

Dear Sir or Madam

I would like to make a submission to the Barriers to Adoption from two different perspectives.

1. As a Mother whom has lost a child to adoption as a teenage girl.
2. As a Professional who has worked in the field working with both Mothers and Adoptees, as a Case Manager/Counsellor on the Forced Adoption program for 2 years.

Firstly I shall discuss my personal experience a bit and the long term effects it has had on me plus my family. When I was a teenager I had a baby boy, I was pressured by those around me to place my son up for adoption. I was treated poorly by both medical and nursing staff. I was not informed of any assistance I was entitled to such as any financial assistance to help keep or raise my son. To cut my story short My son was adopted out. This had a terrible effect not only on myself but my whole family, I became estranged from my family as my parents were not supportive of me. Since this time I have had issues resulting in poor personal relationships eg broken marriages. I have since attempted to reconnect with my adult son and this relationship is strained. He has many issues as a result of being adopted, he was abused by his adoptive Father and has alcohol issues. He has difficulty getting along with my two other children although we do hear from him from time to time.

In my professional capacity as a Case Manager/ Counsellor I work with both Mothers who have lost their children to adoption plus I work with Adoptee's. We help these people gain their records and try and trace family members and support them during this process. I would have to say that all the Mothers I've worked with are traumatized from the experience of losing their child to adoption. A number of these women do not go on to have other children. Others do, some marry and of these most have been through a broken marriage. A lot of these women have mental health issues caused by the trauma of the loss of their child. The majority of women (say 95%) whom manage to find or have some contact with the lost child have difficulty relating to and communicating with their child. There are a number of reasons for this, I shall name just a few, some of the Adopted children are resentful that they were adopted out and take this out on the Mother. The children were raised by a completely foreign person to the family and have been raised with different ideas and views which may clash or feel uncomfortable when the two meet up.

Now to discuss what I have found and observed from working with the Adoptee's, well the majority of these people I'd say 85% of them report that they have been abused in some way growing up with their adopted parents and of these 85% all of these are traumatized

from the experience of adoption. Of the few who report that their parents were lovely to them or that they had a good childhood they report that they felt they had an empty space and wanted to know about their birth family and their family history. All those that have been adopted report they felt they owed the adopted parents. A lot of the Adoptee's wait until their adoptive parents have passed away to start to search for their Mothers and family. Sometimes it's too late and they find that their Mother has also passed away. I have a number of Adoptees that I'm working with that suffer from mental health issues, some are suicidal. I have noticed that a lot of the Adoptees also have difficulties with personal relationships eg broken family's/ marriages. One of the main issues all Adoptees I've worked with have in common is the lack of Identity , they don't know who they are due to being separated from their family of origin and families culture.

During my time in my current role, I have also spoken to a few people (Mothers) who have been affected by the current "open adoption " practices, both of these women have said that the adoptive parents have made things difficult for them to see and or keep in contact with their children. I have heard stories of adoptive parents moving interstate so the Mother is unable to keep in touch with her child so I would ask how is this open adoption? This is wrong, it is also wrong that there are no more checks made on adoptive parents once a child is adopted it is wrong to cut the child off from the birth family (and therefore their identity) it is wrong that the adoptive parents can move interstate away from the Mother. These children aren't the adoptive parent's flesh and blood and so they are unlikely to treat them as such.

Over all the Government would save money by implementing greater support services to families struggling and putting money into wider searches for extended families so these children whom are unable to safely live with their parents place could be placed with family lose their Identity to adoption. It seems as if the Government have not learnt much from their past mistakes, I say this due to the announcement that the NSW Government have plans to have children adopted whom are or will be in Foster care.

Regards