

# Bits & Pieces



Jigsaw Qld: (07) 3358 6666 or 1800 21 03 13 (Qld only) - [www.jigsawqueensland.com](http://www.jigsawqueensland.com)

## Forced Adoption - online training

*By Trevor Jordan*

At the ten-year anniversary of the national apology for past forced adoptions the federal government affirmed its continuing commitment to support professional services for those affected by past forced adoption. It provided extra funding to create a training package specifically aimed at aged care workers to increase awareness of the impact of forced adoption on those in their care.

Both service providers and community stakeholders had identified the need for such training. The cohort affected by the peak period of adoption in Australia is ageing. Past forced adoption trauma, particularly trauma associated with interaction with professionals in institutional settings, can be triggered in

aged care settings. As in so many other areas, in aged care settings assumptions about family relationships are too often made according to the dominant social narrative that adoption was a win-win situation for everybody involved. Consequently, the unique and well-documented challenges confronting families impacted by adoption are not always understood. This lack of awareness is further compounded by the legacy of secrecy from the closed adoption era.

This online training is for people who provide support for adult Australians. It will help aged care workers understand the history and impacts of forced adoption, so they can better support people affected by forced adoption and family separation.

Providing such training for aged care workers comes with its challenges. Aged care work is done in a variety of settings: home, community and residential care facilities. Aged care is also provided by a range of professionals and workers with varying educational standards and cultural backgrounds. So, the training has to be specific to this area of work but flexible enough to address this diversity.

It was important to not create an overblown training resource where time-poor workers would end up chewing on more than they could bite off. Consequently, not all issues are covered in depth in the eight learning modules, each of which is oriented around a practical video scenario backed up with further written material and links to key



support services and information. One of the key messages in the modules is that specific Forced Adoption Support Services are available in each state and territory in Australia to assist workers and their clients.

In this age of do-it-yourself podcasts, YouTubing and Insta-expertise, it is sometimes forgotten that producing trustworthy and transformative educational material that engages a specific audience with evidence-based knowledge is a creative challenge that requires teamwork and professional expertise.

The team creating the modules consulted with a wide of range service providers and stakeholders in all states to define priorities from the point of view of those impacted by forced adoption and those working in aged care. They also worked with an advisory group of service providers from all states to review materials as they were produced to ensure that the messages in the training materials did not inadvertently relapse to the dominant narrative about adoption and that the training materials were consistent with the evidence that formed the basis of the national apology for past forced adoption practices.

The training begins by identifying what forced adoption means, acknowledging that, like the rest of the community, many aged workers are likely to be in the thrall of the



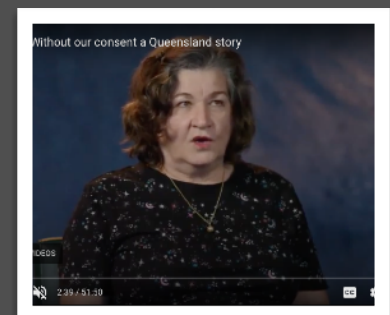
dominant narrative that adoption was a win-win situation for everyone. The training describes how forced adoption experience can produce trauma and may affect the way people access and use aged care services.

Aged care workers are given practical tips about how they can adjust the physical environment or their individual practices to meet the needs of their clients. For example, aged care workers may not even know about their client's experience with past adoption. They also need to recognise that there is a diverse range of forced adoption experiences and trauma coping. Care workers are encouraged to reflect on their use of language about adoption and how this can have negative impacts. They are encouraged to use their best collaborative practices to work with clients impacted by forced adoption in a trauma-informed way by maximising

## WITHOUT OUR CONSENT: A QUEENSLAND STORY

Have you watched the Without Our Consent: A Queensland Story oral history yet? The interviews feature a mother who was forced to give her child up for adoption (Anne), an adoptee (Jo), and a father who was coerced into placing his son for adoption (Alan). It also includes interviews with representatives of post adoption organisations and Queensland politicians.

This video is a must watch for anyone affected by adoptions between 1950 and through the 1980s. You can watch it [here](#).



choice and control for clients and reflecting on consent processes and procedures.

There is further information in the training on reviewing the aged care service providers' previous involvement in forced adoption, reviewing referral networks to help clients access forced adoption-specific services, and how to deal with any potential vicarious trauma.

The practical scenarios in the modules sensitise care workers to how adoption impacts often revolve around certain events, such as Mothers Day, Fathers Day, birthdays, and family seasonal celebrations. Other emotionally charged circumstances specific to aged care that can trigger trauma are discussed, such as being touched, needing assistance, filling in forms, being questioned about one's past, and how conversations about family and children can be met with stony silence or unexpected emotional reactions. Practical tips are given to workers on how to handle these situations in a trauma-informed way.

Following a current trend in online communications, the training videos are animated. This can capture emotional nuances without either the voyeurism or specificity of acting. It can help communicate a message without diverting particulars that might gel for some but alienate others. In this case, I think this has helped to open up a

difficult and emotionally charged topic by making the training material more approachable.

If you work in aged care, community services or any role that supports adult Australians, this course is for you. For further information:

<http://resources.dss.gov.au/forced-adoption/#/>



## Apology Anniversary

Thank you to Post Adoption Support Queensland for hosting the 12th Anniversary of the Queensland Government's Apology for Forced Adoption Policies and Practices on the 27th November at Roma Street Parkland and The Normanby Hotel.

## FORCED ADOPTION SUPPORT SERVICE (FASS) - 1800 21 03 13

Forced Adoption Support Services are funded by the Australian Government in every state and territory. Jigsaw Queensland is proud to deliver these free services for people in Queensland impacted by past adoption practices. Our professional, dedicated team offer:

- **Telephone**, face-to-face (by appt) and online support with adoption related issues.
- **Information** on accessing your adoption records and assistance with searching for and making contact with your relatives, including an intermediary service.
- **Support** in managing post contact with relationships.
- **Referral** to support groups and professionals.
- **Small grants program** to build community capacity.



Forced Adoption  
Support Services





*Attendees gather at Roma St Parklands for a rose laying ceremony and private reflection.*

The Jigsaw Qld team was delighted to honour the beautiful people who fought so hard to bring about the Queensland apology on 27 November 2012.

The event included a rose-laying ceremony at the commemorative plaque in the parklands, followed by formal proceedings at the Normanby Hotel.



*Forced Adoption Apology Memorial Site, at City View Saddle, Roma Street Parklands.*

Acting Director General of the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety, Rob Seiler and Dean of Brisbane's Anglican Church, The Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt spoke at the event and Jigsaw Qld's Heather Hermann shared her story of losing her daughter to forced adoption and her subsequent experiences of

reunion, peer support, volunteering and healing. Kerri Saint's song, *Chasing Rainbows* was also featured at the event.

This annual event is funded by the Queensland Government and is organised by the Queensland Post Adoption Working Committee - The Benevolent Society's Post Adoption Support Queensland (PASQ), Association for Adoptees Inc., ALAS, Origins and Jigsaw Queensland Inc.



*Heather Hermann shares her story at the 12th Anniversary of the Queensland Apology event.*

## AdopTEA events

Jigsaw Queensland staff and peer support workers were delighted to attend the AdopTEA events held at The Colmslie Hotel and the Benevolent Society HQ during Qld Mental Health Week.

Founder of The AdopTEA events, Judy Glover gave a brief history of the initiative at both events and its aim to bring awareness to the wider community about the impact of

adoption on adopted people and removing the stigma of reaching out for support.



*Attendees at the Benevolent Society's AdopTEA event.*

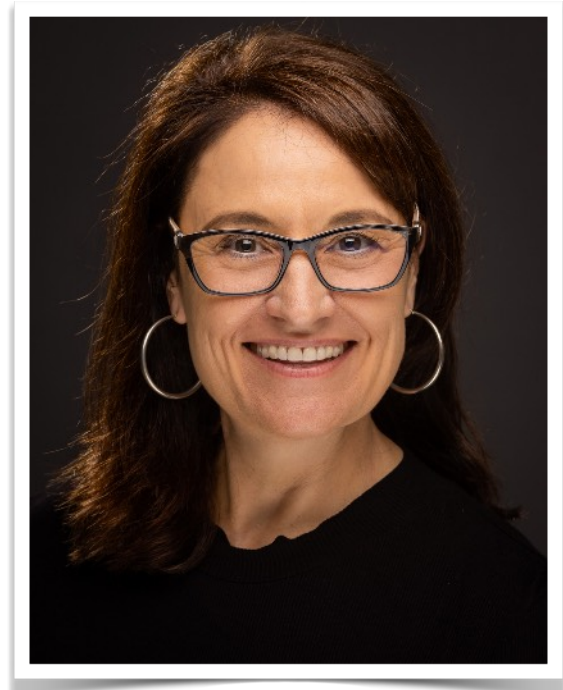
Greg Rostron shared his personal story of mental ill health and suicidality owing to his adoption at the Benevolent Society event and Jigsaw Qld President, Dr Jo-Ann Sparrow spoke about the services available through our Forced Adoption Support Service. For more information visit [The AdopTEA Facebook page](#).



*AdopTEA attendees at The Colmslie Hotel.*

## Message from our CEO

I don't enjoy Christmas because I have no memory of any peace, love or joy growing up in my adoptive family. Not even during the festive season. Yes, there was a handful of sugar cubes left out for the reindeer, and



*Jigsaw Qld CEO, Helen Angela Taylor*

presents under the silver tinsel tree but the day was heavy with expectations of being grateful for everything, not being selfish because there were poor children around the world who would cherish what I had, and being obedient at the dinner table, whether that was at our place or on a Christmas visit to extended family.

Also, because I chose not to marry or have children, I haven't created Christmas rituals that would come with those life stages. I know many adopted people who have created their own Christmas magic which is wonderful for them, but that hasn't been my journey. So Christmas does not feel like a special time for me.





I've learnt from attending our support groups that many people impacted by adoption struggle at Christmas time. If they've reunited with their original family, they can feel torn between expectations of both families and weighed down by the responsibility of managing the different emotions of multiple family members. If they've not found their original family they might feel melancholy at Christmas time, or a bit lost, like a part of them is missing.

This time of year, in many countries, is all about family, children, love, sharing and belonging. But it can also be about grief, loss, loneliness and isolation. I remember moving into a one-bedroom unit in Auchenflower in 1995. Poor planning by me meant that I moved in on Christmas Eve with only a futon



*Learn more about our CEO Helen Angela Taylor in the final episode of S5 2024 of Adopt Perspective Podcast.*

bed, fridge, and sofa. On Christmas morning I turned on the radio and heard a news report that one in four people are alone on Christmas Day. Rather than make me feel sad, I realised there's a whole world of people like me out there, navigating Christmas time the best that they can.

This year at Jigsaw Queensland we will be open on Friday 27, Monday 30 and Tuesday 31 December. So if you want to talk, debrief, vent or share just pick up the phone between 9am and 5pm on those days and one of our team will listen, understand and care.

## DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

Do you have a story to tell? If so, we'd love to hear from you.

Adopt Perspective Podcast explores the adoption experience from the perspectives of mothers, fathers and adopted people. We share personal stories, research and information and also interview creators in this space. You can submit a prospective guest form here: [www.jigsawqueensland.com/adopt-perspective](http://www.jigsawqueensland.com/adopt-perspective).

Adopt Perspective is hosted and produced by Dr Jo-Ann Sparrow, President of Jigsaw Queensland.



Because you are not alone in your experience or feelings. And we do brave things together.

## Newsletter Reminder

This will be the final printed copy of the newsletter. We will continue to publish *Bits & Pieces* four times a year and it will be available on our [website](#), our [Facebook](#) page, our [LinkedIn](#) profile, and via email.

This means the money we spend on colour printing in newsletter format as well as postage can be re-directed towards service delivery for anyone affected by adoption. If you still like to feel the pages between your fingers, it's easy to print yourself at home. If you don't have access to a printer then perhaps a friend or loved one could print it for you.



## Notice of AGM

We are pleased to notify you that our Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held at 11am (AEST) on Saturday, 14 December 2024 in the downstairs meeting room at 505 Bowen Terrace, New Farm.

Current financial members have voting rights to select our Management Committee. Nominations are taken from the floor at the AGM which means you need to attend in person or remotely via Zoom.

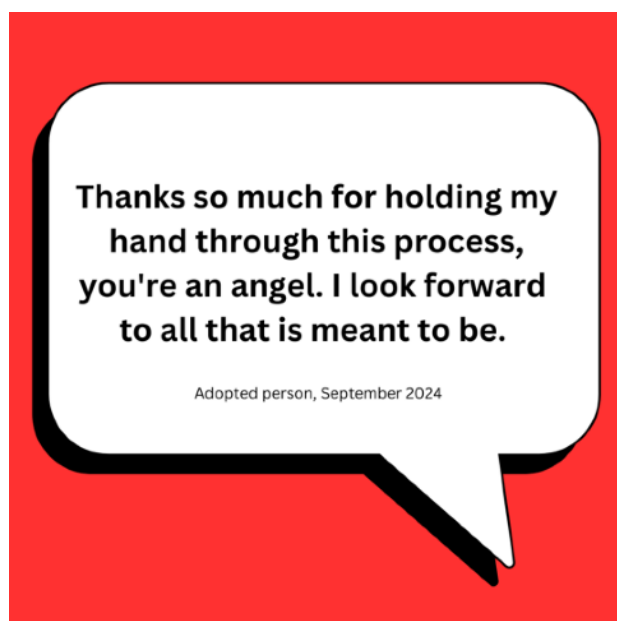
If you do plan on attending the meeting please RSVP by Friday, 6 December so we can make suitable arrangements.

If you're unable to attend but are keen to participate, you can vote by proxy using a proxy form. RSVP and request a voting form



at [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au) or (07) 3358 6666.

The Open Support Group for anyone impacted by adoption follows the AGM from 1.30 - 3.30pm and doubles as our end of year break up, so feel free to stay on and bring a plate to share.



## QCOSS AGM (Cont next page)

Jigsaw Queensland is proud to be a member of the Queensland Council of Social Services [QCOSS](#), Queensland's peak body for the social services sector.

Our President Dr Jo-Ann Sparrow and CEO Helen Angela Taylor attended the QCOSS AGM at Brisbane Powerhouse on 15 November. It was a fantastic celebration of

QCOSS achievements throughout 2024, and recognition of its proud 65-year history of leading social change across Queensland.

We look forward to learning more, building connections and contributing our expertise to drive positive social change for all people impacted by adoption across Queensland.



(Left to right) Jigsaw Qld's President Dr Jo-Ann Sparrow and CEO Helen Angela Taylor attend the QCOSS AGM.



Heartfelt thanks for your part in this very happy outcome. You have bought me closure and for that I am grateful.

Mother, November 2024

## Support Groups

Our peer support groups are a powerful way for people impacted by adoption to learn, grow and heal. Our experienced and compassionate facilitators have lived experience of adoption.

Below are our scheduled meeting dates for 2025. Participation at the groups is free.

**Mothers' Morning Tea** - For mothers who have experienced separation from their children by adoption. A regular morning tea from 10am to 12 noon - 15 Jan, 19 March, 21 May, 16 July, 17 Sept & 19 Nov. Venue: ground floor meeting room at 505 Bowen Tce, New Farm.

**Adoptee Support Group** - For adopted people. (1.30pm - 3.30pm) 11 Jan, 8 March, 10 May, 12 July, 13 Sept & 8 Nov. Venue: ground floor meeting room at 505 Bowen Tce, New Farm.

**Open Support Group** - For anyone affected by adoption. You are welcome to bring along a friend or family member for support. Our final Open Group is to be held on 14 Dec 2024 - 1.30pm to 3.30pm. Bring along a plate to share. Venue: ground floor meeting room at 505 Bowen Tce, New Farm. From 2025 this group will be replaced by the Mixed Group (more info below).

**Mixed Group - New from 2025!** - For adopted people & mothers and fathers separated from their children by adoption. Attendees are welcome to bring along a friend or family member for support. (1.30pm to 3.30pm) - 1 Feb, 5 April, 7 June, 2 Aug, 4 Oct & 6 Dec. NOTE: Mixed Group meetings are held at New Farm Library Meeting Room, 135 Sydney St, New Farm. Venue & facilities are wheelchair accessible.

Please arrive before the scheduled time, as doors are locked once the group begins to ensure the safety and privacy of participants.

To keep up with the latest information or changes, please keep an eye on our website and Facebook page.