

# BITS & PIECES

JIGSAW QLD INC | NEWSLETTER | 2019 SPRING EDITION

## 2019 Events

Father's Day can be a complicated time for people affected by adoption. Losses are often on our mind and negotiating catch ups can be challenging. Don't forget that you can call us to discuss these issues.

## Upcoming Groups

Jigsaw's support groups have experienced an increase in numbers since late 2015. 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).

**Adopted Person Support Group** - (2019 Dates) 14 Sept & 9 Nov.

**Mother's Morning Tea** - (2019 Dates) 10am to 12pm on 18 Sept and 20 Nov. (An informal gathering for mothers who have experienced separation from their children by adoption).

**Open Support Group** - (2019 Dates) 12 Oct, 14 Dec.

**Sunshine Coast Adoptee Group** - (2019 Dates) 19 Oct & 21 Dec at Maroochy Neighbourhood Centre, 2 Fifth Ave, Cotton Tree.

## Jigsaw Queensland Inc.

Understanding, Support & Information for all those with adoption in their lives.



## ST MARY'S MEMORIAL

**"You may hear something or see something on the TV and it takes you right back."**

On 19 June, the Anglican Church Southern Queensland and Anglican Southern Queensland opened a Remembrance Garden in acknowledgement of past forced adoption practices. The garden was established at St Mary's Home, Toowong, which closed in 1974. The Anglican Diocese of Brisbane acknowledged and apologised for the pain and suffering of forced adoptions and the treatment of unwed mothers in the home and unveiled a plaque in the garden for all to read. If you were a resident of St Mary's Home in Toowong and lost your baby to adoption, a small leaf-shaped plaque can be organized to be placed on the larger memorial to commemorate you and your child. If you would like to find out more, please contact Jigsaw Queensland on 07 3358 6666.

Adoption issues are lifelong and support is available. Call our Forced Adoption Support Service on toll free 1800 21 03 13 (QLD only) or email [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au) or (07) 3358 6666.



## "Hey" by Robyn Slade

Jigsaw recently became aware of the song 'Hey' sung by Robyn Slade. Robyn is a Canadian singer-songwriter and the lyrics were written by her friend Rob Hickman.

They describe the experience of an individual meeting their biological father for the first time.

The song beautifully and powerfully conveys the significance and importance of this occasion and the meaning that can be conveyed through a simple word like 'hey'.

You can find this song on apps such as 'Spotify' and on youtube.

### Hey

*I took my time gettin' off that plane  
Thought to myself, "Is this a good  
idea or just insane?"  
All this way for a man I've never  
met  
His name ain't even on my birth  
certificate  
He's nervous too, I bet  
So much inside me I would like to  
say  
But I'll just say, "Hey"*

*Standin' in this baggage zone  
I couldn't feel any more alone  
Is this the way she felt?  
The last eighteen years  
Thinkin' I chose not to be around  
I had no idea until she found me  
And now she's standing here  
I didn't want to let the words get in  
the way  
So I just said, "Hey"*

*Hey, I'm glad to finally meet you  
Share my story, what I've been  
through  
To find the part of me that I never  
knew  
Time and distance seem so small  
now  
Kinda takes my breath away  
How much of me I see when I look  
at you  
A new chapter in my life began  
today  
When you said, "Hey"*

*I know that this must be so hard for  
you  
I think it's so brave that you asked  
me to  
I wasn't sure of the right thing to  
do  
'Til I heard that little word then I  
knew  
Hey, I'm glad to finally meet you  
Share my story what I've been*

*through*

*To find the part of me that I never  
knew*

*Time and distance seem so small  
now*

*Kinda takes my breath away*

*How much of me I see when I look  
at you*

*A new chapter in my life began  
today*

*When you said, "Hey"*

*A new world opened up for me  
today*

*When you said, "Hey"*

## Decades on, Support Groups continue to hit the mark

**We recently received the following feedback from Helen, who attended her first Jigsaw Adoptee Support Group meeting. Helen wanted to share how life-changing the experience had been for her.**

"Never before have I sat with a group of people who knew what it feels like to be adopted. I realise that all the things about myself I have criticized for so long are consequences of the trauma of adoption not faults in me as a person".

**Helen also shared with us a written piece that was originally published in the Hunter Writers Centre Grieve Anthology Volume 6.**

### "I wish I knew" by Helen Angela Taylor

Your patient file stated that my

birth was routine. I disagree.  
When I was born you gave me  
away to complete strangers.  
Government calls it adoption.  
Psychologists call it abandonment.  
I don't have a name for it even  
though it's the canvas upon which  
my whole life has been painted.

People said you gave me away so I  
could have a better life. Better  
than what? I wish I knew.

When I was thirteen Mum told me  
she wasn't my Mum. Well, not my  
'real' Mum. I said, what does that  
mean? She said, it means you're  
special. But I felt different. Other.  
Odd.



For eighteen years I wondered  
about you. What you looked like.  
Where you lived. Why you didn't  
want me. Whether you wondered  
about me, too. I searched for you  
in the crowd at the local shops,  
and on the train platform on the  
way to school.

When I was thirty-one we met for  
the first time in a seedy hotel on  
the city fringe. I brought flowers,  
and a heart begging for  
belonging. You brought a pile of  
loose photos from your past.

Some black and white, some  
colour. Faces of people I'd never  
met. We parted without touching.  
Not even a hug. I phoned the next  
day to thank you. You didn't return  
my call. I don't know why. I wish I  
knew.

When I was forty we met again in a  
noisy nursing home in the western  
suburbs. You shared a tiny room  
with a skeletal woman who kept  
crying out for cigarettes. You  
looked different. Mellow. You  
wanted to know all about me,  
you had many questions. But it  
was hard to talk in that cramped  
room with the crazy lady in the  
next bed.

You said sorry. You cried. You  
sobbed. I held your hand. I held  
back my tears. Until you said I was  
beautiful.

When I was forty-four you died.  
The brother I've never met buried  
you next to the sister I've never  
met. He tried to find me so I could  
attend your funeral. Even posted  
an ad in the paper seeking me out.  
I didn't see the ad. I don't know  
why. I wish I knew.

"I wish I knew you".

## JIGSAW LIBRARY

**Did you know that Jigsaw Queensland stocks a library full of non-fiction and fiction books about adoption from every point of view?**

**The books cover personal stories, search, reunion, adoption trauma and many other aspects. These books are free to borrow for Jigsaw Members.**

**Following are reviews from the Jigsaw Qld shelves.**

### *The Judith Lucy Family Alphabet* written by Judith Lucy and reviewed by Jane Sliwka



Judith Lucy is one of Australia's best known comedians and an adopted person, who only found out that she was adopted at the age of 25.

This occurred on Christmas Day amidst a family row. Judith recalls that she jokingly said to her sister-in-law 'I bet you're glad that you married into this family' and her sister-in-law replied 'there's something else that you don't know about... It's got to do with you...'

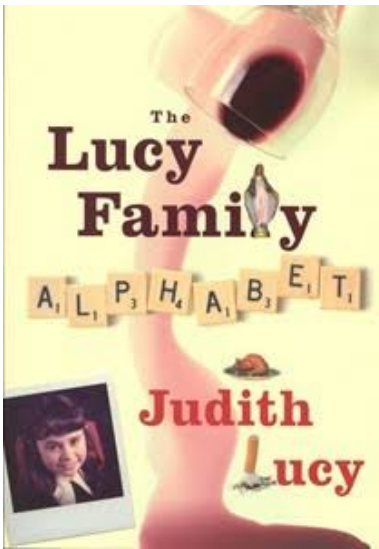
It had never occurred to Judith before this that she may have been adopted and she recalls feeling 'stupid' when finding out that everybody else knew except for her.

Judith grew up with a brother Niall who was the biological son of her adoptive parents. They then decided to adopt a girl.

Judith has talked about her experience of late-discovery adoption in her live comedy

shows over the years, and on television.

I decided to read her best-selling 2009 memoir 'The Lucy Family Alphabet' to learn more about her personal experience of adoption and how she has coped with this.



Aside from adoption, the book details the very complex nature of her adoptive parents and her relationship with them.

The book offers an open and honest account of the many ways that Judith has tried to cope with her childhood and adoption experiences over the years.

From alcohol, to humour that has ultimately led her to become the successful comedian that she is today.

It is easy to see how even the writing of this book itself was an important aspect of Judith Lucy's healing process.

It is an extremely sad yet extremely funny book that I would recommend to all.

## BOOK REVIEW of Adoption and Loss: The Hidden Grief written by Evelyn Robinson and reviewed by Trevor Jordan

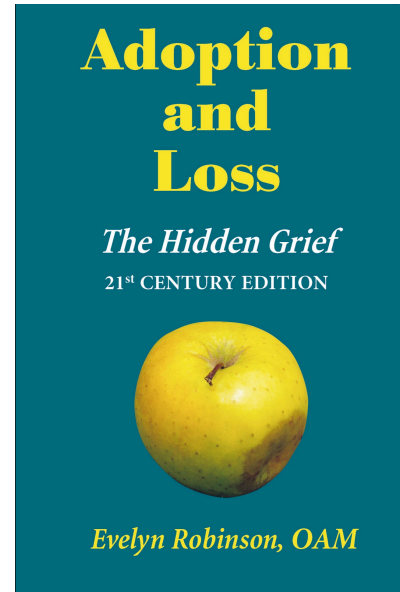
It is hard to overestimate the influence of Evelyn Robinson's *Adoption & Loss: The hidden grief*. When the first edition appeared in 2000 there were already many adoption memoirs written by original mothers and adoptees and a handful of books by adoption professionals on the lifelong impacts of impacts of adoption. Evelyn's contribution was significantly different. Here was a book that recounted a mothers's personal experience combined with her well-researched reflection on the hidden nature of grief and loss that accompanies adoption.

The new '21st century edition' not only maintains that focus, updating the relevant research on grief and loss, it is also a heartening celebration of what has been achieved in adoption reform in Australia since the first edition was published: the right to access adoption information, apologies for past forced adoption policies and practices and commitment to explore alternatives to adoption in policy and practice.

Evelyn explores the grief experienced by original mothers and adopted people and how the emotional reaction to adoption loss is different from that, for example, accompanying the death of a loved one. The latter is socially

acknowledged and surrounded by appropriate rituals, while adoption loss is rarely acknowledged and the grief remains hidden.

Evelyn also bring her skills as a social worker to bear in offering well-considered suggestions on how to take the first steps on the path to recovery.



The first step is to break the silence, preferably in the safety of a support group, where people share a common experience.

Breaking the silence can provide some relief from the tremendous mental and emotional strain of hiding one's grief.

As Evelyn writes, 'That truth is that adoption is a permanent condition' and a parent who lost their child to adoption or an adopted person 'can expect to be reminded frequently, in her conversations and relationships with others.'

The past can be understood, but it cannot be undone.

A support group can also become a base from which to educate the general public and politicians, creating opportunities to publicly acknowledge adoption loss. For example, obtaining an original birth certificate can also be part of creating a ritual. 'The original mother should be entitled to have this document because it represents her experience of giving birth. It verifies what society has denied: that the adopted child is indeed her child.'

For the adopted person, 'having an original birth certificate confirms for them that they did exist prior to the adoption and gives a sense of reality to that existence.'

Having an original birth certificate 'can be the first step in understanding who they are and in uniting the two aspects of their identity.'

This new edition also contains some helpful words from Evelyn's son, Ferg. An excerpt is below.

#### **Excerpt from The Hidden Grief.**

*The journey itself is the win, the outcome is forever changing and growing, thankfully in the right direction for us all.*

*For those adopted people who haven't searched yet: DO IT NOW.*

*For those who've searched and it brings you difficulties: WORK ON THEM AND GET COUNSELLING.*

*For those who've searched and it brings you the same joy it has brought me: WELL DONE, NOW HELP OTHERS LESS FORTUNATE*

**THAN YOURSELF REACH THEIR GOALS.**

*For those working in post-adoption services and counselling: A HUGE THANK YOU.*

*For those mothers (and fathers) who gave birth to us: DON'T GIVE UP, WE LOVE YOU FROM AFAR.*

*For those adoptive parents who want to shut down, silence, lie to and control their adopted child: TRY WORKING TOGETHER WITH THEM OPENLY AND HONESTLY. THIS WILL STRENGTHEN YOUR BOND, NOT WEAKEN IT.*

### **Trauma Sensitive Yoga**

On Saturday 29th June, a group of adoptees and mothers (who had lost a child to adoption) attended an Introduction to Trauma Sensitive Yoga workshop run by Edwina Kempe at Santosha Yoga Space in Paddington, Brisbane.

Edwina is a Brisbane based accredited Mental Health Social Worker as well as a Trauma Sensitive Yoga facilitator.

Trauma Sensitive Yoga is an empirically validated modality that can assist those who have experienced complex trauma.

It differs from a typical yoga class in that there is a focus on creating a safe environment, where participants have a choice in what practices they do or do not participate in.

The facilitator does not touch participants or correct poses as can occur in a typical yoga class.

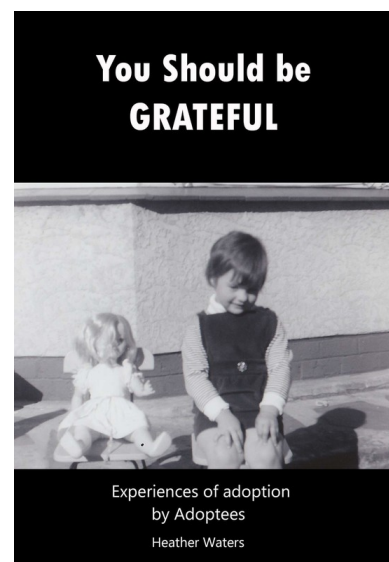
Trauma sensitive yoga draws on trauma theory, attachment theory

and neuroscience and is designed to help individuals to learn to be present, practice making choices, become mindful of the environment around them and to connect with their body through the breath and yoga forms.

The purpose of this workshop was to introduce individuals to this modality which is another tool that might positively assist those affected by adoption on their life journey.

The workshop was funded by the Small Grants program Forced Adoption Support Services.

### **Documentary Review of Heather Waters' "You Should Be Grateful". Reviewed by Anne**



The documentary titled 'You Should Be Grateful' was created by Heather Waters with a target audience of anyone "touched by adoption". It was funded by the

Forced Adoption Support Services small grants program in SA.

In the film, the complexities of adoption are revealed and myths such as the "happily ever after story" of adoption are exposed.

Common themes are evident, emotions are raw, and their stories allow insight into the real trauma and impact of adoption.

As each adoptee opens up, reoccurring themes emerge that are reflective of the recognised core adoption issues including identity, grief, loss, low self-worth and relationship challenges.

It becomes clear that the lived experience for an adoptee (including those with loving adoptive parents) is very different from the dominant cultural narrative around adoption and is an experience that is not recognised or validated by others.

This documentary includes narration from Nikki Hartmann, an experienced adoption counsellor, who highlights and summarises clearly the themes and issues raised in the adoptee interviews.

She explains the impacts of the preverbal trauma associated with separating mother and baby and also how the "adoptee narrative gets silenced".

In relation to the title of the film she states that adoptees are expected to be grateful for being adopted when in fact their experience includes profound loss.

This documentary provides a real insight into the lifelong issues

faced by adoptees that can and do go unacknowledged or unrecognised by others.

All parties of the adoption triad would benefit from watching this film with an open mind and with the potential to engage in discussions that perhaps were previously avoided.

I would also recommend this documentary to all those contemplating a future adoption. It would also be suitable for students in the helping professions to give them a better understanding of the impacts of adoption on an adoptee.

Jigsaw members can borrow this documentary from the library by contacting [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au) To enquire about obtaining a copy of the DVD email: [enquiries@watersproductions.com.au](mailto:enquiries@watersproductions.com.au)

## Upcoming Workshops

We have two new workshops scheduled for October. Flyers are attached in the last few pages of the newsletter.

### Trauma Sensitive Yoga Practice

Following the success of the information session on Trauma Sensitive Yoga held in June this year, we are pleased to offer a series of practice sessions in Oct/Nov. Book early to secure a place.

### Fathers' Workshop

We are also offering a workshop for fathers who were separated from their child by adoption in October. We believe it may be the

first workshop of its kind offered in Australia.

Gary Coles, the facilitator, is flying up from Melbourne to offer us the workshop. Please let us know ASAP if you are able to attend. Email: [support@jigsawqld.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawqld.org.au) Phone: (07) 3358 6666

## SAVE THE DATE!

The Queensland Post Adoption Working Committee invite you to please save the date - 7th Anniversary of the Queensland Government's Apology for Forced Adoption Policy and Practices

A formal invitation will follow with program information.

Wednesday, 27th November 2019, 9.30am to 11.30am.

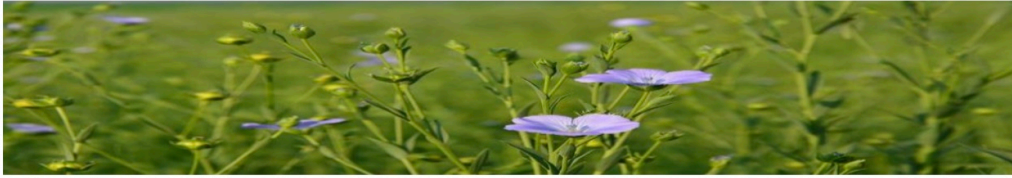
Proceedings commence at 10am at City View Saddle, Roma Street Parklands, 1 Parkland Blvd, Brisbane City. Light refreshments will be provided.

Enquiries about the event should be made to Post Adoption Support Qld (PASQ) on (07) 3170 4600 or email [pasq@benevolent.org.au](mailto:pasq@benevolent.org.au).



# REINHABITING YOUR BODY FOR HEALING

## *Trauma Sensitive Yoga Workshops for adopted adults and mothers who lost children to adoption*



**No** previous yoga experience necessary and you do not need to be fit to participate as **all** levels of fitness and flexibility can be accommodated. Chair options will be provided.

This **series of 4 workshops** is a follow up to the information session held on 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2019. People who book for the workshops need to commit to attending **ALL of the sessions**.

If you have not previously attended the information session, you can still come to this workshop series, but you will need to come early on Oct 12<sup>th</sup> for a short information session prior to the workshop.

### *Why is this series of sessions being offered?*

Mothers and adopted people have experienced trauma related to adoption separation. Fortunately there are now a range of evidence based approaches to healing trauma including the "body based" approaches such as Trauma Sensitive Yoga.

To find out more about Trauma Sensitive Yoga go to [www.tctsyaustralia.com](http://www.tctsyaustralia.com)

### *What will be covered in the session?*

The workshops will provide an opportunity to practice Trauma Sensitive Yoga. This approach to yoga is about offering opportunities for you to notice your body and to make choices about what you want to do with your body.

### *About the facilitator: Edwina Kemp*

Edwina is an Accredited Mental Health Social Worker, trauma-sensitive yoga facilitator, and trainer. She has completed her training in Trauma Centre Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY) through the Trauma Centre at Justice Resource Institute in Brookline, Massachusetts, USA.

For more information about Edwina go to [www.edwinakempe.com](http://www.edwinakempe.com)

**DATES:** 12<sup>th</sup> Oct, 19<sup>th</sup> Oct, 26<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov

**Nov 10.15am to 11.15am**

**VENUE:** Santosha Yoga Space, 180a Latrobe Tce, Paddington, Brisbane

( note there are 17 steps to enter this building)

**BOOKINGS:** are essential. Get in quick because spaces are limited. To book email [support@jigsawql.org.au](mailto:support@jigsawql.org.au) or phone 1800 21 03 13 (from within Qld) or 07 3358 6666.

# Workshop for Fathers

Who were separated from their child by adoption



## About the Facilitator: Gary Coles

Gary Coles is a father. His first-born son was raised in New Zealand by adoptive parents. He has written extensively about adoption, particularly bringing the viewpoint of birth fathers into the discussions. He has published three books and many articles/presentations about fathers. Gary has also been the manager of a post adoption support service and facilitated support groups.

## ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

- Gary will share information on the research and literature about fathers who were separated from their child by adoption
- You will have the chance to share your experience with other fathers in a safe and supportive environment

**DATE: Sat. Oct 19th (10am to 2pm)**

**VENUE: Jigsaw Qld (downstairs meeting room)**

**Sands House, 505 Bowen Tce, New Farm 4005**

**BOOKINGS are essential before September 13th**

**TO BOOK: email support @jigsawqld.org.au**

**Or phone 1800 21 03 13 (from Qld only) or**

**07 33586666**



**Forced Adoption Support Services**

Funded by the Australian Government  
Department of Social Services