

# Bits & Pieces

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## Welcome to Bits & Pieces Spring 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).*

Finally an end to the cold weather is in sight! Spring is here! In this issue... the report on donor conception matters has been tabled, part two of 'when the search ends', and AdoptTEA events return for Qld Mental Health Week. All of this and more in the Spring edition of Bits and Pieces.

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## Concord, Sydney - When the search ends (Part Two)

By Jo Sparrow

*In this continuation of last issue's article on graveside reunions, Jo shares her story of travelling to Sydney to connect with her family by meeting extended relatives, graveside reunions and walking in the footsteps of her family. To hear more of this story, listen to the 3 August episode of Adopt Perspective podcast ([Jo & Caroline - When the Search Ends](#)).*

If I had to single out the most difficult issue I've had to contend with as an adopted person, it would be connecting with family. Growing up the youngest and only adopted child in a family of four, I didn't look like anyone in my family and I felt like a drum beat that was out of time with the family song. I loved them and they loved me, however, I was different and that was a confusing reality.

When I met my mother at 19, I was hoping to find a reflection of myself in looks, personality and interests, as well as grandparents and extended family. In short, I wanted to feel the connection I'd been craving. While I was thrilled

to meet my mother, the reflection and connection didn't follow. She was also an only child, her parents were deceased and she no longer had contact with extended family. My mother disclosed a sad and sometimes disturbing family history to me, and over time, I felt my desire to learn more about this side of my family evaporate.

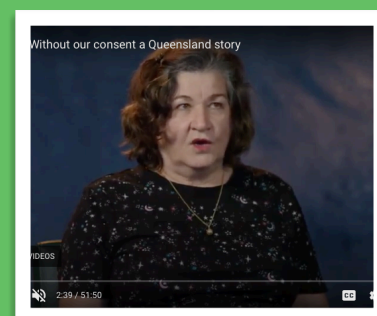


*Jo, her mother and brother taken the day they first met.*

Twenty years later, I met my father and his extended family (his parents were deceased) and while I finally found the reflection I was searching for, deep connection was still out of my reach.

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>



In 2017, I completed a commercial DNA test and as a result met two of my mother's first cousins—one from her father's side and one from her mother's. The two women became a window into my family history and through them I found my interest and desire to connect with my maternal family reenergised. They gifted me with stories of the women in my family that shone new light on my own experiences as a mother.

Through these revelations, I was beginning to make my first deep connections with my biological family, however, there was still something missing. They remained names and stories about abstract strangers. I understood their connection to me, however, I didn't *feel* it. I decided to organise a trip to Concord, Sydney, where my family had lived, to figure out if I could add colour to the picture I'd been given. I booked a trip for April 2020; however, Covid ended that idea. It was more than two years before I could reschedule. I used that time wisely, researching and planning my movements in Sydney.



*Taken outside Jo's mother's childhood home in Concord.*

I was blessed to have my husband, Baden join me on my adventure and I highly recommend having someone by your side who is positive and invested in your story, if possible. He kept



*Jo's great great grandmother, Daisy.*

me focused, drove me all around Sydney and encouraged me to stay the course when I wanted to move on too fast.

My first stop was my mother's childhood home in Concord. This home had seen four generations of my family, having first housed my great grandmother, Daisy, then her son (my grandfather, Ray) and my mother, who conceived me while she still lived there. My grandmother took her own life in the back shed of this home when my mother was only ten years old. The house had changed from photos my mother had given me; however I could still see the original bones. We sat in our car and I grieved the tragedies that had occurred there, including the fracture that would see me raised by another family. I let go of a heaviness I'd been carrying—for me and for them.

We drove around the corner to my grandmother's childhood home before heading to Rookwood Cemetery to visit the graves of my grandmother, two sets of great grandparents

and my great, great grandparents. Of particular interest to me were the graves of my great grandmother, Daisy and my great, great grandparents, Annie & John. Daisy had been assaulted when she was 17 and became pregnant as a result. Her parents had supported her to keep her beloved daughter and Daisy had the confidence to take her attacker to court... twice.

Daisy's story allowed me to reframe my family history in a more positive light. Where I once perceived only darkness and tragedy, I now saw hope. I reconsidered all of the women who came before me and found evidence of strength, resilience and love. When I made this shift in my thinking, it felt as though all the women lined up behind me. I felt deeply connected to them and saw clearly how their stories were reflected in my own. I had more than two years to consider how I would interact with my ancestors in the cemetery. Taking a (loose) leaf from Jewish tradition, I settled on taking six crystals (2 x rose quartz, 2 x amethyst, 2 x selenite) to the three gravesites. I left one of each pair on a

grave and brought the other home. They sit above my desk. I can see them now.

After visiting the cemetery, I met with my two cousins. Julie gifted me with my great great grandfather's suitcase. She had decoupage'd it with family photos and inside were original photos and items belonging to several ancestors. The following day, Pamela showed me through her family photos, made us tea and cake and



*Julie and Jo look through family photographs.*



*A rose quartz left on Jo's great great grandparent's grave.*

told me stories of Daisy and her mother—the daughter Daisy had held onto and loved until she died. There was so much I gained from travelling to Sydney to connect with my family and I'm certain that list will continue to expand long into the future. I now feel a part of something larger than myself and there is a 'knowing' about my ancestors that I imagine people who aren't adopted might feel. Adoption is a lifelong journey and I don't kid myself that I have finished feeling its impacts; however, the trip has replaced a fierce longing with peace and acceptance. To see more photos from Jo's Sydney trip, visit [www.josparrow.com](http://www.josparrow.com).

## Father shares adoption story with Adopt Perspective podcast listeners

Adoptee Voices (ICAV) in partnership with Relationship Matters.



*Allan Hill*

You might recall from our last issue that a highlight of the 2022 national apology anniversary event in March was hearing personal experiences of reunion. In the days prior to Fathers' Day, father, **Allan Hill** (31 August) again shared his experience with Adopt Perspective podcast listeners. Allan walked us through the story of discovering he was to become a father at the age of 16, losing his son to adoption and reuniting with him 38 years later. He also shared the impact this experience had on his life.

In other episodes since our last issue, we heard from **Benjamin Kelleher** (8 June) who was adopted from Brazil and brought to Australia in 1989 at the age of 13 months. He was one of 5000 children in the orphanage at the time of his adoption. Benjamin grew up on the Gold Coast and recently shared his experience of intercountry adoption in a series of [educational video resources](#) produced by InterCountry



*Benjamin Kelleher*

**Tracy Shand** (22 June) shared her story of being an adoptee born in the late 60s under the closed adoption system and a cloud of secrecy. Tracy searched for and reunited with her mother and sister at the age of 24, finding the relationships complex to maintain over time. At the age of 45 she did a commercial DNA test to find her father and 3 years later was successful.



*Tracy Shand*

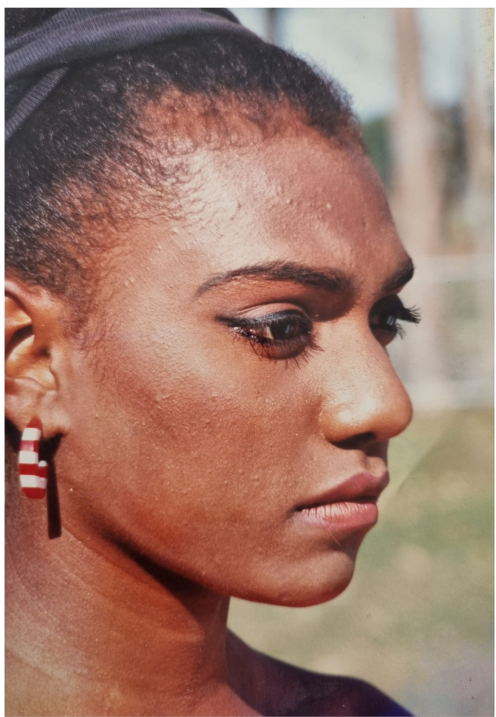
**Natalie Lewis** (6 July) is an Aboriginal and South Sea Islander woman who was adopted in

## 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.



Queensland in 1974. Her adoptive parents were originally from Germany and India. Because Natalie was adopted in Queensland in 1974, she falls outside the Australian states currently offering redress to the Stolen Generations and the criteria for the states that do offer redress. This leaves Natalie in somewhat of a no-man's land as she seeks recognition of the loss that her adoption caused to her culture, community and family.



*Natalie Lewis*

Many adopted people report that their adoption experience has impacted their parenting. **Dr**

**Jenny Conrick** (20 July) is a social worker and academic at the University of Melbourne who has researched the mothering experience of adopted women - an area she hopes to continue to explore in the future. She shared the findings of her research with our listeners.



*Dr Jenny Conrick*

**Jill Rodger** (17 August) is an adoptee born at Crown Street Women's Hospital in Sydney in 1953. She is a tenacious amateur detective who managed to track down her mother in 1984, years before New South Wales legislation was amended to allow access to identifying information and even before the common use of the internet and social media. More recently, Jill managed to track down her paternal family through a commercial DNA test and has had a beautiful outcome. She joined us from Ballarat in Victoria.

Adopt Perspective can be listened to on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, Deezer,

Castbox, Pocket Casts, Amazon Music, Overcast and from the [Jigsaw website](#).



*Jill Rodger*

## Legal Affairs & Safety Committee put forward recommendations to Qld Parliament considering the rights of donor conceived people



Following on from the Queensland Government hearings into matters relating to donor conception information that took place at Parliament House on 13 May, the Legal Affairs & Safety Committee have now returned their recommendations. The committee put forward a number of encouraging recommendations including one for retrospective access to records.

These recommendations are a great beginning point and present the Queensland Government with the opportunity to right the wrongs of the past.

You can read the full report here:  
[https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tableoffice/tabledpapers/2022/5722T1242-74D8.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2i6EgiG1-bJ9q2KJvDQ7VKG8lgOiyh18S\\_ZG5wHTEvXtI6s0bw9FPoWRc](https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tableoffice/tabledpapers/2022/5722T1242-74D8.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2i6EgiG1-bJ9q2KJvDQ7VKG8lgOiyh18S_ZG5wHTEvXtI6s0bw9FPoWRc)



If you are seeking support in regards to this issue, you are encouraged to contact [Donor Conceived Australia \(DCA\)](#) who can provide support for donor-conceived people, education on donor conception for both current and prospective parents and donors as well as the wider community, and advocacy for nationally consistent legislation. DCA also host a networking group via Zoom where you can

connect with adults nation-wide in a no-pressure environment. Find out more on their website via the link above.

## AdopTEA returns for Qld Mental Health Week



The AdopTEA

AdopTEA events are returning this year during Queensland Mental Health Week (8-16 October). The morning tea events began in 2021 with eight events across Queensland throughout the week. Aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of the impacts of adoption on adopted people and reducing the stigma associated with reaching out and seeking support; the events bring together adoptees, their family and friends, post-adoption support workers and professionals.

The morning teas can take many forms and may be organised and hosted by individuals with lived experience of adoption. Alternatively, professionals may host a morning tea to share practice knowledge to raise an understanding of why adoption is trauma, the impacts of adoption on the mental health of adopted people and how to gain access to helpful resources and support services to use in their practice. For more information on how to register or to find

your closest event, click [here](#). To find out more visit the [AdopTEA Facebook page](#).

## 2022 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 Information Events** - (1.30pm to 3.30pm) 8 Oct , 10 Dec.

**Adoptee Support Group** - (1.30pm - 3.30pm) 10 Sept, 12 Nov.

**Mothers' Morning Tea** - a regular morning tea from 10am to 12 noon (address above) 21 Sept, 16 Nov.