



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