

Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020

Introduced to the Legislative Assembly and referred the bill to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

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Child protection and other legislation Amendments Bill 2020- submission

I am an adoptee of the Child welfare Act of 1939 of New South Wales who has been involved in the calling of the Senate Inquiry to the Past Practices of adoption.

The Royal Brisbane Hospital apology for adoptees. As I also am A natural mother who lost her child to adoption in 1975 here in Queensland.

The Sisters of Mercy Apology Brisbane.

The family Institute Study by Darryl Higgins.

Requested Interview by the National Archives Canberra to be involved in their Video Portraits.

Currently on the reference committee for adoption in Queensland as a representative from Origins.

My concerns in your proposal Bill Child Protection and other Legislation amendments bill 2020 are in relation to proposal adoption process for children in care and children from overseas.

You have permeant care and guardian ship orders to offer first, but in all of this what long-term process of support are you offering to the child from the time they come into care and their journey in life.

Our foster care system is flawed with the deaths that have occurred and children being bounced from one family to another, instead of having a choice of say two families they go to in the said cycle, so the child develops relationships with those families, than rather feeling in trouble for being in that situation.

What recommendations still need to being introduced from the Inquiry of children in care?

What of those recommendations will be also conceded in to the guardianship and permanent care arrangements?

I am an early childhood educator and over the time I see some families struggling as parents due to their lack of parenting skills or dealing with their damaged lives. This all impacts on the children and how they will parent the next generation. I would like to see *Parenting courses* and *child development introduced in to the high school and being compulsory* to help give the next generation of Australians a chance of healing our damaged culture. We have 2nd or 3rd generations of damaged families. *To change the lives of children you have to give them a solid base and look at what is causing the problem, not what has happened! Now what do we do with the damage children?*

I also feel we need more funding in the schools for school counsellors and the chaplaincy to be able *to support parents and children in their own cultural environment*. So, we build a stronger and new base of parents in our future culture. The talk of best interest of the child, but I know personally from the past adoption practice there has been no help for me.

I was adopted as my mother could not marry my father due to him being a divorcee even though she was 29 at the time there was no help for her, but in saying that my adoptive parents were separated when my adoption occurred. My adoptive mother come back the next night, but she left again when I was 4. My adoptive father had 3 adoptive children to rear and no support for him or us.

Do you know what it is like to be told at the age 4 that the mother you crying over is not your mother! Then at school your mother did not want you, and then your adoptive mother did not either.!!! So why do think adoption gives a "child a loving forever home" In today's society I am surprised when the child has their original Mum and Dad, as there are so many single parent families and blended families today, which is a testimony that basically in 62 years since my adoption nothing has changed in our society.

My adoptive mother had mental health issues which we suffered the continued effects off until her death 3 years ago. The choice of people who she chose to have relationships with and we had no were to go with that, and how that impacted on us. The behaviour of this woman and the trauma she caused *emotionally physically and spiritually*. I know from personal experience adoption is not happy ever after, and lying on all the school paperwork, parent, guardianship. I was brought up in the Catholic system and every time I had to lie about who my parents where, because I had to say my adoptive parents name, it was a lie.

Personally, my name was changed during baptism and was not updated on any birth certificate. I fought the QLD government for over 10 years, so I could get a passport to visit my natural father's grave in PNG. After 140 pages were submitted the passport office, it was finally believed that I have only ever used one name in my life and thus, do not need to undergo any alias or identity changes.

The proposal of letting the adoptive child to keep their original birth name would reduce the chances and complications, with identity issues such as mine for the future.

You are still allowing name changes and I believe you are looking at keeping the first name not being changed, which I am glad for, as my Birth Certificate (Both)where incorrect of who I am. my adoptive mother changed my name in Baptism I had to fight for 10 years to get a passport which was the identity issue I brought up in the Senate Inquiry submission 120. to the past Forced adoptions is also affected me in who I am and where I belong, and still does but finally having a passport it saves some pain when dealing with government department of who I am. I was granted a passport under historical reference.

In mainstream families these days children have different names to their parents that marriage is not compulsory to have children these days and again blended families.

The simple adoption if it has to occur is a better format as the child does not lose their contact with their family as we have in the past.

Dr Geoff Rickaby OAM, in the talk he did in Without Consent Forced adoption exhibition on

Friday 20th March 2015 talks about Questions in adolescence which most children ask but when you *are not with family of origin is harder to answer.*

"What am I like?"

Who do I take after?"

Am I, a ok kid?"

What was part of me, that why was I was abounded?

Am I grateful enough?"

Very important Questions.

I would like to know how is this being addressed for all children?

In Early Child education they use **Belonging, being and becoming** and I see this as a **Lifelong question** for children but more for children in care and adoption.

Your department staff have been at the anniversary days of these apologies and have heard **Professor Mushin talk** and he worked with the stakeholders on the wording of our National Apology and was involved due to his years as a family Law court Judge. It would be great benefit for you to consult with their reports and findings.

In **Darryl Higgins** Australian Institute of family studies report in which I was involved in it states. In the scoping studies of support, A note on the terms of reference page 10 3.2

It states the term of reference for the scoping study focused on the services providing targeted support to people affected by forced adoption. Therefore, the service mapping has not focused on mainstream mental health services. There was minimal consultation with mental health stakeholders specific outside specific forced adoption services, and no consultation with individual service providers of Commonwealth services such as ATAPS.

Commentary on the nature of these services is derived from information provided by the adoption - specific services.

Importantly, the purpose of the scoping study was not to explicitly notify organisation or services to receive additional government funding. Our aim was to provide the government with a report that reflects the identified needs and the responses from report that reflects the identified needs and the responses from stakeholders that address these needs, then present options for both enhancing services and addressing Un-meet Needs.

I have been to a *doctor* in 2019 thinking they had all done the *complimentary training course* of the past adoption practices so they could understand their clients. I choose this doctor as I had found out they had been involved for setting up for the doctor's exam and as one of my sons had set for the doctor's entrance exam, I thought they would be up on all affairs of Australian life past and present. They had not heard of the apology nor the Former Forced Adoptions.

I held my breath and offered the grace of OK. I will get her a copy of the apology and CD as she is around my age which I did see if I could help educate this Doctor, but she still had not watched a month later when I inquired.

So again, I reached out to trust specially a woman to be ignored.

In my training as an Early educator as a mature age student there is all the studies of the Stolen Generation and then I had to write how it impacts my life and hearing the younger generation saying why do we have to apologise to them but it would be cool to adopt a overseas child they are so cute.

I was very lucky that one of my teachers was adoptee and I was able to give her and her mother a copy of the apology as she did not know about the apology 5years ago.

This teacher then spoke to her students about her life as an adoptee and read the apology.

I am also a mother who lost her son to the past practices of adoption and when my son was doing *his Master's in Education* as a mature age student in Victoria he was doing his Indigenous Studies and having to hear from the young woman saying he was a white privileged male, what would he know about the loss of family.

In his final report for this subject he put in his truth about how he was connected to the stolen generation and how he was involved in the Royal Brisbane hospital apology with his mother and **was failed**, it was only because of Dr Denise Cuthbert of Monash University had been involved in adoption research as Dr Denise had used my Story of identity in her presentation at the Adoption conference in Sydney when he put a complaint in, his paper was reviewed and was given a distinction. It came to light that his lecture had not known about the former forced adoptions, this was only 2 years ago, my son pulled out and did not complete his masters due to that episode.

We need to have adoption in all areas of education, from school, Early learning Education, teaching, medical, police, social work, physiology.

I see this as a huge unmet need that is mentioned in the scope report.

My son who I lost due to lack of support by the agencies of the time, was adopted into an Airforce family and was taken to **Malaysia to start school**, so he experienced *life as an overseas adoptee*, not knowing language and how things work, different smells, food, games. Seeing dogs being skinned on his way to school for food in the late 70s.

There was no help for him and he was moved every 2 years throughout his life, when we were finally reunited and after I met his adoptive mother, she said to him the next day, *that explains your weirdness. !!!most people would take this as an insult It was the greatest bit of honesty, she could have given him. Meeting her sons mother explained to her everything she did not understand about her son. Their relationship was basically non excitant but through nearly 20 years of he and I being reunited they now have a great relationship.*

Two years ago, his adoptive parents finally agreed to meet his other brother and sisters, his Adoptive mother thanked me for my family's kindness and warmth to them, she had not realised she had *been a part of this family the day she took my son home.*

My Son now teaches English as a second language to overseas students but has trouble with relationships. He is divorced and has *decided never to be in a relationship again or have children.*

But adoption is meant to be in Life best Interest of the child?

I know we were part of history that occurred to my son and I, but foster parents' guardians, adoptive Parents and Parents have to realise they are of service to the child, not the child filling their needs.

I wish that the child could chose to adopt the parents at 18 to 25 after a permeant care order has been in place if they wish to choose to adopt that family as their own. Children are not a commodity to fix infertile couples' pain.

My son's A mother has been amazing in her respect of the knowledge she has now of the full effects of adoption. As she has watched the boy, she reared who was very difficult teenager become this man who since our reunion, travelled to have time out to adjust to finding his family of origin and a failed marriage. To help with the Royal Brisbane Hospital apology, to now teaching English as a

second language and being a respected teaching staff member and a trusted confidante to his students.

I have also two brothers that were adopted from different families and one's mother is from overseas and he was adopted in Australia, she was 16 at the time and was told he had died, by her mother after the adoption, but he is denied his mother's married name under that country's privacy laws. In trying to give his children and grandchildren their family tree for school projects we may have to expose her secret in Ancestry for him, but we are hoping a miracle may happen. We allowed an adoption reunion service to handle the case and they through staff changes had *not touched* his case for two years so when we made inquiries and they finally got back on it, *her trust was gone*. She closed the door because she then would have to expose it all again with another stranger.

My other adoptive brother it looks like his mother was under the departments care and trying to find his history has been very difficult. *We three are all from different families, cultural backgrounds, nationality's and was put together to create a family for others. What holds us together is the fact is we 3 are the only ones who no the abuse we have endured under the best interest of the child.*

Please realise that any child in care, guardianship. Permanent care, adopted grows up to be adults of the next generation of this country.

There was no support for my generation of adoptees, I put my -self in Psychiatrist care at the age of 16 as a result of my adoption. They never asked how I felt about being adopted, they thought I was an ungrateful adoptee and their mental health plan was for me to move back with my A mother as they considered I needed mothering. That put me back with the perpetrator, instead of helping me *grieve for the loss of my first family then my 2nd family.*

I am still my mother's secret yet my cousin on my Dads side was my mother's priest, she is 91 he was still waiting for her to break the silence. I have met my sister but she has to keep our mothers secret from her brothers which I could see what damage that was doing to my sister. I walked away from her for 18 years because I felt that was so cruel a position for her to be in. I am in contact now a little over the last 2years with my sister due to I thought my mother had possibly passed.

My sister struggles with her mother's secret because of all the lost years she could have had a sister to share life with as I had made contact 25 years ago and our mother asked her to drive her to see me ,when I went to Adelaide as that is my mother comes from.

My son is back in my life and I am grateful that my husband has *understood my love for my son* as I met this man two months after I lost my son and we have been married over 44 years and have 3 children together, who are amazing people.

I do *watch my children struggle with their mother's life being different from their friends* and my youngest son has walked the reunion process with me and that is a journey also that children should not have to experience some of that journey. He was with me when I met my Mum for the one and only time and has visited my sister and not able *to tell his cousin who he is*. He was with me when I reunited with his brother and I thank God every day for the great relationship they have. Where my two other children find it all to hard at times to deal with.

Please support and understand what a child feels like when they have not got a connection with somebody.

I once said to a principal of Nambour primary if the adults had to content with what our children have to content with because of damaged parents, they would all be on stress leave and getting support and possibly compensation, but our children who act out have to go to school say nothing, be quite, get straight As do the napalm test and everything is all ok for the government.

We need support in all ages of life whether in care, guardianship, primary and adoption.

I am a grand-mother at this point to 6 grandchildren and two years ago was able to finally travel to PNG to place flowers on my father's grave. It took 48years after his death for his daughter to put flowers on his grave, he died when I was 12 and I was not informed. I was his first family member to put flowers on his grave.

We are not informed if our parents die or our children or if they are taken overseas to live.

People are struggling with not seeing their family in the Corina time, that is what it is like for us internally every day.

My son has just had skin cancer removed from his mouth and once again I am denied being his Mum and he is dealing with this on his own. His adoptive mother has just finished treatment for breast cancer so he has not seen her for 6 months to protect her.

Who can he ring and say I need support my A mother is recovering from breast cancer and my Mum is in Queensland and I am here in Victoria on my own recovery from Skin cancer on my mouth and I have to go for further surgery on my own?

Yes, Adoption is differently in the best interest of the child.

What support is there for me when I go into age care?

In respect Therese Hawken

Origins representative

On the Reference Committee for adoption Queensland