

## **Inquiry: Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices**

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Mothers & Fathers together with their adopted Sons & Daughters; adopters and families of all those touched by adoption need to have both available therapy and a facilitated support group.

As a Professional Counsellor in private practice my opinion has been informed by the stories of those I have heard and read who have all been affected by adoption both forced and otherwise.

The issues have created groups of emotionally damaged people, some of whom have remained as victims and barely survived their lives. Those issues include those of identity, loss, and sometimes grief, severe rejection and abandonment and producing problems with trust of others, self esteem, relationships, parenting the will to live anger and so on.

There is a generalised and increasing desire from the wider population to find out about their family histories. Often because of their circumstances, adoptees have no such luxury. Unless people have knowledge of where they came from and the circumstances under which they had that start to their life, there is little hope of having a meaningful present and a sustainable future.

Men have particular issues with dealing with their past. It is far from easy for a lot of men to talk about their feelings. Adopted males therefore struggle to in their search for a sense of normality. Because of the feelings locked inside it will cause problems in varying ways. This might take the form of a need for an institutional life such as the military or ensure they are put in prison or maybe affect their physical health or their mental stability. There is a safety in what is known. It may not be a comfortable life but it has a surety about it, a sense of belonging and therefore safety.

Societal norms during the period of 'forced adoption' were heavily influenced by the churches and therefore government policies. The main idea at the time was to give the child a 'better' life than their birth mother could/should provide. This type of misplaced moral stand, although commonplace had the effects of causing great trauma to the parent/s and also to the child/ren. A, lose – lose situation. The then children were given no support, no hope and a new identity. The adopters who by all accounts were not successfully vetted or supported were expected to get to just get on with a crucial and complex task often still carrying their own emotional baggage. Some adopters even abused their adoptees adding to the trauma of being placed for adoption. They were being effectively disconnected from their birth parents and reconnected with strangers.

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Often the birth mothers and fathers had no hope of having any voice in this situation and many still feel this. In many cases their children were taken from them and the authorities who were carrying out the government policy, gave them no support either.

The idea that people thrown into highly traumatic situations will be ok without outside help is now recognised as being flawed.

Secondary trauma can also be an issue. Those who were not the main players in the adoption transactions may also require therapeutic interventions such as those who have been parented by adoptees or their mother.. There are clear difficulties by some who have no sound parenting role model to go from and have passed down their unresolved issues. This of course will continue down the generations until .the issues are addressed and resolved.

Professionally facilitated support groups, on a face to face basis are in my opinion an essential part of the healing process. Separate groups for all those mentioned before need to be made available however there may be difficulties with creating these.

Some people may be reticent about joining one of these groups initially due to the nature of the problems they carry and might also be true in the case of offering therapy. Many people with all sorts of problems do not come for Counselling unless they have no choice and they feel they are being weak. This is particularly true for men.

Counselling offers many different ways to assist Clients. No one method or theory fits the needs of everyone even if they have the same problem.

## **Recomendations**

That Australia wide support groups be created for all those touched by forced adoption

That Counselling be offered for as long as required. This should be delivered by experienced and knowledgeable professionals that are aware of the specialised nature of the task.

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