Origins SPSA Inc

Response to a question on notice by the
Community Affairs References Committee
examining commonwealth contribution to forced adoption,
to Origins representatives at the Sydney hearing:

"What is the best way for

the truth and stories of past forced adoption to be known?"

COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT
PUBLIC STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respectfully request that an official statement be made by the Federal Government, in acknowledgement that it failed to protect its citizens from breaches of the common, international and humanitarian law by the states, allowing unlawful adoption practices to be perpetuated across the Commonwealth for at least five decades.

DOCUMENTING THE HISTORY

The experience of Australians Separated by Forced Adoption should be documented, and disclaimers placed on past adoption literature evidencing propaganda. For example, Sydney now recognizes 'Invasion Day'.

EDUCATION

The General Public – Publications

Dr G Rickarby has advised: 'Publication funding: wide spread distribution of small publications are necessary for health professionals and the general public to understand what happened, and also publications especially pitched to adoptees.'[1] Rickarby explains the objectives of such a campaign[2]:

> Public Declaration of Significant Findings.
>
> This needs to be a public account of major and common effects of past adoption practices, specifically addressing the power and coercion applied and the helplessness of those who lost their baby.
>
> A special version of this should be published and focused at adoptees, particularly to disabuse them of the myths[3] that the public have held about their mothers, and indicating the abuse, coercion and damage their mothers had to bear.
>
> Public Education about possible and likely long-term effects of loss of a baby to adoption. This should be focused upon the tens of thousands of those suffering without protest.
>
> Public Education about the difficulties faced by adoptive parents and how little preparation there was for this role or how little the help available. This should also include issues of grieving sterility, ongoing and hidden low self-esteem, and the protracted effects of the insecurity created by raising another woman's child. There were recurrent problems in dealing with special difficulties of the adoptive relationship at each stage of development and subsequent testing behaviour by the adoptee.
>
> Many wouldn't recognise that over compliance with adult wishes was a sign of false self

[1] Adoption Trauma to Mothers: Dr Geoff Rickarby's Testimony to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry, Origins Canada, retrieved 28th June, 2011, from <http://www.originscanada.org/adoption-trauma-to-mothers-dr-geoff-rickarbys-testimony-to-the-new-south-wales-parliamentary-inquiry-2/>

[2] ibid

[3] Rickarby's submission goes into detail about the myths surrounding forced adoption.

development and personality damage. But the type of help they were getting was platitudes, untested cultural myths and did not address their real difficulties. However, some did well to become a secure family; all the more congratulations to them to have done this despite the difficulties.

Any help to insecure adoptive families to come to terms with these factors will help a mother with reunion.

More general public education measures should be spread widely and use such contacts as popular magazines and inserts in the daily press.

Schools and Universities

Courses in history, psychology, social justice:

History

- Adoption as a puritan movement – defending reputation
- Adoption as a eugenics movement – cleansing society of the 'feeble-minded'
    - Nature v nurture experiment (Blank slate theory and the child taken at birth to be 'as if born' to strangers)
- American social engineering and adoption propaganda in Australia
- Australians Separated by Forced Adoption – who are they?

Social Justice and the Philosophy of Law

- Understanding the social contract in a liberal democracy
- Breaches of common law during the era of forced adoption
- Breaches of humanitarian and international law during the era of forced adoption
    - crimes against humanity inherent in exclusive adoption (adoption as a service for the infertile rather than in the best interests of the child)
    - parenting as a right to be responsible rather than a legal right
    - exploitation of the sole mother
    - crimes against fathers
- Current breaches of humanitarian law through inter-country adoption

Psychology and Psychiatry

- General mental-health issues suffered by ASFA (see Rickarby's submission), with a focus on
- Identity issues
    - Innate identity v Constructed identity

CONFERENCE SPONSORSHIP

To date Origins has sponsored three mental-health conferences and has just advertised its First Human Rights Conference[4], which is planned to take place at the end of 2012

[4] http://humanrightsconference2013.blogspot.com/p/australians-separated-by-forced.html

and is already attracting interest from high-profile speakers both nationally and internationally. We would like to see government sponsorship of such efforts in future.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- The production of a documentary on Australians Separated by Forced Adoption, including historical video and news media in conjunction with the stories of the mothers as personally conveyed by them (example, 'Gone to a Good Home', the story of Lily Arthur).
- Consultation with the Forgotten Australians and Stolen Generations regarding how they got the truth 'out there'.
- The use of public services of Australian governments, such as Medicare and Centrelink, to advertise help for Australians Separated by Forced Adoption; for example, a Helpline could be set by, manned by mothers and adoptees taken by forced adoption.

This list is not exhaustive.