



Forced Adoption Exceptional Circumstances Fund – An Overview

What is it?

The Forced Adoption Exceptional Circumstances Fund was established by the Victorian Government to provide one-off discretionary payments of up to \$10,000 to mothers affected by forced adoption policies and practices in Victoria prior to 1985, who are experiencing exceptional circumstances.

Who can apply?

Mothers affected by forced adoption policies and practices in Victoria prior to 1985 who are experiencing exceptional circumstances can apply to the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) for the fund. Mothers affected by forced adoption policies and practices that did not result in an adoption are eligible.

What are Exceptional Circumstances?

Exceptional circumstances might include a terminal or critical illness, a diagnosed mental illness, a health condition that, is chronic or requires surgery or other circumstances that are having, or will have, a significant and detrimental impact on your life over the next 12 months such that you would be prevented from having full benefit of any payment made to you if you had to wait. The fund is intended for those in immediate need. If you are terminally or critically ill, your application will be prioritised.

What documents do I need to apply?

Applicants need to submit a completed and signed application form, together with:

- Certified copies of two forms of current ID, or photo of you holding your forms of ID.
- A copy of proof of any name change e.g. marriage certificate
- Supporting documentation to show you were affected by forced adoption policies and practices. This could be any of the following:
 - Adoption records such as a copy of an adopted person's original birth certificate or court records created by past adoption agencies and courts (DJCS can assist with locating these records if you wish)
 - a copy of your submission to a past inquiry into forced adoption practices
 - any other document that shows you were pregnant and / or gave birth in Victoria prior to 1985 or that you experienced forced adoption practices aimed at forcing relinquishment of your baby for adoption.
 - a letter from your doctor or support worker who can confirm that you have been impacted by forced adoption practices and policies
 - a statutory declaration

- Supporting documentation to show you are experiencing exceptional circumstances such as the Medical Statement Form or other documents that show you are experiencing other acute circumstances that may warrant a one-off payment.
- You do not need to retell your experience of forced adoption practices when you apply

Other key points

- Discretionary payments will not affect any future applications for redress.
- Successful applicants should seek advice regarding any tax or Centrelink implications prior to accepting the offer.
- You can nominate a support person to assist you or to be your point of contact

How VANISH can assist you

- VANISH can assist you to complete your application and gather the documentation.
- We can provide you with emotional support while and after you make your application.
- VANISH can act as your point of contact if you prefer.
- A VANISH worker can liaise with your support person if you have one.
- We can send you the forms by post or email or we can complete them with you over the telephone if you prefer, then post them to you for signing.

How to Submit

If you would like VANISH to submit your application on your behalf, you can post it to us at P.O. Box 112 Carlton South, VIC 3053 or email it to info@vanish.org.au.

If you would like to submit your application directly to DJCS, you can send it by post to Department of Justice and Community Safety, Forced Adoption Exceptional Circumstances Fund, GPO Box 4332, Melbourne, VIC, 3001 or you can email it to forcedadoptioninquiry@justice.vic.gov.au.

You will receive a letter or email confirming receipt, then once your application has been reviewed by the advisory committee, they will contact you and tell you about their decision.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact VANISH.



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The Forced Adoption Exceptional Circumstances Fund is supported by the Victorian Government