

Catholic Adoption Agency

1967 – 1993

Details

The Catholic Adoption Agency was established in 1967 under the auspices of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. It was the adoption agency for the area covered by the Sydney Archdiocese of the Catholic Church. It was founded in response to the 1965 *Adoption of Children Act*, which regulated adoption and provided for the creation of new and permanent family relationships. After the *Adoption Information Act 1990* there was a legal and practical shift in adoption work, from secrecy to openness. Centacare took over the auspice of the Catholic Adoption Agency and in 1993 it was renamed Centacare Adoption Services.

The Catholic Church centralised and coordinated the adoption of all Catholic children through this agency, which was staffed by trained social workers. Its first office was in Young Street in Sydney, and it later moved to West Street, Lewisham. St Anthony's Croydon, which had previously managed adoptions, relinquished its control over them to the central agency. Sister Kathleen Burford writes that in 1972, the central agency arranged 300 adoptions of babies born at St Anthony's.

Before the establishment of the Catholic Adoption Agency, a number of adoptions were considered by the Catholic Church. Gleeson writes that some proposed a centralised organisation under the auspices of the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, while others preferred adoptions to be handled by one institution (such as St Anthony's Home or St Margaret's Hospital). In the end, the Church established a centralised adoption agency that operated independently of existing Catholic institutions (Gleeson, pp.388-9).

The NSW Adoption Act 1965 made private adoptions illegal, and the Catholic Adoption Agency placed 200 children in its first year of operation (Gleeson, 389). The new agency was part of a shift towards professional social work practice, however, members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul played a role by having its volunteers visit the homes of prospective adoptive parents.

The CatholicCare Sydney factsheet about Past Adoption Services states that the *Adoption Information Act 1990* changed adoption practice from secrecy to openness and enabled people to formally access information about each other. Centacare Sydney took over the auspice of the Catholic Adoption Agency from St Vincent de Paul as Centacare, known since 2011 as CatholicCare, was regarded to be the Church agency with specialist expertise in providing services to children in Out of Home Care and to their families.

Catholic Adoption Agency was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices Inquiry* (2012) as an organisation that was involved in forced adoption.

More info

Chronology

- **Catholic Adoption Agency (1967 – 1993)**
 - Centacare Adoption Services (1993 - 2011)
 - CatholicCare Adoption Services (2011 - 2018)

- Family Spirit (2018 - current)

Related Entries

Related Events

- [Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Commonwealth of Australia \(2011 - 2012\)](#)

Catholic Adoption Agency is mentioned in submissions 101 and 123 to the Inquiry Committee as an organisation that was involved in forced adoption.

Related Organisations

- [St Vincent de Paul Society \(1854 - current\)](#)
The St Vincent de Paul Society auspiced the Catholic Adoption Agency from 1967 until 1993
- [Catholic Family Welfare Bureau \(Archdiocese of Sydney\) \(1941 - 1967\)](#)

Resources

- Bowen, Jennifer, [Tangled Web, Part I: the silence of consent](#), 20 March 2011
- Burford, Sister Kath R.F.J., *St Anthony's Family Care*, 1989
- Burford, Sister Kathleen, [A history of St Anthony's Home Croydon](#), July 1989

Records

Records

- [Adoption Files \(1967 - current\)](#)
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