

**Association Representing Mothers Separated  
From Their Children by Adoption  
Western Australia Incorporated**

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**For details of Support Group meetings please contact Lynne 0468 444 995**

**Our October meeting will be held on 18 October at 10.30 am and will be at the memorial in Read Park, Victoria Park. Please bring a plate, and flowers if you wish. Cool drink will be supplied. Let's hope for a fine day. Toilets on site.**

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## CO-ORDINATOR’S REPORT

ARMS is still here. We haven’t gone away and it’s time we caught up. During 2020 we were unable to have meetings at Belmont because of the square metre rule. If that has to come back in for any reason then we will once again be unable to use the premises. We can just wait and see and hope that COVID does not come to WA with a vengeance but ARMS has not gone away. There is still a lot for us to do. Right now it’s back to business as usual.

The first thing I have to do is apologise for a mistake I made in our last newsletter. I wrote about the seminal work of Margaret van Keppel and the late Prof Robin Winkler, *Relinquishing Mothers in Adoption: Their Long-Term Adjustment*, as authorised by the Institute of Family Studies. It was one of the first academic works I bought relating to adoption right at the start of my long journey into studying and understanding why adoption became so fashionable

and how it came about that so many mothers were separated from their children by this practice. For me I needed to understand how I came to be so deceived into believing I was unfit to raise my own child. The results of that study are still relevant today. I did not mention Margaret's name when I wrote the co-ordinator's report and, of course, she deserves full credit for her involvement in the study. I was brought to task almost immediately. I can only say that I apologise unreservedly. I do know better and I am uncertain how I came to make such a silly mistake.

There is always an up-side to everything. Margaret agreed to come and give a talk to ARMS' members about her work and how it shaped her career during her younger years. It was an also an occasion of reunion for Margaret and some of the mothers who took part in her study. I hope it proved useful to everyone that came to the talk. Again, I would note that we were able to have it because of the assistance of FASS and the use we were able to make of their rooms and we are grateful to them. This study was surely was the beginning of an acknowledgement that the practice of adoption had caused unnecessary heartache and pain in fact it clarified something many of us already knew; the pain increases over the years. Mothers were never going to 'go away and forget' and we haven't.

It is unnatural to expect anyone to 'forget' they had a baby and rare indeed for any mother to knowingly abandon her baby to a doubtful future. That is what adoption was and is and no amount of dressing it up will change that. Margaret's only regret, as she told us at the meeting, is that she did not put her study into a trauma framework as opposed to that of a grief framework but given this study was done during the 1980's we can only be grateful that it was so well done and achieved so much.

This study was finished at approximately the same time that ARMS was formed. For those who don't know Margaret allowed her office to be used for the early meetings of ARMS. Without her help mothers could well have remained in the shadows so we all owe her a big thank you. We have travelled a long way since the 1980's: ARMS' ladies finally got the access laws changed for mothers while Kath Smith was co-ordinator; Sue, alongside David Templeman, fought hard for an apology in WA; as did Chris Cole in Canberra who argued for a Federal Apology. And thank you to everyone who contributed towards determining that the suffering and lifetime harm we have experienced will not be inflicted on another generation of young fertile women.

We have decided to reprint the Federal Apology as delivered by Julia Gillard because it is so appropriate. It is worth reading through again simply to confirm how comprehensive it was. It is good positive reading. We are publishing an essay written by Shirley Moulds that was written in 2013. Shirley contributed so much of herself to seeking equality for mothers. Her thinking was well ahead of her time as revealed in the many submissions made by Shirley some 40 years' ago. Those submissions remain in the ARMS' archives and they are valuable historic documents.

We move forward to 2021 to publish some of the outcomes of the Victorian enquiry. They make hopeful reading as well as demonstrate what a long way we have come over the last 40 years. We have published a short article from a mother who questions why anyone would want to remove a baby from their family. A discussion about the long-term impacts of PTSD is included and contains some valid points with respect to counselling and how to make the best use of support groups. We have published an open letter from Jen McRae who has raised a petition calling for redress and an inquiry into past practices in WA.

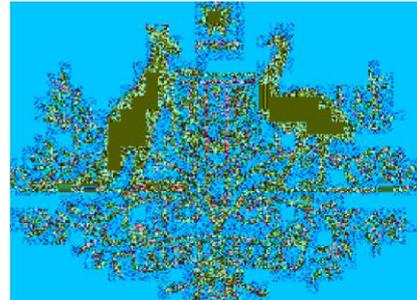
This is a long newsletter but it is an important one. It demonstrates how far we have come since ARMS was formed. We are now open to adopted adults. Although it is difficult to mix adopted people and mothers in groups such as ours it also helps all parties to recognise and understand the difficulties experienced by both sides. We have to try and balance our viewpoints and recognise how easily we can hurt our children with uninformed remarks and vice versa. Given the sensitivity of all of us it can be a good learning experience to realise how easily separated mothers and children can hurt one another especially within the social framework of forced adoption and its aftermath.

Lynne Devine

***Adoption loss is the only trauma in the world where the victims are expected by the whole of society to be grateful.***

***(The Reverend Keith C. Griffith MBE)***

**In March 2013 Prime Minister Julia Gillard delivered the following apology to mothers who had lost their children to adoption. It was a historic moment and acknowledged the grief and trauma suffered by mothers.**



### **National Apology for Forced Adoptions 21 March 2013**

Today, this Parliament, on behalf of the Australian people, takes responsibility and apologises for the policies and practices that forced the separation of mothers from their babies, which created a lifelong legacy of pain and suffering.

We acknowledge the profound effects of these policies and practices on fathers.

And we recognise the hurt these actions caused to brothers and sisters, grandparents, partners and extended family members.

We deplore the shameful practices that denied you, the mothers, your fundamental rights and responsibilities to love and care for your children. You were not legally or socially acknowledged as their mothers. And you were yourselves deprived of care and support.

To you, the mothers who were betrayed by a system that gave you no choice and subjected you to manipulation, mistreatment and malpractice, we apologise.

We say sorry to you, the mothers who were denied knowledge of your rights, which meant you could not provide informed consent. You were given false assurances. You were forced to endure the coercion and brutality of practices that were unethical, dishonest and in many cases illegal.

We know you have suffered enduring effects from these practices forced upon you by others. For the loss, the grief, the disempowerment, the stigmatisation and the guilt, we say sorry.

To each of you who were adopted or removed, who were led to believe your mother had rejected you and who were denied the opportunity to grow up with your family and community of origin and to connect with your culture, we say sorry.

We apologise to the sons and daughters who grew up not knowing how much you were wanted and loved. We acknowledge that many of you still experience a constant struggle with identity, uncertainty and loss, and feel a persistent tension between loyalty to one family and yearning for another.

To you, the fathers, who were excluded from the lives of your children and deprived of the dignity of recognition on your children's birth records, we say sorry. We acknowledge your loss and grief.

We recognise that the consequences of forced adoption practices continue to resonate through many, many lives. To you, the siblings, grandparents, partners and other family members who have shared in the pain and suffering of your loved ones or who were unable to share their lives, we say sorry.

Many are still grieving. Some families will be lost to one another forever. To those of you who face the difficulties of reconnecting with family and establishing ongoing relationships, we say sorry.

We offer this apology in the hope that it will assist your healing and in order to shine a light on a dark period of our nation's history.

To those who have fought for the truth to be heard, we hear you now. We acknowledge that many of you have suffered in silence for far too long.

We are saddened that many others are no longer here to share this moment. In particular, we remember those affected by these practices who took their own lives. Our profound sympathies go to their families.

To redress the shameful mistakes of the past, we are committed to ensuring that all those affected get the help they need, including access to specialist counselling services and support, the ability to find the truth in freely available records and assistance in reconnecting with lost family.

We resolve, as a nation, to do all in our power to make sure these practices are never repeated. In facing future challenges, we will remember the lessons of family separation. Our focus will be on protecting the fundamental rights of children and on the importance of the child's right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.

With profound sadness and remorse, we offer you all our unreserved apology.

The Hon Julia Gillard MP  
Prime Minister

If you would like to share your thoughts and feelings about the impact of the Apology for inclusion in our next newsletter we would be delighted to hear from you. Even if you only wish to write a paragraph this would still be most welcome. Please send us your written contribution by email:

Email: [support@armswa.org.au](mailto:support@armswa.org.au)  
Contributions can be anonymous if you wish.

### **SHIRLEY MOULDS – REFLECTIONS.**

**FRIDA 9 AUGUST 2013/CONTINUED 12 AUGUST 2013.**

#### **A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY OF THE ORIGINS OF ARMS WA**

The idea for ARMS WA germinated when two young mothers who had lost babies to adoption in the 1960s, attended a meeting in Perth in 1980. The women, Barbara Thornton and I (Shirley Moulds), were both married with children and both registered nurses by profession.

I had seen a newspaper advertisement for Jigsaw - an adoption advocacy group formed a few years prior in the late 70's. Both of us went along individually to the meetings to explore what the service might offer women searching for children taken for adoption decades earlier.

It was at one of these Jigsaw meetings that Barbara and I met and forged a friendship.

I had my first son, John, in 1965 at the King Edward Hospital in Perth. I was 20 years of age and unmarried at the time. The morning after the birth I was

packed into an ambulance with six other new mothers and taken to a smaller, subsidiary hospital in Subiaco. All the women were in a state of distress as they realised this was being done to prevent them from having any contact with their babies. (The babies remained in the main building).

I had no contact with my first- born son until some 19 years later.

After attending a number of Adoption Jigsaw meetings in 1979-80, and stirred by content coming out of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Adoption Conference held in Adelaide in 1981, Barbara and I arrived at the view that Jigsaw seemed more attentive to adult- adoptees' issues, than mothers struggling with the question: "To whom did I give birth?"

Together we discussed forming an organisation in WA that catered specifically to mothers' issues. This matter had been raised at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Conference on Adoption and the representatives from each Australian State (Barbara, in the case of WA) all went home and put forward similar suggestions within their own State.

Over the next 18 months, Barbara and I spoke with other distressed mothers and together, 6 of them decided to form a steering committee. These first meetings were held in my lounge room in Greenwood, Perth. At the time, I was pregnant with my third child by marriage to the husband I had met only weeks after being released from King Edward Hospital - having already lost my first son to the adoption process.

In 1982, I was voted coordinator of the new group ARMS: Association of Relinquishing Mothers WA (in recent years changed to the Association Representing Mothers Separated from their Children by Adoption WA Inc - due to the members rejection of the term 'relinquishing').

The group's priority was to gain equal rights to information for all parties involved in adoption, but particularly the rights of mothers seeking identifying information re their missing children.

Prior to this happening, the ARMS steering committee had made contact with Western Australian psychologists and academics Margaret Van Keppel and Professor Robin Winkler. Professor Winkler was overseeing Keppler's work investigating the impact of adoption on the mental wellbeing of women who had had children taken for adoption. Margaret Van Keppel came along to many of the steering committee meetings and was very helpful.

Professor Winkler subsequently offered us a room to conduct the inaugural ARMS group meeting at the University of Western Australia which was advertised and open to the public.

On 25 October 1982, ARMS held its first public meeting at the University of WA. Barbara and I both addressed the meeting and I gave a brief talk which detailed the first 86 years of adoption history in WA. i.e., 1896 to 1982.

N.B. As a point of interest, prior to all this happening - I had previously discussed the first 86 years of Adoption History at an Adoption Jigsaw meeting. We retired for supper and an elderly woman approached me. The woman explained that she was an adopted child herself and she wanted to apologise to me and all other mothers who had lost a child to the Adoption process - because, she said, "it had all been her father's fault".

Intrigued, I listened to the lady explain her adoptive father's role in the legislative changes in WA in 1921, that had caused Adoptees to completely lose their original identity - and had made it more difficult (in fact, impossible) for natural parents to trace their adopted children and for children to find their natural parents. Hansard makes it clear that prior to 1921, WA had maintained an open adoption policy based on the New Zealand model, under which adopted children kept their original names, including the original surname, and added to that name, if desired, their new adoptive family's name.

In 1921, however, the *Adoption of Children Amendment Act* came into force. This law meant that adopted children lost the right to their original surname and were given only their adoptive parents surname. The elderly woman told me that she had been an adopted child and that her adoptive father had been 'a golfing buddy' with a number of influential politicians of the day - and it was he who had lobbied hard and successfully to have the Adoption laws changed! Thus 'secrecy in adoption' was introduced for the very first time in Australia. Sure enough - I checked the names in the Hansard Records for the 'golf - playing' politicians mentioned by the elderly adopted lady and they were the very same small group of politicians who had argued in favour of a complete name change for all adopted children. And thus - the beginnings of secrecy in adoption and total loss of identity for adopted children.

The remaining States within Australia began to introduce legislation for the practice of the adoption of children some 30 years later than Western Australia, in 1926. It appears they used the Western Australian Adoption of

Children Act as a guide. Hence the practice of 'secrecy in adoption' spread throughout Australia. It seems that much skullduggery can occur on a golf course!

For ARMS WA, all members lobbied local politicians to change the State's adoption information laws to allow greater access to information by mothers. They also lobbied actively for the rights of the adopted children. Whilst lobbying for these changes, I recall, quite often I would have to go to a meeting with a politician or government official - and a fellow member of ARMS would come along and stay outside the office minding my baby. This was all part of the team work which was so evident in ARMS members.

I remember another time when I took my then three-year-old to a meeting with the Government Adoption Department and this time I did not have anyone with me to mind my child. The officer I was meeting had handed my toddler a pencil. While our discussion took place, my three-year-old was behind me and out of my view. By the time the meeting was over, (much to my embarrassment) he had scribbled all over the walls of the Adoption office. The later relaying of this story to ARMS members at the monthly meeting caused them much celebration and mirth!

As co-ordinator I would lobby every state politician at least once, in writing, every three months. To save money I delivered the letters myself to Parliament House in a shopping bag. At first, my large shopping bag was viewed with much suspicion. The strange looks suggested maybe I was carrying a bomb! The officials soon got used to my visits however, and soon I was accepted as a regular event. These letters were often followed up with meetings with individual politicians at Parliament House or in their electoral office. Changes were coming, but it was painfully slow.

Although some changes to adoption legislation were made in WA in 1982 and 1985 which allowed adoptees greater access to identifying information, the final breakthrough for ARMS WA only came on the 1st January 1990, with the proclamation of legislation which officially allowed mothers access to identifying information about their adopted children after the child had reached the age of 18 years.

This, of course, only describes the political side of the ARMS WA organisation. Myself and other members of the committee spent many hours each day counselling, both on the phone and face-to-face in our homes, with many

distressed mothers who had lost a child by adoption. We also created a booklet of information (called "the Pink Booklet" affectionately) which provided information for single women who were pregnant and wanting to know what help was available within the community.

Once the group had been assured (verbally) of access to information, I stepped down as co-ordinator of the group and was given a new title by the ARMS Committee – Consultant. At the same time, the group made me a "Life Member" of ARMS. Lindy Gattinger took over the reins from me and was followed by a number of dedicated and hard-working coordinators. At this point, I decided to follow my practice with the theory (Yes, I know that is back to front!) and I enrolled at UWA for a degree in Social Work.

The ARMS WA group still operates as a support group today, with a number of its members attending the National Apology in Canberra on 21 March, 2013 - given by the Prime Minister of Australia to all Australian mothers who had lost a child to adoption. According to the current coordinator - Carmel Ipock, hand-made scarves were made and worn by members (both grieving and elated) who attended Parliament House for the Apology. Those who were unable to attend watched the ceremony on the television - many of us, at a gathering in the offices of Adoption Jigsaw WA.

E. Shirley Moulds RN., BSW.

## **(DISARMED) REDRESS SCHEME PROPOSED FOR VICTIMS OF FORCED ADOPTION**

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA, 8 SEPTEMBER 2021**

A major parliamentary inquiry has called for the Victorian Government to immediately establish a landmark redress scheme for mothers whose babies were forcibly removed from them because of historical adoption policies and practices.

An amendment of the statute of limitations to exclude those affected by forced adoption is also among the 56 recommendations contained in an extensive report into responses to historical forced adoption in Victoria.

The Legislative Assembly Legal and Social issues Committee launched the inquiry in November 2019.

*“From the outset the Committee was determined to hear from as many people as possible who were affected during this inexcusable time in Australia’s history.” Committee Chair Natalie Suleyman said.*

The inquiry received 114 submissions and heard from many mothers and adopted people who bravely shared their personal experiences at 11 days of public hearings in Melbourne and regional areas including Geelong, Wodonga and Kangaroo Flat.

*“We heard first-hand exactly what mothers have experienced and we witnessed their incredible strength as they spoke about justice, truth and recognition,” Ms Suleyman said.*

Community and social service organisations, advocacy and support groups, peak bodies and non-government organisations also provided evidence to the inquiry.

*“With recommendations to establish a comprehensive redress scheme and remove the statute of limitations, both without delay, the Committee hopes this report builds upon mothers’ efforts for justice,” Ms Suleyman said.*

The Committee believes the redress scheme should include:

- A monetary payment
- Counselling and psychological support
- A direct personal response from the institution and/or organisation involved in the applicant’s forced adoption.

The Government is being encouraged to work with responsible organisations to secure their involvement and consider sanctions for those that don’t comply within a set timeframe.

A fully funded legal advice and referral service to ensure applicants receive free, independent guidance on redress and/or civil litigation has been suggested.

Ongoing funding for state-based support service VANISH and further specific funding for the regular training of health professionals at the Melbourne-based entity has also been recommended.

*“If implemented by the Victorian Government, the recommendations will enhance the capacity of people to address the trauma of historical forced adoption,” Ms Suleyman said.*

*“Particularly, through the provision of specialised and flexible mental health support services, and various measures to improve access to adoption records and make it easier for people to search and reconnect with their family.*

The Committee has also proposed a stand-alone inquiry to explore the impacts of adoption on adopted people.

*“The Committee heard from many people who are adopted, nearly all of whom had negative adoption experiences,” Ms Suleyman said.*

The government has been urged to *instantly introduce integrated birth certificates for adopted people who request them and ensure they are regarded as legal proof of identity.*

*“The Committee also recommends various measures to improve the operation and transparency of current adoption laws to ensure the mistakes of the past are not repeated,” Ms Suleyman said.*

*A designated day each year to commemorate historical forced adoptions in Victoria has been put forward by the Committee. October 25, the anniversary of the Victorian Parliament’s apology for past adoption practices, has been nominated as a suitable date.*

## **A MOTHER'S CONCERN FOR ADOPTEES**

**(Anonymous)**

There seems to be a lot said and written about how mothers and adopting mothers feel about their children, but not, it seems how the whole adoption business affects the children and over time I have realised how the children never feel as if they fit in – they don't fit in with the adoptive family. Oh, sure, when they are little, but when they grow older they have lots of things to question. For example, they look different, they have different personalities, they feel they owe gratitude to their adopters. Then when they meet their natural mothers they are like strangers. They have lost so much time and it can never be gotten back. Many adopted people suffer from anger, depression, feelings of abandonment and many more negative effects. When they themselves become adults their head understands the reason for their adoption, but their heart does not. All they know is that we, their mothers, were adults and they were babies. They had no choice.

Why do adopters take babies from young mothers? Why don't they help them so that they can keep their children (money love, support).

It is funny that adopters only want babies and not older children. It has been proven that in the case of surrogacy the baby bonds with the woman who is carrying the child. Then when the baby is born it is looking for the smell, sound and the heartbeat of the woman who has carried him/her. But, just like adoption is instead handed over to a stranger – abandonment. THE BEGINNING.

## **LONG-TERM IMPACTS ON MOTHERS WHO HAVE LOST CHILDREN TO ADOPTION**

The outcomes for mothers whose children were taken from them to be raised by strangers via the adoption system have largely been considered as warranting little attention or concern. Mothers who blended into the community with little or no outward signs of their inner pain have been regarded as living proof of the success of the practice, whereas those who were less successful in masking their distress have been viewed as demonstrating that they are and have always been dysfunctional and “unfit

mothers.” So that regardless of how each mother deals with her loss, she can never win. A perfect lose/lose situation.

But just because so many mothers of these stolen children have learned to mask their pain, some more successfully than others, this does not mean that the pain is any less. Symptoms experienced by mothers who have lost their children to adoption have been likened to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), with mothers experiencing a constant sense of loss and painful memories. Any event that is unpredictable and uncontrollable can trigger PTSD and surely even those with the hardest of hearts must acknowledge that to give birth to a child which is immediately removed and given to be raised by strangers qualifies as a traumatic incident in which the sufferer is rendered helpless.

As stated above the effects on mothers mirrors the symptoms of PTSD which can develop following a traumatic event and any shattering event that leaves an individual feeling helpless and hopeless. Their sense of safety and trust are shattered. This is not to be taken as any evidence of dysfunction on the part of the individual mother, but is a normal reaction to abnormal events.

**Some symptoms of PTSD, although these vary from individual to individual, are briefly outlined below:**

- Re-experiencing the traumatic event.
- Avoidance and Numbing.
- Increased anxiety and emotional arousal.
- Anger and irritability
- Guilt, shame and self-blame
- Substance abuse.
- Feelings of mistrust and betrayal.
- Depression and hopelessness.
- Suicidal thoughts and feelings.
- Feeling alienated and alone.
- Physical aches and pains.

**PTSD is prevalent in society and listed below is a brief summary of what treatment for this condition involves:**

- Exploring thoughts and feelings about the trauma.
- Working through feelings of guilt self-blame and distrust
- Learning how to cope with and control intrusive memories
- Address problems PTSD has caused in your life and relationships

Also of benefit may be Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) which looks at how a person's self-perception influences behaviour. It addresses the underlying issues and how these can give rise to damaging or destructive thoughts.

It is essential that in seeking therapy mothers have access to a mental health professional who specialises in the treatment of trauma and PTSD. For therapy to work the mother needs to feel respected and understood. Psychotherapy and counselling which is below standard can result in further damage to an already injured individual.

We now come to the question of if counselling were made available to mothers who lost a child to adoption who would provide such a service and it is this point that is of vital importance. It is counter-intuitive to consider that any organisation which has any connection with the adoption industry, either past or present, would be an appropriate venue for mothers to receive counselling. Such organisations include religious institutions and the charitable organisations purporting to help the disadvantaged all played a major role in orchestrating the original trauma. Included in the category of "unsuitable to offer counselling" are any individuals who have worked in the adoption industry, either as social workers or as counsellors. It would be a cruel twist of fate indeed for any organisation or individual which played any role in the separation of mothers and their children to again profit from the trauma which they were instrumental in creating.

Whilst it could be argued that adoption of Australian children is practically non-existent now and that most children adopted are from overseas there is no reason to believe that impoverished mothers from overseas grieve any less for their lost children and the notion of being counselled by anyone involved in adoption, whether local or international, is extremely distasteful.

In the absence of appropriate professional counselling many mothers have benefitted by joining groups representing mothers who have lost children to adoption. Many people want to talk about their trauma with others who have had similar experiences and this can often be of benefit.

In a group mothers can talk to others who have also been through similar trauma. Sharing an experience with others may help in feeling more comfortable talking about a personal trauma. This can help in coping with symptoms, memories and other parts of life.

Belonging to a group can help build relationships with others who understand what you have been through. Sharing with the group may also help build self-confidence and trust and may assist in learning how to focus on your present life rather than feeling overwhelmed by grief. Ideally belonging to a group

should result in learning to deal with emotions such as guilt, shame, anger, rage and fear.

The previous paragraph outlines the positive effects of what could be loosely called Group Therapy. However, while there are many positives in belonging to such a group, unless there is a strict code of conduct such associations may unintentionally have a detrimental effect. Self-reflection is a good thing but when introspection goes awry and thoughts get stuck on repeat, playing over and over in the mind this becomes counter-productive. Rumination and self-blame are part of the problems that can lead to depression and anxiety and unless groups are forward looking, positive and non-judgmental consequences may not be positive.

The most important way in which events lead a person to depression and anxiety is by leading a person to ruminate and blame themselves. Rumination, having thoughts stuck on replay, was found to be more damaging than self-blame. (BBC Lab UK – Denise Winterman BBC News Magazine 17 October 2013).

The aim of counselling or attending support groups should be to develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and the ability to take control of one's own life. It is inappropriate to use unstructured and nondirective approaches as this may result in recreating the emotionality of the traumatic experience without offering ways to deal with it. Cognitive and psychodynamic approaches are more useful and the way individuals think and deal with things can be changed.

In conclusion, I offer my sincerest appreciation for the superb Apology delivered by Julia Gillard and for the fact that the trauma of mothers who lost their children to adoption has finally been acknowledged. And although the past cannot be erased it is very important that the historical record has been set straight.

My concern is that if therapy is made available that it is appropriate for the needs of mothers who have lost their children and that organisations who were instrumental in orchestrating this trauma do not profit again from our loss.

Maryla Rowcroft

**PETITION AND EXPLANATORY LETTER FROM ADOPTED ADULT–  
FORCED ADOPTION SURVIVORS IN WA NEED REDRESS AND AN INQUIRY  
NOW**

Hi, my name is Jen. I am a Western Australian survivor of forced adoption, an adoptee, born in 1972 at KEMH and ‘homed’ at Ngala.

I am the creator of the WA petition requesting redress for survivors and the opportunity to participate in truth telling via a State Parliamentary Inquiry.

For too long we have had non-survivors, including former forced adoptive institutions narrating our lived experience, who continue the fairy tale telling that adoption is beautiful.

If child migrants and survivors of clergy abuse can obtain access to redress mechanisms, personalised apologies and other concessions then surely we too deserve the same.

Importantly, WA must examine its policies and practices of forced adoption, so that our society never repeats such a failing of human rights ever again.

Below is a list of why we need an inquiry and what we need to know. Please sign, even confidentially and share with your like-minded family and friends.

Thank you in advance.

1. The WA experience of forced adoption policies and practices operated within its own unique circumstances, within the State’s cultural-social mores and significant geographical isolation.
2. When compared to other jurisdictions, WA took longer to move away from adoption policies and practices despite the instigation of the single parent benefit in 1973. This lag effect observed in WA is reflected in State-by-State adoption statistics.
3. An unknown number of women from interstate travelled to WA to conceal their pregnancy, birth secretly, and return home without their baby.
4. Explore the pivotal role of country WA and city GPs as the initial points of contact whom procured newborns for constituents of their personal religious denomination via Perth based maternity homes.
5. Examine the operational role of the welfare department, maternity homes, hospitals, their matrons, boards of governance, funding

- mechanisms and other staff in procuring adoptions. Investigate the adequacy of care given to unwed mothers by these facilities and the interactions experienced by mothers with their caregivers.
6. Review and repair the current service provision for survivors in terms of comprehensive specialised counselling, individualised mental and general health care requirements (including regular cancer screening if exposed to the anti-lactation drug DES during their hospitalisation) and gerontology services, as many mothers and adoptees are in their 60s and older.
  7. Address and remove the legal constraints which prevent survivors from redress mechanisms, including the statute of limitations.
  8. Allow adoptees a clear and simplified pathway to revoke their adoption order, have their father's name added to their birth certificate, or to obtain an integrated birth certificate.
  9. Instruct all former forced adoption institutions to formally and publicly apologise to survivors and install commemorative structures within their grounds where forced adoption practices occurred. These now wealthy, influential and powerful institutions must cease creating a fairy tale narration of their involvement in forced adoption and own the widespread trauma they have inflicted upon thousands in this State.
  10. Allocate appropriate funding and staffing to provide FREE services which conduct reconnections between adoptees and their biological family. Survivors should not be paying the bill to find their kin.
  11. WA survivors must have timely access to all of their adoption records, hospital, welfare and maternity home records without redaction or censorship. Numerous mothers report that their hospital records have been lost or are damaged, despite their son or daughter being able to access their own newborn records from the same time period. Survivors are waiting up to 12 months to receive their documents.
  12. Examine the financial operational processes by which government adoptive institutions, adoptive parents and mothers operated within. The issue of stolen wages from unwed mothers while residing in maternity 'homes' and the issue of commodification of newborns

must be examined in detail. Who paid what to whom, for a newborn baby.

13. Identify the depth of involvement of regional and country hospitals in facilitating adoptions.

14. Unveil the indigenous experience of forced adoption practices.

<https://www.change.org/WAinquiryforcedadoption>

You can sign anonymously, should anyone prefer this method.

### **ABC – THE CONVERSATION HOUR**

<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/melbourne/programs/theconversationhour/the-conversation-hour/13553908>

Victorian mothers who were forced to give up their children for adoption at birth could soon be eligible for compensation and support under a new redress scheme.

The scheme was one recommendation from the Parliamentary Inquiry into Historical Forced Adoptions in Victoria which happened between 1958 and 1984.

Mothers like Elaine reflected on the moment her child was taken from her.

“I came home without my baby and told to get on with my life,” she said.

Duration 1 hr. Broadcast Wednesday 29 September 2021 at 11 am.

### **NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS BY MEMBERS**

Have you got an idea you would like to share, or something you would like to say? If you do then we would love to hear from you. We always welcome contributions by members for our newsletter and would love to hear from mothers. Please share your thoughts with us.

Even if you don't wish to write an article your comments on what you have read either in our newsletter or elsewhere would be appreciated. Your feedback provides invaluable information. We want to know what you think.

Please forward your article or comments to Arms WA Inc to the following:

Email: [support@armswa.org.au](mailto:support@armswa.org.au)