

Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices

I am an adoptee born in Qld in the 70's and I would like people to know how adoption has touched my life. I believe I had a relatively normal upbringing with parents who loved me and provided all that I required to get through life. Also in our family was my older brother who was also adopted.

I can not remember ever being told I was adopted, I just always knew. It was never a secret but then again, it was never a topic of discussion around the dinner table. My parents lost their first child during childbirth and were unable to have any more due to the risks involved, so adoption was their only option.

When I was old enough I made the decision to apply for information about my family. This was not a decision that came easy, the feelings of guilt and betrayal were with me the whole time. My parents had made it clear at an early age that they would support both my brother and I if ever we decided to search for our families.

In the mid 90's I applied for my identifying information in order to start a search, I was not prepared for what I found. The Department informed me that my mother had placed a veto preventing me from obtaining identifying information and from contacting her. To say I was devastated would be an understatement. I don't think any words could ever express what that day felt like, being told that you have been rejected by your own flesh and blood, and being old enough this time to understand the consequences. How does any human being get their head around that. It took many many years to gain acceptance of the situation, but eventually I learnt to move forward, but it never left my thoughts that my mother didn't want to know the person I have become. How is that possible?

Recently the laws in Qld changed and I was able to re-apply and receive the information I so badly wanted all those years ago. Who was I? Where did I come from? Whom did I come from and did she still not want to meet me? I received my identifying information mid 2010 which filled in some of my puzzle and made me feel like I did belong to someone, once. To know my mothers name and the name she had chosen for me at birth provided some comfort.

ASQ contacted her recently to obtain updated medical information and to ask her whether she would reconsider her veto (contact statement). At that time they read her a letter that I had left for her many years ago, in which I thanked her for wanting more for me than she believed she could give me and to let her know that my only wish in this world was to know her. I was told she was very emotional upon hearing this and she told the Adoption Officer that she thought of me often, especially on occasions such as birthdays and Christmas but at this time she was not able to have contact with me. I believe the shame and secrecy as well as past practises surrounding adoption are what is keeping us apart. Hopefully one day she will find the courage to face her fears and we will be reunited.

What I have written is a brief overview of a very personal journey. I have purposely kept my emotions out of this submission and just told the facts. I am not angry at my mother for the choice she made and I do believe that one day we will meet. My journey is far from over.

One thing that I have found lacking during this time is the support services available outside of the larger cities to people involved in Adoption. There are a few organisations in Qld, mostly operating out of Brisbane. Not all of these are run by people with first hand experience, which makes a BIG difference when

trying to explain your emotions over the phone – trust is a huge issue for Adoptees. I have had two calls to one particular organisation and was immediately put off on both occasions when I quickly realised that the person I was speaking with had no idea how to deal with the issues I raised.

My submission does not reflect in any way the feelings and emotions that I deal with on a daily basis. It may sound strange, but I am unable to articulate my emotions into written form in a way that would do them justice. Adoption takes away a big part of who you are and I know that will never ever be able to be replaced. Adoption is a life time sentence, something I will never escape but I deal with it the best I can. I hope the people involved in getting this inquiry to the stage it is get what they are after, recognition for the wrongs of the past, understanding of the lost they suffered and awareness of their pain. Hopefully that will give them the ability to move forward and live long happy lives.

**TO KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND WHERE YOU
CAME FROM IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT - FOR EVERYONE**