

VANISH news bulletin

November 2012

Historic Apology to people affected by past adoption practices

The Victorian Parliament apologised to the mothers, fathers, sons and daughters affected by past adoption practices on Thursday 25 October 2012 and expressed regret for the pain and harm caused by the past practices.

The Apology acknowledged that forced adoptions occurred from early last century into the early 1980s and were particularly common between 1950 and 1975.

A stakeholder group comprising representatives from VANISH Inc (Victorian Adoption Network for Information and Self Help); Association of Relinquishing Mothers Vic (ARMS); Origins Victoria; and Independent Regional Mothers were consulted in the lead up to the Apology.

VANISH sincerely thanks all our members who contributed so generously to the content of the Apology and arrangements for this special day.

The proceedings were watched by around 300 invited guests at live broadcasts in Queen's Hall, Parliament House and at the Windsor Hotel. The events were hosted by the Assistant Director Placement and Support and the Secretary of the Department of Human Services respectively. The screening at Queen's Hall was attended by the stakeholder consultation group and representatives of some religious-affiliated organisations that had been involved in the past adoption practices.

The Government announced a number of additional measures to better respond to the needs of people who were affected by forced adoption practices. These include:

- funding of \$500,000 over two years to establish a professional development program to build specialist competencies in post forced-adoption psychotherapy for qualified counsellors.
- amending the Adoption Act 1984 to allow birth parents to receive identifying information about adopted people
- waiving fees for people affected by past forced adoption practices that seek access to personal and family information through the Family Information Networks and Discovery (FIND) service provided by the Department of Human Services
- support for the development of an integrated birth certificate in conjunction with national reforms relating to documentation and provision of birth and adoption records.

A DVD of the broadcast will be made available in the coming weeks. To order a copy of the DVD contact Robyn Gumley by email at robyn.gumley@dhs.vic.gov.au or via telephone on 03 9096 7366.

Copies of the Apology co-signed by The Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the National Party, and the Leader of the Victorian Greens have been framed and placed at key locations, including the Parliament of Victoria, serving as a permanent reminder of this important milestone. A commemorative book was also available at the live screening for signing. It will now be placed in the Parliament of Victoria library for people to sign.

Apology Past Adoption Practices

Thursday 25 October 2012

This Parliament expresses our formal and sincere apology to the mothers, fathers, sons and daughters who were profoundly harmed by past adoption practices in Victoria. We acknowledge that many thousands of Victorian babies were taken from their mothers, without informed consent, and that this loss caused immense grief. We express our sincere sorrow and regret for the health and welfare policies that condoned the practice of forced separations. These were misguided, unwarranted, and they caused immeasurable pain. To the mothers and fathers who were denied the opportunity to love and care for your children, and for the pain and trauma you experienced, we are deeply sorry. To the sons and daughters for whom adoption meant continual anxiety, uncertainty and the deprivation of a natural family connection – we offer our sincere apology. Today, with all Members of the Parliament of Victoria gathered in this House, we acknowledge the devastating and ongoing impacts of these practices of the past. To all those harmed we offer our heartfelt sympathy and apologise unreservedly.

We undertake to never forget what happened and to never repeat these practices.



The Apology was delivered by the Premier, Ted Baillieu in State Parliament at 11:30am on Thursday, 25 October 2012. During his speech, Premier Baillieu acknowledged that the practice of forced adoptions occurred from early last century into the early 1980's but was particularly institutionalised between 1950 and 1975. "Young mothers were routinely compelled, coerced, and given no realistic choice other than to relinquish their babies for adoption" said Premier Baillieu. "On behalf of the Victorian Government, representing all of the Governments which have come before us, we express our sincere sorrow and regret for the health and welfare policies that condoned the practice of forced separations. These were misguided, unwarranted, and they caused immeasurable pain".

For more information visit
[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/news-and-events/news/general-news/victorian-gov)

[department/news-and-events/news/general-news/victorian-gov](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/news-and-events/news/general-news/victorian-gov)

Full transcript of Premier Ted Baillieu's speech during a special sitting of the Victorian Parliament to formally apologise for past adoption practices – 25 October 2012.

For more information visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/news-and-events/news/general-news/victorian-government-apologises-for-past-adoption-practices

FEDERAL APOLOGY

VANISH members and the manager are actively involved in consultation on the Federal Government Apology for former forced adoption policies and practices which is due in March 2013.

VANISH Chairperson Leigh Hubbard is a member for the Reference Group.

Please contact us with any comment or feedback you may have at manager@vanish.org.au

VANISH HAS MOVED

***1st Floor, 50
Howard Street,
North Melbourne***

***(Tram 57 up
Elizabeth/Victoria
Streets;
first stop after the
market over Peel
Street –
turn right into
Howard Street)***

LAST SUPPORT GROUP FOR 2012

**Mixed Group, 11 December
at 7.30pm**

**1st Floor, 50 Howard Street,
North Melbourne**

OPEN DAYS

***Wednesdays
5 December and 12 December***

***Come and see our new office
and let us know what we can do
for you in 2013***

***Coffee and Tea at
10am OR 3pm***



WE DO HOPE YOU CAN JOIN US FOR A PRE-XMAS CATCH UP

**Please let us know if you are coming to
visit ... 1300 826 474**

Note: Any changes to your membership can be advised by email to info@vanish.org.au Please mark the subject as 'Change of Membership Details'.

Lightly Centered Nurture Retreats

are seeking expressions of interest
from

Women Adoptees

to be part of very special weekend retreat

19th – 22nd April 2013

Tabitha Dougall Tabby and Jen both work from the heart and they are extremely passionate about their new program. The ultimate goal is to produce a book that increases awareness of the lifelong challenges that adoptees face.

Called **Your Voice**, this program involves :

A 3 night Retreat catering to all budgets

*Guidance on creating & building your own unique Journal
A safe environment where each woman is heard, respected & valued*

Sand play Therapy & Mandala Workshop

Creative Writing & drawing

Connecting with like minded women

Self care and empowerment board

Letting Go Ceremony

##Optional Indian Head Massage##

3 nights Fully Catered from \$450 p.p

Limited Places so enquire now

email Jen to abjen@ozemail.com.au

Ask about our payment plan

Phone Jen on 0413 423145

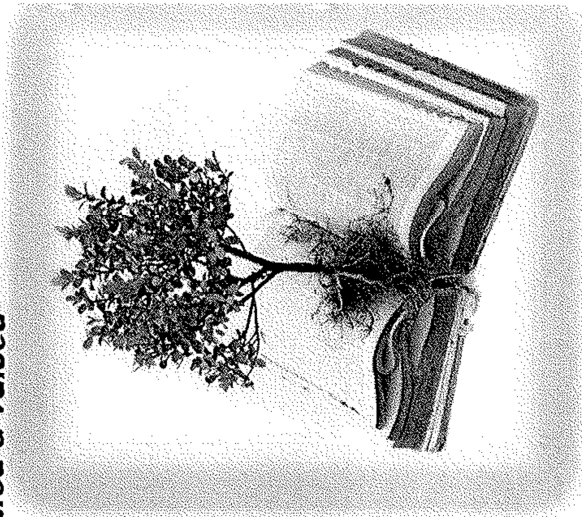
or Tabby on 0422 646021



Tabitha Dougall
Holistic Counsellor



Jen Bartlett
Facilitator &
Adoptee



A Day of reflection on your experiences of adoption

Two days of Adoption and Permanent Care Conference followed by the State Government Apology for past adoption practices provided me with the opportunity to re-visit my own story, gather my resources and give thanks for what I now know about myself. It has also prompted me to share this learning with others and so I invite you on

Saturday, January 12th 2013

9:30 for 10: 00 am start and finish at 5:00 pm.

Come and spend the day on the Mornington Peninsula and reflect on your experience of adoption:

- consider the patterns within your family that have been impacted by this experience
- reflect on the triggers that result in discomfort
- recognise your coping mechanisms, share and develop new ones

Morning and afternoon teas provided. Please bring lunch to share.

Cost: \$150



There are many beautiful places to discover on the Peninsula. You may consider staying the weekend down here to further your process of reflection before heading back to the burbs and your everyday routines.

Your day will be facilitated by Kim Isaacs, who was a past worker at VANISH Inc. Kim shares an experience of adoption herself and has been working with her story across her life cycle, recognising and reflecting on when the challenges of adoption reappear and how to meet them with grace and mindfulness.

You will be invited to work with a variety of materials to aid your reflective process. Some of these may be clay, sand, paint, music ...

Feel free to call Kim on 0431 989 048 to chat further about this workshop.

IDENTIFY –

Adoptees Play for Change – Melbourne concert for adoptee voices

In the lead up to the National Adoption Conference and the state apology for past adoption practices, on Sunday 21 October Melbourne hosted a very special concert of performances by adoptees. The first of its kind in Australia, “IDENTIFY” provided a platform for people who were adopted to share their songs, stories and sentiments through creative expression.

This inaugural event aimed to encourage and inspire adopted people to connect to their own creativity to express their experiences and feelings in any artistic form. It was an opportunity for adopted people to convey how they feel about being adopted and an opportunity for people without an adoption experience to relate to their messages through music and poetry.

Although IDENTIFY was a celebration of adoptees voices, it carried a serious message. Organisers Charlotte Smith and Vincent Rungo sought to raise awareness about issues adoptees face, including addressing the many prevalent myths and mistruths about adoption. Through media and promotion they shared that adoptees have a right to know their roots and kin and that the grief and trauma of separation and adoption need to be better understood.

The concert kicked off with an open mic, offering a space for anyone who wanted to perform in whatever way they chose. Five brave souls got up and shared their journeys through song, dance and spoken word - each of them giving a fine performance to a delighted audience. This was followed by wonderful musical sets by experienced performers Genevieve Davis, Justin Frew, and Vincent Rungo, all of whom performed their own material.

IDENTIFY – Adoptees Play for Change represented a coming together of people affected by adoption from across the Australia and overseas. The atmosphere was one of camaraderie, mutual understanding and warmth. It attracted the attention of print and online media, plus over 90 likes on Facebook! These two comments posted on Facebook the following day sum it up very nicely *“Wasn't it a great night. The open mic then the wonderful featured performers. We adoptees rock”* and *“The show was wonderful! It was so great to hear these voices and stories. Really inspirational”*

Vince and Charlotte are very grateful for the financial support and encouragement of VANISH for IDENTIFY and look forward to further collaborations involving providing creative platforms for the many voices of people affected by adoption.

For more information go to adopteesplayforchange.com

VANISH SUPPORT GROUP DATES 2013

**Held at VANISH, 1st Floor, 50 Howard Street, North Melbourne
(nearest corners – Victoria and Howard Streets
or Queensberry and Howard Streets)**

ALL TIMES: 7.30 – 9.30pm

ADOPTION TRIANGLE - MIXED SUPPORT GROUP

(Adoptees, Natural Parent, Adoptive and Alternative Parents)

This group is held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month

8 January	12 February	12 March	9 April
14 May	11 June	9 July	13 August
10 September	8 October	12 November	10 December

ADOPTEE ONLY SUPPORT GROUP

This group is held on the 4th Tuesday of each month

22 January	26 February	26 March	
23 April	28 May	25 June	23 July
27 August	24 September	22 October	26 November

SUPPORT GROUP FOR DONOR CONCEIVED PEOPLE

Lauren Burns (donor-conceived person and VANISH committee member) and Kate Bourne (counsellor and education officer at VARTA) will be facilitating the group for donor-conceived people 18yrs+

This group is held bi-monthly on the last Thursday of the month

31 January	28 March	30 May
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If you have a question related to this area please contact

Kate Bourne, Senior Community Education Officer, VARTA phone 8682 1069 or
Coleen Clare, Manager at VANISH phone 9328 8611

and they will try to assist you

RSVP or enquiries kbourne@varta.org.au

BALLARAT MIXED SUPPORT GROUP is currently being reviewed

VANISH XMAS APPEAL

VANISH is funded to provide search and support for the adoption community. This funding is insufficient to provide support groups. VANISH provides 3 support groups on a voluntary basis but only in our city venue. We would love to provide support groups in the regions – with your support we can do this

*If YOU
have ever benefited from VANISH support you might like to
make a small, medium or large Xmas gift
of a donation to VANISH*

**YOUR GIFT WILL ENABLE US TO PROVIDE MORE
SUPPORT TO OTHERS IN THE ADOPTION COMMUNITY**

**PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY –
DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE**

**IN THIS YEAR OF ADOPTION APOLOGIES
MANY HAVE HAD THEIR HEARTS STIRRED
AND STRESSFUL EMOTIONS ARISE**

**THERE IS NOTHING BETTER THAN SITTING WITH
SUPPORT FROM SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN THROUGH
WHAT YOU ARE GOING THROUGH TO EASE THE HEART
AND GET GOOD STRATEGIES FOR GOING FORWARDS**

**A SMALL, MEDIUM OR LARGE GIFT FROM YOU
WILL MAKE AN ENORMOUS DIFFERENCE
TO SUPPORT FOR OTHERS**

Payment details for payment on separate sheet