

Bits & Pieces

Jigsaw Qld: (07) 3358 6666 - FASS: 1800 21 03 13 - www.jigsawqueensland.com



Welcome to Bits & Pieces Autumn Edition

Bits & Pieces is a quarterly newsletter produced by Jigsaw Qld. In each edition we aim for a mix of stories and information encompassing various perspectives relating to adoption. It also includes stories & information about our Forced Adoption Support Service (FASS). If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please email us at support@jigsawqld.org.au.

The first edition of 2023 sees us commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoptions. An opportunity to reflect and join together in community.

1

WATCH FULL
APOLOGY
P7

2

READ FULL
APOLOGY
P6

3

SAVE THE DATE!
2023 Meeting Dates
P8



Anniversary
Invitation P2.



What is Forced
Adoption P3.



Why hold
commemorative
anniversaries P4.

Your invitation to the 10th Anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoption

A morning tea event to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoptions will be held on Tuesday 21st March, 2023 from 10.30am to 12.30pm at Events on Oxlade Drive, New Farm.

The event is organised by the Forced Adoption Support Service (Jigsaw Qld) in association with ALAS Australia, Association for Adoptees, Origins Queensland and You Gave Me A Voice. Please RSVP by Friday, 17 March by calling 07 3358 6666 or email support@jigsawqld.org.au.



Click image to read full invitation.

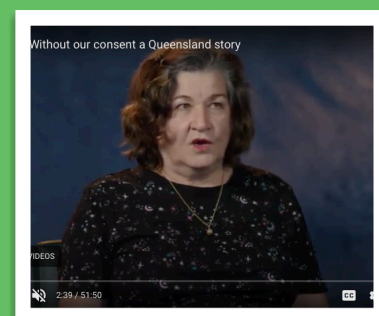
This event is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.



Then Prime Minister, The Honourable, Julia Gillard delivers the apology on 21st March, 2013.

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: <https://www.jigsawqueensland.com/without-our-consent-a-qld-story>



What is Forced Adoption?

by FASS Team Leader, Caroline Slade

This year is the 10th anniversary of the Federal Apology to those affected by forced adoption practices. Although there are some women who are in no doubt that their adoptions were forced and they have endured on-going trauma as a result, there are many mothers and adopted people who would never consider themselves 'forced adoptions'. So, why is this the term that is used to label the period of adoption from 1950 through to the middle of the 1980s and in some cases even later?



It comes down to the choices that mothers who lost babies to adoption had available to them. Despite the obvious biological truth that it takes two people to create a baby, it was overwhelmingly the women who shouldered the burden of pregnancy outside of marriage. They were judged by church and society and were at risk of complete alienation from their family and community. This was despite the fact that there was no easily available female contraceptive. It's an interesting side note that contraceptives for men had been available since the 1890's in Australia.

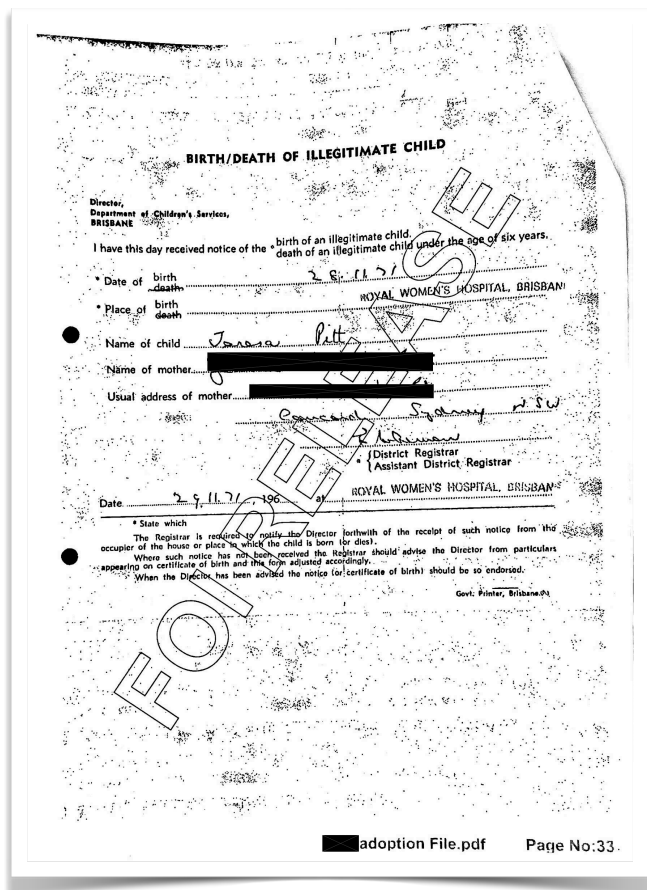
Christian views at the time failed to consider that the complete lack of sex education meant that many women had little understanding of what caused pregnancy or even what sex was.



Children conceived from rape were seen as something the victim should be ashamed of.

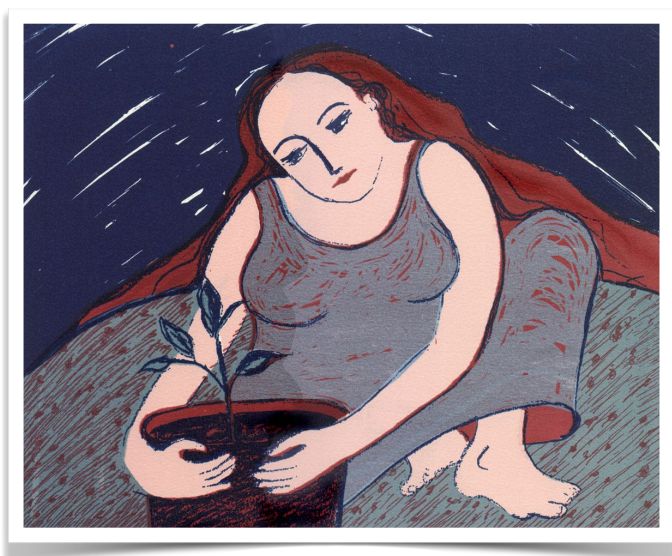
Women who chose to keep their babies would be alone in the world with no skills, no childcare and no financial support. Their families were also at risk of shame and exclusion having failed to bring up their daughters correctly and with solid 'moral values'. The irony is that a single mother without family support, childcare or financial stability had their babies taken from them 'in the best interests of the child'. These





Old Birth / Death of Illegitimate Child order 1971

women had few or no skills with which to obtain employment (even teaching and nursing were denied as occupation for mothers), and so, were only able to obtain menial employment opportunities that were insufficient to support themselves and a child. These issues are still being highlighted today as advocacy around the Gender Pay Gap increases.



The stain of the mother's unmarried status also tainted the child. Society punished the fatherless child and they were denied the opportunities afforded to others. They were isolated, denied inheritance rights and poverty restricted their access to education and employment.

This is the landscape that faced mothers during this time period. They chose what seemed to be the best decision given the options available. Sometimes they chose adoption to allow themselves a different life from their mother, sometimes to save their family or their child from bearing the shame of their mistake.

This choice was forced on them by government policies and Christian moralism. A true choice is one where they could have decided on what was right for themselves and their child without fear of alienation, poverty or the judgement of God. Their ultimate choice might have been the same, however, the reality of this period is that they did not have the opportunity to make an informed decision. It is the same environment that drove women to risk their life seeking back-alley abortions, shotgun weddings, to stay in abusive relationships or to abandon their babies.

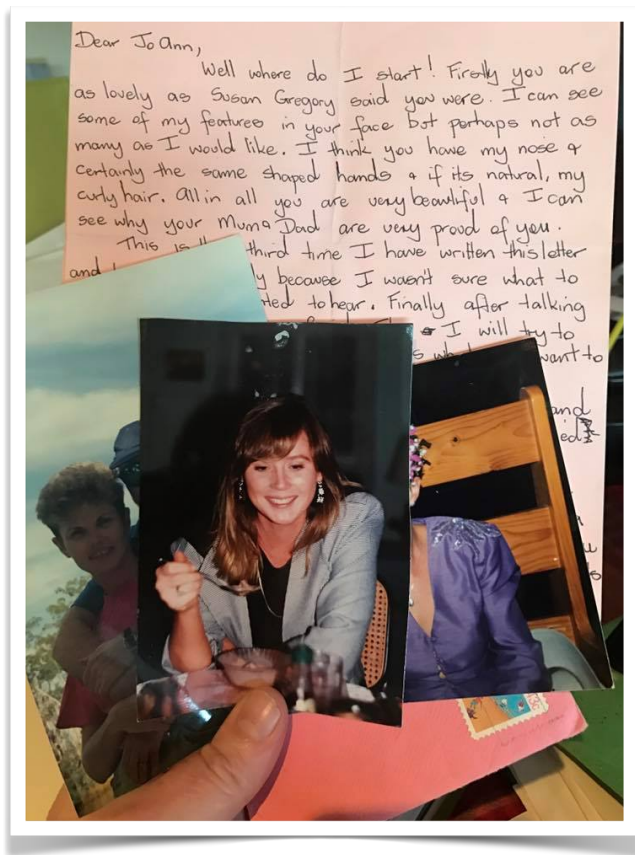


The apology was an attempt to acknowledge that these women and the babies they carried were never really given a choice. The anniversary was a reminder that we should continue to strive towards a world where women's choices are not forced upon them by others and are truly their own.

Why hold commemorative apology anniversary events at all?

Dr Jo-Ann Sparrow - President Jigsaw Qld & Host of Adopt Perspective Podcast

In 2017 I wrote an article that was syndicated across Fairfax newspapers Australia-wide (with a dodgy headline added by a sub-editor) about the value of anniversary events such as the upcoming 10th anniversary.



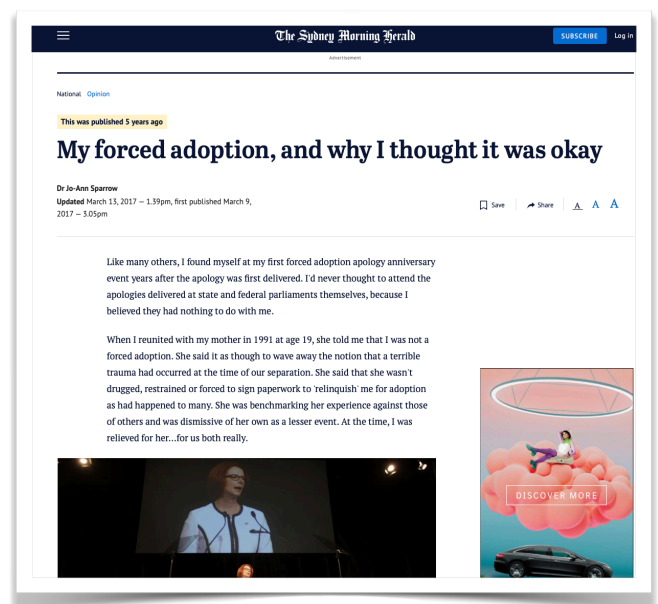
Images taken from our first meeting, our first letter and photos that were included with it.

I'm including an excerpt from it in this edition as, unlike my thoughts and feelings about my adoption in general, my thoughts on this topic have remained unchanged.

My mother came across the article during one of our periods of contact and she told me that it meant a great deal to her to read that I understood what she was up against when faced

with the non-existent choices available to an 18 year old woman who was pregnant outside of marriage, in this era.

Like many reunions, ours has had its share of speed bumps and long periods of non-contact. She recently shared with me that she feels like she must be a bitter disappointment to me, and in the same message assured me that she thinks about me every single day. My reply to her was simply that she had never been a disappointment to me and that I knew she thought of me every day. I knew it because from the time I first understood I was adopted, I have also thought of her daily. If she happens on this newsletter in the future, I hope it reassures her once again that I do understand how complex adoption is from all perspectives and that we both do our best...and that is good enough.



To read the article in The Sydney Morning Herald, click the image above.

Article from Fairfax Newspapers:

Like many others, I found myself at my first forced adoption apology anniversary event years after the apology was first delivered. I'd never thought to attend the apologies delivered at state and federal parliaments themselves,

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?

Do you have a story to tell? If so, we'd love to hear from you. We regularly feature personal stories, poems and articles in our newsletter and on the website, or you can submit a form to be interviewed on the podcast. Email us at support@jigsawqld.org.au or go to www.jigsawqueensland.com/adopt-perspective to fill in the podcast prospective guest form.



because I believed they had nothing to do with me.

When I reunited with my mother in 1991 at age 19, she told me that I was not a forced adoption. She said it as though to wave away the notion that a terrible trauma had occurred at the time of our separation. She said that she wasn't drugged, restrained or forced to sign paperwork to 'relinquish' me for adoption as had happened to many. She was benchmarking her experience against those of others and was dismissive of her own as a lesser event. At the time, I was relieved for her...for us both really.

She worked throughout her pregnancy as a nanny to two children in Brisbane to support herself, as her father refused to help. On the day I was born, we parted ways without ever sighting or touching each other. She was offered no options or alternatives that would allow her to keep and raise me. Because she was not forcibly coerced into signing the adoption paperwork, she believes that my adoption was not forced, but what choice did she have but to place me for adoption? How can it be said that it was not forced?

"Consents obtained from unmarried mothers who were not fully informed of alternatives to adoption, were unaware of the consequences of adoption, or were influenced or manipulated by authority figures including their parents, doctors, social workers and church figures, cannot be said

to be informed consent." National Forced Adoption Exhibition, 2012.



Read the full apology by clicking the image above.

Before I attended my first anniversary event, I didn't understand why a yearly commemoration was necessary. I attended as someone seeking to support and acknowledge the loss of others and when I departed, it was as an adoptee acknowledging my own loss through forced adoption policies and practices and those of my mother, who was cornered into a checkmate

position by society, her parents and the government.

It was moving hearing mothers speak of their experiences and having our losses openly acknowledged. One of the characteristics of forced adoption is that society didn't acknowledge there had been any loss. Honouring it now, through yearly anniversary events is important, not only for the grieving and healing process of mothers, fathers and adoptees - many of whom will come to their first event years after the apology itself, but also for broader Australia. This was a period when voices were silenced, and anniversary events are an opportunity for society to hear and honour them now and for the people affected to know they are not alone and that they are heard.



If reading the newsletter online, you can click the arrow on the image above to watch the full apology from 21 March, 2013.

Adopt Perspective Season 4

Season 4 of Adopt Perspective Podcast will kick off on 21 March, 2023 to time with the 10th Anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoptions.

Our first guest is none other than the Former Prime Minister of Australia, The Honourable Julia Gillard, who delivered the apology in the

Great Hall at Parliament House, Canberra on 21 March, 2013.

In the interview we ask Ms Gillard, who describes delivering the apology as one of the most moving and important moments of her prime ministership, about her personal experience on the day.



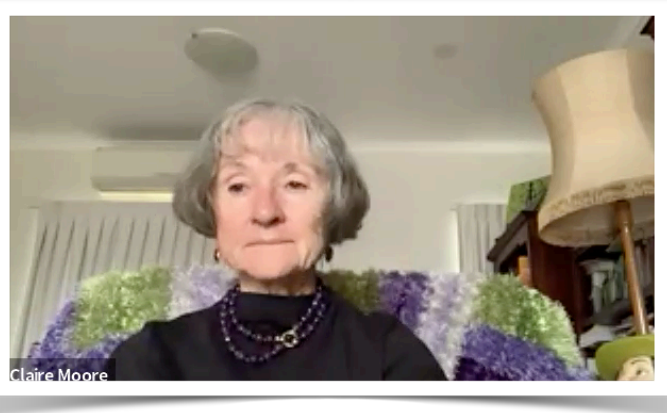
Screenshots from the podcast interview with The Hon. Julia Gillard (above) and (below) Jo Sparrow.



We discuss why Forced Adoption has less community recognition than other prominent issues that occurred during the same period.

Ms Gillard shares her disappointment about a leadership challenge occurring on the same day as the apology and how it overshadowed the event in the media and how she'd tried to ensure that didn't occur the night before the event.

Ms Gillard also reflects on why the apology is important in the history of our nation and what she sees as the key messages as we move forward.



Retired Senator, Claire Moore

Later in the season, we interview retired Senator, Claire Moore who was Deputy Chair of the Senate Inquiry into Forced Adoption Policies and Practices and have a number of personal stories from people affected by forced adoptions, authors, practitioners and more lined up.

Not sure if podcasts are for you? Adopt Perspective isn't a talkshow style format. We discuss the adoption experience from the perspectives of mothers & fathers who have lost children to adoption, adopted people and their loved ones, so we may learn and grow from the perspectives of others. We share personal stories and explore adoption topics including adoption loss, the psychological impacts of adoption, forced adoption, indigenous adoption, inter-country adoption, searching, reunion, healing and many others.

Adopt Perspective interviews adults affected by adoption as well as practitioners, people involved in inquiries, research, legislative change and apologies, artists, film-makers and authors.

The podcast is hosted, produced and edited in-house by Jigsaw's President, Dr Jo-Ann Sparrow.

Adopt Perspective can be listened to on all great podcast apps including, Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, Amazon Music, Deezer and [here](#).

2023 Events

Support groups are adhering to current government recommendations and directives. To get the latest information, please keep an eye on our website and Facebook page. The below dates are our scheduled meeting dates - restrictions allowing.

Adoptee & Open Meetings and Mothers' Morning Teas are held on the ground floor of SANDS House, 505 Bowen Terrace, New Farm.

Participation at the groups is free for members (suggested \$5/head donation for non-members).

Open Support Group - (1.30pm to 3.30pm)
11 Feb, 8 Apr, 10 June, 12 Aug, 14 Oct, 9 Dec.

Adoptee Support Group - (1.30pm - 3.30pm)
14 Jan, 11 Mar, 13 May, 8 July, 9 Sept, 11 Nov.

Mothers' Morning Tea - a regular morning tea from 10am to 12 noon (address above) 18 Jan, 15 Mar, 17 May, 19 July, 20 Sept, 15 Nov.