

Inquiry into Responses to Historical Forced Adoptions in Victoria

Submission by *Peter John Moore* - Thursday, 5 March 2020

In Summary

- I am a Late Discovery Adoptee. Discovered adoption via Ancestry DNA at 59 years
- I was not aware of Apology before my discovery in 2017
- Apart from getting copies of my Original Birth Certificate & Adoption Certificate, a retreat hosted by Relationships Australia & the Benevolent Society, a few counselling sessions & watching a video clip of the Apology I have received little from Apology
- I am traumatised that I have two Birth Certificates I cannot come to terms that any government would do that to me or any other child then Adult
- A Birth Certificate should be as best as possible a Factual & Trustworthy Document, a recorded snapshot at the time of birth.
- I relied on that document my whole life, particularly when I had questions as a teen after a science class discovery that blood types did not match, being presented with my Birth Certificate allayed my fears for another 47 years, that devastates me
- I never had the opportunity to meet my father who died in 1982, I was 24 at that time, nothing can ever replace that loss
- I missed a relationship growing up with my mother 8 siblings in total, 5 maternal, 3 paternal
- I have met and maintain, relationships to various extents with my mother & siblings
- Reunification is like reverse adoption, trying to integrate with a family that you don't know and whose dynamics you are never sure of. Some siblings I can't really call it a relationship and that hurts & cut deep. I still try hard to nurture them.
- My mission that this never happens to another child ever again.

Points to Raise

Points I would like to raise

Adoptee Equality

- **Personally, I would like my Father's name to be inserted on my Original Birth Certificate**

(I have a statutory declaration for this from my mother and Ancestry DNA to support this) I satisfy the requirements of the application form. I have applied twice and been rejected twice.

One adoptee I know was told by a BDM counter staff member, that he would have to dig up his deceased father and get a DNA test

- **One Life One Birth Certificate** - Stop the Canceling of Original Birth Certificates, Stop Fabricating of Post Adoption Birth Certificates – Deceptive & Delusional Lie, a fabrication that says Adopted Parents Gave Birth to Child then Adult
- **Integrated Certificates** are another lie or an extension of a lie (I am definitely against this as an option for future adoptees – whilst not opposing for present adoptees trying to make some sense of their messed up identities – I agree that **present** adoptees should have many options available to them)

- **Deed Poll Certificates** do not rectify this trauma nor re-establish biological & legal connections to family – these should not be considered as any type of panacea
- Freedom for adoptees to identify with the person they really are – Why are LGBTQIA people able to identify including altering their Birth Certificates but adoptees are denied updating details on their Original Birth Certificate.?
- **No Fault Adoption Discharge** – We settled this argument with divorce in 1975 – Why should a fully informed adult be forced to use a surname they don't identify with, why are they legally severed from their biological family, mother, father, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, family history, culture/s, vital medical history.
Why an Adoptee endure costly, traumatic court proceedings with no guarantee of success?
- **Adoption VETO's** should be invalidated retrospectively – they do not serve the child then adult – victimizing the victim – causing more trauma, loss & hopelessness for adoptee
- **Death Certificates** – Adoptees have no legal right to be listed on their biological parent's death certificates – this needs to change
- **Why am I, as a 62 year old, still a child under Child Protection Legislation?** My life is controlled by an Adoption Act & Births Deaths & Marriages Act – I am not a signatory to the adoption, but I am bound by its laws and secretcies.
- **I am still a child the Act says so**
NSW
"child" means:
(a) a person who is less than 18 years of age, or
(b) a person who is 18 or more years of age and in relation to whom an adoption is sought or has been made.
"adopted person" means a person:
(a) an order for whose adoption was made under a former Act before the commencement of section 95 of this Act, or
(b) whose adoption in another State or in a country outside Australia was recognised under the Adoption of Children Act 1965 as having the same effect as if an order for adoption had been made under that Act, or
(c) an order for whose adoption was made under this Act, or
(d) whose adoption in another State is recognised under this Act as having the same effect as if an order for adoption had been made under this Act, or
(e) whose adoption in, or in a country outside, Australia is recognised and effective for the laws of this State under a law of this State or the Commonwealth.

Vic
"child" means a person who has not attained the age of 18 years or a person who has attained that age in respect of whom an adoption order is sought or has been made;
"adopted person" means a person—
(a) an order for whose adoption was made under this Act or any corresponding previous enactment; or
(b) an order for whose adoption was made (whether before or after the commencement of this section) in a place outside the State but whose birth was registered in Victoria;
- **Why is the fact that a child will become an adult never mentioned in Adoption Legislation?**
- **If Adoption is a child protection Act then why does adoption not end at 18?**
- **Equal rights to being included on the legal documentation of our relatives in the same way that non-adopted people are.**

- **In recognition that adopted people are a vulnerable population, and that there is no adequate evidence base to inform current and past adoption policy and service provision:**
 - 1) **Data Collection and Research** – Collect data with adopted people as an identified demographic in all dealings with government and non-government. Commit to funding research that investigates whole of life outcomes for adopted people, including retrospective analysis of already collected data.
 - 2) **Build an Evidence Base** - Provide incentives which encourage the study of adoption in Australia (with provision for affirmative action for those with lived experience)
 - 3) **Family Searching and reunion** - Commitment to ensuring that adequate resources and real assistance is available to adopted people in all aspects of finding information about and reconnecting with their real families.
 - 4) **Support and Trauma-informed Services** – Commitment to formal and meaningful consultation with adoptees about Support Services.
- **Adoption language should be used by government departments that acknowledges and is informed by adult adoptees, instead of the dominant narrative informed by those who have adopted or want to adopt.**
- **Adoption laws need comprehensive scrutiny as anyone bound as an adopted person by adoption legislation does not have the same rights as a person who is not adopted:**
 - 1) Conduct reviews of legislative or regulatory discrimination against individuals on the grounds of their adoptive status.
 - 2) Review the Adoption Act to check for breaches of the Human Rights Instruments that Australia is signatory to.
- **Self-Determination** - Rather than outsourcing to NGO's who have adopted people as passive clients, ensure that adopted people are represented in all decisions, consultations on policy, and as active and involved funding recipients or partners in determining the way forward in all the issues referred to above.

My Story

I was the family historian & genealogist

I had amassed 13,500 people in my family tree

I had attended many family tree reunions interstate

I had spent tens of thousands on research & travel

I had an Irish Coat of Arms carved at many thousands of dollars

I had a headstone remanufactured and placed it on a refurbished grave of the Irish Convict Ancestor

As it turns out he was not my ancestor – none of them were

Three years ago, at age 59 I did an Ancestry DNA test and discovered something was not right, there were no surnames in my DNA matches that I was familiar with.

I always knew I was born at Salvation Army Bethesda Hospital

I had Google it many years before which produced nothing but a image of an old building.

In desperation I Googled it again

Forced Adoption Government Apology

What I have never heard of this before, how was this I am an avid watcher of news

I was Adopted

I was shocked, my whole identity erased.

I looked in the mirror every morning for many months thereafter and thought to myself, really, I am not Irish I am Italian?

This has been a roller coaster ride of emotions.

My biggest shock after my discovery was that I had two birth certificates

I really cannot come to terms with this fact, that the government set out to lie and deceive me for 59 years as to my real identity.

The fact that they fabricated what I refer to as a “FAKE” Birth Certificate that falsely says that I was born to adoptive parents.

What a delusional deceitful lie “The lie that all of the subsequent lies of my life were constructed upon”

How dare you, how dare you

I read the <http://forcedadoptions.naa.gov.au/> page, I was deeply moved and horrified by what I read.

I followed the support link to Relationships Australia

I thought after reading <http://forcedadoptions.naa.gov.au/> page that I would receive help and empathy.

What I got was “Fill in the paperwork, make sure it is witnessed by a JP, send it in and if we find anything, we will make you a client and assign you a caseworker” – Whilst this may be a budgetary measure this does not alleviate stress & trauma and only adds to it.

I signed I would not contact if there was a Veto

I was never going to honour that, nothing, no fine, no threat of gaol was going to stop me finding my mother – what another bizarre notion – a law to stop a child contacting their mother, really?

This is not what I needed to hear at this time of distress

I needed “oh you must be devastated, we will assign you a counsellor who will guide you through the process every step of the way, we know how important it is to you to get information as quickly as possible, we appreciate every minute , every hour kept waiting is traumatic for you”

That is what I needed to hear but sadly it was not.

One month later I rang back frustrated I had not heard from them, “I was wondering how long before I get my Adoption Certificate, it has been a month?” “oh a month it could take six months at present”

What 6 months, you have got to be kidding, I can’t possibly wait that long

I circumvented the system and six weeks later I was talking to my mother.

Whilst I believe those times have reduced somewhat now – I cannot emphasise just how important it is to get that information quickly.

The pain of my loss is constant

I last thing I think of when I go to sleep is, I am adopted, my whole life was manipulated none of it was real.

It is also the first thing that I think of when I awake.

I think of my adoption throughout the day it never leaves me.

It affects my work, I work for myself, my productivity has decreased dramatically.

I lost my biological family, my mother, my father, my grandparents, my siblings, my aunts, my uncles, my cousins, my family history, my cultures (Italian & Aboriginal)

My Italian Father died in 1982, I was never to know my father, this distresses me, and always will.

I have met 3 siblings, two aunts (one in Sydney & one in Italy) and numerous cousins on my Father's side

I travelled to Italy to visit his grave and pay respects, I visited three times during my short stay in rural Calabria

I read him a poem I wrote 8 pages in total all rhyming, I wrote that in one sitting, my first ever poem at 59 years old.

I cried as I read it out aloud, sitting in front of the family mausoleum which housed my grandparents, my father and an aunt, I needed to do this.

Two Italian woman who heard me approached me Mio Padre I pronounced, they looked at the name and announced the village he came from Si I said.

I placed flowers adjacent their plaques

I am not religious I had bought four candles and matches from the supermarket; I attended the small chapel at the cemetery and lit the four candles for my Grandparents, my Father and my Aunt.

I believe my Father would have wanted me to do that.

I have met my Mother and 5 siblings on my maternal side.

I keep in contact the best I can with all, some do not return messages others I am quite close.

I feel the loss of them every day.

I have some close cousins on both sides but am particularly fond of my Italian family, cousins & aunts, who have welcomed me so warmly to the family.

Adoption has affected me my whole life, it has affected my children & grandchildren

Many things that I glossed over growing up and in adulthood, the differences in my treatment and that of my adopted sister (a biological child of adopted parents)

The way my wife and my children had been treated; I had glossed over as I had done for myself.

It now all made sense

I was living in someone's pantomime, I was a leading actor the directors were my adoptive parents, the scriptwriters were the Adoption Act & Births Deaths & Marriages

Peter John Moore (Legal Name)

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