

Bits & Pieces

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Welcome to Bits & Pieces Autumn 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.

The leaves may be turning brown however, this edition is as fresh as can be! Roger shares his story of finding his Maori family and father through DNA. Caroline explains the cultural loss that comes with being a part of the Stolen Generation and we give a sneak preview of S3 of Adopt Perspective.

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“Once you know that someone is in your corner, you fight a little harder.”

by Anna Crockett (FASS Practitioner)

‘Roger McPaul’ is a 56 year-old adopted person. Roger approached us in December 2021 to help him connect with his biological family. While Roger’s search for his biological mother is ongoing, he has connected with some of his vast biological family on his father’s side and filled in many of the missing gaps about his heritage. He tells his story below.

Q: What bought you to Jigsaw QLD?

I really wanted to find out about who I was and where I came from, particularly since I have dark skin.

My two siblings were also adopted and I look completely different to them and we don’t really have shared interests. I also have a very different personality from my adoptive siblings – growing up I was always very curious, always asking questions and very talkative.

In 2017, I applied for my adoption information from the adoption services in the state where I was born. I received my adoption information however, I began to hit some road blocks when I applied for marriage and death searches for my biological mother at the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (RBDM) in that state.

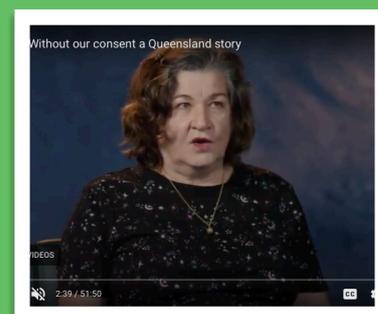
When I emailed my application form, the response was ‘you can’t start here’, and then they referred me on to another area within the Registry. My communication with the Registry left me feeling that they didn’t really listen and weren’t engaged enough to genuinely try to help me.

During this time I also moved house, changed jobs and life got in the way. When I recontacted the adoption services for support they suggested that because I lived in Queensland, that I contact Jigsaw QLD. Finally, after some more procrastination, I did just that.

Searching for my biological mother was complicated because she did not sign the adoption papers and she had a fairly common name.

Have you watched the *Without Our Consent: A Queensland Story* oral history yet? The interviews feature a mother who was forced to give her child up for adoption (Anne), an adoptee (Jo), and a father who was coerced into placing his son for adoption (Alan). It also includes interviews with representatives of post adoption organisations and Queensland politicians.

This video is a must watch for anyone affected by adoptions between 1950 and through the 1980s. You can watch it here: <https://www.jigsawqueensland.com/without-our-consent-a-qld-story>



I had done some searching on old electoral rolls online and I began to think that she may have returned to her home state after giving birth to me. Around the time that I first contacted Jigsaw QLD, I also did an Ancestry DNA test.

Q: How did Jigsaw QLD support you?

Jigsaw began with helping me to reapply for the death and marriage searches of my biological mother. Again, my application was referred onto another area. Jigsaw then stepped in for me and after some emails and phone calls they too met with the same response.

In short, the Registry said I wasn't legally entitled to request these searches and that I needed my biological mother's consent. I'm very grateful that I didn't have to battle the bureaucracy only to hear these words myself.

Jigsaw then contacted the states's Forced Adoption Support Service (FASS), who were able to liaise with RBDM to action my search requests and provide feedback about this incorrect procedure which not only contravenes the relevant state adoption legislation, but also further restricts the fundamental rights of people who are adopted.

I received an apology, which was okay, however, my feeling is that it is most important that they don't let it happen again, because other people might not have the energy to keep fighting.

There is a knock on effect with the support Jigsaw provided to me, because once you know that someone is in your corner, you fight a little harder.

I am caring for my 90 year old adoptive father who has dementia and the most important thing was knowing via updates from emails and phone calls from Jigsaw that someone else was doing it...someone else was fighting for me.

Q Where are you now with reconnecting with your biological family?

Happy, happy days! I'm still waiting for the results from RBDM searches, however, Ancestry has connected me with my Maori heritage on my father's side of my family.

My biological father actually passed away in 2011 but I have already met up with one of my half-brothers. Ironically, I look more like our Dad than he does!

This side of my family is a big, embracing Maori clan from New Zealand's North Island and they have organised a reunion for me to meet everyone in October this year.

I feel so accepted and this has given me the confidence and strength to deal with whatever response comes from my biological mother - if she is still alive and her family.



Roger's father

The Role of Culture in Identity Formation for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children

by Caroline Slade (FASS Team Leader)

The impact of removing a child from its biological family is becoming better understood as the research around adoption increases. However, there is little information available to help mainstream Australia to understand why this impact is different for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. To understand this better, it is first necessary to recognise what culture means and how important it is for everyone in terms of identity formation and personal development.

Culture is defined as:

“the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group also : the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time”

The removal of an Aboriginal child from their family and kinship structure effectively severs their only link to the culture.

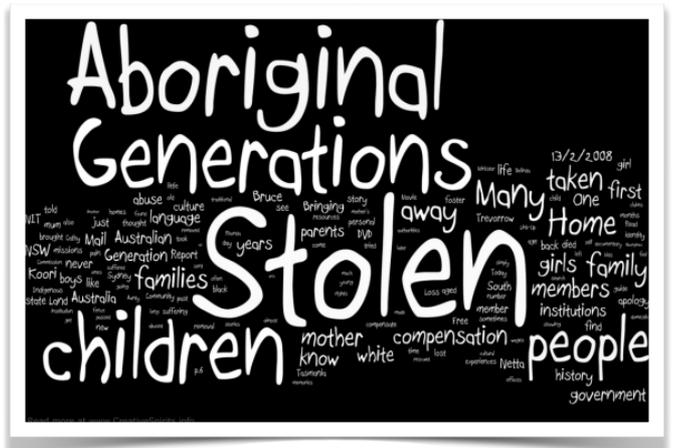
If these children are then placed with a family who are not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, they do not learn the beliefs, rituals and non-verbal cues of their population.

They are inundated with mainstream culture, through religion, media and education. This is the difference between the removal of children through forced adoption and the removal of Aboriginal children as part of the stolen generation.

Adopted children still learn to be part of the community that they live in and their broader culture is maintained even though their biological links are lost. Aboriginal children are forced to assimilate to a culture that is not their own and does not work for them in terms of their biological and neuropathic structure.

Throughout Australian history the government has undertaken a systematic and thoughtfully developed program of genocide against Aboriginal people. This has taken different forms as science evolved. Initially, it was believed that the easiest, most cost-effective way of removing Aboriginal people from the land to allow for expansion of the colonies was to kill them. This proved difficult due to the harsh terrain and the effective resistance provided by Aboriginal warriors.

The understanding that the features and characteristics of an Aboriginal person could be bred away over three generations led to a new form of genocide. This eugenics program is well documented and its intention to dissolve the Aboriginal population through breeding also failed.



Finally, the States settled on the complete destruction of Aboriginal culture through disconnection, isolation, discipline and removal. This recognised the strength of Aboriginal people came from their connection to each other and their land and community.

This saw the creation of missions across Australia and the removal of children from their families and communities to raise them as white.

It was not done for the benefit of the children but rather to destroy the Aboriginal presence in Australia. Queensland was a leading state in the management of its Aboriginal population with its designer going on to develop Apartheid with the South African Government.

The children that were removed were forbidden from talking to their family, or to speak their language or practice their culture. Families were moved from their country and shut into church and state run missions that farmed out their labour and prevented them from moving around.

As times have changed so have government policies around the treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The apology to the Stolen Generation showed that the Federal Government was prepared to take responsibility for the genocidal policies and acknowledge their devastating effect on Aboriginal people.

“We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians. We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.” - Kevin Rudd

Nancy Verrier talks about her books on Adopt Perspective podcast

by Jo Sparrow

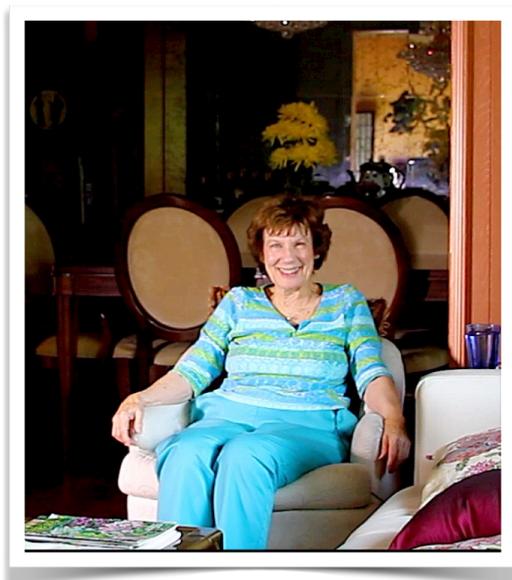
The 2022 season of Jigsaw Qld’s Adopt Perspective podcast is off to a flying start with our first two episodes of Season 3 featuring author of *The Primal Wound: Understanding the*

Adopted Child (1993) and *Coming Home to Self: The Adopted Child Grows Up* (2003), Nancy Verrier.



Nancy wasn’t the first academic to explore the effects of early infant separation from their mother and subsequent adoption, however, she communicated it in a way that was relatable and easily understood.

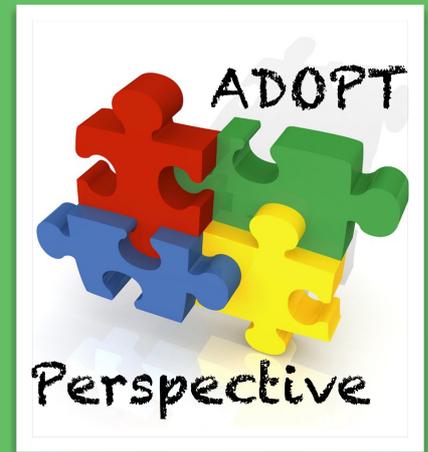
Her books are listed in the Jigsaw Qld recommended reading list and are often the starting place for anyone exploring their experience.



Nancy Verrier

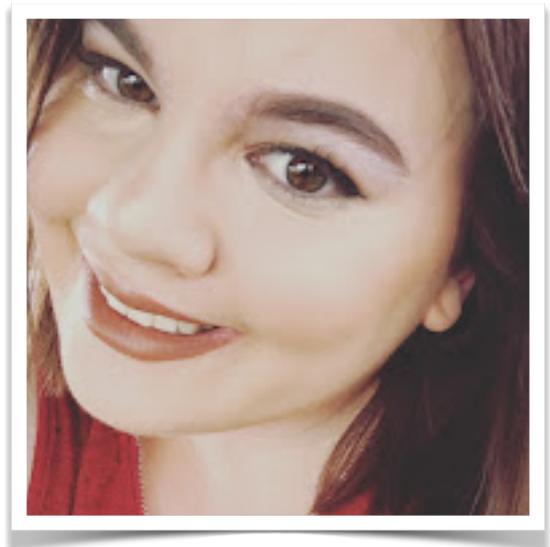
DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

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.



In the first episode, Nancy discusses the primal wound and how it impacts an adopted person and in the second episode, her next book, *Coming Home to Self* and the path to healing.

The remainder of the season promises to be a great one with episodes featuring the stories of mothers and father's who have lost children to adoption and adoptees, therapists, authors and much more.



Melissa Lock-Berry

Melissa was born and adopted in 1994, after five foster care placements. She shared that EMDR had been instrumental in her own healing, in addition to attending support groups at VANISH in Victoria. The episode with Fiona Mawson is scheduled to be released in the first half of the season.

Adopt Perspective is a podcast for anyone affected by adoption and can be listened to on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, Deezer and here: <https://www.jigsawqueensland.com/podcast>

If you'd like to help us continue to produce Adopt Perspective podcast episodes, consider making a tax deductible donation here: <https://www.jigsawqueensland.com/blank-ke6yx>



Fiona Mawson - EMDR Therapist

We'll also be exploring Eye Movement Desensitisation Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy with Fiona Mawson, a counselling psychologist and registered and accredited EMDR consultant with the EMDR Association of Australia.

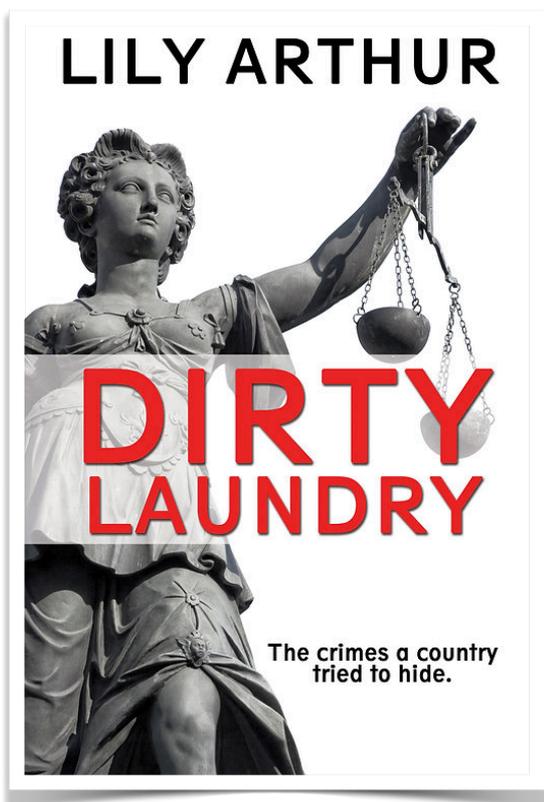
While we've long heard about the potential benefits of this therapy, it was a conversation with a Melbourne adoptee, Melissa Lock-Berry that sparked the episode.

'Dirty Laundry' Book Release

Lily Arthur has released her book, *Dirty Laundry: The Crimes A Country Tried To Hide* about her life as a Forgotten Australian and her experiences as a mother separated from her child by Australia's dark Forced Adoption era.

Lily's book chronicles her childhood as a migrant from England and her time as an unwed mother in Magdalene laundry in Brisbane.

Exploring the impact her child's adoption had on her life, the book also follows her journey from housewife, to student and then activist, and examines the impact her child's adoption had on her life.



You can find out more about Lily's story and purchase her book at www.lilyarthur.com.

Federal Apology Anniversary Change of Venue & Date Claimer



GOMA at Sth Brisbane

The venue for this year's 9th Anniversary of the Federal Governments Apology for Past Forced Adoption Policies and Practices has changed!

This year it will take place on the Roof Terrace at the Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA), Stanley Street in South Brisbane (near the State Library of Queensland).

DATE CLAIMER

The 9th Anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoptions will be held in Brisbane on Monday 21st March 2022

An event to commemorate the 9th Anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoptions will be held on 21st March, 2022 at Roof Terrace, Gallery Of Modern Art (GOMA), South Brisbane from 10.30am to 12noon. The event is being organised by the Forced Adoption Support Service (Jigsaw Qld) in association with ALAS Australia, Association for Adoptees, Origins Qld and You gave me a Voice. We hope you will note this event in your diary. More details and a formal invitation will be sent later.



The event will be held on Monday, 21 March, from 10.30am. A date claimer with further details is attached.

The event is being organised by the Forced Adoption Support Service (Jigsaw Qld) in association with ALAS Australia, Association for Adoptees, Origins Qld and You Gave Me A Voice.

Formal invitations will follow shortly.

Queensland Government to consider the rights of donor conceived people

The Queensland Government has made a welcome announcement that it will establish a Parliamentary Committee to consider the rights of people who are donor conceived to access genetic information about their donors.

The Legal Affairs and Safety Committee will examine the issue to determine whether a statutory register of donor conception information should be established in Queensland.

A report is expected by 31 August, 2022. Read the full media release here: https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/94552?fbclid=IwAR20yvrGWBjrDkjc1Bd_fzFZp11dLLo_nQLncngs4FjDx0Ls0jrBsXMC_shA

2022 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.

Adoptee Meetings and Mothers' Morning Teas are held on the ground floor of SANDS House, 505 Bowen Terrace, New Farm.

Participation at the groups is free for members (suggested \$5/head donation for non-members).

Open Information Events - 3 events / year.
Dates TBA.

Adoptee Support Group - (1.30pm - 3.30pm)
12 March, 14 May, 9 July, 10 Sept, 12 Nov.

Mothers' Morning Tea - a regular morning tea from 10am to 12 noon (address above) 16 Mar, 18 May, 20 July, 21 Sept, 16 Nov.

Queensland Government acts to protect rights of donor-conceived people

Published Thursday, 24 February, 2022 at 11:54 AM

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence
The Honourable Shannon Fentiman

The rights of donor-conceived Queenslanders to access genetic information about their donors to manage their health and personal wellbeing will be considered by the Queensland Parliament.

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice Shannon Fentiman said she had today asked Parliament to refer the important matter to the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee for inquiry.

"Conception using donated sperm, eggs or embryos has given countless Queensland couples and individuals the precious gift of starting or extending a family," Minister Fentiman said.

"For those people who are donor-conceived, it is important that they can access information about their genetic identity to better understand their origins and to manage their health appropriately.

"That's why the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee will examine this issue carefully, and to determine whether a statutory register of donor conception information should be established in Queensland.

"The Committee will consider the extent to which identifying information about donors should be given to donor-conceived persons, while also taking donors' right to privacy into consideration."

Under the Terms of Reference, the Committee will consider the experiences of donor-conceived people in accessing information under the current Queensland framework, as well as the views of donors and industry stakeholders, and governance and regulatory frameworks operating in other Australian jurisdictions.

Minister Fentiman said in addition to donor-conceived people, the Committee would also consider the ability of their parents and siblings to access information.

"Another important issue will be how identifying information about donors can be collected and disclosed for donations made on the condition of anonymity," Minister Fentiman said.

"Clearly there is a balance to be struck between donors' rights to privacy and donor-conceived people's right to information.

"However, I believe all Queensland children should grow up knowing their origins, with access to the genetic information they need to manage their health, wellbeing and sense of identity.

"I look forward to seeing the Committee's recommendations."

The Parliamentary Inquiry into access to donor conception information is expected to report its findings by 31 August 2022.

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