



Speech by


Hon. Campbell Newman

MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE

Hansard Thursday, 23 August 2012

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Forced Adoptions

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (9.37 am): I rise also today to announce that during an upcoming sitting the Queensland government will make a statement of apology in parliament to the many people affected by past forced adoption practices. In February this year a Commonwealth Senate committee inquiry found that forced adoptions were widespread in Australia during the 1950s through to the 1970s and that the emotional damage caused to all those affected remains prevalent to this day. Between 1951 and 1975 an estimated 140,000 to 150,000 adoptions took place in Australia, but it is unknown how many of these were forced.

During its deliberations, the Commonwealth Senate committee held a public hearing in Brisbane in April 2011 and heard evidence from individuals and stakeholder groups about the impacts of the practices and policies of the past on Queenslanders. Across the nation the inquiry heard stories which highlighted women's experiences of being physically shackled to beds and social workers failing to advise mothers of government payments that may have been available to support them in keeping their child. Indeed, only a week ago in my electorate office one of my constituents, who was born in 1967, poured out her heart-rending tale of what happened to her mother at her birth here in Brisbane.

This is a devastating experience for many and it is a very sad time indeed in the state's history. These forced-adoption practices have had long-term impacts for the many mothers, children, fathers and extended families that were affected, many of whom continue to be haunted each and every day of their lives by what happened to them. Again I refer to my constituent's story. She has been searching for her identity for over 25 years.

Thankfully, these practices no longer continue. To those who have been affected we say: whilst we cannot change what happened in the past, we hope that an apology will acknowledge the role of past Queensland governments in practices that are now recognised, and rightly so, as wrong. We hope that an official apology will help ease the pain felt by those people who have been so deeply affected and will assist them in their healing process. I invite people affected by forced adoption to attend the apology in this House. We will ensure that information is made publicly available in the lead-up to this significant event. I feel honoured to lead a government that is prepared to do the right thing in acknowledging a practice of the past that should never have occurred.