



THE HON KON VATSKALIS MLA
MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Parliament House
State Square
Darwin NT 0800

GPO Box 3146
Darwin NT 0801
Telephone: 08 8901 4118
Facsimile: 08 8901 4119

Dr Timothy Kendall
Acting Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee
on Community Affairs
Po Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Dr Kendall

Thank you for your letter of 1 March 2011 highlighting the inquiry into the Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices (the Inquiry), and providing an opportunity to make a submission or respond to allegations as contained in the submissions.

A review of current submissions has revealed that no reference to practice within the Northern Territory has been raised. This lack of response may highlight a lack of awareness into the Inquiry. Staff within the Northern Territory Department of Children and Families (DCF) have indicated that they have forwarded the Inquiry Terms of Reference to known relinquishing mothers, however acknowledge that this is only a small portion of potential respondents.

Staff from the Adoption Branch, DCF, provides post adoption support services to adults who were adoptees, relinquishing mothers and fathers, and adoptive parents and other. These support services are primarily in the form of information and counselling.

The Northern Territory has a history of considerable mobility within its population. Between 1950 and 1970, a significant number of young women, due to feelings of shame and societal attitudes at the time, from other states within Australia travelled to the Northern Territory to give birth to their babies and subsequently arranged to have their babies adopted. Over the years a number of these mothers or their children have made contact with the Adoption Branch to obtain information and/or counselling.

The Northern Territory has also been a destination for people to make a new chapter in their lives.

A number of young women who had relinquished their child for adoption in the United Kingdom then immigrated and made their new life in the Northern Territory. In later years their biological children, who are now adults, have initiated contact with Adoption staff in an effort to learn more about their biological parents or to seek contact with their biological parents.

Thank you for the invitation to review submissions and contribute to the Inquiry.

I look forward to hearing of the outcome of the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

KON VATSKALIS

4 APR 2011