



Association for Adoptees Inc
Submission 2018

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and
Legal affairs.

Committee Secretary
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Inquiry Into Local Adoption

1. Stability and permanency for children in out-of-home care, with local adoption as a viable option;
2. Appropriate guiding principles for a national framework or code for local adoptions within Australia

Attachments: * The Child Exchange.
* It Takes More Than Love: What happens when adoption fails.
* Apology from the Womens and Newborn Services Royal
Brisbane and Women's Hospital.
* Birth: Adoptees First Trauma
* Imbil mum's fight on 'legalised child Stealing'

Association for Adoptees Inc; is a support, advocacy, and lobby group for domestic and International adoptees living within Australia.

Association for Adoptees Inc, is formerly known as **W.A.S.H** (White Australian Stolen heritage) who lobbied for inclusion on the senate inquiry into former forced adoptions and subsequent federal and state apologies. W.A.S.H was the first and only adoptee support group to receive an official apology from a hospital that was involved in former forced adoptions. (Please see attached; apology from the Women's and Newborn Services Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital 2009)

We provide a safe supportive environment for all adoptees to speak about their experience as an adopted one. Many adoptees who access our support have suffered abuse, mistreatment, and trauma within the homes where they were adopted. Most adoptees express that they are desperate for inclusion and belonging, and earnestly seek to be heard, understood, and respected.

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Australian Institute of family's studies "Past Adoption Experiences" report 2012 stated: Of particular concern is that quite a number of participants reported suffering abuse in the adoptive family environment.

(Page 173) A concerning number of participants disclosed abuse they had suffered by their adoptive parents, and felt it was important that the message be communicated more broadly that not all adoptees went to good homes. Their response demonstrates the variety of ways in which they are still dealing with the lifelong effects of these abuses. Carrying the physical and psychological scars and their need for medical and psychological support has come at great cost, financially and emotionally.

For some, it is a question of how those responsible for their placements could let this happen to them.

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In 2018, we still have had NO accountability or acknowledgment by any government that adoptees suffered abuse by adoptive parents. We want to know when this will happen and how any government can consider any movement forward into adoption, knowing that adoption is a failed social experiment that destroyed and adversely affected thousands of lives and still affects them today. Adoptees consider that even open adoption has the same foundations as past adoptions, the same myths, and narrative is being told and sold in the guise of "in the best interest of the child" Unless ALL governments talk directly with and engage with adult adoptees with a lived experience of adoption, no efforts forward will convince us or even ensure that," the child's best interests" are being met.

Both state and Federal governments know that these abuses occurred, yet refused to apologise. The Senate inquiry clearly heard from a number of adoptees who had suffered abuse. Professor Nahum Mushin retired family law Judge spoke to many of these victims as he travelled around Australia gathering information on the wording of the apology on behalf of the federal government. Our group under the name, W.A.S.H, with other adoptees made repeated requests for our abuses to be added to the federal and state apologies, into former forced adoptions; however, we were either ignored or told NO it will not happen! The adoptees of today want to know why this occurred and when will we be heard? We strongly request, that our claims of abuses, mistreatment and trauma be heard in an official and satisfactory inquiry, without delay and apologised for. We want our country to respond, acknowledge, and recognise, our experiences as abused adopted ones, with the same types of assistance as offered to the forgotten Australians, Stolen Generation, and victims of child sexual abuse.

The inquiry into Institutional care, and the royal commission into Sexual abuse refused submissions from adopted people. Our own Senate inquiry into former forced adoptions failed to adequately add adoptees. The terms of reference denied acknowledgement that adoptees had even been affected by adoption, as the focus was on the mothers. We are being denied a voice at every turn and we need this issue rectified. Until our government hears all the pain and suffering of adoptees and explores how and what mistakes were made to us, then NO possible movement forward concerning children in care and adoption can possibly be justified. The mistakes of the past, towards adoptees has not yet been adequately and responsibly addressed and until that does happen any idea of adoption for any child in care, must be denied.

(Australian Institute of family studies report 2012) **Adopted Individuals were VERY STRONG** in their focus on the need for public acknowledgment and repeatedly state that their experiences are equal to the forgotten Australian and Stolen generation.

Dr Daryl Higgins Deputy Director (Research) Australian institute of family Studies; Many of these practices have similarities with those to which Indigenous Children of the Stolen Generations were subjected, with children forcibly removed from their families under acts of parliament and sent either to institutions or adopted by non-indigenous families. Findings from this study again highlighted that long-lasting effects on not only mothers and fathers separated from a child by adoption, but also on the now adult children who were adopted as babies. The most common impacts of forced adoption were found to be psychological and emotional, and included mood disorders, grief and loss, PTSD, identity and attachment

disorders, and personality disorders. The study found a range of poor mental health and wellbeing outcomes. Around 70% of adopted individuals agreed that being adopted had a negative effect on their health, behaviour and or wellbeing while growing up, regardless or whether the experience with the adoptive families was a positive or negative one.

In light of this damning report from Dr Higgins, we ask how can adoption ever be considered as a viable option for thousands of children? The Queensland government agrees, and considers that adoption remain a last resort. As exposed in the 2013 Queensland Government response to the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry final report. Taking Responsibility: A Roadmap for Queensland Child Protection. Led by the Honourable Tim Carmody QC.

In its forwarding statement of 121 recommendations it states; The overarching tenet of the report is clear in that parents (and families) should take primary responsibility for the protection of their children and that, where appropriate, parents should receive the support and guidance they need to keep their children safe. It is only as a last resort, that the government should intervene in a statutory role to ensure the protection of children who are at risk of harm.

Association for Adoptees Inc, in collaboration with families who have lost children to Child protection practises, and refer to the Carmody report, believe that far too many children are taken from families and placed in foster care. There is an over burden of the foster care system, and children are not being cared for adequately, especially for those children needing it the most. Queensland has clearly defined this problem. We believe that this inquiry should not be about adoption, but rather about why there are so many children in care and how to help them return home .

There are far too many reports of children being mistreated, harmed, and even killed in foster care, as reported by the media, government sources, and the biological parents themselves. We want to know why children in care are being targeted for adoption rather than fixing the blatant issues of a broken foster care system . Why are foster parents being targeted to adopt, when it is clear that foster parents also abuse. This evidence alone proves that the screening, training and follow up of foster carer's is flawed. AdoptChange and other pro-adoption groups, governments and individuals seem to believe that children in care should be made available for adoption, yet adoption is just an extension of foster care with many of the same workers, agencies, parents etc.

The idea that anti-adoption agenda demands that children to be kept with abusive families at all cost is a lie.

We deny the narrative being sold to the public that some against adoption believe that families should be kept together at all cost. This could not be further from the truth. We want the whole system cleaned up, and we want child protection better held accountable for removing children that would have been best cared for at home with support. There is a culture of, "guilty until proven innocent" and "one size fits all", in child protection. The reports that come to us, clearly shows that not enough is done to help families stay together with intervention and prevention models. We have increasing reports of babies being removed on the concept of perceived harm, no crime has been committed. However just because the mother was in care herself as child, or had a child placed in care when she was a teenager, she is unjustly targeted. When NSW offers NGO's \$38,000 or more to procure a child for adoption, do you seriously think that family preservation will occur? The amount of money given to NGO' services for foster care is concerning, (why would a service that relies on funding to support kids in care want to reduce the amount of children they care for, as this would result in loss of funding. If the same amounts of money were directed into helping families to stay together with support, then we would see a dramatic drop in children needing out-of-home care. Clearly, measures such as these would account to the large numbers of children still in care.

How truthful the numbers

The actual numbers of children living with a family member are estimated be (23,500) which is half the number of the total of children in care. The other half, estimated (23,500) are not living with a family member. So if we add the numbers like this: The amount of children in care who are already placed with extended family, with those who have family who are are on short term orders, added with those children who have severe and complex disabilities and trauma's, combined with the amount of children over the age of 5, will leave a small pool of children even accessible to be considered for adoption. It is then estimated that the actual number of children who could most likely to be adopted are at lower than 96% of the total amount of children in care. This is close to the truth, as the University of Sydney admitted on ABC Radio (recently) with the Chair of this committee, that those children who could be considered for adoption are estimated at 4,000 out of the 47,000 children currently in care. We are tired of the stretched reports, to inflate the numbers, such as 47,000 kids needing forever families! These children have families, it is only a very few number of children that can actually be considered for adoption. Even far less still of parents who will willing consent to adoption. This glaring truth is exasperating, because pro-adopters sprout exaggerated numbers in an effort to anger and outrage the public and media, to gain support. They leave out vital facts, and put many loved children at risk of being harmed by forced adoption.

In the past, couples who could not conceive were given children for adoption, many of these couples were foster carers, and it has been proven that children were abused, mistreated, and even killed, in their care. The same flawed system that demonises poor vulnerable families and single mothers seems to be alive and well today. The narrative that one group of people are more deserving of children over another is a tool used in the past that resulted in illegal and unlawful practices occurring. The media with the help of the pro-adoption agenda is creating the same propaganda that existed when over 250,000 mostly non-indigenous children were stolen by force, threats, coercion and lies between the 1950's and 1980's. The adoptees most affected by those past adoption practices, are still suffering the effects today, and strongly object to such rhetoric and tactics.

Love and Stability Are Not Enough

If the pro-adoption groups and the chair of this committee as stated in a number of interviews believe that love and stability is enough (quote end quote) then why are not more children returned to poor families? It is an absolute ludicrous idea, to think, and even say that love and stability is enough for the all the numbers of children claimed, to be so severely abused and traumatised by their parents. To claim that adopted parents need little more than to offer love and stability to heal these broken, traumatised children is beyond the comprehension from those of us who know the truth. The amount of support, training, education, and money that is needed to support such children over their lifetime seems to be beyond the comprehension of the pro-adoption agenda. In addition, this is why adoption will not work and cannot work to the best interest of the child. *(please see attachment; It takes more than love: What happens when adoption fails)*

(Page 179 of the Australian Institute of Family studies report) **Truth, recognition, and apology from our government. Adoptees that were to families and subsequently abused are seeking better services for pain, suffering, grief, and trauma. We are seeking an apology not only for being taken from our mothers and family, but also for the lack of screening of POTENTIAL adoptive parents that should have protected us from perceived harm.**

Adoptee Qld

Association for Adoptees challenge your view on adoption, and present the truth of not only abused adoptees/ but include the voice of foster children who became adopted and suffered abuse in the foster carers/adoptive parents home. Just because you have a desire to adopt, does not automatically make you a good person or a safe person or even the right person to raise someone else's child. We want to know what plans are in place for failed

placements, because at present there are none for adopted children. What recourse will adoptees have if the adoption fails or they are abused by adoptive parents?

Adoptees in our group who did not suffer abuse, clearly share and suffer many of the same traits as abused adoptees. This is brought about by traumatic separation of family, culture, and heritage. The impact of this loss can never be underestimated nor diminished. Adoptees in general suffer moderate to severe mental health issues, at being torn from their family of origin.

(Australian Institute of family studies report surveyed 823 adoptee as documented on page 121); **That Adoptees in this study showed a higher than average likelihood of having a mental health disorder, than the general population, and qualitative accounts of mental health and wellbeing support these findings.**

(Page 172 of the same report): Qualitative accounts suggest that adopted individuals are facing multiple issues, and having had a positive experience growing up with their adoptive families has not necessarily meant that they have not faced any issues in relation to their adoption. In fact, there was an **OVERWHELMING** amount of information provided to us as to how their adoption experience has affected many areas of their lives, such as self-identity, family and other intimate relationships, parenting behaviours (including confidence, and questioning their own adequacy as a parent), and issues with abandonment and attachment (or “bonding”). Having their own children has also been a trigger for many participants as to what adoption has meant to them and how it has affected their lives.

Negative feelings by some study participants about their adoption experience have been compounded by feeling ostracised from a community who perceived adoption as being something to be ashamed of. E.g. Stigma, Pitying attitude, and needed saving, negative attitudes and shame about biological parents, lies about biological parents, painting adoptive parents as **SAINTS** and burdened with the weight of expectations of adoptive parents and non-disclosure of their adoption. Adoptees who stated they were not abused by adoptive parents, still suffered negative impacts that they say are **PROFOUND**. (End quote)

Heritage, identity, and culture more than the colour of your skin.

Adoptees consider that information about them as being of EXTREME IMPORTANCE, as it relates to issues of identity that everyone else takes for granted. They stated that the current system does not provide for ease of access information: it fails to reflect the significance of the information that is being provided to those seeking it. Adoptees state there is still a lack of sensitivity coming from those who have the power to give it, and are told that it should not be viewed as a privilege. Adoptees believe that they have a right to their information that the rest of the community take for granted (such as original birth certificates) which is a central issue for many adoptees. They also express their views on the absence of choice that they had to be adopted, feeling that adoption is forced onto them. They question why they have to bear the burden of having to continually fight for information that belongs to them. A critical element for adoptees is the need for assistance from service providers to obtain information and to have the positive sensitive support to do so. Their search for their real legal identity and genealogy that includes their father's name and medical history is vitally important to many adoptees.

The whole way, in which adoption is viewed by our governments and society, take huge tolls on the adoptees life. The need for lifelong assistance to cope with being adopted needs to be taken seriously, as being adopted, means adopted for life. The idea that the government can take a child for adoption and convince themselves that they have created a stable and loving forever family and believing this is enough for the child, is incredibly naive to say the least. Failure to adhere and learn from adoptees will result in creating more victims of adoption trauma.

Association for Adoptees clearly state that; It is our greatest concern, that introducing adoption back into society, will once again create more victims who will require ongoing mental health assistance and support for the remainder of their life. We also believe that any children born of these victims will also need assistance and so on. The cost of adoption trauma over the life of an adopted person far outweighs the cost of addressing family crisis issues that are often short term.

We don't yet have the services and funding to meet current needs; So why create more victims?

Despite good efforts to train mental health professionals and GPs, adoptees still report that current services are unable to adequately respond to complex trauma issues. In response to the Senate Inquiry in 2013 The Australian Psychological Society received \$5million to develop guidelines and training materials for mental health professionals to assist in the diagnosis, treatment and care of those affected by forced adoption practises. This consisted

of a series of webinars and an e-Learning package. To date only 2,000 mental health care workers, GP's and other helping professionals have completed their training. Association for Adoptees, believe that though it is to be acknowledged that counsellors are making efforts to be trained, we believe that thousands more, need to avail themselves to such training and that current training models do not yet go far enough to address and meet all adoptees needs.

(Australian Institute of Family Studies report page 184) Specialised counselling was seen as being integral to meeting the current needs of those affected; that is, counselling by professionals who have specialised knowledge of the issues associated with adoption (including trauma and relational and attachment-focused therapy). Specialised counselling needs to remain available to those affected throughout their life span. Adoption-related issues can be triggered at any time, and often the individual is left in a very vulnerable state when events trigger an emotional response.

Shared Information a Constructive Working Model

Government should endeavour to work alongside adoptees and other victims of adoption: Collaborative, well-informed decision making = best practice, and a better future for families and children.

Association for Adoptees Inc works with other former forced adoption stakeholder groups and engage with the Queensland government on a regular basis.

It is through this engagement that the Queensland government has attained a greater understanding of adoption issues. We work collaboratively with the department to ensure positive changes in the areas of child protection and adoption. We are proud of the work that we have achieved in Queensland and understand the difficult and complex work needed to keep children safe, as well as connected to their family of origin. We implore each state to also open its doors and departments, to work together with adoptees. We are also requesting that the federal government consider the importance to do the same, in the best interest of all children.

When ALL aspects of adoption are properly investigated, when one allows themselves to be educated, and begins to open themselves to understand the true impact of adoption, you will begin to understand why many adoptees find adoption, either offensive or upsetting. (Kerri Saint, AFA)

Through these meetings with the Queensland Department of Child Safety; a two-way exchange occurs, where we are able to ask the questions around child protection, adoption, and current legislation and what views the department hold, on adoption. In exchange, It is our views, opinions and lived life experiences of adoption that helps the department to better understand the complex issues of adoption, throughout our entire life.

Our continued journey as victims of adoption provides a wealth of knowledge through our lived experiences as adoptees, not just as children, but also as adults with families of our own. This understanding of what adoptees experience and feel over a lifetime, on a range of life issues, is a wealthy resource for the department. Sadly, other states fail to take advantage of this same-shared information. It is common knowledge amongst adoption support groups who, and what government, refuse to engage with adoptees in a constructive working model.

It is vitally important that government and departments fully understand how our adoption affects us and our children and grandchildren; including relationship with others, our marriage, deaths, divorce, our family role, siblings, reunions, searches, birth certificates, wills, inheritance, medical history, mental and physical health, and seeking information, etc..

Our voices as an adoptee should be seen as vital, to any discussion on adoption and we feel that this inquiry will do a great injustice to future generations of children without speaking to the very ones who are directly affected, adoptees themselves. We fear the same mistakes; will be made if you fail to do this.

(Page 187 Australian Institute of family Studies report 2012) The Senate Inquiry (2012) highlights the complexities of the current adoption climate in Australia and determined that the findings of their report are considered in any discussions about local adoptions. (Section 13:16) and the information provided to the Committee is consistent with the contributions made by the participants in this study. *Please note, that 823 adoptees gave their voice to this report.*

Former Forced Adoptions Senate Inquiry: The Committee urges ALL those involved in current adoption practices to take the findings of this report into account to ensure that the mistakes of the past are NEVER repeated. Has the committee read this report?

The Queensland Government response to the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry final report. Page 33, 121

Recommendation; That the Queensland Government commit to the Child Protection reform Roadmap with the intention of significantly reducing the number of children in the child protection system, and improving outcomes for children in out-Of-home-care

ACCEPTED; The government accepts this recommendation. Commissioner Carmody's roadmap sets a path for improving the Queensland child protection system over the next ten years moving away from a risk adverse system focused on placing too many children in care, to one focused on better supporting families and keeping them together.

Also; 31

Recommended;

The department of Communities, Child Safety, and Disability Services routinely consider and pursue adoption (particularly for children aged less than 3 years) in cases where reunification is no longer a feasible case-plan goal.

Accepted;

The government accepts this recommendation. The government acknowledges that adoption, as a permanency option for children in out-of-home care is a contentious issue. It is important that family reunification remains a preferred outcome for children in the child protection system where possible, other options, including adoption, that are in the best interests of the child will be considered.

The government accepts this recommendation. The government recognises that keeping children connected to family, community and culture is of central importance to the long-term well-being of ALL children.

Statistics and findings on the harmful effects of Adoption And Research and Study findings on Adoptees

Adoption is a failed experiment! The system was supposedly designed to benefit, the children, yet they are failed in every country that adoption exists. Many adoptees do not realise that their difficulties, at least in part, stem from simply having been adopted. All adoptees are affected by their adoption experience. The degree of the effects and symptomatic behaviours vary a great deal.

The following are a number of findings by the UK and the USA on adoption. We have included adoptees within Australia. We have included findings from other countries because the pro-adoption speakers as heard on ABC Radio, believe that we should have the same adoption system as the USA and the UK, yet both countries have alarming numbers of children that have suffered abuse, mistreated, trauma, re-homing and have even been murdered by adoptive parents.

Association for Adoptees implore our government to NEVER model Australian child protection/adoption policies based on either of these countries. Both of these countries have serious breaches of children's rights. The USA in particular has serious issues with child trafficking, (please refer to attached media stories) No money should exchange hands for any child, for any reason. The recent inquiry into modern day slavery, clearly identified and exposed that adoption in some countries is nothing more than modern day slavery.

- Adopted Children are disproportionately represented with learning disabilities and organic brain Syndrome. (Schechter and Genetic Behaviours)
- Mental health professionals are surprised at the alarmingly high number of their patients who are adopted. (Lifton, Birco- Pannor and Lawrence)
- Studies show an average of 25 to 35% of the young people in residential treatment centers are adoptees. This is 17 times the norm. (Lifton, Birco-Panner and Lawrence.)
- Adoptees are more likely to have difficulties with drug and alcohol abuse, as well as eating disorders, attention deficit disorder, infertility, suicide and untimely pregnancies. (Young, Bohman, Mitchell, Ostroff, Ansfield, Lifton and Schechter)
- Alarmingly high numbers of adoptees are sent to disciplinary/correctional schools or are locked out of their adoptive homes. (Anderson and Carlson)
- 60 to 85% of teens at Coldwater Canyon's Center for Personal Development, are adopted. That is 30 to 40 times the norm. The centre is a private acute-care psychiatric hospital/school in Southern California. (Ostroff)

- 50 to 70 % of the teens at the Haven in New Trier Township, Illinois, are adopted. That is 25 to 35 times the norm. The Haven is a resource centre for street kids. (Henderson)
- Nancy Newton Verrier, PhD writes..” I believe that the connection established during the nine months in utero is a profound connection, and it is my hypothesis that the severing of that connection in the original separation of the adopted child from the birth mother causes a primal or narcissistic wound, which affects the adoptees sense of Self and often Manifests in a sense of loss, basic mistrust, anxiety and depression, emotional and/or behavioural problems, and difficulties in relationships with significant others. Nancy Verrier is also an adoptive mother and is well respected for her work by adoptees, in particular.
- Greif and loss. The very nature of adoption is centred on the concept of loss. The mothers, father, adopted persons, extended family members and adoptive parents all experience loss through adoption. Further, individuals who do not undertake the normal grieving process are susceptible to pathological grief. The result of an abnormally prolonged grieving process that has maladaptive impacts. (Bloch & Singh, 2010)
- Anxiety, is evident that adopted persons, mothers and some fathers affected by adoption have, or are continuing to experience, symptoms associated with panic disorder, generalised anxiety and other symptoms and disorders (Kenny 2012; Senate inquiry, 2012). Anxiety symptoms and disorders are common responses among people who have been exposed to trauma (Brier & Scott, 2013)
- Trauma, The value of a “Trauma-aware” approach to service deliver is becoming more recognised when working therapeutically with people who have experienced significant events that affect a person’s sense of self (Wall & Quadara, 2014) This includes people affected by forced adoption and who are separated from family.
- The lessons learnt from past practice require reflection on the future of adoption. The vast majority of people affected by forced adoption would like to see the total abolition of adoption..It cannot be in a child’s best interest to have all aspects of his or her past obliterated from the record..Professor Nahum Mushin retired family law judge Australia.
- Many of those affected by forced adoption policies and practices continue to struggle with the ongoing mental, physical, and social health problems because of their adoption experience. There is now evidence of the wide-ranging psychological impacts, including complex and/or pathological grief and loss, self-identity and attachment issues, anxiety and depression disorders, and symptoms or posttraumatic stress disorder. (Australian Psychological Society 2014)
- Criticism of the UK’s adoption laws include Britain’s most senior authority on family law, Baroness Bulter Sloss, the former president of the High Court family division. Peers are worried that the focus on adoption could break up families unnecessarily.

- Former Judge Alan Goldsacks QC call for all babies to be forcibly removed from Criminal families at birth for adoption has been strongly criticised UK News 2017
- 2017 UK families say adoptive families are being driven to crisis point, due to 'extraordinary lack of support'- Independent New UK
- More than a quarter of adoptive families are in crisis, according to a survey by the BBC and Adoption UK. Almost 3,000 responded to the survey. Where it revealed that families are sending children back because they cannot cope, family disruption and breakup in most cases due to a complete lack of support. Dr Sue Armstrong Brown, chief executive of Adoption UK said, "The survey results broadly mirror what we already knew-that many families are experiencing serious challenges. In a utopian world all adoptive parents experiences would be 'fulfilling and stable' but this is not the case.
- Around 5,500 children are adopted in the UK every year, with the majority of adoptions involving children over the age of 1 and many under the age of 5 and yet results are still poor. 2% are 1, 71% aged 1-4, 24% between the age 5-9
- In one case alone in 2011, 3 adopted children were abused over 10 years by adoptive parents. Proving the system is flawed. Professionals were swayed by perceptions and assumptions about the couples class, professional status, and academic qualifications. The Cheshire East Local Safe Guard Board found these parents should never have been allowed to adopt. The Children were subject to repeated and systemic physical abuse and emotional harm and neglect.
- The Mirror UK- Parents in the UK are sending adopted children back into care. Repeatedly stories are being told of abuse by adoptive parents one recent story exposed an adoptee suffering abuse for decades by adoptive mother.
- There have been reported cases, which have drawn significant criticism from the Judiciary; for example, Lord Justice Aiken describes the way social workers had acted in the case before him as being more suited to "Stalin's Russia" or Mao's China than the West of England. Once a child is placed for adoption the child and parents have no recourse open to them to reverse the process even when evidence comes to light that shows that the reasons for the adoption were flawed. Families are, prohibited by court order from publicly discussing their cases.
- Resistance to overturning adoption orders once made on, the basis of being in the best interest of the child has been criticised by the Council of Europe as based on the miss understanding of what is meant by the child's best interest.
- Concerns are that children from lower income families are targeted. Over 90% of children forcibly adopted in the UK come from families that live below the poverty line and then placed with middle class families, despite counter arguments that child abuse and neglect are NOT a class issue.
- Car plunged off cliff in California. The 6 adopted Children were believed to have perished. Child Protection workers were investigating that 3 of the children were being starved days before they died. One of the couple had dark history of child

abuse that was not flagged by the adoption agency. One child's teacher in 2011 noticed bruising on the 6-year-old Sarah one of the parents was charged with domestic assault. New York Post 2018

- Russia children's right commissioner Pavel Astakhov scathing as 20th adopted child killed in 11 years in the US, by adoptive parents. 2013 radio Europe.
- Death of in toddler in Texas prompts call from India to end intercountry adoptions." The continued death of adopted children proves the system does not work.
- Two adoptee support groups in the USA that expose abuse and mistreatment to adoptees are Pound Puppy Legacy and Bastard Nation..Share 100's/1000's of stories of children who were adopted and abused, and or re-homed. 60 minutes Australia and America exposed the disgusting practice of re-homing of children, where they are given to strangers when an adoption placement fails. Those children either turn up dead, abused, sold as a sex slaves or never heard of again, etc and rarely ever find their forever family.

A child Protection Motto Should Read: Do No More Harm!

Why do we need adoption and whose needs are we really attempting to address?
Are the children in-care asking to be adopted by strangers and removed from their entire family and culture? Alternatively, are childless couples putting pressure on our governments to supply them with children?
Who is really driving this idea of open adoption? If it is not the children, then is adoption really in the best interest of the child? (Please see attached; The Child Exchange)

Stewardship VS Adoption

Before you start to create a system that will do nothing but cause, more trauma you might want to consider another model that adoptees have discussed at length and feel comfortable with. We are talking about Stewardship instead of adoption. A Stewardship family offers a safe, warm, loving supportive family with on a permanent basis and offers all the stability a child seeks. Stewardship models offer an alternative to children being bounced from one home to the next. A stewardship model supports family contact and arbitrates for it. Unlike, open adoption that makes promises of 'being open' and connection with biological family, which is often reneged on. Adoption creates ownership of the child, something former victims of adoption hate. Unlike adoption, stewardship allows the child to retain their biological family name and retains their original birth certificate and stays

connected to siblings and other biological family members, the stewardship parents are legally responsible. Stewardship model means you keep your original birth certificate; there is no need to hide or lie about who you are. Adoptees consistently state that they are deeply upset at the lie on their birth certificate, stating that two strangers who cannot have children are your biological parents. We already have biological parents and it needs to be honoured, no matter what they have done or not done..We do not deserve to have our truth wiped away. A birth certificate can be shared with a document of legal standing that the parents that have stewardship are legal guardians..In Stewardship, heritage is not affected as anyone can write a legal Will, with his or her wishes. Stewardship does not deny any inheritance from biological family. Adoptees are rightly upset around the areas of inheritance and wonder why we are denied the right to claim inheritance from our biological family when we never wanted to be separated from them, in the first place. Adoptees are also upset that the families they are adopted into, leave them out of family inheritance because they are adopted, and not technically family. If you think we are joking about inheritance and what adoptees have had to endure please think again. Repeatedly adoptees have told us that they were wiped from adoptive families, after either one or both of the adoptive parents have died. Extended families members, including the biological children of adoptive parents exclude the adoptee from any inheritance, contact and family gathering after adoptive parents die. Unless you are willing to hear the life experiences of adoptees over the duration of their life, you will never begin to understand the price adoptees have to pay.

Adoption should never be included as a child protection strategy in any form of legislation, policy, or practice. We believe that the overall decision making by authorities in Australia in relation to adoption, need to take care to ensure that dialogue, and policy is not driven by the desire of adoptive parents to have ownership of such children. Ownership expectations create all sorts of problems and anguish for the child, especially when they become old enough to want to have a relationship with their biological family. Adopted people are the only people in society that feel that they are obliged to be grateful to the parents that raise them. They are expected to deny any feelings towards biological parents, and other siblings, for fear of upsetting adoptive parents, this is highly damaging and un-natural for any person to endure.

A Changing World That Has Forgotten the "Adoptee"

If as a society, we can formulate a better way to respond to transgender people and people who are gay, and pass new laws to accept same sex marriage, and equality removing discrimination in all areas of their life. If we are considering altering Birth, death and marriage certificates to considered and include transgender, none binary persons. Then why

can we not give adopted people inter-grated birth certificates? Why can we not remove discrimination from adoption and adoptees lives as well. We are the only group of victims to be denied a voice in the, "Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse", and the "Inquiry into Children in Care," and denied an "apology" within own inquiry into, "Former Forced Adoptions". Why are adopted people constantly discriminated against? Why are we to accept changes for all other members of society to meet their needs, yet adoptees are still treated like second-class citizens. Every time we seek our personal information we are asked to pay. We are wanting DNA information to be freely accessed. Why are the things we ask for, being denied? Especially in the areas of Birth certificates, and discharge of our adoptions. Why is it that we can evolve as a society in our understanding, knowledge and views for other members of society, yet for us the adoptee you are still stuck in the dark ages and confining our lives to fit the needs of childless couples against our own needs.

People who cry to be able to adopt need to consider that the past mistakes of this countries horrific abuses of the past, have not been fully dealt with, and all the evidence in regard adoption is overwhelmingly stacked with far too much collateral damage, upon the adoptee.

In the past our adoptive parents were not subjected to stringent and legal obligations, to adopt us. There was no proper screening, no follow up, no training and education and certainly no ongoing support. It was a matter of passing a child over from one un-deserving parent to another, more deserving parent. The result being that adoptees suffered abuse, miss-treatment, and trauma.

The current driving force for adoption seems very upset about the protective rules and policies and practices in place to keep children safe. The pro-adoption argument is that adoption is too hard and too stringent, and they want quicker easier access to children for adoption. However, the very fact that adoptees are (now) not suffering the levels of abuse and mistreatment in this country as in the past, by adoptive parents, is evident of why the rules of adoption need to be so stringent.

However, adoptees of the past, are still made to endure for life, every ounce of a cruel and unjust system of past adoption practises. Consider those who cannot un-do their adoption and are tied to their abusive adoptive parents/family for life and are torn from their biological families. These adoptees are without the family unit, without that belonging, love, warmth, and togetherness. Every birthday, holiday, Mothers day, Father Day, Christmas etc is affected and they will never get back what was taken from them.

Any idea of removing children from biological families should always be treated with the utmost stringent, rules regulations and requirements, because you are dealing with a human being, who is created from the bodies made up of their own personal unique DNA Ancestry. Each person born is uniquely connected to his or her parents, siblings, and grandparents via; a complex web of DNA structures that are physical and psychological, reaching into generations. If we fail to respect this connection and do not treat it with the utmost care, attention, and respect it deserves, then we are committing a crime not just against that child removed, but also on generations of children.

The pinnacle barrier to adoption/ open adoption. No adopted family will replace that unique connection, it cannot adequately meet what every child deserves, and has a right to belong to their biological family. Every child will want to be connected to the biological family, despite the dysfunction. The key should be how can we keep children safe and achieve this without destroying that connection. Association for Adoptees believes this motto, "if you want to Save the Child, Save the Parent". No child can grow to be a healthy well-adjusted adult if we as a society, demonise, or devalue their biological parents and heritage. Children are an extension of their parents, the two are forever connected, physically, psychologically, and emotionally, so when biological parents are devalued, then automatically the children are also devalued. The actions of society to diminish the parents, their role and importance sends a strong message to the child, that they are somewhat less than. This is something that adoptees have had to struggle with all their life.

Association for Adoptees are greatly concerned in-regard to the amount of monies and resources that exist through government funding, non-government agencies, registered entities, religious organisations and individuals that may be unwittingly or knowingly contributing to the unnecessary separation of children from their families and now want to enter the dialogue of open adoption. We implore you to carefully read and consider our submission, on the grounds that we are the true voice of adoption, and wish that no child should ever carry the burden's we have been forced to endure.

Thanking You

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