



ARMS WA

Newsletter 127

July 2022

**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**

Meetings are held on the third Monday, each month.

CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

Hello Everyone,

Welcome to another newsletter that is being sent to you digitally. It is called struggling our way into the world of instant communications. If you would like a hard copy mailed to you, we can certainly do this too. Just get in contact.

COVID has caused some disruption to our meetings, throughout 2022. We are at the present time able to hold meetings at Belmont once again. Unfortunately, so few of our members use Zoom or Teams we have been unable to hold digital meetings.

A gentle reminder to all, please do not attend in-person meetings if you have been in recent contact with anyone who has tested positive to covid. It is unfair on all members, for the Belmont staff and places everyone at risk especially those of us with underlying medical problems. Wear a mask if you are in any doubt.

Despite there not being meetings quite a few things have been achieved during the past two years. Our memorial is finished, and our tiles have been laid. We owe a heartfelt thank you to FASS, the Town of Victoria Park and Jenny Dawson without whom this could not have been achieved. We did not have an opening ceremony due to COVID. There has been a lot of activity from adopted adults who are finally speaking out about the experience of growing with false birth information and a denial of their human right to access information about their genetic inheritance. For anyone who is interested do look at the ARA web site. I think it is a huge positive that finally adults who were adopted are finding their voice and speaking out about their experience.

This brings me to a point that we will be looking at when the 1994 WA Adoption Act comes up for review again in 2023. Vetoes are still in existence. Most of us thought vetoes were an archaic practice that was negated once the truth about adoption practices was exposed and access to identifying information was opened for all parties, as Shirley used to say, "fair and equitable access for all parties to adoption," not just the one-sided access that existed in the past. Apparently old vetoes remain in place. They cause great pain to those who have one inflicted upon them. This is tantamount to someone issuing a violence restraining order when you have not actually done anything. That is an unjust and cruel thing for anyone to inflict on another human being. It reflects the lies and damage past adoption practices were designed to enforce. There is no place for this level of egregious cruelty in the 21st century. We have published a poem below to reflect that reflects the feelings of someone who has been ghosted by this practice.

Credit for much of the political activity goes to Jen McRae who has been instrumental in pushing for questions to be asked about why, 13 years after our apology, the State Government has yet to do anything practical to improve the lot of parties separated by adoption. The mess is of their making. They make no effort to encourage institutions to apologise for their behaviour and do not seem to recognise the appalling level of suffering they continue to facilitate as these institutions deny their culpability. We are grateful to MLA Wilson Tucker who has twice raised the issue in parliament about the lack of services available to us. We need truth-telling and at least an acknowledgement that separation at birth was illegal and unnecessary. Our babies (now adults) deserved better and so do we.

Lynne Devine

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Tel: 0468 444 99



Source: facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=392755522861308&set=pb.100063805900043.-2207520000..&type=3

Saturday April 30th, 2022. Read Park Memorial

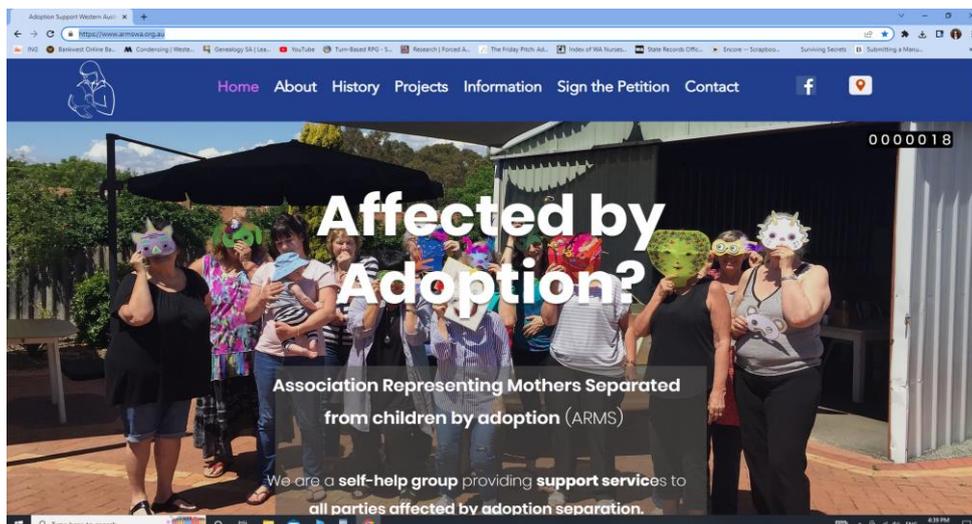
Federal Minister for Swan Zaneta Mascarenhas, Lynne, MLA Hannah Beazley for Victoria Park, Helen & Cindy

Have you been to the ARMS WA website recently?

New content is being added regularly, we would love to include your stories, photos and feedback too.

Click on the link below for more.

<https://www.armswa.org.au/>



IN THE MEDIA

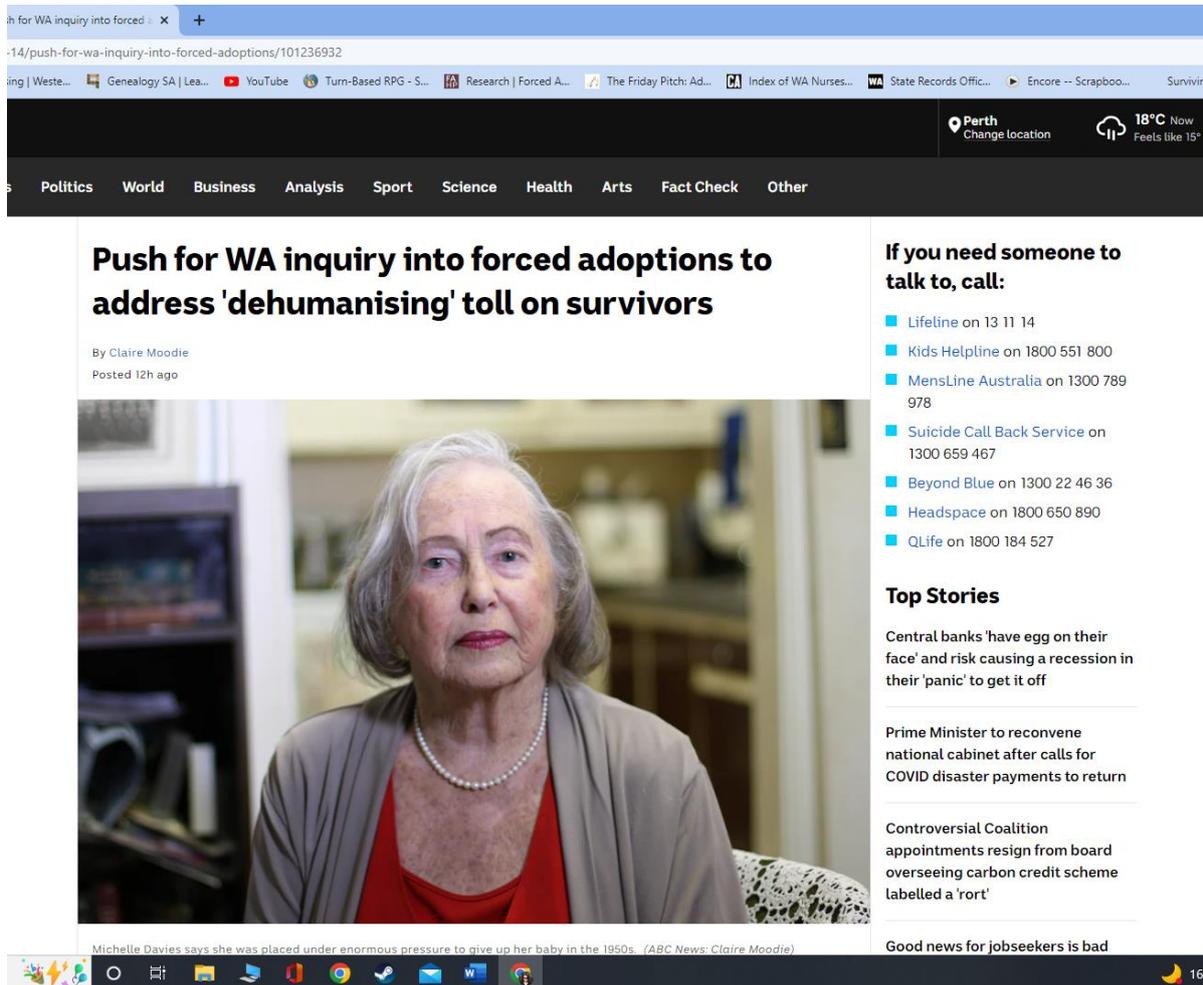
On Thursday July 16th, ABC News WA aired the story of our very own Michelle Davies along with adopted adults Jen and Anne who are from country Western Australia. All three women experienced the policies and practices of forced adoption at KEMH and want to see an inquiry held in Western Australian.

To read the news article click on the link below:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-14/push-for-wa-inquiry-into-forced-adoptions/101236932>

To watch their ABC News WA interview with Journalist Claire Moodie, click on the link below:

<https://iview.abc.net.au/video/NU2208W167S00>



SIGN THE PETITIONS – We need our own inquiry in WA!

Click on the links below and sign each petition and share.

Both are confidential.

<https://www.change.org/p/for-a-lifetime-the-secrets-of-wa-s-forced-adoption-policies-practices-have-been-hidden-from-the-public-now-is-the-time-to-tell-the-truth-redress-mechanisms-are-paramount-within-this-process-of-seeking-justice>

[https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/LCePetitions.nsf/\(\\$All\)/0E8E5906BE37791E48258838002030A9?opendocument](https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/LCePetitions.nsf/($All)/0E8E5906BE37791E48258838002030A9?opendocument)

A poem by a WA Adopted Adult

I landed in the closed adoption world, in 1977.
Where my father was never spoken of.
Even when he went to heaven.

He was deemed not worth a single word.
Hearsay says he denied, and victim blamed.
Maybe for fear of paying CS, the SO register, jail,
reputation tarnish or later inheritance claim.

So, I never thought of him growing up.
It never occurred to me.
That I had a father out there.
That was never meant to be.

In my youth I just felt sorry.
For the young girl not much my senior.
Who found herself with baby?
Not too many choices left to keep her.

A veto has since changed my mind.
And all governments need to end them.
It's our human rights to know our truths.
Please Ministers do not bend them.

To suit your agenda and hide their shame.
The perceived "mistake" is not our burden.
Current government policy is still to blame.
Parties to adoption, it only serves to hurt them.

Doctored birth certificates, a veto system,
Various FOI Acts that still exclude adoptees,
information withheld or "lost",
to protect or deny past brutalities.

So instead of pushing the adoption narrative,
We provide support to those in this patriarchy,
who are deemed unfit and can't progress,
with child, the way they'd like their life to be.

And to those baby predators, that baby is not yours just to take.
Your entitlement does not outweigh, a father, a mother, their families,
and the chance for them to pull their weight.

It takes two and a village to raise a child.
A child's identity should never be replaced.
In some almost Nazi like scheme.
To suit some fantasy White Australian race.

So, hands off the vulnerable mothers and children,
unless they are in danger.
And choose to better educate and at worst punish,
those who deserve to be a stranger.

Hold them accountable for their actions.
Don't just let them off Scot free.
For no child ever deserves.
To be removed from their genealogical family tree.

And to those out there who will not speak,
your silence is your consent.
And you'll never be truly healed, or free,
from that past adoption dent.

Religion, age, marital status, education level or financial security,
Should never be grounds for a child to be "given" or "hidden",
Beneath these (still in place) Government fabricated false identities.

APOLOGIES FOR FORCED ADOPTION

The 2012 Senate (Federal) Inquiry states that an apology can be viewed “as a desirable step in reconciliation and healing.” Importantly, all forced adoption apologies must be offered within a clear and respectful framework. The inquiry proposed that within Australia we could use the model created by the Canadian Law Commission which recommends 5 criteria be followed for all public apologies. These are detailed in chapter 9 of the inquiry. To read the full details as to why an apology requires a clear structure to ensure credibility and validity, please click on this link.

https://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/senate/community_affairs/completed_inquiries/2010-13/commcontribformerforcedadoption/report/c09

A public apology requires:

1. Acknowledgement of wrongs done
2. Acceptance of responsibility for the wrong that was done
3. an expression of sincere regret and profound remorse
4. the assurance or promise that the wrong will not recur
5. and reparation through concrete measures.

In other words, simply to say, “It was a mistake,” or “I’m sorry it wrecked your life,” or “We thought we were doing the right thing,” or any other form of excuse is not a real apology. Those are just dismissive phrases that only deepen the hurt of what was done. Let us not forget that in almost all cases of adoption separation the law was broken on many fronts. It was not legal to abduct babies from the delivery bed. It was not legal to refuse a mother any access whatsoever to her newborn. It was not legal to not advise her of her rights. It was not legal to prevent the baby’s father access to her and to his child. It was not legal to leave the father’s name off the birth certificate when it was given. It was not legal to drug, bully and coerce a mother who had only just given birth into signing papers without legal advice or support for her and the rights of her newborn baby.

Here in Western Australia a world movement was started when the State Government apologised for past adoption practices. Unfortunately, the main things we were promised, a memorial to commemorate our losses plus a suitable apology from King Edward Hospital and others, were not forthcoming. Parliament House was filled to overflowing on the day of the state apology. There was a standing ovation for the speech of The Hon David Templeman whose efforts had brought about this apology. Unfortunately, post-apology the Liberal government of the day made every possible excuse to do what they did in the end – nothing.

Our memorial in WA was built using Federal funding. ARMS’ membership worked very hard to build it as an acknowledgement to the sufferings of those who have been separated by adoption. We owe our gratitude to the Town of Victoria Park for allowing us to site our memorial at Read Park. It was the responsibility of the State Government of the day to fund and site this memorial, but they chose not to do so. As with everything else connected with adoption separation we have had to fight for what should never have been denied us in the first place.

So far, our present WA State Government has not shown a great deal of enthusiasm for making up for the lack of action with respect to our apology. The Barnett government produced all sorts of excuses for not fulfilling their meagre promises and somehow adoption separation seems to be back in the too-hard basket. We need an inquiry, some truth-telling, a grievance committee, access to information, and proper funding to train and qualify professionals to deal with the aftermath of this illegal practice.

We have fought for 40 years to obtain justice and equity. Our children know the truth now that the records have been opened and they too are finding their voices. We still have a long way to go.

Lynne.

The following links are TV footage from 2009, which documents Minister Haines commitment to obtaining an apology from KEMH.

Please note: content warning; details of forced adoption practices.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XhqhxVI0y0> HYPERLINK

["https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XhqhxVI0y0&t=291s"](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XhqhxVI0y0&t=291s)& HYPERLINK

["https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XhqhxVI0y0&t=291s"](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XhqhxVI0y0&t=291s)t=291s



King Edward Memorial Hospital - apology update

Many ARMS supporters will vividly recall the promise former Liberal WA Health Minister Kim Haines made in 2009, that KEMH would apologise for their role in forcing adoption upon mothers and their newborns. More than a decade later we are still waiting for the state's main maternity hospital to admit responsibility and formally apologise to survivors, their families and the people of Western Australia.

In late 2021, two adopted adults, both born at KEMH and denied their birthright to remain with their mothers, approached the hospital requesting an apology be uploaded to their website. They requested that the hospital use the KEMH apology (see below). The Apology Alliance holds a copy in their collection which dates back to December 12th, 2009.

While the below KEMH apology is not perfect, in that there is a focus on 'newborns' and 'babies', without a direct acknowledgement of adopted **adults**, it has much of the five criteria suggested by the Canadian Law commission.

In June 2022, after months of inaction KEMH finally uploaded a few vague sentences to their website. The hospital has not used their 2009 apology. Instead, KEMH has entirely avoided taking ANY responsibility for the thousands of newborns they removed from their mothers.

<https://www.kemh.health.wa.gov.au/About-us/Formal-Apology>

We will keep you up to date as events unfold.

A question for members; **In your opinion, is there anything else missing from the KEMH Apology, detailed below ?**

To make a complaint to KEMH for their inadequate 'apology' or regarding your personal experience, please write to:

Jessica Pournault

Director Safety, Quality and Performance

Executive Services, Women and Newborn Health Services

Level 1, A block/374 Bagot Rd

KEMH Subiaco WA 6008

EMAIL: jessica.pournault@health.wa.gov.au

King Edward Memorial Hospital (WA) apology

December 12th 2009

Source: APOLOGY ALLIANCE - Australia

King Edward Memorial Hospital (WA) apologises unreservedly and sincerely for the brutal separation of mothers from their newborns and for the ensuing lifelong pain and disabling mental health problems caused by that needless separation.

No mother or newborn should ever have endured the interference with and the manifest injustice of not allowing the completion of the birthing process by being denied access to each other.

No subsequent Acts, neither Child Welfare nor Adoption, that mothers and babies were placed under, unethically and illegally could ever legitimate the theft of their children at the birth. This brutal separation occurred whilst mothers were the guardians of their infants and had every right to see hold and nurse them. As the infant had every right to see and be held and nursed by his or her own mother. For the failure of our duty of care to allow the natural and normal process of birthing to proceed the King Edward Memorial Hospital is deeply sorry and sincerely apologises.

The Hospital knowingly and carelessly failed in its duty of care to ensure the civil and human rights of its most vulnerable citizens – mothers and babies.

The symbiotic relationship and the bonding that begins from the moment of conception reaches a physical and emotional peak at the birth when mother and child meet face to face for the first time. For the majority of young mothers without support and without a married partner that great and most mysterious event was denied them. The touch of their newborn was denied them. The opportunity to feed, nurse and name their infant was denied them. For the fact that these mothers and infants never got to meet each other with the effect of being deeply traumatizing and

causing lifelong regret and pain the hospital expresses deep sorrow and deeply and sincerely apologises.

There were some families who stood by their daughters, but even they were hunted from the hospitals by security guards with the threat of having their grandchild being made a ward of the state. To these grandparents we express our sorrow and deeply and sincerely apologise.

To the fathers who dearly desired to see and touch their newborns but were denied this god given right, we express our sorrow and deeply and sincerely apologise.

For all of the above and for the deep ongoing pain caused to so many Australian families who were brutally torn asunder we express our sorrow and humbly and deeply apologise.

We renew our commitment to ensure that the needless destruction of families never again happens in this hospital.

We renew our commitment that the first and most significant of family units: mother and child, will have the full protection and support of all Australian law and International treaties within our hospital walls. Australia is signatory to many treaties that acknowledge that it is the right of all children to be brought up within her or his original family. To know and have knowledge of his or her ancestry and to retain documents that detail accurately and truthfully their family heritage and history. It is this hospital's commitment that it will honour faithfully these treaties and the common law whereby the rights of the mother and child at the birth are paramount and a right that this hospital will ensure is never again violated.

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 email your article or comments to Arms WA Inc to:

support@armswa.org.au