



Commonwealth of Australia Inquiry into Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices.

ALAS, Adoption Loss Adult Support is a support group for Mothers and Adoptees who were separated by forced adoption practices of the past.

ALAS is a self funded voluntary group operating in Qld since 1989 and we will always be an independent group.

We provide a safe environment for Mothers and Adoptees to meet and talk about their combined experiences of separation, loss and the ongoing trauma, and grief it is causing in their lives.

We represent women who have not coped with their separation; their struggle has been over a lifetime and will remain with them even after some have had successful reunions.

Some mothers still need constant nurturing and the security to know how to move towards re-establishing the bond with their child/mother, which was broken by flawed Government forced practices and policies of the past.

We represent past mothers/ adoptees who have been lost to suicide.

We have played a vital part in changing legislation both administratively and socially in Queensland as may be relative to the objectives of the group.

In the 1980's, the co-founders of ALAS, lobbied for amendments to adoption laws resulting in the introduction of the Contact Register.

Many of our mothers marched in protest in Brisbane about the inflexibility and cruelty of these laws that had not been amended since 1964. These laws were barbaric, traumatic and archaic and were enforced by the ignorance of governments and the lack of knowledge of the ongoing lifetime effects of separating a mother from her newborn. This has been well documented.





In 1991, we celebrated the laws changes that enabled mothers and their children to receive their personal government file pertaining to the adoption.

In mid 2000, we joined with many other support groups around Australia under the umbrella of the Apology Alliance to stand united in our request for State and Federal Apologies.

In February 2009 our Steering Committee, approached Professor Ian Jones, Obstetrician and Executive Director of Newborns and the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital with a draft for an Apology. After consultations with Professor Jones, and the Head of Nursing, and the Hospital Social Worker, an agreement was reached to the wording of our apology which was acceptable to all parties.

On 19/05/2009 we accepted our Apology on behalf of our members. Channel 7 covered this historic event in their news.

We believe that this was the first official apology ever received in the world, which acknowledged the cruel and coercive practices unmarried mothers and their taken babies received while in hospital care. This apology was important in securing the Western Australian Parliament and Government Apology which was unanimously passed by all members of the House on 19/10/2010.

Following this historic apology ALAS sent individual correspondence to all members of both Federal and State Houses of Legislative Assembly, requesting an apology for past adoption practices.

Many members have shown their support.

In September 2009, one of our mothers contacted the Anglican Church with a request for an apology for treatment she received while she was institutionalised in St Mary's Church of England Unmarried Mother's home in Toowong.

. The Most Rev. Phillip Aspinall, Archbishop of Brisbane, gave this mother his personal apology on behalf of the Church

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On 1st February 2010, we saw further amendments to the Adoption Law Act and the Queensland Government award funding to the Benevolent Society to form the Post Adoption Support Queensland.

We find, some mothers and adoptees find it hard to go to government funded departments and support organisations for help.

There is still a deep need for our own support group. We share friendship throughout their ongoing adoption/ separation/reunion journeys at our monthly meetings. Every day, life throws new adoption related challenges in front of us through, insensitive media reporting on past propaganda spread by social workers and through the lack of knowledge by journalists to the true story of adoption history.

The trust taken from mothers through no fault of their own, while they were at their most vulnerable time, by Government sanctioned adoptions is not given back easily.

The following people were meant to place, "the best interest of mother and child "first;

Government, Government Social Workers, Child Safety Department, Government Hospitals, Doctors, Medical Staff, Nurses, Church run institutions with Government support.

Some parents were strongly coerced by churches and social workers into believing their Grandchildren would be better cared for by strangers.

They ALL failed in their duty of care towards mothers and their newborn babies.

Our babies were seen as a highly sort after commodity in the ever expanding and accepted Adoption Industry.

The mother, she was invisible and expendable and seen as inferior and was told, "To get on with life as one day she would have children of her own." The baby she had just given birth too was not seen as being her own flesh and blood, and the sacred bond between mother and her newborn was traumatically and inhumanly severed.

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This was achieved by not allowing the mother to see, hear or hold her own newborn baby.

It was a common belief that if a woman unable to fall pregnant and if she adopted a baby, she would be more likely to go on and have children of her own. This is known to be true but, unfortunately, the mother who lost her baby often suffered from mental sterility never able to have any more children after the trauma and loss of the forced separation from her baby. This has caused a lifetime of internalised grief which gets worse with the passing of time. While these mothers watch their brothers and sisters and friends sharing life celebrations and pitfalls and enjoy playing with their own children and grandchildren, they know they have been permanently deprived of having the same experiences for themselves.

Some adoption consent forms were signed prior to birth; some were signed while mothers were under the influence of drugs. Other underage mothers had no parent, guardian or legal representative present to witness that their rights and options, available to them had been fully explained and understood, instead of just the adoption option.

Mother's left with empty arms and broken hearts.

They were not given a copy of any of the forms they signed when they were discharged, nor did they get a court notification of the official adoption order or when it was to be heard in court, making it impossible for mothers to object to the adoption and to revoke the consent signature while still in the 30 day revocation period.

If you brought a packet of lollies from a shop you got a receipt, but for a baby you got nothing.

While mothers were told that they could not have any information of the adoptive family, or information as to the wellbeing of their babies or what their future was to hold for them, the social workers gave adoptive parents the full rights of our names and addresses.

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Secrecy was only for the protection of the new family.

Some mothers were able to name their babies at birth others were told they had no right to give their newborns a chosen christian name.

The government, through Births/ Deaths and Marriages compounded the lie by issuing our babies with a second birth certificate which contained false information. Our child's true family name would be forever banished and eradicated from our child's life.

Only if the fathers admitted to parentage were their details placed on the true birth certificate.

Fathers were never approached by social workers and therefore were denied their right to parent their own child.

Our children then had to live with this false identity. Many had ongoing confusion which has effected them all of their lives.

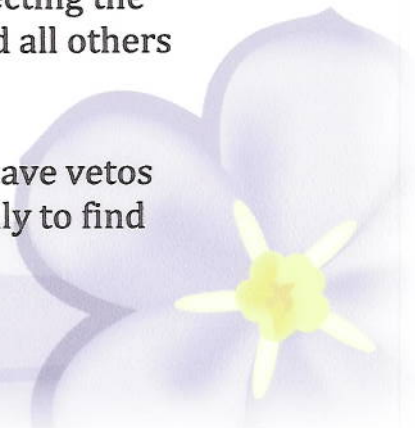
The lifelong consequences of separation and loss of our babies which was known to social workers was never acknowledged or disclosed to us at any time. The lifelong loss of the adoptee is, their true self and birth right position in their genetic family and their heritage. The insensitivity shown by Government sanctioned Adoption Practitioners, condemned these mothers to silence and a lifetime of unresolved and internalised grief.

THE MOTHERS ONLY CRIME WAS, SHE WAS UNMARRIED!

When the Queensland Laws were changed in 1991, the Government under pressure enacted the Veto Contact System enabling the illegal adoption practices to be kept concealed, once again protecting the adoptive family, unethical social workers and doctors and all others involved in former forced adoptions.

It has been our experience, to find some of our mothers have vetos placed preventing them all contact with their adoptee, only to find

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the adoptee had no knowledge of their adoption and Veto even though they were over 18 years.

Some adoptees were never told of their adoption and family members were sworn to secrecy resulting in late discovery of their past.

The Queensland Government investigated our complaint and found 10 in every 100 vetos were illegally placed.

The investigation was halted by Liberal/ National Government of the day in mid 1990's, due to the pressure from a group who were responsible for some of the illegal past adoption practices and who had a vested interest in the outcome.

We now need an independent body to investigate authenticity of all the remaining Vetos held by Adoption Services Queensland, for proof of legitimacy through a mandatory consultation process not by signature alone.

Pressure was placed on many adoptees to sign a veto form.

An Inquiry is much needed, leading to mothers and their children receiving both State and Federal Apologies.

Most of our members are now aged pensioners and believe they will not be alive to hear the results of an Inquiry; it may be too late for them.

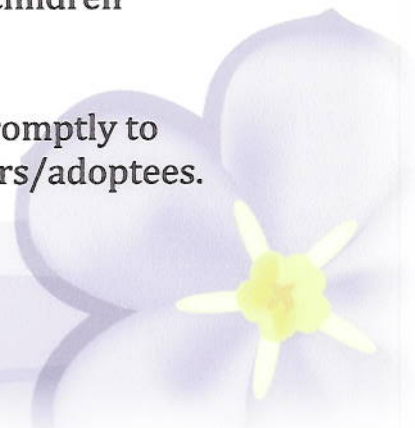
We want our children to know they were, "**NOT GIVEN AWAY,**" they were much loved.

The future of our children and grandchildren and our future generations will still be filled with lies and secrecy if laws are left unchanged.

Our human rights of being a mother were stripped from us, and we would like our parental rights reinstated and our stolen children legally recognised.

The outcome of this Senate Inquiry should be acted on promptly to help alleviate the pain and suffering of our elderly mothers/adoptees.

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We ask for the “truth” of the Commonwealth Governments Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices to be recorded in Australian History and propose a written apology to be placed alongside the other historic apologies to be permanently displayed at all Parliament Houses.

We ask for legislation to compensate for the life-long effects and cost of unresolved grief and loss causing ongoing post traumatic stress.

We ask for specialist counsellors trained in Post Adoption Traumatic Stress Disorder to be available free to mothers and their stolen children, Australia wide.

We ask for consideration for all the fragile mothers who have been permanently disadvantaged by emotional loss and trauma, and for them to be believed so that their horrific adoption experience can be recognised, as their health prevents them from writing their submissions.

On Tuesday 19th October 2010,
The day of the Western Australian Apology,
here in Queensland, ALAS members and guests witnessed the historic Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital Apology given by Professor Ian Jones to the ALAS Steering Committee, unveil a framed copy of the apology and official photo of all involved. It is placed on permanent display on the wall of the 5rd floor of the Women’s Hospital.

This was followed by speeches and the laying of flowers in the hospital garden, in memory of our adoption losses.
Channel 10 covered our story on their 6pm news.

We CELEBRATED our achievements with a special lunch.

We then adjourned to the Post Adoption Support Queensland building for an afternoon of friendship and all participated in a craft afternoon working on a special square depicting our personal





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feelings of what The Western Australian and the Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital Apologies meant to each of us. The Team leader from PASQ had organised this afternoon for us and to watch the WA apology live on the big screen.

On hearing the heartfelt, honest apologies from the ministers of the Western Australian Parliament and knowing that we had representatives attending from ALAS and from Queensland, we were elated that our years of advocating for recognition of our trauma caused by unlawful adoption practice of separating us from our babies has now been officially acknowledged giving us validation for Past Adoption Injustices.

Our human rights of being a mother were finally recognised publicly.

We have seen the benefits that the RBWH and Western Australian apologies has bought to our members and we ask for Federal and Queensland Governments to show us the same respect the WA Government showed to their mothers.

An Australian Federal Government Apology would show the world how to express compassion and care to the survivors who were the victims of Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices.

We thank the media and newspapers who have given us their support through the years and the photo journalists at the Brisbane Times for the series of photos and the story of two mother's adoption loss and unresolved grief.

We thank you for the Inquiry and we send this submission on behalf of the members of ALAS.

23th March 2011.

Alas Steering Committee.

Patricia S. Large

*Marg Hamilton
S. Kashin
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