

INQUIRY INTO CHILD PROTECTION

Organisation: Australian Adoptee Rights Action Group
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Inquiry into child protection

SUBMISSION by the *Australian Adoptee Rights Action Group*

20 June 2016

This submission is a statement by adult adoptee people who wish the Committee to understand that adoption was never intended to be a child welfare measure was introduced into legislation in the 1920s as a “solution” to “illegitimate” births.

While children need the best protection there has never been evidence that the severing of all ties to one’s original family, disinheritance, falsifying one’s vital records, or making it virtually impossible to discharge one’s own adoption despite never consenting to it, is in their best interests.

birth certificates

- Because when we were born the States and Territories of Australia took away our birth certificates.
- They changed our names and issued us with a second replica birth certificate with this new name on it.
- They also listed as our parents on our new birth certificates, two people who didn’t even know us when we born.
- Our falsified identity was complete and our true identities sealed – even from us.

inheritance

- Every person in Australia is entitled to be provided for from the estates of those people on whom they have been dependant during childhood. Adoption is the ONLY form of permanent care where the State enhances that right for a child and says that they can inherit off their adoptive parents, not just as dependants, but as the actual child of the adoptive parents.
- But in the process of this “enhancement”, every single legal attachment that the child has to their natural parents is severed for the rest of their lives.
- What this means is if we are left destitute by our adoptive families we have no legal recourse to seek help from our natural parents: even if they are multi-millionaires. (When you abandon your child to the adoption system you not only get rid of your child – but every legal obligation toward them, even after your death. Thus adoption has all the conveniences of abortion but without the social or religious censure).
- What this also means is that we have no rights to photos, heirlooms or keepsakes from our natural parents, families, or ancestors, no rights to our family heritage.

- In reunion we sit around the dinner table with our families, marvelling at our synchronicities, our connections, the similarities of our faces, our mannerisms, our personalities, tracing ourselves in our kin but we sit there still as outsiders with no legal recognition of our belonging to our own people, (an inferior, subordinate member of our own clan subject to the whims of our relatives whether we are to be considered part of our own kinship structure).

death of our natural parents

- We will not be listed on our mother's death certificate unless we can convince other relatives to include us. (Of course we can't ask to be included if we can't even find our relatives.) It will be as if we never existed.
- Therefore our children and our children's children cannot trace their family trees and discover their ancestral stories this way.
- We are not even notified of our own mother's death. Can you imagine this?

our consent, our freedom

- The States and Territories of Australia also say that this status of "being adopted" is almost impossible to escape despite the fact that we never consented to the contract which binds us.
- We are forced to find lawyers and run costly court cases to prove there are "special circumstances," such as abuse by our adoptive parents, that mean we should be "allowed" our freedom from our adoptive status.
- And yet we never, ever, consented to be adopted in the first place.
- (There is now "no-fault divorce for people who CHOSE to marry – and yet we, who never chose to be adopted nor chose the people who adopted us, are virtually trapped for life.)

the rebranding of adoption as "open"

- Our records are now open – thanks!
- Some of us have found our kin and have had reunions.
- Some of us found graves instead of our mothers because people told us too late that we were adopted.
- Some of us still don't even know we are adopted because everyone around us, including those closest to us, pretend we are not.
- "Open adoption" means there is now possibly some contact between the child and his or her kin.
- But adoptees are still disinherited under this system, they still get replacement birth certificates that obliterate their identity and their parents, and still have their legal rights to their families severed.
- The "rebranding" of forced adoption as "open adoption" hides the fact that the adoptees still have no rights.
- And of course inter-country adoptees may as well still be "closed records adoptees" considering the amount of information and access they have to their families.

resolution

- We hope that the above has outlined some of the ways in which adoptees are discriminated against in Australian society and around the world.
- And if you feel that perhaps we should not be complaining about these things, then we say to you, we forgive all if we are granted the one thing which we are denied above and beyond all others.
- Worse than all these discriminations and depredations of rights is the blatant and blanket denial we get, by our adoptive families, by the general public, by the media, by professional psychologists and counsellors, and even by our natural families, that premature maternal separation – that is, separation from our mothers after our labour and birth, is NOT a trauma for each and every baby.

denial of our experience, denial of our voices

- We are told we have “no proof.”
- We are told our emotional and issues, any mental health problems, any addictions, any suicidal tendencies: “must be from bad adoptive parents, a bad adoption experience” or “because you were closed records” or from our “genetic predisposition to mental illness” or “stress felt when inside the womb of a mother in distress.” In other words – anything our permanent removal from our mothers at birth when every iota of our baby desire for reassurance, nurturance, well being, survival and love is geared toward that mother.
- We are told “but there are so many happy adoptees! Adoption has good outcomes so you where is the trauma? Only SOME adoptees were “traumatised” babies.”
- Since when has a person’s personal success at life been “proof” that they have not suffered childhood trauma?!
- The ONLY thing that success in an adoptee is indicative of is that their personal strength is exceptional from a lifetime in which they have had to develop coping mechanisms to manage their infant experience.

declaration:

- Adoptee activists from all over the world say: ALL adoptees have suffered a trauma, the trauma of losing our mother at the moment when we most needed her, the moment after birth, our *arrival into this world*, DESPITE the way we may present, despite the totality of a familial and cultural socialisation that seeks to prevent us from making the connection between our personal trauma symptoms and our extremely premature mother loss at the time when her presence and the relationship with her was most vital and necessary to our wellbeing both in that period immediately after birth and in our future.
- Forced adoption occurs when mothers are forced or coerced by people or circumstance, or falsely “counselled” that their baby will have a better life without them (this counsel is almost always false).
- *BUT from the point of view of the adoptee –*

**ALL ADOPTIONS WITHOUT THE CHILD'S CONSENT ARE FORCED
ADOPTIONS.**

- We did not consent. We should have the freedom to exit and reclaim our identities if we so choose.
- Adoption as it still functions today in Australia violates the rights of the child under the Convention of the Rights of the Child to which Australia is a signatory.

ADOPTEE EQUALITY NOW!

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