

February 2020

**Submission to the Inquiry into responses to historical forced adoptions in
Victoria.**

Grace Kelly

Victorian ex-adoptee

My name is Grace Kelly, and I am an ex-adoptee. In 2018, the County Court of Victoria granted me a discharge.

This submission is made based on my own experiences and the experiences of other adoptees that I come into contact with in my life, including through my volunteer service called *Crib Mates - Adoption Reversal, which helps adoptees apply for discharges.

Recommendation;

- 1. The statute of limitations must be lifted so that abused and neglected adoptees can pursue redress from religious bodies, agencies or other parties who arranged the adoption.**

During the forced adoption era, many adoptees were adopted using unethical/illegal methods, and/or placed into unsuitable/abusive/neglectful homes.

An apology has been made for the past practices of forced adoption, and this apology has made it easier for some people to speak out about their horrific experiences, but due to a legal technicality, it is now too late for any meaningful redress.

Organisations or individuals who, in the past, acted illegally in organising and facilitating forced adoptions, and were derelict in their duty of care with regard to placements, should be subject to the ordinary processes by which service providers are held to account.

Adoptees who have been neglected or abused by their adoptive families, have suffered real, measurable material damage as a result of their adoption. Due to this damage, they can require substantial support from the State, and parties who have acted illegally or been derelict in their duty should not be able to avoid contributing to these costs. They must not be allowed to escape responsibility, they must be put at risk of being made liable for some or all of these costs, should a successful case be made against them.

*Crib Mates - Adoption Reversal is not a registered charity, and does not seek or accept donations; it is simply a service that assists adoptees with their reversal applications, for free, because the going price for legal assistance is about \$15k.