

# Bits & Pieces

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## 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 Services (FASS). If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please email us at [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au).*

In this edition we discuss the 30 years that have passed since Qld's landmark adoption legislation amendments, simple adoption, a personal story and more.

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**SUPPORT GROUP  
UPDATE**

Check web &  
Facebook for updates.

**2**

**ADOPT PERSPECTIVE  
2021**

Prepare for a  
meaningful year P3

**3**

**DO YOU HAVE A  
STORY TO TELL?**

We want to hear from  
you! P6



ADOPTION OF CHILDREN  
ACT 1964

Reprinted as in force on 1 April 2001  
Includes amendments made to the Act by No. 74

Reginald No. 43

30 Year  
Anniversary P2



Simple Adoption  
P3.



A Beautiful Name  
- personal story  
P5.

## How legislation amendments changed our adoption stories 30 years ago

The lives of thousands of people who were affected by adoptions that occurred in Queensland, changed forever thirty years ago, this year. On 1 June, 1991, Queensland Parliament voted to amend the State's adoption legislation, allowing many parents and adopted people to access their identifying information for the first time.

Where were you when you heard the news? Were you involved in advocating for the change? How did these amendments change your life? Do you have photos, letters or a story to tell about this momentous event for anyone affected by adoption?

To commemorate this milestone we are collecting stories, photos and de-identified documents / or letters with the aim of showcasing a selection in June. If you would like to share your experience through any of the above, please contact us on [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au) or (07) 3358 6666.

## Podcast propels us into a meaningful year

Adopt Perspective podcast hit the ground running in January with psychotherapist, adoptee and author Pam Cordano speaking with Jo about the foundations for a meaningful life.

In February, singer song writers Cath and Jay Turner spoke to Jane about the process of writing and performing the song, *Lost and Found* for the 2020 Federal Forced Adoption Apology and Michael Costello spoke to Jo about discharging his adoption.

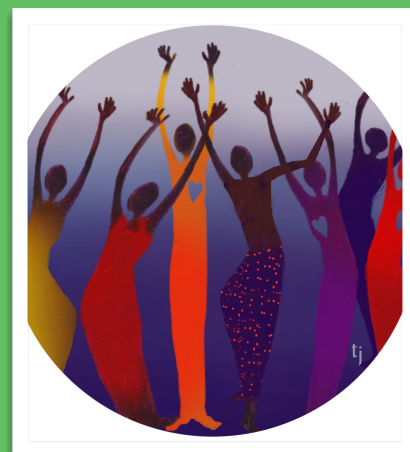


There was an immediate rush on the Qld Govt Department as they struggled to meet the demand of enquiries and applications and deliver on promised access.

## COVID SUPPORT GROUP UPDATE

Jigsaw Qld are following all Queensland Health restrictions and directives with regards to our support groups and face-to-face services. To get the latest information, keep an eye on our website and Facebook page.

We have successfully run some support groups as a Zoom sessions and will keep you posted about further online sessions in 2021. For further information email [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au) or phone (07) 3358 6666.





Pam Cordano helps us build a meaningful life

March, April and May's episodes promise to deliver more great content including Jane speaking to Professor Daryl Higgins about the Australian Institute of Family Studies study into adoption. Jo will be interviewing mother and daughter, Susannah McFarlane and Robin Leuba about their book, *Heartlines - The Year I Met My Other Mother* that details their reunion experience from both of their perspectives. Jo will also speak with adoptee, Kevin Barhydt about his struggles with addiction and the experience of finding and meeting his mother in



Cath Mundy & Jay Turner

USA and writing his story. These are just a few of the coming episodes for the first half of 2021.

The podcast features a mix of personal stories and informational episodes and is available to listen to on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts and Deezer or can be listened to at [www.jigsawqueensland.com/adopt-perspective](http://www.jigsawqueensland.com/adopt-perspective).

## What is Simple Adoption?

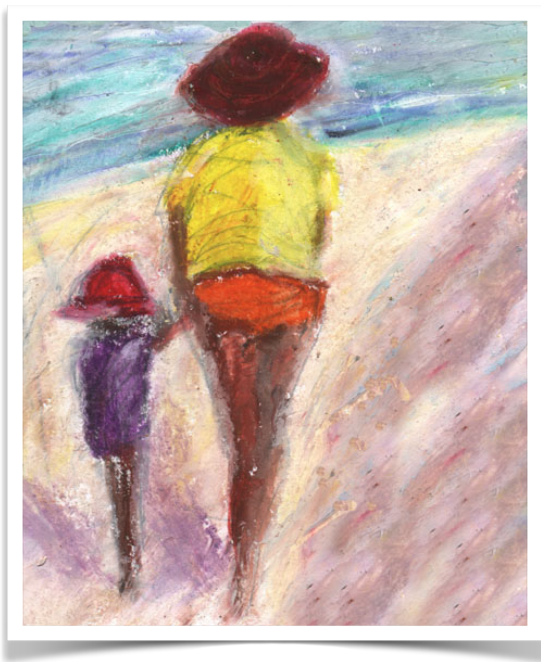
by Dr Trevor Jordan

Lately, you may be hearing the term 'simple adoption' being mentioned as an alternative arrangement to ensure that the mistakes of the past forced adoption era are not repeated. The kind of adoption we have had, and continue to have, here in Australia is sometimes referred to as plenary adoption. 'Plenary', according to my dictionary, means 'full, complete, entire, absolute or unqualified'. As such, the term describes current adoption practice in Australia, which still permanently severs the legal relationship between a child and their biological family. The adopted child becomes a child of the adopter(s), who for evermore become the legal parents of that son or daughter. Simple adoption, on the other hand, transfers parental responsibilities from the child's original parents to their adoptive parents without permanently severing the child's legal relationship with their biological parents.

Some folks find this an attractive arrangement for several reasons. If a court decides that it is in a child's best interests to be removed from their original family and placed in the care of another family until they turn 18 years of age, simple adoption is a more truthful acknowledgement of the continuing biological relationship than the legal fiction of a plenary adoption.

Simple adoption can also offer social, legal and psychological permanency for a child while lessening identity confusion. Simple adoption

clarifies who has parental rights and responsibilities until a child turns 18 years of age, creating a new family for a child by addition, rather than subtraction. Simple adoption does not create a legal arrangement that denies the existence of a child's original parents, grandparents and siblings. Also, simple adoption is clearly a more suitable form of adoption for older children in need of a permanent family as they have already formed significant connection with their biological relatives.



Depending on the laws of inheritance in place in any particular jurisdiction, one of the upshots of simple adoption is that an adopted person, under certain circumstances, may be able to inherit from both families.

That being said, simple adoption can be a reassuring expression of a commitment to a relationship that can, if all goes well, last a lifetime rather than coming to an abrupt end when an adoptee turns 18 years of age, which is the case in a permanent guardianship arrangement. Simple adoption cannot guarantee positive relationships and personal happiness. This always lies beyond the scope of legislation. All permanency arrangements, whether family restoration, fostering, permanent guardianship

or simple adoption, require well-funded support services to respond to each individual's needs.

Arguably, simple adoption could increase practical and emotional burdens for adoptees. An adoptee's responsibilities to all their parents, should they accept them, would be doubled while parental rights and responsibilities would not. It could also be argued that that is already an everyday reality for many adopted persons.

One question often asked is 'How does simple adoption, in practice, differ from a permanent care order or guardianship until 18 years of age?'. Clearly, in practice, simple adoption and permanent care are converging practices. Should policy makers choose one or the other?

Individuals will have preferences based on their own positive or negative experiences of adoption, fostering or guardianship. For some, anything that has the word 'adoption' is a relic of past bad practices and should be completely abandoned. Others who have lacked secure commitments in their fostering and guardianship experiences will be looking for the emotional security that simple adoption might bring. From my experience, others will simply be wanting a range of options that they, as an adult, can choose for themselves to suit their needs and interests.



Of course, any permanency arrangement cannot in and of itself address the trauma of family separation which, sadly, will continue to occur. Nevertheless, many have come to believe (both experts and those affected) that plenary adoption brings added layers of loss that can best be avoided through the openness and honesty of simple adoption and other alternative permanent care arrangements.

A survey recently conducted by the University of Western Sydney indicated that the concept is viewed favourably by stakeholders and professionals. Simple open adoption, then, may be a policy and practice bridge helping us as a community to move cooperatively into the future. Any movement forward not based on the cooperation of all concerned stakeholders can be quickly undone by policy reversals. In my view, in the past, inadequate policy and practice have resulted from the ruthless application of a single good idea. Having a range of alternative options to choose from encourages choice and diversity and can lead to healthier future outcomes.

Of course, there are many questions we would still need to ask about simple adoption. For example, if simple adoption became a policy and practice would it be applied retrospectively or only for new arrangements? Would adult adoption make sense in the context of simple adoption? What do you think?

## **A Beautiful Name (Anonymous)**

I leaned against the brown brown brick fence waiting for Mum to pick me up for dance class. Sister Rosemary stood next to me. I ran my fingers along the smooth brick, imagining it was the wall of the castle where the Princess tried to sleep on a teetering tower of mattresses. I wanted to ask Sister Rosemary if she'd read *The Princess and the Pea*, but she didn't look like she wanted to chat. Her hands were clasped in front

of her thighs. Her brown lace-up shoes were much shinier than mine and I wondered if she polished them or the angels did that for her.

Mum pulled up in our white Holden and parked at the kerb. 'Hello Sister', she said, walking towards us. 'Is something wrong?'

Sister Rosemary looked at me then at Mum. 'I need to bring something to your attention,' she said. 'Your daughter has decided to change her name.'



Mum put her hands on her broad hips and frowned. 'What's this all about, young lady?' She said, leaning in close to my face.

'I don't like my name,' I said, crossing my arms.

Sister Rosemary bent down and smiled at me. 'But you have such a beautiful name,' she said.

'That's what grown-ups think, Sister, but I don't like it.'

Mum pushed me toward the car. 'I'm so sorry about this, Sister,' she said. 'Rest assured, we'll sort this out. It won't happen again.' Mum opened the rear passenger door for me to get in then went round to the driver's seat. 'Enough of this nonsense,' she said, turning on the engine and checking for oncoming traffic.

## 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](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au) or go to [www.jigsawqueensland.com/adopt-perspective](http://www.jigsawqueensland.com/adopt-perspective) to fill in the podcast prospective guest form.



'It's not nonsense!' I said. 'I don't like my name! Why can't I change it?'

'Because your father and I chose it,' she said.

'Well, you should have picked a name I like!' I looked out the car window and decided I hated everyone standing at the pedestrian crossing and I hated the man in the car next to us with the bald head and bushy beard. When he picked his nose, I hated him even more.

Mum stared at me in the rear vision mirror. 'If you don't like your name, when you turn eighteen, you can change it.' She accelerated through an amber traffic light and drove across the bridge.

'I will!' I said, hating her too.

We travelled in sullen silence to the community hall where I spent most of my youth, learning ballet, jazz and tap from age three to fifteen. Mum had studied ballet for a long time and insisted that I do as well, but I didn't have the feather-light physique or flexibility required for an elegant arabesque. But I loved tap classes, spinning like a Whirling Dervish from the back corner of the hall all the way to the front, coming to a dramatic stop inches from the upright piano. I wanted to tap all day and all night, spinning and turning out of the hall, through the car park, onto the road and far

away to a foreign place where I fell in love with the local goat herder's son.

Mum attended every dance class, her straight spine pressed against the wooden chairs, knitting needles aloft in front of her ample bosom. She began her annual knitting campaign each Autumn, choosing earthy colours of rust, brown and beige for Dad, varieties of blue for my brother, and bright red or orange for me. When the class ended, I slipped my latest hand-knitted jumper over my leotard, grabbing my bag, and followed Mum to the car.

'You weren't listening,' she said, putting on her seat belt.

'I was,' I said.

'Then why did you hold the barre so tight?' She lifted her left hand from the steering wheel to demonstrate the correct position. 'Your fingers need to rest lightly on top of the barre, not grip it for dear life.'

I pulled my bag close to my chest and looked out the window.

'And you need to press your heels down hard in your demi plie,' she said, 'as if you're pressing them right through the floorboards.' Mum looked at me in the rear vision mirror. 'Are you listening to me? I'm trying to help.'

I nodded, wondering if other mothers helped their daughters as much as Mum helped me.

Not long after this, Mum helped herself into the top drawer of my dresser and read my diary. When I caught her red-handed, she claimed it was my fault. 'How else am I ever going to understand you?' She said, before storming out of my room.



Turns out she wasn't my mother after all.

My mother was Russian, born in Stavropol in the Northern Caucasus region, seven years after the Revolution. Her father had attended the Tbilisi Spiritual Seminary at the same time as Joseph Stalin but was shot during the Great Purge for refusing to join the Communist Party. Her mother was last seen in Moscow in 1939 and is believed to have died in a Siberian gulag. In 1941 Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa, a brutal campaign lasting four years and killing 28 million Russians. My mother fled to a refugee camp in Italy where she gave a false name and place of birth for fear of being found by the communists. She then traveled by ship to Australia to build a new life.

My father was Yugoslavian, a proud descendant of Spartacus. He was born in Prizren, Kosovo, one of the oldest settlements in the western Balkans. When he was 17 Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy invaded his homeland. Ten years

later he fled to Naples where he boarded HMHS Oxfordshire, the first ship that brought European refugees of war to Australia. The passenger list of 'displaced persons' shows him as a single male, occupation farmer. By the time I was born, 16 years later, he had achieved a Master of Arts from Sydney University and worked as a high school Maths teacher. He was a foundational member of the NSW Ethnic Communities Council, an advocate for the introduction of Slavic Studies at Sydney universities and a prolific writer of editorial pieces for *Nova Doba*, the Croatia newspaper. My father even formed a political party and ran for the Senate.

Discovering that I did not belong to the family that raised me explained everything.

Why 'The Ugly Duckling' was my favourite fairytale, one I read over and over, soaking up the euphoria when the duckling sees a swan for the first time. Why I tried to befriend the girls in the 'wog' group at high school, wanting them to feel accepted, but also wanting them to accept me. The Anglo-Saxon girls said I was lucky to be adopted because they hated their Mums. One told me I was illegitimate as she pushed in front of me in the tuck shop line. The dictionary said that meant 'unlawful' which didn't make sense because I hadn't done anything wrong.

My Slavic identity explained my choice of high school subjects - Latin, Ancient History, Modern History - and my passion for politics and keen sense of social justice. I got a higher score for Latin than English in my final year at school. I chose Political Science as my Arts major at university simply out of interest. And a counsellor once told me that I have a powerful shit detector.

It explains why I fell madly in love with Mikhail Baryshnikov when I first saw him dance in *Le Bayadere*, then in the films *The Turning Point* and *White Knights*, and many years later, acting

as Carrie's love interest in *Sex and the City*. It explains why my first crush was on an Italian tennis player at summer camp, my first boyfriend was a Lebanese tool maker, and my first true love was a French chef. Come to think of it, he bore a striking resemblance to Baryshnikov! It explains why elderly European men speak to me in their native tongue, assuming I share their heritage, or at least know enough of their language to have a conversation.

And it explains why I desperately wanted to be called Tatiana or Anastasia or Ekaterina because I really don't like my name.

## How to switch Presidents...without an impeachment



Jo Sparrow & Trevor Jordan

After more than two decades serving as President of Jigsaw Queensland, Dr Trevor Jordan is retiring from the role, with the Management Committee electing Dr Jo-Ann Sparrow in December last year to lead the organisation into the future.

While he is stepping down as President, the organisation will retain Trevor's experience and expertise as CEO of Jigsaw Queensland. Read more at <https://www.jigsawqueensland.com/change-of-guard>

## 2021 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.**

**During the pandemic please register by calling (07) 3358 6666 or email [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au) if you wish to attend a support group as there are number limitations and we may need to cancel groups at late notice owing to restrictions or illness. Meetings are held on the ground floor of SANDS House, 505 Bowen Terrace, New Farm from 1.30 - 3.30pm.**

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

**Open Support Group** - 10 April, 12 June, 14 Aug, 9 Oct, 11 Dec.

**Adoptee Support Group** - 13 March, 8 May, 10 July, 11 Sept, 13 Nov.

**Mothers' Morning Tea** - 17 March, 19 May, 21 July, 15 Sept, 17 Nov.



# 8th Anniversary

## Australian Government National Apology for Forced Adoptions



**Date:** Sunday 21st March 2021 10.30 am-12.00 pm

**Location:** Events on Oxlade, 50 Oxlade Dr, New Farm, Brisbane (map on p2)

**Bookings essential by Friday 5th March**

**To book email:** [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au)

**Or phone:** 1800 21 03 13 (from Qld) or 07 3358 6666

You are invited to a commemorative morning tea to honour the 8th Anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoptions. The guest speaker will be Professor Karen Healy, Head of Discipline, Social Work and Counselling, University of Qld. The event will also feature a performance of “Lost and Found (Hoping)”, a song created in 2020 as result of a collaboration between people affected by forced adoption and singer- songwriters Cath Mundy and Jay Turner.

An film of the event highlights will be available online after the anniversary day.

This event is organised by the Forced Adoption Support Service (Jigsaw Qld) in association with You Gave Me a Voice, Origins Qld, ALAS Australia, and Association for Adoptees.



Association for Adoptees Inc.  
Through sharing we heal



Jigsaw  
Queensland

*This event is funded by the Australia Government Department of Social Services*



Forced Adoption Support Services