

WHY I CAN'T FEEL THE LOVE FOR LOVECHILD

March 10, 2014 by [Annette](#)

We Aussies love a TV series, especially a home-grown one. This year's breakout smash seems to be LoveChild – and it's the stuff of a television producer's dreams. I can almost hear the pitch now 'Imagine this, a show set in an era that evokes nostalgia for more than one key demographic of our audience, with awesome music and vibrant fashions, it will be a visual feast. We'll have a really sexy cast – we might even lure that Rrafters girl back from the US. And there will be romance and drama played out in an iconic Australian location, all set against the backdrop of huge social upheaval – and the cherry on top, evolving storylines surrounding unbelievable adoption practices. People will lap it up! It will be a smash, a ratings bonanza.'

And so it is. It is also my story, and the story of thousands and thousands of other Australians, those who were adopted, or who relinquished their babies, those who gratefully became parents via adoption, and those who had their potential parenthood ripped away from them, and of the people who allowed these things to happen.

Since the teasers started last year, I'd been wondering what LoveChild would be like – would it be true to the times, would it show the reality of what happened, would people want to watch that.... and I think it's doing a pretty good job of being great television, which nods towards some of the ugly reality of what happened, but keeps the audience from feeling it too deeply – with great costumes, a feel-good soundtrack and other story lines that bring relief to the heaviness of the adoption aspects of the show.

I watched the first two episodes, and I really wanted to like it. I thought it might be a great way to bring the topic of adoption to a wider audience and give people opportunities to talk about their experiences – perhaps for the first time in decades, or ever.

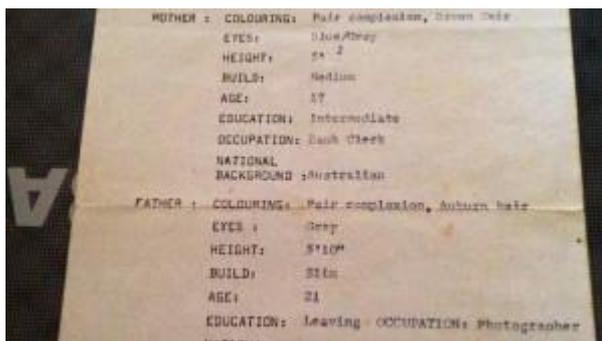
I coped pretty well with it, until Annie was giving birth and they put that sheet up so she wouldn't be able to see her baby. When that nurse rushed out of the room with Annie's baby girl, and she couldn't even catch a glimpse of her – well, I don't mind telling you – I broke out in an instantaneous, head to toe, hot and cold sweat. I don't expect people to understand that reaction fully, heck I don't understand it fully, but what it proved to me, again, is that my adoption, which happened almost 46 years ago, still has a profound impact on me, at a cellular level. So much for the 'clean break' theory, or 'getting over it'.

Sometimes when adoptees speak about adoption, people are quick to rush to the defence (perhaps unwittingly) of everyone but the adoptee – I can't tell you how many adopted people have recounted stories about being asked how their desire to discuss their adoption openly, or search for their families, or express anger at past practices, is met with 'oh but how will your (adoptive)

parents feel about that?’ Then there’s the old ‘well darling, there was no single mother’s pension at the time, so your mother did the best she could for you and gave you up’. How the f*** would you know what my 17-year-old mother was feeling at the time? Seriously. The knee-jerk cliché thing is NOT HELPING anyone. If you don’t know what to say, say that – simply say, ‘I don’t know what to say’, and keep listening. And I can’t imagine how difficult it must be for those teenage girls, now in their sixties, to open up about having their babies taken, to be listened to and not shooshed or told ‘it’s all in the past’. It isn’t, it can’t be left behind.

Here’s what they didn’t know about adoption then, that is being realised and felt across the country, and the world – adoption has life-long ramifications. These are felt by adoptees, natural/birth/original parents and their extended families, adoptive parents, siblings, partners and children of adoptees. Perhaps one of the saddest, most heartbreaking revelations is that sincere, deep love for adoptive children actually hasn’t been enough to make adoption a once-in-time, impact free event.

It pains me to say it, but love isn’t all we need. We need to accept reality, we need to face up to the impact that the past has had, and is still having, on hundreds of thousands of lives here in Australia. We need to have a frank, open, continuing dialogue about adoption, and the commodifying of children, which is ongoing. We need not to be swayed by movie stars who have made intercountry adoption ‘trendy’, nor by politicians who will do anything to make themselves appealing to the electorate. We need to listen to the stories of adoptees, of those mini-skirted teenagers of the 1960s (and their counterparts from surrounding decades), we need to undo the myths around adoption and open our eyes to the ways in which similar mistakes are still being made.



This is the extent of my family tree. This document wasn’t even typed until I was almost 10 years old. I guess the authorities hoped they’d never need to type it. All babies have families of origin, to deny that is utterly destructive.

For my then 17-year-old mother, who is now 62, I wonder if you’re watching LoveChild and thinking of me..... I wonder if I will ever muster the courage to search for you, and if you would welcome that, or if it would be too heartbreaking for you to face it.... I wonder.

I won't be watching LoveChild anymore, I don't need to watch it, I'm living it.

For anyone tempted to comment about how I haven't told the full story, to take me to task because not all adoptees feel the same way, of course I haven't, and I know that, but this is part of my story, and nobody can 'shoosh' me or judge my experience. Nothing I've written here makes me 'ungrateful' or disloyal to my family. This happened to me, and if that makes you uncomfortable, there's nothing I can do about that. I welcome your thoughtful questions and comments.