

VANISH VOICE

Summer 2019



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From the Manager's Desk

Dear VANISH members and friends,

Welcome to the Summer edition of VOICE.

When the team here got together to discuss what to include in this edition we realised there is a lot to report on! It seems as if adoption and donor conception are in the news more and more these days and we can rarely include all the news and links we would like to, but in addition, this time there are some important developments in Victoria to update you on. These include the inquiry into historical forced adoptions, the changing arrangements for Open Place - a service for Forgotten Australians and the National Archives of Australia's exhibition *Without Consent* in Geelong.

We are also pleased to include a report from a group of donor conceived people who travelled to Geneva (Switzerland) to present at the Convention on the Rights of the Child 30th Anniversary. It was great to hear how well received their presentation was. We congratulate them on the success of this initiative.

After the establishment of a small fundraising sub-committee this month we have a few fundraising ideas and initiatives to tell you about in the hope you will be inspired to participate and spread the word. One is the sale of some original artworks by retired

architect Hank Romyn who has turned his hand to painting and has generously donated some of his works to VANISH for us to sell. Thank you Hank!

Every year, as we approach the festive season, we hear from some of the people we work with how they find Christmas a particularly difficult time. Some people love it of course, but some experience grief, loneliness, complex family dynamics, or other difficulties. This year we have included some suggestions for self care—a concept which is often discussed but less often practised. We know that these strategies can work so we hope you find one or two of them helpful.

Please know we are thinking of you and wishing you comfort and joy.

Charlotte Smith,
Manager



Committee of Management Update

VANISH welcomes two new CoM members Peter Rice and Ross Hunter.



Peter was a sperm donor in Melbourne in the early 1990s and has had successful (and ongoing) contact with some of his now adult donor conceived children. With insights learned from that first hand lived experience, he is keen to explore matters affecting donors and donor conceived people, and to contribute to improving relevant legislation policy and social practice.

Ross is a donor conceived person who discovered his status a decade ago and has since been striving to understand the ramifications for himself, others like him and society as a whole. He teaches English, History, Humanities and Media Studies. Before teaching he worked as a mediator, a model, a barista and a librarian. Ross served on the Committee until he moved to East Timor in 2015 so we are delighted to welcome him back.



The VANISH Team

Charlotte Smith
Manager

Elizabeth Tomlinson
Counsellor and Search & Support Coordinator

Mary Rawson, Patricia Navaretti,
Tracey Hudson
Search & Support Workers

Gail Holstock
Community Outreach & Training Coordinator

Lorna Sleightholm
Receptionist/Administrator

Adam D'Arcy
Quality & Compliance Officer

Andrea Phillips
Legal (volunteer)

VANISH 30th Annual General Meeting

In September VANISH held its 30th Annual General Meeting. We had an excellent turnout for the event and the Committee of Management even managed a rare group photo!



From left to right Paul Ruff, Cathy Burnett, Sue Green, Penny Mackieson, Lyn Moore, Todd Dargan, Simon Prior, Tricia Lester, Ross Hunter, Peter Rice, Barbara Burns & Charlotte Smith, VANISH Committee of Management members (including incoming and outgoing).

Excerpts of the Manager's Report

Charlotte Smith expressed great pleasure in presenting VANISH's report for 2018-19. "It has been an extraordinary year with significant changes to our external environment to which we have successfully responded thanks to the skill and commitment of the wonderful team at VANISH, which I am proud to lead. The work we do is challenging yet rewarding. It is often unseen in the broader community but we know from the feedback we receive that it is of great importance and value to those we support.

VANISH has seen increased demand for support, information and counselling, growth in the



David Cross, Mandy Candlish, Pauline Ley and Dorothy Kowalski enjoying supper.

Melbourne support groups and requests for community education presentations.

A significant change has been the exponential growth of DNA testing. This has been useful where records are unavailable, incorrect or incomplete. VANISH has started to assist service users to interpret their test results and identify the relative sought. We have also presented to professional and amateur genealogists assisting those who have been tested - our key messages being about making contact sensitively and getting professional support. "

Charlotte thanked VANISH members and service users, the staff team and CoM members. She also thanked DHHS for supporting VANISH over the past 30 years.

She then congratulated Gail Holstock (staff member) and Cal Spiers (volunteer support group facilitator) on five years of service.



Gail Holstock and Cal Spiers

Simon Pryor, Chair and Treasurer, announced that VANISH has been extraordinarily productive this year and CoM were pleased to declare a \$74 deficit for this financial year. He gave special thanks to Barbara Burns for giving of her time and professionalism in her position of volunteer accountant for VANISH for the last 10 years.

Full details are in the VANISH Annual Report for 2018-2019.

Guest speaker, Dr Sue Green, gave an overview of the sessions she attended at the American Adoption Congress 40th Annual Conference where she presented on the VANISH Counsellor Training.



Donor Conceived People Educate the UN at the Convention on the Rights of the Child 30th Anniversary, Geneva

Last week, donor conceived people celebrated an incredible achievement. As part of the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child event held 18-20 November at the Palais De Nations in Geneva, a group of 16 donor conceived people were invited to present as part of a workshop on children's rights and biotechnology. The workshop delved into the experiences, challenges and obstacles faced by donor conceived people and surrogate born people around the world.



Delegation representing Donor Conceived People

Australia was well represented, with Myf Cummerford, Damian Adams, Sarah Dingle, Hayley Smith, Matty and Beth Wright presenting as part of the workshop. A huge amount of effort went into organising and coordinating the workshop by Dr Sonia Allan and Stephanie Raeymaekers, which was rewarded with a standing ovation by those who attended. A number of those who attended the workshop sought them out afterwards, expressing that they had never heard from donor conceived people and that our workshop had opened their eyes to perspectives they'd never considered.

Following this workshop, five recommendations to the UN were prepared by our group. These recommendations, along with a short statement were presented during the closing ceremony of the event to international delegates, representatives from Children's rights organisations and members of the UN Human Rights committee.

"There is a need for urgent national and international measures, which are inclusive of and made in consultation with a broad representation of donor-conceived and surrogacy born persons. These voices need to be heard, listened to and acted upon.

States should create international and national frameworks and laws that

- 1) Ensure the right of donor-conceived and surrogacy born children to access **information about their identity and origins** regardless of when these children were conceived and born and to preserve relations with their biological, social and gestational families.
- 2) Ensure that comprehensive and complete records of all parties involved in the conception of the child be **held by the State in perpetuity** for future generations.
- 3) Respect and **promote the full and effective enjoyment of all the rights** of donor-conceived and surrogacy-born children in both the immediate and longer terms.
- 4) Ensure that the **best interests of the child be the paramount** consideration in all relevant laws, policies and practices and in any judicial and administrative decisions. This requires a best interests assessment pre-conception on an individual case by case basis.
- 5) **Prohibit all forms of commercialisation** of gametes, children, and surrogates including, but not limited to, the sale and trafficking in persons and gametes."

The inclusion and participation of donor conceived people at this event is an incredible milestone; a first step for the millions of humans on the planet who have been systematically left out of the discussion about an issue which impacts them at the most fundamental, biological level. While there is more work to be done to ensure that these recommendations are implemented by member countries, our voices are being heard by people who can advocate for those changes to happen and that's a cause for celebration.



Courtney du Toit, Damian Adams & Myf Cummerford

News & Events

Anniversary Event

On 25th October a gathering was organised by ARMS (Vic) at the statue "Taken Not Given" in St Andrews Place, Melbourne, to commemorate the 1st Anniversary of its unveiling and the 7th Anniversary of the Victorian Apology for Past Adoption Practices. Marie Meggitt made a powerful speech reminding us all of the dark journey of adoption and the profound loss and grief that is the lived experience of those affected. After the ceremony all gathered at the nearby café and shared their stories.



Ghost family

My birth family
Is a family of ghosts:
The dead
And the dead to me
They linger in the periphery
Barely seen
Unwilling to be real to me
Unable to manifest
They are potential only
A tease
I grasp for them
Nothing
I can never touch them

They light up in me
As dna
Pure genetic material
But there is no feeling
No common memories
I was cut off from them
And joined to my adoptive
family as some

Strange hybrid plant
I grew into my host family
Some strange new limb
That never really belonged
there

My birth ancestors claim me
I can hear them call to me
There are no secrets among the
dead
There's no more shame
They are there for me in a way
the living cannot be

I walk amongst my birth family
Shunned by the living
Embraced by the dead
The dead holding my hand

By Karyl
Adoptee

My son and daughter meet their big brother

You might remember one of our members Dawn, shared her story of being reunited with her son in VANISH VOICE Autumn 2018. Last month we had a lovely letter from Dawn with an update. She said;

"...in August 2019, my daughter (44 years) and son (41 years) travelled to Queensland to meet their big brother for the first time and to celebrate his 50th birthday. It was all a surprise. For now, life is just wonderful. I have a photo here in my home of three lovely children that I can see every day."

Gary's lifetime of regret

Gary Coles was young and scared when his biological son was adopted in 1967; and in 52 years, his guilt and regret over the situation has never left him. The author and family man has found a form of catharsis through sharing his experiences with others and encourages birth fathers whose children have been adopted to reach out to those in similar situations. Gary's story is in this month's The Senior <https://www.thesenior.com.au/story/6480674/one-decision-a-lifetime-of-regret-for-gary/>

Open Place Announcement

In October we were surprised and saddened to hear the news that Berry Street Victoria will cease operating Open Place as from June 2020. Open Place is continuing 'business as usual' while the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services undertakes a co-design process which will involve consultations with individuals and organisations involved.

Having been funded to deliver services to Forgotten Australians prior to Open Place being established, as well as continuing to provide search and support services to them, VANISH is very familiar with the needs of people who spent some or all of their childhood in institutions and understands the importance of having a trusted service informed by lived experience.

In our response to the news, we responded to our colleagues at Open Place saying *"Since Open Place opened its doors we have witnessed the establishment and delivery of an extremely valuable, sensitive service for Forgotten Australians, a group of people whose unique circumstances and challenges had been neglected for so long. We are always full of admiration for the Open Place team and inspired by the way these services are so respectful and empowering of the individuals it supports."*

The Department of Health and Human Services has a dedicated email and telephone number for the transition process. The information below is taken from the Department's Frequently Asked Questions page. More questions and answers can be found there <https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/open-place-transition-new-service-provider>

Will there still be a dedicated Victorian service for Pre-1990 Care Leavers?

Yes. The Victorian Government and the department remain committed to providing a dedicated support service in recognition of the lifelong impact of the care experience. A new provider will be announced next year that will commence on 1 July 2020.

The national service provided by the Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN) will continue to operate in Victoria.

Can I have a say about the future service?

Yes. It is important to the department that Pre-1990 Care Leavers and key stakeholders inform the development of a future service. We would like to know what is important to you in the transition of this service to a new provider.

How can I share my views?

The department is running a co-design process until the end of December 2019 that you can choose to be involved in.

This process means we would like to hear your thoughts about what you would like from support services including what you value about Open Place and should therefore be retained and what if anything might be improved.

If you would like to provide more detailed information, you can let us know your views including your thoughts about:

What support services (including at Open Place) do you currently access?

What is good about these support services that doesn't need to change?

What helps you feel understood by these services and by others?

What are the qualities of a good service provider?

What would you like to change in support services if you could?

What support services and/or resources do you need that you don't currently get?

To have your say you can call

1800 319 520 (free call) or you can email openplacetransition@dhhs.vic.gov.au or send a letter to Open Place Transition, Department of Health and Human Services, Level 11, GPO Box 4057, MELBOURNE VIC 3001.

If you require a postage paid envelope, please call 1800 319 520 (free call). If you do send a letter, please let us know if you consent to us using the information you provide in the co-design process. Any personal information about you will be de-identified before use.

What will the department do with the information provided by Pre-1990 Care Leavers?

We will ask for your consent when you engage in any of these activities, so we have your permission to use the information you provide. Any personal information you provide us (such as your email address) will be de-identified before further use. After the consultations, we will create a short report that captures everything you told us which will be used to help identify the new provider.

The new provider will be announced in March 2020.



Review

Screening of 'The Ugly Model' with Q&A

From the outside, Philadelphia based Korean American adoptee and fitness model Kevin Tae-jin Kreider seems to have it all: Looks, Muscles, Chutzpah, Confidence and Charisma. He has a popular Instagram and vlog and has modelled around the world for the likes of Men's Health, Gillette and Abercrombie & Fitch. However, underneath those layers of muscle fibres, lies a loneliness and insecurity that deeply affects the psyche of a Korean adoptee growing up as an Asian male in America. Directed by Doris Yeung / 92 min / Doc / USA (Taken from Facebook event page)



Review by Ross Hunter

After seeing the notice in the VOICE newsletter, I attended a special screening of 'The Ugly Model' at the Treasury Theatre in the Melbourne CBD. The screening was followed by a Q&A, featuring three intercountry adoptees all of Korean ethnic origin.

The event was facilitated by Lifeworks, with Gianna Mazzone, Intercountry Adoption Support Coordinator as the moderator of the Q&A following an abridged screening of Kevin Kreider's story. Directed by Doris Yeung, this documentary depicts the paradox of a handsome and charismatic Korean American adoptee (Kreider) who struggles to reconcile his past as he confronts stereotypes about Asian masculinity. Despite having over 100k followers on Instagram and a successful modelling career, he has felt inferior to his fellow Americans as the parameters of people's perceptions about his ethnicity continue to afflict him.

One of the most touching parts of the doco was a scene depicting him interacting with his adoptive mother, where despite their obvious tenderness with each other she still seemed unable to have an

understanding of his feelings of alienation, dismissing him as needing to 'get over it'. This reveals what seems to be a typical trench of misunderstanding between the parent and child in adoptive families.

Another interesting point is how Kevin's adoptive father dismissed his attempts at communication, in the confusing early stages of his adoption, as 'babble'. Here was a child clearly and understandably confused between his early linguistic formulations in Hangul (Korean) and his sudden transition into English, being disparaged for using his natural language.

Perhaps the most positive and constructive element of the screening was the Q&A time after the session. Hearing the lived experience of 'actual' adoptees seems to be an unfortunate rarity in the adoption public discourse. The emphasis is usually on the parents and how much they had to go through in order to 'get' their child, which seems to overshadow many of the negative experiences of child adoptees, many of which they carry into adulthood. This invisibility and burden of expectation to be grateful is replicated in the donor conception community too. In both adoption and donor conception rarely are the 'offspring' considered a part of the equation, despite the fact that they are the real 'product' of the non-contract.

The panel consisted of Shaun, Ryan and Jessica; three intercountry adoptees and one counsellor, Micah, who is a practitioner working with adoptees and their parents in a professional capacity. Despite differences in their situations and upbringing, there was a common frustration from their fellow Australians about their lack of apparent knowledge about where they were born, despite the fact that



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Review

'The Ugly Model' Q&A cont from p6

they were mostly very young when they were brought to Australia. Herein lies much of the problem - for all the expected nuances of life in a multicultural society (which has been going on 'formally' in Australia since at least the 1970s) people still expect that anyone of non-Anglo Celtic backgrounds who has been raised here to have some intrinsic knowledge of Korea, Afghanistan, or wherever they came from and are inclined to judge them if they don't. I understood from this discussion that it can be painful for intercountry adoptees to have their loss of country and culture thrown back in their face in this way.

I am so used to hearing a narrative which wants to valorise adoption and donor conception, that I was relieved to hear the panel speaking frankly about the pain and frustration of it, with no agenda to marginalise or minimise the voices. Shaun spoke of the consequences of a sense of abandonment, and emphasised the complexity of international adoption to the audience, many of whom had their adolescent children with them. Ryan, who co-hosts a podcast called *Adopted Feels*, spoke of the problems connected to 'adoption' as a description as opposed to an ongoing dialogue.

Jessica spoke of a sense of accumulated resentment in adoptees, especially as they are so often infantilised well into adulthood. She also made a memorable comment that "eating kimchi can't ameliorate the loss of a connection to language and culture" - which demonstrated how difficult it is to assimilate with a culture you 'look like' you belong to.



From the perspective of a donor conceived person it was confronting yet liberating to hear individuals with a lived experience openly sharing their perspectives in such a public forum when most of the time these discussions occur behind closed doors or within private online groups. I was reminded again of the parallels between adoption and donor conception – both in terms of the internal challenges and the mismatch with the way those around us, despite their 'good intentions' think we should be.

The screening of the documentary 'The Ugly Model' was edited for this session with the consent of the Producer, **Bianca Kuijper**. If you'd like to see the full version you can stream it here: <https://www.uglymodeldoc.com/>

The panel discussion will be made available as a webinar early 2020, please email icasupport@lifeworks.com.au to be added to the mailing list.

The Monash Uni Adult Adoptee Performing Ensemble

The documentary style performance is based on the content of the participants' research interviews,

storytelling sessions and group activities undertaken in a series of theatre workshops. The research participants are the actors of their own stories.



The Performativity of Adoption Trauma: Performance, Haunting and The Uncanny is now in its final phase of development. There will be two performances at Monash (Clayton campus) in 2020. So,....**WATCH THIS SPACE** for performance dates and information about how to book your **TWO FREE tickets**.

Members of the Monash University Adult Adoptee Performing Ensemble

News & Events



Without Consent: "Australia's past adoption practices" exhibition examines, through the contributions of people affected by Australia's forced adoptions policies and practices, what happens when social expectations, morality and authority collide.

It is estimated that 250,000 Australians were affected by the policies and practices of forced adoption, with most adoptions occurring between 1950

and 1975. The policies saw unmarried mothers forced, pressured or coerced to give up their children rather than bear the shame and social stigma of pregnancy and birth outside marriage.

Such pregnancies were shrouded in secrecy and the mothers hidden away until the post-partum period, when they were expected to return home, forget about their babies and get on with their lives. They did not forget. (Taken from the NWM website)

This exhibition, on until 27th January 2020, is developed and presented by the National Archives of Australia.



Crowd Funding for Inaugural Lunch in Vietnam for Birth Mothers, April 2020

Kate Coghlan is raising money for birth mothers in Vietnam to be able to attend an inaugural lunch being held in Vietnam next April to come together and meet inter-country adoptees and share stories of what it has been like over all these years. One party losing a child and the other party losing a mother.

Please take some time to check out Kate's page and consider donating.



Kate's story was shared in our Winter edition of VOICE. Donate to:

<http://bit.ly/MyCauseVietnamMothers2020>

ISS Australia video release

International Social Service (ISS) Australia together with Stories in Motion recently released a video to raise awareness of the tracing and reunion needs of Australian intercountry adoptees. <https://www.iss.org.au/our-services/intercountry-adoption-tracing-and-reunification/>

ISS Australia notes that there are 10,000 intercountry adoptees in Australia and that many wish to reconnect with their family and/or country of origin. Since government funding to ISS ceased in June 2016, they hope the video will raise awareness and inspire people to donate to their services.

Netherlands: 150 mothers so far told their stories to forced adoption hotline

The information collected will form part of the inquiry announced by junior justice minister Sander Dekker into the circumstances under which unmarried women parted with their babies. The register will remain open until next June. Read more at DutchNews.nl: <http://bit.ly/150toldStoriesDutchNews>

Girl in Return Adopted Teenager journey back to Ethiopia

Years after being adopted from Ethiopia to Denmark, a teenager reclaims her identity and fights the adoption system.

Go to this link to read more <http://bit.ly/GirlReturnAdoptedTeenEthiopia>



Julia Zemiro's Home Delivery with Judith Lucy ABC

In Series 7 Julia Zemiro meets self-described "funny lady" Judith Lucy in Melbourne. Judith talks about her formative comedy years. We then return to Perth and Judith talks through growing up in a dysfunctional family.

Judith Lucy's adoptive parents emigrated from Ireland to Perth in the early 1950s, and she was born and raised in Perth. At 25 Judith discovered she was adopted. To catch the full episode go to <http://bit.ly/HomeDeliveryJudithLucy>

Inquiry into Historical Forced Adoptions in Victoria

On 28 May 2019, Victoria's Attorney General, The Hon. Jill Hennessy, announced that a new parliamentary Inquiry into support services and responses to the issue of historical forced adoptions in Victoria had been referred to the Legal and Social Issues Committee in the Legislative Assembly – chaired by Natalie Suleyman MP. Ms Hennessy advised via social media that “Danielle Green MP - Member for Yan Yean and Mary-Anne Thomas MP came to me earlier this year and shared their constituents’ powerful stories of forced adoption..... Reporting by December 2020 the committee will provide women and their children the opportunity to tell their stories.”

This article is to provide information about this Inquiry and propose some things to consider and what you might need to prepare if you want to make a submission. Details of this Inquiry can be found here <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/lsic-la/inquiries/inquiry/973>.

Terms of Reference and Media Release

The Terms of Reference are “That this House refers, an Inquiry into support services and responses to the issue of historical forced adoptions in Victoria to the Legal and Social Issues Committee for consideration and report no later than 31 December 2020.”

According to the media release circulated on the 6th November:

“The inquiry will explore the support services and responses provided to the people in our community who endured the past practice of forced adoption going back several decades,” Committee Chair Natalie Suleyman said.

“It is an important opportunity for community members to provide information that will enable the Committee to assess what support has been provided and to make recommendations going forward,” Ms Suleyman said.

Forced adoption practices predominantly took place between the 1950s and 1970s throughout Australia, but also occurred outside of this time period.

Through forced adoption, also identified by some as forced family separation, a child's natural parent, or parents, were compelled to give up their baby for adoption without their willing or informed consent.

Groups involved included governments, non-government organisations, religious institutions and professionals such as doctors and social workers.

In 2012, the Victorian Government issued a formal apology “to the mothers, fathers, sons and daughters who were profoundly harmed by past adoption practices in Victoria”. This followed a recommendation from the 2012 Commonwealth Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs in its report on the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices*.

The National Apology for Forced Adoptions was delivered by the Federal Government on 21 March 2013.

Following the state apology, the Victorian Government committed to providing practical assistance to those affected by these practices.

“The terms of reference for this inquiry are broad, so the Committee will consider all issues raised by community members who make submissions and present at public hearings,” Ms Suleyman said.

“We encourage people with experiences and knowledge on this important matter to make a submission.”

Submissions to the inquiry are welcome until 3 February 2020*. The Committee's final report will be tabled at the end of 2020.

The terms of reference for the inquiry and details on how to make a submission are available from the Committee's [website](#).”

Making a submission

The website states that “Any person or organisation can make a submission to the Inquiry. In conducting this Inquiry, the Committee is examining systemic problems and failures in this area, rather than conducting forensic investigations into individual cases.”

Some people may already know what they want in relation to this Inquiry – it may be specialist support services, redress, a general or personal apology, removal of the statute of limitations, specialist counselling or something else. Some people may just wish to be able to share with others what happened to them and the impacts.

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* See update on next page

Forced Adoptions Inquiry continued...

VANISH suggests you be mindful that some people may find it therapeutic to participate in the Inquiry by making a submission or attending consultations, whilst others may experience it as 'opening old wounds' and may feel the need for further support or counselling during or after writing their submission. It is normal to feel nervous or distressed about the idea of writing about your experience.

VANISH will lobby for the Inquiry to be undertaken in a way that ideally does not cause further distress and that uses trauma informed communication designed to acknowledge the significance of the sensitive nature of the experiences. However, there still might be times when this process may be difficult.

To begin with, you may want to think about talking to someone you know and trust to give you support. You can also get support through services provided by the Parliamentary Committee. These services can provide you with emotional support through a referral to their free counselling service (Carfi). If you would like to discuss your submission or support needs you can call the Committee Manager, Yuki Simmonds on 8682 2845.

The steps are

- deciding whether to make a submission
- considering your support needs
- deciding whether your submission will be public, confidential or name withheld
- writing your submission
- submitting it by email, post or through the online submission form (see below)
- make and keep a copy of your submission for your own records.

It is important to be mindful of the issues surrounding confidentiality and privacy and to note how your information will be used and protected. VANISH recommends that you read the information provided on the parliamentary website as well as this article. In particular, we suggest you read in the full the sections relating to:

Confidentiality which describes what to do if do not want your submission to be published or if you are willing for it to be published but with your name withheld. VANISH suggests that you make contact with the Committee to clarify your submission will be treated as confidential before you lodge it and also to check regarding whether these confidential



Parliament of Victoria

submissions may be made public after 30 years.

Parliamentary Privilege which explains how public submissions, once released by the Committee, are subject to parliamentary privilege which means what you say in your submission cannot be used in court against you, and also describes the process for right of reply when a person or organisation considers they are the subject of an adverse reflection in evidence to the Committee.

[https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/lsc-LA/Inquiry into Responses to Historical Forced Adoptions in Victoria /Parliamentary privilege.pdf](https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/lsc-LA/Inquiry%20into%20Responses%20to%20Historical%20Forced%20Adoptions%20in%20Victoria%20Parliamentary%20privilege.pdf)

The closing date for submission is 3 February 2020.

STOP PRESS: An extension to 6 MARCH 2020 can be given upon request. Call (03)8682 2846 or email forcedadoptionsinquiry@parliament.vic.gov.au

We will keep you informed regarding public hearings for this Inquiry through our newsletter and new bulletins, however given sometimes consultations can be announced at quite short notice, we suggest you sign up for parliamentary updates on the progress of the Inquiry if you are able to. You can do this by emailing news@parliament.vic.gov.au, and requesting updates on **Responses to Historical Forced Adoptions in Victoria Inquiry updates**.

VANISH provides support to everyone affected by past and forced adoption policies and practices so please feel free to contact us by phone, email or letter if we can assist you. Our contact details are on the back cover of this newsletter including our 1300 number which if you call from a landline, is the cost of a local call.



SELF CARE DURING THE FESTIVE SEASON

Christmas and the holiday season can be overwhelming for some. While one hopes for this time of year to be all that you dreamed, just like the adverts showing perfect families in their perfect homes, this is rarely the reality and for some it can be a stressful nightmare. Self care is often talked about as a way to get through, but what does self care involve and how can it help? Below are some suggestions that you might find helpful.

Give yourself some time out

Give yourself some time out so that the pressure of Christmas does not become relentless. Allocate some free time in your diary to relax. Everyone finds different ways to relax but when we are stressed we often forget how important this is. It might help to remind yourself to read a book or listen to podcasts, listen to some music, spend five minutes or more doing some breathing exercises, go for a walk or ride, do something creative, or watch a comedy or something uplifting. Make sure you are allowing enough time to sleep.

Spread out the celebrations and commitments

We can often busy ourselves socially with too many events and functions to the extent that we are not caring for our own needs. One way to prevent this is to be selective about which invitations you accept and spread the Christmas festivities over several days so there is not too much pressure. Pace yourself. You could also arrange a few events for January, you might find that others appreciate it too.

Don't strive for impossible perfection

Perfection is only ever someone's perspective. No one alive has attained perfection! Adjust your expectations and be kind to yourself. Avoid blaming yourself if your Christmas is not perfect.

Set boundaries

Many of us have a problem with setting clear boundaries, especially when we just want everyone else to have a good time. Setting clear boundaries with people is about letting them know what you need and what you can and can't do. It takes a bit of practice and sometimes if you can't say 'no', just saying 'I just need a bit of time to think about it' can give you the space you need. Remind yourself that it is impossible to keep everyone happy and it's your Christmas too.

Give

There is good evidence that we feel better when we focus on kindness and giving to others, it is good for the soul. It can help to offer some of your time or lend a helping hand to a friend, neighbour, relative or by volunteering, or even just giving a compliment or a seasonal greeting to a stranger.

Receive

Some of us feel uncomfortable receiving. If this is you, try to open yourself up to receiving, whether it is a gift, a compliment or just some good cheer, delight in the little things, or write down all the things people do for you or give you.

Self Compassion

Being compassionate with yourself can feel strange but it can also work wonders. Feeling compassion towards yourself about the things that have happened to you or that you have done or not done is a powerful antidote to self blame.

Connect with others

If you are on your own this Christmas, which many of us are, seek out ways to connect with others, even for short periods of time. Look for local activities or volunteering opportunities, visit or make a phone call to someone you care about, or write a letter.



Fundraising

Buy an original watercolour by Hank Romyn and help VANISH

To all VANISH supporters, this is your opportunity to purchase a unique work of art, for yourself. We are delighted that retired architect Hank Romyn has very kindly donated 15 of his stylish watercolours to VANISH. This is your opportunity to purchase a unique work of art, for yourself or as an original Christmas gift. You will at the same time be helping VANISH raise much needed funds to support its worthwhile work. VANISH is extremely grateful to Hank for his generosity.

Hank has an affinity to VANISH and its service users because of his own childhood. He was born in The Netherlands before the Second World War. Tragically his mother later died in childbirth, and Hank was sent to a boarding school and his brother to an orphanage. Hank migrated to Australia in the 50s and was for many years a prominent architect in Melbourne. He now lives in Parkville.



The 15 paintings are all original and all behind glass in temporary frames. VANISH is offering these framed works for sale. Make us an offer of anything over \$50.00 (plus \$17.50 postage if you cannot collect it from North Melbourne). Offers over \$50 will be accepted if your choice is still available.

ALL OFFERS OVER \$50 ACCEPTED!

You can view the paintings at <https://photos.app.goo.gl/hoMJUViXK7iWbU1a6>

Click on a photograph and then on "i" (for info) at the top of the page. This will identify the painting by number eg HANK ROMYN #1 and gives the size of the framed painting. Make your choice and place your order by email to info@vanish.org.au identifying your chosen painting by number eg #1 and advising us of your offer. We suggest you nominate a second choice in case your first choice has already sold. Please also confirm whether you will collect the painting from VANISH or pay for postage (with details of your postal address). When you receive confirmation from us that you have been successful, we will contact you to arrange payment.



Artist Hank Romyn with
VANISH Patron Pauline Ley

GET IN EARLY TO SECURE YOUR CHOICE & HELP VANISH!

Other ways to support VANISH

**Tuesday 3rd December
is Giving Tuesday,
a Global Movement**

You can support the work of VANISH by

* making a Tax Deductible Donation to VANISH through Give Now by using this link www.givenow.com.au/vanishinc/ You can make a one-off donation or commit to a monthly amount. Every little bit helps.

* making Tax Deductible Donation by cheque to our address on the back cover.

* bequeathing some money to VANISH in your will. To find out more about how to make a bequest please contact the Manager of VANISH, Charlotte Smith on manager@vanish.org.au or by post to the address on the back cover.

Thank you for your generosity

VANISH Professional Training

A two-day competency-based training program for health professionals and counsellors

In November, the VANISH Counsellor Training was held in Geelong, at the National Wool Museum to coincide with the Without Consent Exhibition.

Feedback from participants was very positive in regard to the presentation of the two day workshop, by Dr Sue Green, and location.

Day One is designed for anyone who is interested in learning more about the lifelong effects that past and forced adoptions has had on peoples lives and the second day is specifically designed for qualified counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers. *Please note that Day One is a prerequisite for Day Two.*

Register your interest in training events in 2020:
Email: info@vanish.org.au
Phone: (03)9328 8611

New Complex Trauma Clinical Guidelines Launched

[Blue Knot Foundation](#), Australia's National Centre of Excellence for Complex Trauma has launched new clinical guidelines for the treatment of complex trauma. Written by ISSTD members, Dr Cathy Kezelman AM and Pam Stavropoulos PhD, these clinical guidelines update the original ground-breaking and internationally acclaimed clinical guidelines, which were published in 2012.

The original guidelines were unique: the first such clinical guidelines published anywhere in the world. In fact, they were endorsed by ISSTD, the first time the organisation had ever endorsed treatment guidelines from another organisation.

Much has changed in the treatment of complex trauma since 2012, not just in Australia, but around the world. These updated guidelines expand and further develop the material written in 2012 and contain considerable new material.

Link: <http://bit.ly/TraumaClinicalGuidelines>

DNA Workshop in Albury

VANISH ran a DNA information session in Albury in September. This session was facilitated by Rose Overberg. Rose is considered an expert in DNA searching and might be familiar to some of you as she has often shared her story about the search for her biological father <https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/health-and-wellness/dna-detectives-and-the-end-of-family-secrets-20190306-p5124t.html>

Rose was invited to speak at one of VANISH's monthly support groups in Albury/Wodonga. The DNA session was organised in response to demand from existing support group members and was also advertised as a public event for others with an adoption experience.

Topics discussed were: what is DNA and how is it used for finding unknown family; using DNA and family trees to be a DNA detective and finally how to manage expectations and contact with genetic relatives. Overall the DNA session was well received and assisted groups members to understand the complexity of DNA testing.

New College of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Practices (CATSIHP)

PACFA is pleased to announce that the PACFA Council has approved the establishment of PACFA's newest College, the College of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Practices (CATSIHP). The new College has already garnered substantial support from PACFA members, with over 80 individual members indicating interest in joining the College. Read more at:

<http://bit.ly/CATSIHP>

CATSIHP will also provide leadership, representation and advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Practitioners. It will offer relevant professional development opportunities, support the development of curriculum, establish support and referral networks, contribute to research on Indigenous issues and work towards government recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Practitioners.

New Books in the Library

Before We Were Yours

by Lisa Wingate

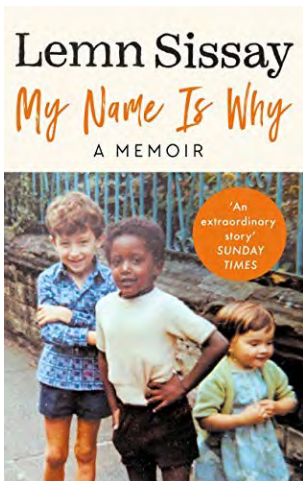


A compelling, harrowing and utterly redemptive novel that reveals a family torn apart by a shocking betrayal. Based on real-life events of kidnap, illegal adoption and a corrupt orphanage, the fictional narrative brings alive deeply researched real-life events in the manner of Jodi Picoult and Caroline Overington.

One of the year's best books . . . It is almost a cliché to say a book is 'lovingly written' but that phrase applies clearly to Lisa Wingate's latest novel, *Before We Were Yours*. This story about children taken from their parents through kidnapping or subterfuge and then placed for adoption, for a price, clearly pours out of Wingate's heart. . . . It is impossible not to get swept up in this near-perfect novel. It invades your heart from the very first pages and stays there long after the book is finished. Few novelists could strike the balance this story requires but Wingate does it with assurance. *The Huffington Post*

My Name is Why

by Lemn Sissay - A Memoir

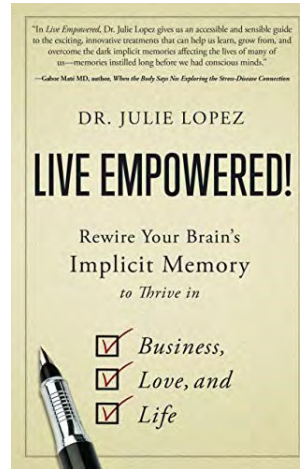


At the age of seventeen, after a childhood in an adopted family followed by six years in care homes, Norman Greenwood was given his birth certificate. He learned that his real name was not Norman. It was Lemn Sissay. He was British and Ethiopian. And he learned that his mother had been pleading for his safe return to her since his birth. Here Sissay recounts his life story. It is a story of

neglect and determination. Misfortune and hope. Cruelty and beauty. Sissay reflects on adoption, self-expression and Britishness, and in doing so explores the institutional care system, race, family and the meaning of home. Written with all the lyricism and power you would expect from one of the nation's best-loved voices, this moving, frank and timely memoir is the result of a life spent asking questions, and a celebration of the redemptive power of creativity. *Goodreads*

Live Empowered!

Rewire your Brain's Implicit Memory to Thrive in Business, Love, and Life by Dr Julie Lopez



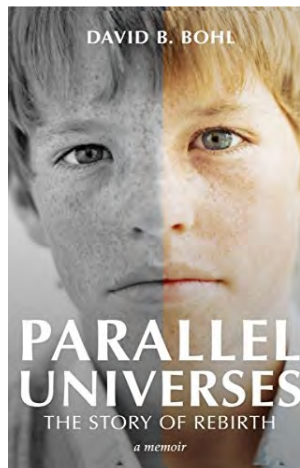
Have you ever found yourself puzzled by an inability to act on something important that seems logically within your reach? Do you notice that invisible barriers seem to keep you from making desired changes? Some of these roadblocks may seem minor, others insurmountable. Now you can get past them by

hacking into the hidden regions of your mind that influence your daily life.

Live Empowered! is a different kind of self-help resource. No simple solutions here. Dr. Julie Lopez offers valuable information on the neuropsychology surrounding implicit memory, the past experiences you can't recall but which remain stored deep within your subconscious mind. *Amazon*

Parallel Universes

The Story of Rebirth by David B Bohl



In this poignant and powerful memoir, David B. Bohl reveals the inner turmoil and broad spectrum of warring emotions- shame, anger, triumph, shyness, pride- he experienced growing up as a "relinquished" boy.

Adopted at birth by a prosperous family, Bohl battled throughout his earlier years to keep up a good front and surpass expectations as he tried desperately to fit in. An over-achiever at everything he undertook, whether in sailing, academics, or life as a trader on the Chicago Exchange floor, he continued his search for happiness, often finding it in a bottle or pill, and ultimately becoming a raging wealthy alcoholic. David B. Bohl's story offers hope to those struggling with the reality of everyday life in today's increasingly stressful world. *Amazon*

Acknowledging those not with us this season

*The Manager and Staff of VANISH would like to offer
our sincere condolences to friends and family of our
members who have passed away this year or members'
loved ones who are no longer with us.*



Upcoming VANISH Support Group Dates

Mixed Groups are for Adoptees, Natural Parents, Adoptive and Alternative Parents

Adoptee Groups are for Adult Adopted Persons over the age of 18

Mothers Groups are also referred to as Natural Mothers Group

Melbourne

VANISH office

**1st Thursday of each month
Adopted Persons 6.30-8.30pm**

5th December

6th February

5th March

Melbourne

VANISH office

**2nd Tuesday of each month
Mixed 7.30-9.30pm**

10th December

14th January

11th February

10th March

Melbourne

VANISH office

**3rd Wednesday of each month
Donor Conceived Adult Network**

7.00-9.00pm

18th December

19th February

15th April

Melbourne

VANISH office

**4th Tuesday of each month
Adopted Persons 7.30-9.30pm**

28th January

25th February

Ballarat

**3rd Saturday of each month
20 Eastwood St, Ballarat**

2.00-4.00pm

18th April MIXED

16th May ADOPTTEES

Albury-Wodonga

**2nd Saturday of each month
Albury Library, 540 Kiewa St**

10.30am-12.30pm

14th December MIXED

14 March MIXED

9th May ADOPTTEES

11th July MOTHERS

Mildura

To register your interest in
attending a support group
contact the VANISH office

Bendigo

To register your interest in
attending a support group
contact the VANISH office

For all enquiries please call VANISH on (03) 9328 8611 or 1300 826 474, or email info@vanish.org.au

VANISH

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