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Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Submission to Inquiry into responses to historical forced adoptions in Victoria
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To: Victoria Government Committee of Inquiry
Inquiry into responses to historical forced adoptions in Victoria.

From: Robin Turner
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Good afternoon,

I am a mother of "historical forced adoptions in NSW" in 1967.

Having served on the Relationships Australia NSW Forced Adoptions Support Service Consultative Group from its inception, and having had some contact with those organisations who have received Federal funding to assist those affected in other States, I feel I would like to comment on the lack of services available to all people affected by forced adoptions Australia wide.

As your inquiry is basically interested in Victoria I will start with your State.

The NGO who has received the Federal funding in Victoria is Relationships Australia Victoria. The program that they run to assist those affected by the issue is called Compass. (In each State where Relationships Australia received the funding the program has a different name.)

As with every other State in Australia the emphasis is not on regional or rural areas but restricted to the capital city urban area only. In addition, I am personally affronted that despite Federal funding to run a service to assist those affected in your State of Victoria that they are charging \$30 for each person who comes forward wanting "counselling services". They do have a "hardship" program for those who cannot afford their fees, however the embarrassment to those who are financially stretched, and this is without the shame and stigma and trauma associated with the issue, and the red tape involved in accessing this is beyond

many people already suffering from lifetime trauma from the issue itself. They also offer a phone counselling service for those unable to attend sessions in their office, however at a price to the affected individual.

It would appear, in my opinion, that your Victorian State funded organisation Vanish offers better and a free service to those affected by the issue.

Last year I wrote to the NSW Government asking if they could tell me how many people who identified themselves as affected by this issue were currently in the Corrections system and how many people identified with being affected when entering the Health system. The Public Health system is particularly interesting as one of the first questions asked in any emergency room across Australia is family medical history, to which of course many many adoptees have no answer.

The only response I have had so far was from The Honourable Anthony Roberts MP NSW Minister for Counter Terrorism and Corrections NSW, who tells me that, " The Commissioner of Corrective Services has advised Corrective Services NSW does not maintain any data of the adoption status of inmates. This information is not collected uniformly as part of the inmate reception process. Therefore, it cannot be determined if this inmate cohort is over represented in the prison population."

Is Victoria the same in not collecting this type data on people affected? It would be interesting to know if, as many in our community believe, those affected are over represented in the Corrective systems Australia wide.

Adoption is a life sentence for the child, the mother and some fathers.

There has been no increase in the Federal funding for the issue since its inception and the recommendations of the Federal Senate Inquiry generally ignored. In addition at this point in time it appears that the Federal funding will not exist beyond this block of funding which expires June 2021, as our current Federal Government appears to have no appetite to extend the same. (I do acknowledge that our Federal Government does have some other serious issues to contend with at present, ie the drought and the bush

fires. I am quite enjoying watching our PM scramble!)

I trust that the Inquiry Committee will be looking at The Australian Institute of Family Studies publications into the issue.

In relation to mothers it has been exposed that the loss of their first child to historical forced adoption system resulted in somewhere between 50% to 65% never giving birth to another child. That is an indication of how damaging it was to the mothers.

Corruption was rife within hospitals and other organisations who ran private facilities or unmarried mothers homes. You only have to look at what occurred in your own State with Ann Hamilton Byrne and the access she had to children of unmarried mothers' babies to form her Cult of The Family. As a result there are many, now adults, without birth certificates.

In relation to our children, many whom consider that they were treated like a commodity, to be traded by State Governments Australia wide to provide children to infertile married couples, many have expressed to myself that they feel like Australian refugees within Australia. Stateless individuals within the country in which they were born, and we appear to be the only citizens of Australia to whom Privacy Laws do not apply.

With DNA tests becoming more affordable and readily available many are using these services in an effort to discover for themselves where they come from and who their cousins and other relatives are, with mixed success and some with more trauma and further rejection following.

What has been done to date to assist our community is superficial at best.

Words were spoken and promises were made but not kept. You will find within your own State of Victoria on the public housing waiting lists, some of whom have been there for years, people who are affected by the issue however your forms do not ask the question, are you a person affected by forced adoption. In my opinion your

Government should be giving those affected some priority, after all Adoption Law is State Law and previous Governments of your State are responsible for the disadvantage caused to these individuals. Therefore you have a moral responsibility to seek them out and help them. They may be single woman in 60+ age group who when applying have not felt they could expose their situation due to shame, stigma and trauma, or they may be our children who felt like guests within the homes in which they were raised, whose education was not completed due to personality conflicts with their adoptive parents, perhaps they didn't meet their adoptive parents expectations of what having a child meant or have never come to terms with the separation trauma from their birth. Studies dating back to the 1950's have shown that when you separate a child from its mother at birth the neural pathways for attachment do not form, so don't be surprised when many of those affected leave a trail of broken relationships and broken families behind them.

You will also find our community in your mental health facilities, where my guess would be that the question isn't asked, are you a person affected by forced adoption. I also think you will find many adoptees in drug rehabilitation facilities as their mothers were given drugs by the hospitals and other institutions, to keep them quiet and compliant, that crossed the placenta and these, now adults, recognise, on some subconscious level, that drugs are a safe place as they experienced drugs prior to the trauma of their birth and subsequent separation from their mothers.

Of course the housing, mental health and drug rehabilitation inmates would also include people affected by other social issues at the time like the Indigenous Stolen Generation and the Forgotten Australians. Governments across our country have a lot to answer for.

What could be done to assist our community better?
Great question, but one that I do not have a definitive answer to.
The only thing I could suggest is that you ask the following organisations. In

NSW The Post Adoption
Resource Centre run by The Benevolent Society and Vanish in your State as
well as Jigsaw in
Queensland, as these 3 organisations are those that have been dealing with
people affected by the
issue longest, for advice on how best to help us and provide Vanish with the
funding to start and run peer
support groups across your State, as many people are isolated and have never
met another person who has
walked in their shoes, both for adoptees and mothers alike affected by "historical
forced adoptions" and
to MAKE SURE IT NEVER HAPPENS IN YOUR STATE AGAIN.

I have never recovered from what I consider to be the abandonment of myself by
my family, nor the
what I consider to be the betrayal of myself by my government and adoptees
have never recovered
from what they see as their mothers abandonment of them.

I may wish to send in a supplementary submission before the closing date.

Thank you for your time and holding this inquiry and I hope every other State in
Australia follows
your lead.

Regards, Robin Turner