Origins Supporting People Separated by Adoption Incorporated

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into

"Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices."

Recommendations

(b) the potential role of the Commonwealth in developing
a national framework to assist states and territories
to address the consequences for the mothers,
their families and children who were subject to forced adoption policies

Where to Now?

Origins as an organization wants to highlight the fact that no mother, according to its experience, has ever been provided with her legal and human rights in relation to past adoption, practices, though not professing to speak on behalf of the individual mother.

With regard to the requirement for justice and for personal healing of the mothers, however, we have noted that there are those:

- for whom a sincere apology and acknowledgment of past practices will be sufficient;
- who will find relief in knowing that their take children are made aware of their unlawful separation from their mothers;
- for whom the latter acknowledgement will not suffice, but who will wish to take action through Supreme Courts;
- who may wish to take up their right to lay charges under the Crimes Act, bypassing the statute of Limitations;
- who will want to overturn their child's adoption based on improper consent.

Along with the latter, we request that all avenues be made available for discussion with the Origins Committee, along with the implementation of the following requirements.

We demand that a public education campaign be instigated so that adoption practices cease to be viewed by apologists employing defences such as “it was in the child’s best interests”, or was a “kindness” to the mothers, as adoption facilitators have done little or no research into the legal, and mental health affects of adoption and/or have ignored research conducted internationally.

We therefore request that:

- the Federal Government fund Origins SPSA Inc as an organisation suitable to continue to provide ongoing and collaborative services to Australians separated by “forced adoption”, including Forgotten Australians and Stolen Generations, and to provide services such as reality based counselling, emergency relief aid, welfare services, research, and information

and commemorative events. This would include the establishment of an organisation possibly comprising a fulltime coordinator, three part time staff to oversee Forgotten Australians and Stolen Generations, and a full time counsellor.

- Nation-wide financial and material assistance be granted to organisations such as Origins SPSA Inc, to support and to enable the development of other self help organizations in city, regional and outer lying areas of the states.

- Redress for mothers who have lost children to forced adoption, as they have not only lost the companionship of their child (in many cases their only child) but also the reward that a child may have been able to bring them. Many mothers are now alone and unsupported in their old age whilst adopters have the love and security of the adopted child to care for them.

  Origins recommends that as mothers were wilfully denied financial assistance to enable them to keep their child, and that Federal and State governments "profited" by failing to support mothers and their children who were eligible to receive welfare payments during the decades of 'forced adoption' (which in fact went to foster carers awaiting final adoption orders), that it is only just that the Commonwealth now provide redress.

  This Redress could be in the form of compensation delivered through a pension scheme, possibly with a further "allowance" to those mothers and adoptees separated 1950-1990 (who are also suffering mental and physical health disabilities), who are already receiving Centrelink pensions.

  This allowance could be the difference between what they could effectively earn before losing benefits. The mother and the adoptee not on Centrelink pensions should be afforded a non-means tested pension equivalent to their counterpart already on a pension.

  This benefit would facilitate mothers and adoptees to seek counselling, pharmaceutical cost, healing programs and other means of enabling them to have quality of life in their later years.

- A full investigation into hospital records of "still births" to ensure that children who were claimed to have died at birth did in fact die and were not adopted out. While there are

mothers and adoptees who still do not know they have been subject of criminal acts, this organisation (Origins) cannot accept any apology offered by Federal and State governments.

- The deregistration of all adoption agencies and agent licences, for non-compliance with the terms and conditions of their professional licence, as issued by Departments of Community Services, for failure to comply with the terms of the Child Welfare Act 17, the Adoption of Children Act 1965, and their own regulations to apply a professional standard of duty of care as a professional adoption service to the community.

- That the Government make it unlawful to discriminate against mothers on the grounds of marital status: i.e that the denigration of single mothers in the media promoting "hate speech directed at women" be outlawed (examples can be provided to the Senate Committee).

- That an emergency helpline and 1800 number for counselling be established and funded to assist those separated by 'forced adoption".

- That funding and tax rebates to religious and non-religious institutions that played a part in past 'forced adoption' and adoption services be discontinued.

- That a disclaimer be placed on all past literature promoting adoption as being in the "child's best interest".

- That governments of this country cease "bowing down" to adoption pressure groups to "harvest" children from other countries where it has not been established that those children are available for adoption.

- That the Australian government substitute intercountry adoption with education schemes for children in third world countries, so that they can lead those countries into a better future as Australia is a leader, relatively speaking, in this field; this could be done by promotion of sponsorship of children to attend further education in Australia.

- That the government sponsor orphanages in third world countries, so that many children benefit from an education rather than the few that are adopted, so that children can grow and thrive in their own communities surrounded by their own family, culture and religion.

  We believe that this form of assistance, if followed by other countries will in some way contribute to the decline in the trafficking of children, as while ever there is a demand for children from overseas there will always be a "market" for saleable children.

- We recommend a review into, and improvement of, all counselling procedures, to reflect reality as relative to adoption trauma and breaches of the law.

- We request that a national campaign occur, to remove the stigma placed on mothers who surrendered children to adoption in the past, including to remove the stigma inflicted upon those children who have been classified as unwanted.

- We request a full Royal Commission into past adoption practices, as well as the prosecution of those found as having breached the law.

- We would like to see the Statute of Limitations overturned, as in South Australia.

- We desire full and sincere acknowledgement by the Australian Association of Social Workers regarding the involvement of its members in past unlawful practices, to all mothers and children who have been separated by their agents working out of charitable organizations and licensed adoption agencies.

- We desire full and sincere acknowledgement of the same, by the medical profession, the Nursing Association, the Department of Community Services, and all state Health Departments involved in past 'forced adoption' practices.

- We request as an Act of Parliament reinstate all original Birth Certificates and adoption "birth certificates" by their replacement with "adoption certificates", as well as full disclosure of the truth regarding adoption practices, to begin the official rewriting of adoption history.

- We want the separation of mother and child at birth officially to be recognised as a severe trauma to both mother and child, and information be provided to health services in recognition of the symptoms of that separation.

- On behalf of our members, we would like to see, as an outcome of this inquiry, the provision of regular seminars and workshops accredited by the Departments of all Community Services and The Health Department, for educational purposes, in order to inform all mental health workers of the nature of emotional implications that resulted from The Mother's Experience as abstracted from the many accounts of loss through adoption as presented to this Inquiry.

- We also request that the provision of weekend, week long and monthly de-programming, trauma recovery, research, and respite centres be made available for those in need of in depth recovery where required.

- We would like funding to launch an official day of observing the suffering of the mother and her child lost through 'forced adoption'; we desire to promote this as Family Remembrance Week during Adoption Awareness Week.

- We also request research into and disclosure of adoption consequences; including (a) the suicide rates of adopted children and their mothers; and (b) the mental health implications of adoption on both mothers and their children.

- We would like a disclaimer placed on all historical adoption literature and casework studies (perhaps indicated by way of a sticker), such as is found in state libraries, depicting improper adoption facts based on the promotion of the adoption myth.

- We would like funding for family reunion support and history programs as well as for the production of documentary, film and historic projects.