

Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices

Terms of Reference

That the following matters be referred to the Community Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report **by 30 June 2011:**

- (a) the role, if any, of the Commonwealth Government, its policies and practices in contributing to forced adoptions; and
- (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.

In Queensland, Adoption policies and services are a State matter, and I am unsure of the Commonwealth's role in influencing past adoption legislation or its implementation at a State level. I seek to submit a brief application with reference to b) above

I believe there is great potential for the Commonwealth to provide a significant leadership role in acknowledging past wrongs in adoption and the resulting mental health issues for many persons (Gair 2008). This leadership would include recommending:

- **A national apology to people traumatised by the removal of their babies *under* past adoption State and Commonwealth policies, and/or resulting from actions of professional acting *outside* any past adoption policies or actions *contravening* past adoption policies, that resulted in the adoption of children into unrelated families due to coercive practices where Informed Consent was not given.**
- **A national apology to adopted people traumatised by being removed from their mothers and fathers under past adoption policies, outside any adoption past policies or contravening any past adoption policies that resulted in the adoption of children into unrelated families due to coercive practices where Informed Consent was not given.**
- **A national Acknowledgement that some professionals involved in past adoption of babies and children may have acted unprofessionally, inappropriately, unethically and without Informed Consent towards mothers, fathers and the babies who were made available for adoption.**
- **A national Acknowledgement that such treatment has resulted in recurring and ongoing mental health issues for persons and families involved including mothers, fathers, extended family, siblings and adopted adults.**
- **Recommend and sponsor the development of a Framework and Training Packages – in consultation with representatives of all Stakeholders - that would inform present day professionals, including training packages for**

social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, medical doctors, counsellors, mental health workers and volunteers (almost all of whom have national associations) who work with recipients of past adoption services who suffer the associated mental health, social, emotional, spiritual and psychological legacies.

- **A National hotline/website offering advice and information about where to find further information or help from persons *who have completed the training***

This submission is submitted as a personal submission and is not on behalf of any institution.

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Gair, S. (2008) An Altered State of Being: The psychic disequilibrium of adoption, stories exploring links between adoption and suicidal thoughts and behaviours, *Australian e Journal of Advanced Mental Health*, Vol 7, No 3.