

VANISH news bulletin

July 2013

Dear Members, Friends and Colleagues

Here we are in mid-Winter again and I trust your Winter Solstice weekend was good, either in blissful solitude or with family, under the magnificent moon. We are busy enough at VANISH not to feel the cold too much and I take this opportunity to up-date you with what is going on.

VICTORIAN LEGISLATION CHANGE

VANISH Committee of Management, staff and members have worked closely with ARMS, Origins, Independent Regional Mothers and adopted people to stop the amendments to the Adoption Act being passed. Whilst VANISH supports the amendment to the Adoption Act 2013 which allows natural parents to have access to identifying information we do not support the introduction of Contact Statements. We lobbied, held a vigil and attended many meetings expressing the strong opinions of all our communities against these changes. Labor members Danielle Green and Jenny Mikakos fought valiantly on our behalf aided by Greens Sue Pennicuik and Colleen Hartland. Many Coalition members personally agreed with our points of view but in the end voted as a Coalition block passing all the Amendments to the Act. Following is the Department of Human Service's official statement in relation to the changes that will take place from the 1 July 2013 (see below). Please do not hesitate to ring VANISH and ask to talk to a Support Worker if you need further advice.

DHS ADVICE ON NEW LEGISLATION

On 25 October 2012 the Victorian Parliament formally apologised ('to mothers, fathers, sons and daughters') who were profoundly harmed by past adoption practices in Victoria. As part of the apology the Victorian Government announced a number of additional measures to better respond to the needs of people who were affected by past adoption practices including amendments to the Adoption Act 1984.

As of 1 July 2013, natural parents can apply for identifying information to a relevant authority using a prescribed form. This form can be obtained from the FIND website and/or upon application to FIND and including Anglicare, CatholicCare (previously Catholic Social Services Bureau/Centacare and Connections (previously Copeland/UnitingCare).

The changes to the Adoption Act 1984 now include:

- Access to Identifying Information - Natural parents will be able to receive identifying information about their adult adopted children without the need for the adopted person's permission.
- An adopted person is able to regulate contact by lodging a Contact Statement that outlines the type of contact they wish to have with their natural parent including being able to express a wish for no contact.
- The changes now also allow the Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages to register the adoption of a child whose adoption was finalised in a Hague Convention country with the State's Central Authority involvement, and to issue a birth certificate in respect of the child when an application is made. DHS/ICAS can provide advice on how to obtain a birth certificate. This will not form part of FIND's work.

Adult adopted persons are recommended to discuss their contact wishes with FIND or any relevant authority (as mentioned above) before making a decision.

FIND/DHS has available an Information Sheet and FAQ's sheet for natural parents and adult adopted persons. Both these documents provide a well detailed understanding of the changes to the Adoption Act 1984 that will come into effect on Monday July 1 2013.

If you have any queries in relation to the information provided please do not hesitate to contact FIND.

Here at VANISH we will endeavour to answer any queries you may have about the new legislation.

APOLOGIES

All states, with the exception of the Northern Territory, and the Federal Government have now apologised for former 'forced' adoption policies and practices. VANISH was delighted to assist in the dissemination of funding to attend the apologies and to host video-link events in Melbourne and Tasmania. We trust this was a healing time for you all.

To their shame the Northern Territory back-flipped on its commitment to deliver a formal apology to victims of forced adoption. This is a sad blow bringing much grief to those mothers who were separated from their babies and those people who were adopted in this territory. The Northern Territory Minister for Families and Children Alison Anderson made the announcement that an apology would not be appropriate because "*These policies and practices did not continue after the Territory became self-governing in 1978*". We do not agree with this statement.

VANISH is working on a coloured edition of VOICE that will present all the apologies, state and national, with other relevant details. We plan for this edition to be ready in the New Year to coincide with VANISH turning 25 and trust it will be a beautiful souvenir edition for you to treasure and keep. If you would like to help with this significant task please contact Diane at VANISH.

Meanwhile we look forward to your stories, poems, plays and art work so please send us anything you would like to share. We know resources are important to you so we attach a message from Evelyn Robison, South Australia:

"Two of my books ***TO PRISON WITH LOVE*** and... ***WHAT KIND OF LOVE IS THIS*** is both on Amazon/Kindle as e-books and has been updated. Also, I'm in the process of sending my speeches to Kindle as articles. ***Radical Leadership for Radical Change*** was the last speech I gave back in 2000, so I've submitted that one and it is now available for .99 cents on the Kindle site. Also Letters ***from the Heart*** which were written by triad members in response to my guest appearances on the 700 Club and PTL over 30 years ago.

Kindle just sent me this link to my new updated version of What Kind of Love is This? A story of Adoption Reconciliation.
<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00D6G7JCC>"

Evelyn works very hard to both produce her books and keep them accessible at a very inexpensive rate so we urge you to follow up and have a good read!

AGM/COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

VANISH was established in 1989 and **we are looking forward to seeing you at 6.00p.m. on Wednesday, 28 August** at the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, 5/50 Market Street, City for our 24th AGM. Further details to come nearer the date.

Our Committee of Management will be looking to refresh committee membership at the AGM so please contact our Chairperson Leigh Hubbard on lhubbard@anfvic.asn.au if you would like to discuss joining the committee

DHS FUNDED WORKSHOP CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

VANISH is pleased that we are now moving along with this project that is funded for two years from DHS.

Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss this new project on manager@vanish.org.au. I look forward to your opinions and consultation with you.



Media release

The Hon Mary Wooldridge MP
Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Community Services
Minister for Disability Services and Reform

Monday 1 July 2013

Historic adoption reform takes effect today

Amended adopted laws initiated by the Victorian Coalition Government that give parents who relinquished their babies for adoption prior to 1984 the right to access identifying information about their now adult child come into effect today.

The *Adoption Amendment Bill 2013*, which recently passed through Parliament, honoured a commitment – made by the Coalition Government at the time of the Parliamentary Apology for Past Adoption Practices last year – to give natural parents access to this information. Community Services Minister Mary Wooldridge said there is widespread recognition that past adoption practices have had an ongoing and devastating impact on many natural parents.

“Those parents now have the right to find out the child’s name after adoption, as well as the name and address of the adoptive parents at the time of the adoption,” Ms Wooldridge said. While they now have the right to receive identifying information, with or without their adult child’s permission, the amended laws include measures to protect the privacy of adult children. They can make a formal contact statement – which needs to be renewed every five years – stating that they do not want the parents to contact them, with breaches incurring penalties.

The changes coming into effect today reinforce the Coalition Government’s commitment to improve recognition and support to those involved in adoption. Other reforms include: a formal apology by the Victorian Parliament on 25 October 2012, to parents and children who were profoundly harmed by past adoption practices in Victoria and acknowledged that many thousands of Victorian babies were taken from their mothers, without informed consent, and that this loss caused immense grief;

removing fees charged when people affected by adoption search for their family information through the family information networks and discovery service; and

changing the *Adoption Act* to enable the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages to register the adoption of a child whose adoption was finalised in a Hague Convention country. This enables them to get a Victorian birth certificate.

For information, contact Family Information Networks and Discovery (FIND) at: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/contact-us/locations/central-dhs-office/contact-family-information-networks-and-discovery

Media contact: Michael Moore 0400 719 355 michael.moore@minstaff.vic.gov.au

Visit www.premier.vic.gov.au for more news



VANISH staff member Hana Crisp has just received a grant from the Australia Korea Foundation to attend this year's International Korean Adoptee Associations' 'Gathering' in Seoul, South Korea. The Gathering is the largest conference of its kind, occurring only once every three years, with attendees from all across the United States, Europe, Asia and Australia. Past conferences have included sessions relating to: birth family search, negotiating relationships with birth family members post-reunion, Korea from a historical perspective, developments in domestic Korean adoption, working and living in Korea, Korean adoptees and parenthood, exploring identity through art, and more. Hana will also be singing the Korean national anthem at the opening ceremony of the conference. For further information you can visit: www.ikaa.org

INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTEE SUPPORT GROUP INFORMATION
SESSION

VANISH would like to invite all adult inter-country adoptees, aged 18 years and over, to an information session to discuss a possible Inter-Country Adoptee Support Group. The session will be hosted by Hana, a Korean adoptee (who will just have arrived back from attending the 2013 IKAAGathering in Seoul), Simon, a Vietnamese adoptee and friendly VANISH staff. The details are:

**Tuesday, 6 August 2013
7 - 8pm**

**VANISH office: Level 1, 50 Howard St, North Melbourne (between Victoria and Queensberry Streets)
A light supper will be provided**

We hope to see you there! Hana and Simon

Inside: Life in Children's Homes and Institutions

**29 Aug 2013 - 27 Jan 2014 Melbourne Museum,
11 Nicholson Street, Melbourne.**

Shares the experiences of some of the half a million children who spent time in institutional 'care'.

Although so many children were brought up in institutions, what happened to them there is largely unknown to the wider community.

The histories of those who spent time 'inside' – histories for so long unspoken, unheard or disbelieved – are becoming an acknowledged part of our national history.

Featuring the words, voices and objects of the Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and all those who experienced institutional care as children, *Inside* provides a chance for all Australians to understand something of a history that has affected so many of us and was hidden for so long.

Inside is a travelling exhibition developed and presented by the National Museum of Australia and supported by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

**Best wishes
Coleen Clare, Manager
and the Staff Team at VANISH Inc
1 July 2013**