

To: The Legal and Social Issues Committee; State of Victoria.

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to your committee as an adoptee from Western Australia. This inquiry allows the survivors of the Forced Adoption Era (FAE) a much-needed voice with which to explain what we live with every day of our lives.

I would like to sincerely thank the committee for delving into the experiences, histories and policies of the (FAE). This enquiry will provide another important public record detailing the immense life-long harms inflicted upon thousands of vulnerable young women, their sidelined partners and their beloved newborn babies. I sincerely hope that all Australian jurisdictions follow your lead and will hold their own formal enquiries before time steals away a rightful justice from the survivors of FAE.

I write my submission to your inquiry in solidarity with our Mothers. I want to sincerely and gratefully thank our Mothers for ploughing through the public disbelief they have experienced at every turn in their fight for recognition. They have selflessly faced repeated re-traumatisation with every word spoken or written in the decades of their fight for a public formal apology. However, much more needs to be done, which I describe below.

My Birth Story

My story and that of my Mother is entwined. In my submission I have included both our testimonies, her story that she has shared with me over the years and my own life experience as an adoptee. Our lives together were stolen from us and despite our reunion in 1991 our relationship will never be what it would have been, had we been afforded the right to live a life together. Our relationship is

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strained by loss, fear and grief and not knowing how to say the things we need to. We have tried, but its impossible to fill up 20 missing years with all the shared memories which bond a mother and child. My first steps, first words, first Christmas, Easter, tooth fairy visit, first day at school, learning to ride my bike and the list goes on and on. These moments would be the privilege of my adoptive parents, who lived in fear that I would leave them the moment I found my Mother.

I was born at King Edward Memorial Hospital (WA) in July 1972 at the peak of the FAE, when approximately 400 newborns were removed from their Mothers in WA and a reported 10,000 nationally. At the time of my birth, my Mother, "B" was a 21-year-old enrolled nurse who had worked full time in a remote hospital in the Pilbara region of WA up until her confinement at Ngala Mothers and Babies 'Home' in Kensington, Perth.

"B" lived and worked at Ngala for a month before my birth. She was required to pay for her stay through active work, by serving the nursing staff their meals, working in the kitchen assisting the cook, cleaning the facility and attending to linen duties in the laundry. A rotating roster through these different areas was used to share the workload between the twenty or more pregnant mothers residing at Ngala. Many of the Mothers were from rural WA and from working class families.

"B" reports that the mothercraft nurses, who primarily cared for the newborn infants (awaiting adoption) at Ngala considered the Mothers to be subordinates, either ignoring them outright or speaking to them in a disrespectful manner, like that of a drill sergeant in the army. Despite being a nurse herself, my Mother did not feel comfortable around the mothercraft nurses and avoided them at all costs. Ngala Matron, ██████████ noticed "B" excellent work ethic and offered her to work solely in the laundry and despite it being a hot and humid place to work my Mother was relieved as it meant she was out of the way of the workplace tensions evident within the home. My Mother had only one visitor during her month-long stay, a friend on holiday from the Pilbara and not a single

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family member knew “B” was at Ngala. In order to keep my birth a secret my Mothers employer, the matron at the Pilbara hospital hatched a plan. My Mother would keep writing to her parents each week, posting her letters to them via the Matron, who then placed the letter in an envelope postmarked with the Pilbara towns stamp and an envelope previously addressed by “B” in her own hand writing. Unbeknown to my grandparents these weekly letters had travelled up and down the length of the state, before arriving in their mailbox in the South West of WA. They would not learn of my existence until I arrived on the scene 19 years later. When I met them, I had hoped for a joyous warm welcome, this would not happen, and I would never really know what they thought of me and consequently I did not feel accepted. It would be one of the saddest aspects of being adopted. Wanting to be taken into the fold by my biological family, waiting, for years for it to happen, to be included in family events as an equal. There would be no fairy tale reunions.

My birth was negligent and traumatic. My Mother has told me many times over the years that she had been petrified that the staff were going to let her die. Through her own nursing experience, she realised early on in her labour that she was not going to be afforded the same care she had given and witnessed to married labouring mothers. She was left alone for up to two hours at a time in a labour room without any supervision by nursing or midwifery personnel. Occasionally, they would look in on her, but there was no words of support or encouragement as she laboured on into 24 hours. A midwife would check her cervix for dilation and then leave the room again without a word. During my labour my Mother was given medication for pain relief just once (Pethidine) and this is confirmed in the incomplete medical record we recently obtained from KEMH under the freedom of information act. In the final stage of labour, my Mother was horrified when a young medical officer inserted an IV line using a ‘cut down’ technique which is normally used for catastrophic medical emergencies, whereby a vein near her wrist was cut with a scalpel and the IV line inserted directly into the open and exposed vein. Again, my Mother was bewildered as to why such a technique was

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being used. There was absolutely no clinical indication for such a procedure. She had excellent veins that could be easily accessed via normal IV cannulation techniques, she was not unconscious, nor experiencing a catastrophic medical emergency. This unnecessary procedure was performed without local anaesthetic, which would have been the expected standard procedure for even a comatose patient. Her story is familiar to many Mothers who testify that they were treated like a training dummy.

█ had the scar from the cut down on her wrist for decades after and was able to show me the 1cm line on her skin, when I met her years later. First births are often difficult, █ was made worse by her petite figure and narrow hips- unable to accommodate my unusually large head. I should have been a caesarean. After 24 hours of active labour I was extracted via both suction and forceps delivery. █ perineum was badly damaged (ripped) during these procedures to extract me and the delicate skin of the area between the vagina and anus was sown together by the same medical officer that performed the 'cut-down'. Again, the medical officer in attendance chose to not provide adequate pain relief in the form of local anaesthetic for the excruciating painful suturing repair procedure. His name (along with the midwives) are noted on my birth certificate as the *witness medical officer*. He certainly was not a witness, but an active participant in her negligent and abusive medical care. There is a cruel irony that my birth certificate did not reveal my father's name but did include the names of the KEMH staff present at my birth.

Growing up I would be envious of my friends who could recount the joyful story of their birth. I could never join these discussions; all I knew was what my imagination had conjured to fill the space of not knowing how I came into the world. My imagined birth story had been a fairy tale Rapunzel scenario. To discover that my birth had not been even 'nice' was devastating and the realisation that it was my baby body that had been partly responsible for my Mothers trauma is a guilt I will never be rid of.

RECOMMENDATION

Lift the statute of limitations for litigation/compensation. "B" testimony of institutional physical and mental abuse is not unusual. Across Australia Mothers have shared their testimonies of negligent medical care, being used a vessel for training medical procedures, and other abuses by medical and midwifery/nursing staff within the hospital setting and while residing within their home of confinement. As a direct consequence many Mothers have suffered lifelong PTSD. Had my Mothers' violation occurred in 2021, criminal charges would have been made and then heard in a court of law. Time should be inconsequential. Justice for the harms inflicted must be brought before the courts and tested.

After my birth my Mother was offered a brief glance at my face by a nurse and I was then quickly removed to the newborn nursery. In reading my KEMH medical notes from July 1972, it appears that after my birth I refused to feed from the bottle and I rapidly lost weight. I was transferred to the special care nursery at KEMH. At no time was my Mother informed of this significant event in my wellbeing or was offered/allowed to breast feed me, which would have been the most effective technique to resolve my weight loss. In fact, "B" believes that she did not experience the breastfeeding *let down* reflex in the hours and days after my birth and suspects that she was given the drug Diethylstilboestrol (DES) to stop her milk flow. This is in stark contrast to [REDACTED] experience with breastfeeding my three younger siblings in the following years where the milk gushed from her so strongly, her babies choked at the breast when feeding. We have been unable to confirm if DES was given to my Mother, as we have been told her microfiche records with KEMH have deteriorated so much that they are illegible. I find this difficult to believe seeing that my neonatal records from the same period have survived intact. I am aware that many other WA Mothers from this period believe that they were given DES, without informed consent. I personally know of another Mother

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who reports that she has been unable to obtain her hospital records (1973) and was told they are too decrepit and unsuitable for digitising. This smells strongly of a cover up.

RECOMMENDATION:

In your inquiry you may have already covered the issue of DES in your investigation. If not, I have attached a document from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists. In Victoria, your state had invested in a DES clinic (The Royal Women's) for those who have been exposed to this carcinogenic medication, frequently given to the Mothers of the FAE. This is an initiative which each state in Australia should also provide in the delivery of health services for survivors of FAE and promoted widely as a free service to facilitate accessibility.

<https://www.thewomens.org.au/patients-visitors/clinics-and-services/gynaecology/des-follow-up>

Birth Certificates

My Mother named me Leeanne Joy Howes. My Mothers address was documented as that of the Ngala – Mothers Home, Jarrah Road in Kensington. “B” has told me that they were encouraged to not name known fathers on the birth certificates of their newborns. I suspect that this was a strategy to support the narrative that adoptees were uniformly born without a known or participating father and as such we were illegitimate, from a broken home and ‘unwanted’. There was no offer made by adoption authorities and those who facilitated WA adoptions to contact our fathers in a mediatory capacity to inform them of our birth. Our paternal parents were not rightfully informed of our existence and those fathers who did know were sidelined from any involvement or decision making about our welfare. They too, like our Mothers were stripped of their rights as a parent. If our Fathers had been informed, I believe that many adoptions would **not** have been finalised, as given the opportunity many of these young men would have stepped up out from the sidelines to claim us as theirs and to support our Mothers. I was utterly devastated to discover my father's name missing

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when I received my first birth certificate in 1991, it was an anticlimax to the otherwise euphoric discovery at reading on paper of the names of who I 'was' and belonged to. After reading of others who have done so, I recently approached the WA Births, Deaths and Marriages office to have my biological fathers name added to my birth certificate. It will require considerable paperwork and evidence via DNA that confirms that I am his kin. Thankfully, my brother Mark, is supportive of my application as I require his involvement to achieve this requirement for the registry. Unfortunately, this would not be the case for many adoptees wishing to have their fathers name added to the empty gap in their original birth certificate.

RECOMMENDATION

Support and advice must be made available for all adoptees to have their Fathers named on their original birth certificates (This was also a recommendation within the 2010 Senate Inquiry). Training must also be provided to registry office staff, to ensure that applicants do not experience stigmatisation or unnecessary hurdles to have their fathers named. The process needs to be simple and timely. This is an important corrective action for adoptees and should be considered as a priority. All adoptive related birth certificates must be free to purchase for Adoptees and Mothers.
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The Mother's 'Home' - Ngala

My Mother returned from KEMH to the Ngala-Mothers Home within a day of my birth, I returned separately a few days later after I had begun to gain sufficient weight. This time "B" did not work at Ngala and could rest in her single room where she spent most of the day and rarely came out beyond the doorway of her bedroom. She did not visit me on my return to the nursery at Ngala as she had assumed that she was not allowed to. She had not been invited to do so and was not actively encouraged by the staff, as a result she assumed that it was not permitted. It wasn't until a

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Ngala staff member at the signing of paperwork in relation to my adoption, asked my Mother if she had seen me since I returned. Discovering that she had not this individual encouraged and escorted “B” to my crib. ■■■ has told me that during this meeting my, dark newborn eyes locked onto hers and that short moment together has haunted her ever since.

My Mother flew back to her nursing position at the Pilbara within a week and she only knew that I had left Ngala, when the invoices she was required to pay for my care from the facility had ceased as no-one from Nagla had called or written to her. Within the following year of my birth my Mother married, moved to Queensland and had her second child, my brother. It may sound slightly unhinged, but I would always be jealous of him, that she chose to keep my brother and not me. These are the typical dilemma’s many adoptees silently experience when they are reunited with their biological family. One of the many internal dialogue’s which you battle against. Your wounded inner child narrates a point of view, that you were not worthy enough to be kept by your own flesh and blood, your Mother. Yet, your rational self totally understands that you ARE good enough to keep, it was an abhorrent social system which denied your rightful place with your Mother and kin. I believe this is rarely reconciled for adoptees; the primal wound is carried for an entire lifetime. The self-esteem is in perpetual conflict.

RECOMMENDATION:

All Mothers must receive their unpaid incomes for working at the homing facilities like that of Ngala and reimbursed for the costs they incurred for their newborns care. It was also expected that the Mothers would knit baby clothing and make other crafts depending on their skills, for sale in the Ngala Opportunity Shop, ‘*Bargain Bazaar*’ – which was a significant earner for the operations of Ngala. Hours of toiling over tiny garments, intended for other people’s babies and not their own is in hindsight a form of enforced labour and another blatant disregard of our Mothers. These hours of ‘employment’ must also be reimbursed.

Adoptees also deserve compensation; for the lifelong losses and psychological harms they have suffered as a direct result of the FAE.

Life with my Adoptive Family

I was collected from Ngala by a hard-working married farming couple “G” and “G”. They had been trying for children since their marriage in 1965 without success. In a time before IVF, adoption was regarded by society as the only way they could create a family. I was told by my adoptive mother at about 3 or 4 years of age that I was adopted. While the research suggests that this can be an ideal age to be told of your adoption status, this knowledge was not a comfort to me. I would wish away my childhood waiting to be old enough (18) to find my Mother and family. I believe in hindsight that it was the cause of my severe separation anxiety until I was in mid primary school. My adoptive mother had little tolerance for my fears, and I was routinely scolded for being naughty and selfish for not thinking of anyone but myself for the trouble I had caused everyone. Emotionality was discouraged in this family, a consequence of my adoptive mother losing her own Mother when she was in her late teens. She had been expected to suppress her grief by her own Father who told his children to never speak of their Mother again. It is not surprising that my adoptive mother was finally diagnosed with severe depression when she was 50. Our nuclear family would live under her cloud of grief my entire childhood. Had psychological testing of prospective adoptive parents been performed at the time of my adoption it is likely that her mental health issues would have been detected and her application denied.

In late 1975, we collected my new sister [REDACTED] from Ngala. It is one of my earliest memories.

[REDACTED] had stayed longer than the usual 2 weeks at Ngala as there was a concern that she had hip dysplasia. For eight weeks she was cared for by a rotating roster of mothercraft nurses and as a

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result I believe she failed to achieve the first psychological milestone of her infancy; attachment to a primary caregiver. Instead, she learnt to self soothe, alone in her cot, not wanting comfort in any form from others. Her unusual neonatal independence troubled [REDACTED], but the local child health nurse, nor Ngala offered any form of counselling, investigations or referral services. It's very likely that had [REDACTED] been seen by a paediatric specialist, strategies could have been implemented in a timely manner with which to prevent her from progressing to living with the permanent difficulty of dismissive-avoidant attachment disorder. My sisters difficulties affected our family's daily interactions and throughout her lifespan she increasingly distanced herself from our adoptive family. With the passing of our adoptive parents, she has continued to disassociate from myself and my children.

My adoptive Mother tried to normalise my adoption and would explain that I was 'special' a chosen child, a gift. She tried to reassure me,

'There's lots of kids out there like you, you just don't know because they don't talk about it'.

I tested [REDACTED] claim at primary school one day. I went around to all my peers at recess and asked them outright if they were adopted. I found not one. This discovery confused me. I knew [REDACTED] wasn't one for lying but I didn't know what to do with the growing cracks in the adoptive stories she told me. My quest to prove her claim that I was surrounded by adopted kids ended prematurely when the school called [REDACTED] and informed her that had been canvassing the adoption status of my classmates. She was furious with me, but I was just confused; again. Much of childhood was experienced in this state.

I would always be curious about my adoption and while I held onto my adoptive Mothers unconvincing narrative throughout my primary school years, it was because I had nothing else to go

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on. There were no adoption books in the library or TV shows about people like me. I did identify with fairy tales of stolen children (Rapunzel) and often considered the possibility that my Mother was from royal blood. The only narrative I had was told to me by [REDACTED]. That, I was truly a fortunate child to have been given away to new parents by a young school aged girl who wasn't married and would not have been able to financially give me the life I had with them. This was an entirely untruthful account told to my adoptive parents by the relevant authorities at Ngala, who then fed this misinformation to me, throughout my lifespan. However, the truth was that My Mother was 21, an adult. She was employed full time as a nurse, lived independently and was paying her own way through life. My Mother was instructed in turn, by KEMH and Ngala that adoption was the only option and that she simply couldn't provide me with the financially secure life I deserved, which a married couple could. However, the actual truth was; I was not an unwanted baby and I did not need saving.

The entire adoption triad was told untruths by the facilitators of the FAE and their blatant lies ensured the sustained success of the policy of family forming. Society was also brain washed into believing that adoption was a 'win-win' and the 'best-solution' situation – whereby infertile married couples could become parents through the perceived illegitimate births of unwed, working class and often rural underaged girls. This belief system continues to remain the default adoption narrative for most of Australian society and as an adoptee I experience the expectation from others that I should be a grateful for my adoption; I had a better life and more opportunities and that speaking of my perspective as an adoptee is a betrayal against my adoptive parents.

This ongoing culture of misinformation plays a significant hindrance to gaining societal acknowledgment and compensation for the FAE and the Stolen Generations too. Sadly, it is also one of many significant reasons why many Mothers and their adult children will actively choose to not

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unite or will have difficult reunions. All three parties of the adoption triad have all been so deeply brainwashed that it can just be easier and less painful to stay in this accepted thinking than to go deeper and break apart the dysfunctional mythology of adoption.

RECOMMENDATION
Long term, free, accessible, non-denomination counselling must be made available for all survivors of the FAE and their immediate family members. Adoptive parents should also be included.
Governments must undertake a significant national advertising program which promotes professional connection services to Mothers and adoptees that are entirely free. Investment in these services must also occur so that they can provide a timely and quality service.

The denial of an uncomfortable history

Despite WA being the first state parliament in Australia to formally apologise for their role in the Forced Adoption Policy, the government has failed to keep a momentum in facilitating further strategies to solidify acknowledgment for survivors. As such, since the formal FAE apologies, the continuing conversation within the public sphere has descended into a silence. I discovered the extent of this during a visit the grounds of the of Ngala in mid-2019. I was in search of a commemorative plaque acknowledging the permanent separation of the Mothers from their newborns, perhaps along a wall or in the garden at the front of the building. Unable to locate an epitaph on the grounds I enquired with a Ngala employee who curtly replied, 'I have no idea what I you are talking about'. She then quickly turned on her heel and disappeared into the foyer door of the building. As an adoptee this was an unsettling interaction, I was invisible to and silenced by this employee. Her rejection of my story was a denial of my very existence and also my Mothers suffering.

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This brief and bizarre conversation motivated me to test my theory that the FAE formal apologies have put the issue 'to bed' in the eyes of those who were responsible. Sadly, it seems my hypothesis is correct, and a collective silence has ensued.

- Within WA there is just one physical commemorative FAE icon located within a Perth public park which was not funded by any of the institutions responsible for the FAE.

<https://www.relationshipswa.org.au/News-Events/Current-News-and-Events/2019/March/Unveiling-of-Forced-Adoption-memorial-sculptures>

- Not a single institution complicit in our states FAE have participated in public admissions of guilt, they have not installed website apologies or built significant physical representation of apologetic accountability upon their grounds or premises.
- For example; Ngala has published a statement of support (see below) but have failed to acknowledge their significant role as a government sanctioned holding place for newborns awaiting adoption and the homing of their Mothers in their purpose-built structures enclosed by behind high barb wire fences.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20170612201905/http://www.ngala.com.au:80/About-Ngala/History/Statement-of-Support-for-Adoption-Apology>

- Some Mothers have received individual written apologies from WA institutions and fewer still have received monetary compensation.
- Premier McGowan's provided a video clip of birthday congratulations for Ngala on their Face Book page – without a single word of acknowledgment for the survivors of the FAE.

<https://www.facebook.com/NgalaRaisingHappiness/videos/198453261800002>.

This was an insulting snub to the thousands of adoptees and Mothers who were incarcerated within the high barbed wire fences of Ngala so that they could not run away from the 'Home'. It was doubly offensive that Premier McGowan had made a supportive speech at the WA apology in 2010. The

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final insult is that Ngala's promo statement is *Ngala; 'Raising Happiness'*; an inappropriate advertising bi-line knowing that so many Mothers and families were denied the right to even exist and to raise their own newborn within happiness.

- Further evidence to support my concern can be found in a recent article (attached above) written by Ngala's Research Director Elaine Bennett (2019) details the organisations history yet fails to mention Ngala's critical role of providing accommodation for hundreds of unwed pregnant women across four decades while they waited for their babies to be born and then adopted (pg. 31 mentions only 'adoptive children').
- Furthermore, today (16/02/2021) in my research I noticed that Ngala's website provides an empty space on its 'History' page.

<http://www.ngala.com.au/About-Ngala/History>

In 2020, I approached my local state member via email expressing my above concerns. Two weeks later I received a phone call from a Perth based senior child protection worker. This person admitted at the beginning of our conversation that she did not know why she had been selected to call me but had surmised that it was due to her current role working in the field of WA adoptions. Her honest revelation caused me to feel I was an inconvenient annoyance; that this conversation was occurring solely because she had been instructed to. This employee spoke in defence of Ngala claiming that Ngala had 'not wanted' to be a part of the state's forced adoption practices but had been obliged to, under financial pressure from the state government. I was then advised by the senior child protection officer of 'current' adoption practices describing them as 'so much better now', a comparative deflection technique which Mothers and adoptees find highly offensive to survivors of the forced adoption era as it diminishes our very personal experiences of trauma.

“What we choose to forget often reveals the limits of justice in our collective imaginations.

What we choose to memorialise reflects what we actually value”.

Eddie S. Glaude Jr.

RECOMMENDATIONS
FAE Institutional websites must provide accurate, detailed histories along with an unequivocal public apology to all survivors.
Commission appropriate outdoor artworks erected on the premises of all grounds where the FAE occurred. A Community arts project, engaging survivors in the design of these structures of apology - in memory for all those who have suffered as a result of this devastating governmental policy.
Educate all community and governmental employees of the FAE and the role their institution played and how to respectfully communicate with survivors.

Health and Wellbeing

The Forced Adoption Era is a deeply unpalatable chapter in the history of Australia. However, it is the Mothers and their now adult (stolen babies) sons and daughters who permanently live with the consequences of the FAE. Our community experiences a greater burden of psychological disability and disease when compared to their non-FAE counterparts. Internationally, adoptive research indicates that survivors experience an encompassing burden on their health and psychological wellbeing as a result of living a lifetime with unresolved loss, grief and trauma. Depression, anxiety disorders and PTSD effectively reduce the life expectancy of FAE survivors. Furthermore, significant evidence suggests that both Mothers and adoptees from the FAE are more likely to engage in self-harm behaviours, suicidal ideation, attempted suicide (requiring admission to hospital) and many

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have taken their own lives. Physically, the FAE community suffer complications caused by long term ill health and report diagnosis of stress related gastrointestinal disorders, cancers, chronic inflammatory, autoimmune and pain disorders. Internationally, research confirms this claim, yet Australia has failed to investigate the psycho-social and physical consequences of those directly affected by the FAE.

RECOMMENDATION
All FAE survivors must be given life-long access to the Australian health care card, which will limit the financial burden of their ongoing mental and physical health care costs. Research projects funded by governments to establish the burden of disease (s) which afflicts Mothers and adoptees.

Many of us will never be reunited with our biological kin. Some will die never knowing they were adopted or refuse to seek out their beloved lost child or Mother for fear of reawakening their trauma and the real risk of another deeply wounding 'rejection'. When the miracle of a bipartisan reunion does occur negotiating such a delicate relationship is challenging and are rarely the happy fairy-tale celebrations, we read in works of fiction and see in film and TV series. Sadly, many reunions are stalled from maturing as both parties grapple with the fact that no amount of trying can replace the lost decades of separation. Many of us will search, including myself to find that we are too late and our lost loved one had died before a meeting was possible. My only 'memory' I have to call upon of my biological father [REDACTED] is in a dream of his smiling moustached face looking down at me, he says, 'I love you, beautiful girl'.

The harms inflicted by the permanent or long-term rupture from biological kin must not be underestimated or replicated by Australian governments and institutions in any form. I am pleased

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to see that Australia has not followed other western nations into commercial International surrogacy and adoption, yet I see the rich, powerful and noisy voices of adoption advocates, often famous adoptive mothers lamenting our overly strict policies and lobbying receptive representatives of government and the public belittling of 'Birth' Mothers.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/nov/16/mother-of-lion-sue-brierley-opens-up-on-life-before-saroo-hollywood-and-nicole-kidman>

However, our nation does have a problematic approach to the incarceration of youth and children of our first nations and this can be viewed as a modern incantation of the FAE.

RECOMMENDATION
If governments were to invest heavily in early parenting initiatives, public housing, poverty reduction strategies and educational outcomes for our Indigenous youth and actually closing the gap with more urgency another generation of stolen children and broken-hearted Mothers will be avoided.

And Finally,.....

Our Mothers must have the satisfaction that their history will never be forgotten, the confidence that they have been not just listened to and but truly heard and they must be afforded unconditional apologies and financial resolution through compensation, which recognises their lifetime of profound loss, grief and trauma. Adoptees require all of this too.

Adoptive Non-Fiction.

Below is an incomplete list of memoirist non-fiction specifically written by those who are Mothers and Adoptees of Australia's FAE, which are all worth reading should have the time!

Publications within this Australian specific genre appears is problematic, potentially a reflection of our society's disbelief and deep discomfort with the FAE. I am really intrigued by this. Interestingly, there the volume of Australian FAE authorship is significantly smaller when compared to published titles of the Indigenous Stolen Generations. I wonder if this is because the FAE has only gained notoriety in the last decade whereas Australians have a much longer and stronger knowledge of the Stolen Generations.

FAE memoir often exists on the outer fringes of mainstream publishing, with very few prominent Australian publishing houses printing works by survivors. This unique genre of life writing is frequently self-published with limited or no editorial support and are distributed online by obscure book sellers, state adoption related support services or through word of mouth within the FAE community. These works are printed as compilations, novellas and booklets written with raw emotion and traumatic recollections. On the rare occasion Australian publishing houses do print the uncomfortable testimonies of the FAE but they publish the works of authors who already have a significant public profile such as a retired politician, international journalist, children's author and international geneticist.

I wonder if this about believability. That those FAE survivors who are established and have credible public profiles are not just a good bet in terms of their publications profitability but are also more believable as the storytellers of their adoption? Is it more palatable to

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endorse the story of an adoptee who has excelled in life, is famous, rich and at the peak of their profession? If this is the case, publishers through their selection of who they publish from the FAE are perpetuating one of the many myths of adoption, that the unwanted newborn would be 'better off with a married couple'.

Whichever your story, writing about one's trauma is incredibly challenging and exhausting, but it is important work; documenting a significant history for society and the therapeutic nature writing can be to be a catalyst for deep healing. It is essential that our stories of the FAE are shared with the Australian public before time catches up with us all, we the survivors are the ones who can recalibrate the malignant myths of adoption which society is so tightly bound to, by sharing the permanent harms we have experienced.

Ten Doors Down – Robert Tickner 2020 (Retired Federal Politician)

Little One – Paul Papathanasiou 2019 (International Geneticist)

Heartlines: The year I met my Mother – Susannah McFarlane (Childrens Author) & Robin Leuba
2016

I knew you'd have brown eyes – Mary Tennant 2016

Adoption Deception: A personal and professional journey- Penny Mackieson 2015 (Adoption
Activist)

Run for your life – Jill Jolliffe 2014 (International Journalist and author)

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Surviving Secrets – Margaret Watson 2010

Shadows in Paradise: A Memoir – Carolann Dowding 2013

Coming Home to Truth – Judith Roseboom 2010 (self-published booklet)

RECOMMEDATION

Each state to fund writing programs for survivors of the FAE; these could be community development projects which link in with counselling and reconnection services.

Annually fund a writing stipend/grant for an adoptee and a Mother to write their life story.
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