

# BITS & PIECES

JIGSAW QLD, INC.

Jigsaw Newsletter Summer 2016

Jigsaw  
Queensland  
Inc.

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



## Happy 40th Birthday Jigsaw Qld!

**Jigsaw Queensland celebrates its 40th birthday this year, marking four decades of work with people affected by adoption across the state. A number of celebrations are planned to mark the milestone throughout the year, starting with our new website launch and ending with a Spring birthday party. If we helped you 1, 5 or 40 years ago you're an important part of our celebrations this year.**

Since Jigsaw was founded in 1976 key legislative changes with Adoption Acts in Queensland have impacted on the information people could receive about their adoption. During the past 40 years the most significant law changes occurred in 1991 and 2009 in Queensland.

**Pre 1991:** People who were adopted had no access to identifying information unless they were born before the 1964 Act and their adoptive parents shared identifying information about their mother with them.

The only information mothers were able to receive about their children was non-identifying. The need to seek identifying information about birth relatives saw Jigsaw establish an independent reunion register. For a number of decades this register was maintained and worked tirelessly by a dedicated group of volunteer mothers and adoptees.

Many families were reunited but many people couldn't progress because they had no information, and Jigsaw's advocacy work for improved legislation around access to information would not bear fruit until amendments were made to the 1964 Adoption Act in 1991.

The advocacy work during this time demanded a lot of resilience from our Jigsaw volunteers. Jigsaw founders speak of many meetings with politicians and sitting in the parliament gallery all night listening to debates.

**Post 1991:** Many people were able to access identify-

ing information about their adoption. Unfortunately a campaign by those opposed to the release of identifying information meant that the QLD Government received an overwhelming number of applications for a veto to be put in place, which not only prohibited contact but also prohibited identifying information being released. For those affected there were still many questions and missing pieces in their lives.

Jigsaw continued its work in reuniting family members and advocating for legislative change, particularly in relation to vetoes.

**2010:** Following extensive consultation, the Queensland Government introduced *The Adoption Act 2009* which meant major changes to accessing adoption information. Significantly, people who were previously unable to access identifying information if there was an objection (veto) in place, were now able to access



**Jigsaw Queensland** (07) 3358 6666

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Providing information and support for 40 years

## New Jigsaw Qld Website launched

**Jigsaw Queensland's new website has now been officially launched at [www.jigsawqueensland.com](http://www.jigsawqueensland.com).**

Containing new information about forced adoption, donor conception and family searching, the website complements Jigsaw's existing face to face and phone services. The website has a clear, simple but informative style and utilises the familiar artwork of Teresa Jordan.

"The experience of adoption is lifelong. We want to be able to provide information to people who are just commencing their journey but also to people who may be further down the track with their adoption journey", stated Team Leader Susan Kelly.

"The decision to seek information about your adoption is a big step and we understand that many people will go online and equip themselves with information before picking up the telephone. The website won't replace the experience of speaking and sharing with people who have also experienced adoption. That can only be found through our support groups and by picking up the phone and calling us to connect with someone who understands."

We welcome any feedback about our new website. You can send your feedback to [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au).

## New law gives all donor conceived Victorians the right to know their heritage *(from VARTA, Vic)*

Amendments to the *Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008* were passed on the last week of February in the Victorian Parliament. The key elements of this legislation included:

- All Victorian donor-conceived people, regardless of when they were born, will have a right to identifying information about their donor, without having to receive consent from their donor. This will mean that **donor-conceived people born before 1998 will have the same rights as those born after 1998.**
- Contact preferences will be made available to donors and donor-conceived people, allowing them to determine the way in which contact with those with whom they are linked will occur. People will also have the option to choose a 'no contact' preference. If a contact preference is breached, a significant penalty may apply. Contact preferences will also be extended to those legal children of donors or donor-conceived people who are under the age of 18 years.
- Responsibility for managing the central and voluntary registers will be moved to VARTA. The amendments will also enable VARTA to be the 'one door in' provider of support and information to donors, donor-conceived people and their families, as per recommendations made by the Parliamentary Law Reform Committee.

People who have questions or concerns about the legislative changes should call VARTA on 03 8601 5250 for a confidential discussion or visit [www.varta.org.au](http://www.varta.org.au).

## Adoption Micro-aggressions: What are they and how do they affect us?

By Dr Trevor Jordan

At a conference in Auckland, recently, I encountered a new and intriguing term – ‘micro-aggression’. Little did I know that that it would become very real to me a few days later.

I was giving a short presentation sharing the ethical concerns of real people involved in various ways with adoption, donor conception and surrogacy. Only ten minutes into my talk, I was interrupted from a member of the audience with the request to ‘be more positive’. It felt like a blow. It has taken a long time for the voices of adult adoptees to be heard and respected in adoption and even longer for donor offspring to be heard, particularly if they offer a counter-story to the dominant win-win narratives that have long prevailed.

Silencing negative voices and only accepting positive voices is just one example of the adoption micro-aggression, defined as the subtle biases present in commonplace interaction that intentionally or unintentionally communicate negative attitudes or insults towards adopted persons. The theory of micro-aggression has been drawn on by Amanda Baden and Ellen Pinderhughes in their research on racial and adoption macroaggressions in the lives of adopted persons and adoptive parents. The concept of racial macroaggression has been around for some time now and is highly relevant to the experience of intercountry adoptees, but the concept has now been fruitfully extended to describe the subtle put-downs that adopted persons often encounter in everyday life. Amanda Baden’s paper in the forthcoming *Adoption Quarterly*, for example, has been entitled, ‘Do you know your real parents?’ I, too, remember being extremely annoyed when a journalist used the term ‘real mother’ in his write up of an interview with me. I rang and told him in no uncertain terms that I had two mothers, and they were both real.

I haven’t got the space here to explore in detail all the adoption micro-

aggressions that the researchers coded in their interviews with adult adoptees, but here are some examples that may be the start of some fruitful conversations in our support groups.

**Biology is best** (e.g., Did your parents have any children of their own?)

**Bad seed adoptees** (My friends adopted some kids and they had a terrible time.)

**Grateful adoptees** (You are so lucky. I am sure you’re grateful to be adopted.)

**Shameful/inadequate birth parents** (Your much better off than you would have been. They abandoned you or neglected you.)

**Altruistic rescuers** (Your parents are so wonderful for rescuing from poverty, war or institutional neglect.)

**Adoption is win-win** (Everyone is better off this way! Not even asking how I am feeling.)

**Commerce in adoption** (Your parents sacrificed a lot to adopt you. Your adoptive family have been able to provide you with so many material things and an education that you would never have had with your original family.)

**Love will conquer all** (The everyday equivalent of colour-blindness. Your reality (your colour, ethnicity or adoptive status) does not matter to me. But in saying so, you deny a part of who I am.)

**Infantilising adoptees** (No matter how old you are you are always and adopted ‘child’.)

Admittedly, most people do not intend to hurt when they say such things; however, they do reflect dominant social narratives that assign second-place status to some identities. Adopted persons grow up being told they are ‘special’ or were ‘chosen’. But they also grow up knowing they were either given away, taken away, or that perhaps they were in somehow the unexpected cause of their original family breakdown. It is hard to sustain positive identities in the face of these powerful or persistent messages.

The effects of micro-aggressions, although by definition small, can be cumulative and lead to sudden and quite unexpected outbursts of anger or push-back from adoptees. Many will try to deal with unkind and ignorant comments with humour or sarcasm, but others simply go quiet and internalise their feelings.

Finding a safe space to share experiences of micro-aggression without having them compounded through denial or rationalisation is important. Mothers also experienced a whole range of micro-aggressions and continue to. This is one of the positive benefits of being part of a support group. As for dealing with other people’s need to indulge in adoption macroaggressions, that will take a longer period of sustained consciousness-raising in the wider community. There is always hope!



*In the next issue we will explore racial microaggression and intercountry adoption.*



## Adoption News

### Twinsters (2015)

Samantha Futerrman is a Korean born actress based in the USA who plays the roles of actress, writer and director of "Twinsters". After uploading some of her acting work to Youtube, she was contacted by Korean born Anais Bordier who was raised in France. Anais and her friends were struck with how identical she looked to Samantha. After a brief interaction, Samantha began visually documenting her journey of discovering a twin sister she was separated from at birth. The film is an emotional journey that highlights the highs and lows of adoption, reunion and post reunion. It also highlights how big the international Korean adoption community is. This movie is great for young people wanting to know more about personal adoption experiences especially from an intercountry perspective.

*Twinsters is currently available in Australia on Netflix or online DVD stores. It is rated PG13 for brief strong language.*

### Intercountry adoption information & support

The Australian Government is providing better support for families and children going through the intercountry adoption (ICA) process, which can be uncertain, tiring and difficult. Central information is provided by Intercountry Adoption Australia (Call 1800 197 760 or [www.intercountryadoption.gov.au](http://www.intercountryadoption.gov.au)). The site has reliable information on current and emerging ICA programs and realistic information on what ICA involves.

Support will also be offered to families after they have adopted a child, ensuring that the unique issues associated with adoption are being addressed. In Queensland, International Social Services has been funded to deliver these services. International Social Service (ISS) Australia is a not-for-profit, non-government organisation with over 50 years' experience in providing intercountry case-work services to families separated by international borders, with a special emphasis on the interests of children.

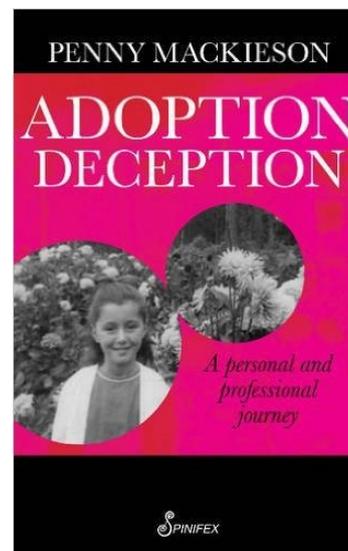
### New programs & expectations

Announcements of new programs often raise unrealistic expectations in the community. For example, on 9 No-

South Korea has sent 2282 children to Australian parents since 1987. Over 150 000 Korean children have been adopted to foreign countries since the Korean War in 1953.

vember 2015, the Australian Government announced new intercountry adoption programs with Poland and Latvia. Both Poland and Latvia have a strong commitment to finding families within their borders for children in need. Where appropriate families cannot be found within Poland or Latvia, Australian families will be able to help provide homes to those children. However, in both countries eligible children are usually aged between 7-10 or within a sibling group of 2 or more children.

### New book highlights difficulties associated with adoption



Penny Mackieson is an adoptee and Chair of Vanish, VIC who has spent over a decade in intercountry adoption work. She has a Bachelor and Masters of Social Work from the University of Melbourne and is currently enrolled in her PhD studies exploring the permanency in out of home care. In her new book "Adoption Deception", she unravels the complexities, debunks the myths, analyses the policies and raises important questions about the ethical and human rights dilemmas in adoption. The book argues for permanent care instead of adoption for vulnerable children unable to be raised by their families.

*Adoption Deception is available online from Spinifex Press.*

# Review of Qld Adoption Act 2009

The Adoption Act 2009 is currently being reviewed and the Queensland Government is seeking your feedback. For those interested in contributing to the legislation review, you are invited to make a submission or complete an online survey:

1. Making a submission <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/childsafety/adoption/review-of-operation-of-adoption-act-discussion-paper.pdf>
2. Filling out an online survey via Get Involved <https://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/gi/consultation/2700/survey/2650/view.html>

**Please note, the online survey and submissions will close on Friday 11th March at 5.00 pm.**

A consultant Pam Bourke has been engaged by the government to consult directly with the community. She and her colleagues would like to make contact with those of you who are interested in contributing to the legislation review by being interviewed, or attending a focus group.

\* The interview would take about 1 hour to complete and can be done phone or face to face depending on what you prefer.

\* The opportunities for interviews, focus groups or workshops are available until Friday 4th March 2016.

\* The information discussed will be recorded anonymously and none of your comments will be attributed directly to you.

\* The department has produced a discussion paper on the review of the operations of *Adoptions Act* which is available on line or in a hard copy. The discussion paper is available here <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/childsafety/adoption/review-of-operation-of-adoption-act-discussion-paper.pdf> for your information or we can send you one in hard copy if you prefer.

The consultants are aware that the adoption journey is a sensitive and personal matter, and for some it has not been positive. They can provide access to a counselling session to debrief participants after the interview/focus group if required.

If you would like to participate in the legislative review you may contact Pam or Fiona directly:

\* Pam Bourke—Mob: 0420 829 509 or at [bourkepam@gmail.com](mailto:bourkepam@gmail.com)

\* Fiona Caniglia—Mob: 0400 196 492 or at [fiona.caniglia@gmail.com](mailto:fiona.caniglia@gmail.com)

**Last year Jigsaw held two workshops which identified a number of areas needing attention in the current legislation. These included:**

The current legislation **restricts access to the names of fathers.** Currently an interpretation of this legislation is giving some access to fathers names, however we would like to see this secured explicitly in the act.

**Contact statements (vetoes)** should be removed. Every adoptee, mother or father should have the right to approach their family.



Where contact is problematic there is recourse in other areas of law. Contact statements currently in place also have no expiry—people do change their minds about contact and current statements dating back to 1991 need to be reviewed. And the Jigsaw experience is that people's lives change significantly during the course 25 years!

**Siblings** should have the right to apply for information about an adopted person. Having information about who one is genetically related is important for one's identity and avoiding inappropriate relationships in communities where populations are small.

**Please make your voice heard during the Adoption Act review about *contact statements, fathers and siblings.***



### Jigsaw welcomes new staff

**Andrea Lynch** has joined the Jigsaw Qld team. Andrea has had extensive previous experience in working with people affected by adoption and previously worked for Post Adoption Services Queensland (PASQ). Andrea joins our Forced Adoption Support Service (FASS) team. Andrea has studied a Masters in Counselling and has provided training in Mental Health First Aid.



**Dr Jo-Ann Sparrow** has been providing communications and media support for Jigsaw Qld. Jo is an adoptee, writer, researcher and public relations expert. Jo graduated from the University of the Sunshine Coast in 2015 with a Doctor of Creative Arts (Creative Writing), the University of Southern Queensland in 2011 with a Masters of Public Relations and from Monash Uni-

versity in 2004 with a Bachelor of Arts (Journalism, Writing).

### Forty years of YOUR stories.

Jigsaw Queensland celebrates its 40th birthday this year - forty years of working with people affected by adoption.

As part of our celebrations, we want to hear YOUR stories - your stories of being supported by Jigsaw or how your adoption or donor conception experience has affected your life. The stories will be collected and condensed confidentially and published anonymously as part of a 40th Anniversary publication. Throughout the year we will share snippets on our website, social media and in the newsletter.

If you would like to share your adoption story as part of our anniversary celebrations, please send a few sentences or paragraphs to [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au) (Subject: Anniversary Story), mail to PO Box 912, New Farm Q 4005 or you can call us on (07) 3358 6666 to schedule a time to be interviewed over the phone.



The publication will be launched at the Spring anniversary party.

### 3rd Anniversary Apology Morning Tea

A Morning Tea was held in Roma Street Parklands on **27th November 2015** to acknowledge the 3rd Anniversary of the Queensland State Apology for Forced Adoptions .

It was a hot day in the parklands but was attended by many impacted by forced adoption practices. A children's tea rose, the emblem of the state apology, was featured throughout the day and at the conclusion of proceedings those who attended each placed a rose on the memorial plaque of the apology. Members of Origins Qld, ALAS, Jigsaw Qld, PASQ and Adoption Services, Queensland Government attended the occasion with a reading of the apology and personal experiences shared.

Jigsaw Qld's Chris Mundy encouraged all who attended to seek the support of one another when we are feeling troubled by forced adoption.

**(Below: Attendees of the 3rd Anniversary Apology Morning Tea lay a Children's Tea Rose at the memorial plaque.)**

## Upcoming workshops and support groups

Jigsaw's support groups have experienced an increase in numbers since late 2015. Participation at the groups is free.

**12 March, 14th May & 9th July** — Adoptee Support Group 1:30 to 3:30pm.

**19 March & 21st May**— Birth Mother Group Meeting 1:30 to 3:30pm

**9 April**—Open Group Meeting 1:30 to 3:30pm.

## Mothers Healing Retreat

**Origins Inc.** are pleased to invite Mothers who lost children to adoption to the 2016 Mother's Healing Retreat facilitated by the Jigsaw FASS team.

During this retreat, you will have the opportunity to:

- Participate in relaxing activities on beautiful Stradbroke Island



### Mothers' Healing Retreat 2016

**Origins Inc.** are pleased to invite Mothers who lost children to adoption to the 2016 Mother's Healing Retreat. The workshop will be facilitated by the team from Forced Adoption Support Service Qld. During this retreat, you will have the opportunity to:

- Participate in relaxing activities on beautiful Stradbroke Island
- Meet other Mothers in a supportive and safe environment
- Explore self care and self compassion

**Location:** Allure Resort, Pt Lookout North Stradbroke  
**Dates:** Monday 14-16th, 2016  
**Cost:** Free

If you would like to attend, please email [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au) or call 1800 210 313 by Monday 22nd, February 2016.

This activity is funded by the Small Grants program, Forced Adoption Support Services.



- Meet other Mothers in a supportive and safe environment
- Explore self care and self compassion

The healing retreat will take place

at Allure Resort, Point Lookout, Stradbroke Island from Monday 14th to Wednesday 16th of March. This is a free event for all mothers who have lost a child to adoption.

If you would like to attend, please email [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au) or call 1800 210 313 by 2nd March 2016.

## Third Anniversary of the National Apology

A morning tea to acknowledge the 3rd anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoptions will be held on Monday 21st March 2016. Hosted by ALAS (Adoption Loss Adult Support), it will take

**3RD ANNIVERSARY NATIONAL APOLOGY FOR FORCED ADOPTIONS**

**ALAS (Adoption Loss Adult Support) Australia Inc.** would like to invite you to acknowledge the 3rd Anniversary of the Australian Government's National Apology for Forced Adoptions. Our guest speaker will be **Sue Boyce, former Senator for Queensland.**

**Guest Speaker:** Sue Boyce  
**Event:** 3rd Anniversary Morning Tea of National Apology for Forced Adoptions  
**Location:** Riverside, New Farm (Details over the page)  
**Date:** Monday 21st March  
**Time:** 10:30am to 12pm  
**Cost:** Free

If you would like to attend, please email [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au) or call 1800 210 313 by Friday 11th March 2016.

This activity is funded by the Small Grants program, Forced Adoption Support Services.

Forced Adoption Support Services Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services

place from 10:30am by the riverside at New farm. If you would like to attend please contact [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au) or call 1800 210 313 by Friday 11th March 2016.

## Fathers Survey

The University of NSW is conducting research into fathers of adopted children. Little research has been conducted in this important area. Those wanting to participate should follow the instructions on their website at <http://www.birthfathers.unsw.edu.au/>

## Long Lost Family



Originally conceived in the United Kingdom, Australia will get its own version of "Long Lost Family" on Network 10 in 2016. The show, hosted by Chrissie Swan and Anh Do will include a number of post adoption reunions which may present a number of triggers for those affected by adoption. The show traces and reunites families on camera that have been separated for decades through adoption or family breakdown. It is expected that the show will result in an increase of people wanting to access their information and seek support of services like Jigsaw Qld.

**Jigsaw**   
Queensland

Visit us at  
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