about \$100-150 per person. You may also upload your results to GEDmatch to widen your possible connections. The power of these websites is that many people have shared their genealogical information which may potentially increase the likelihood of finding connections. There has been varying reports about the accuracy of these tests in regards to their ethnicity estimates. They are dependent on the populations they have taken DNA samples from. However when other methods of searching have not succeeded, some people have used genealogical DNA testing to successfully find relatives including parents.

Confirming that a family member is the father (or mother) of the person can bring a lot of assurances to both parties. This can also come as a shock to a father who has not been told about the pregnancy. Anger can result when this information has been deliberately withheld from him. It can be embarrassing for a father if he has moved on to marry and have further children. It can also come as a shock to fathers when they find out they are not the father of a child.

There is a lot to consider when using DNA in an adoption-related situation, but the most important thing is to find support during the process and in the aftermath of DNA testing. Sometimes tests raise as

many questions as they answer and a third party as a sounding board can help you during the process.

The following organisations perform 'peace of mind' DNA tests in Queensland, however Jigsaw Qld does not endorse any particular organisation.

- EasyDNA: 20/3274 Pacific Hwy Springwood. Ph: 1300 482 165
- HOME DNA DIRECT: Suite 21, 3374 Pacific Hwy, Springwood Q 4127 Ph: 1300 482 165
- DNAQ: P.O. Box 149, RBH Post Office Herston, Qld 4029 Ph: 1300 172 837
- DNA Bioservices: Northbank Plaza, Level 22, 69 Ann St, Brisbane Q 4000 Ph: 1300 768 428

## Book Review by Andrea Lynch

### **"Not Named: From Adoption to Deadoption, 1948-2014 by Judy Balmforth 2018**

Judy has written this memoir to dispel the myth that adoption was "the ideal solution for unwanted babies given to new parents, without question, to ensure happy- ever-after".

Judy describes her experiences of growing up in an adoptive family in the 1950's and 60's in Tasmania. She documents the emotional and physical abuse she suffered and this makes for very sad reading. Judy was adopted in 1948 and under the 1920 Adoption of Children Act in Tasmania there was no requirement for an assessment of the adoptive parents. This practice changed with the Adoption of Children Act in 1968.

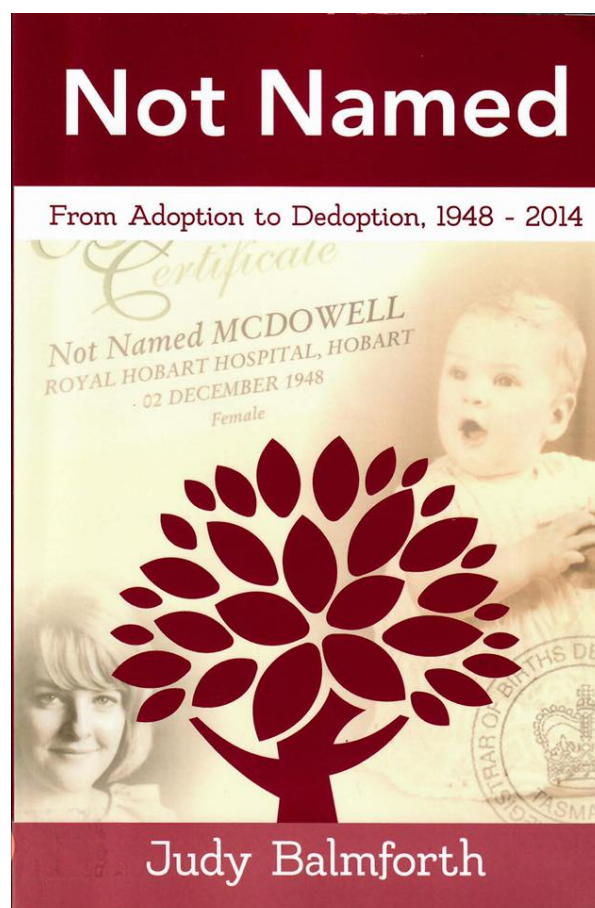
Judy's intelligence and resilience helps her to survive this childhood. In the 1970's she sets up Jigsaw Tasmania and becomes involved in helping others. Later she searches for and finds her mother and father. Finally through connecting with a cousin she reaches a real sense of belonging to a family. In the final section of the book she documents her journey to getting her adoption discharged and receiving her new birth certificate on which she is named:

"Not Named Mc Dowell".

With more people around Australia expressing interest in discharging adoption, this book will be of particular interest to anyone considering this option.

The book costs \$25 plus postage and can be obtained by emailing [notnamedtwo@gmail.com](mailto:notnamedtwo@gmail.com)

Jigsaw Qld members can borrow the book from the library.



### **Forced Adoption Support Services**

Funded by the Australian Government  
Department of Social Services

