

Forced Adoption

From the 1930's to the 1980's newborn babies were removed from their unmarried mothers immediately after birth, often without any contact or even sight of the child, to be placed with a married couple. The shame and stigma of pregnancy outside of marriage was such that maternity homes were established where families could send their daughters to have their children to be adopted out, with or without her consent.

There were few options for unwed mothers to keep their baby. Little financial support was available to single mothers, and many more institutions were engaged in what we now know as forced adoptions than there were safe places for a single mother to take care of her baby. Mothers were subject to abuse in maternity homes, sometimes shackled to the bed during birth until their baby was removed, drugged and forced to sign papers consenting to adoption, or misled by social workers about financial support available for them to keep their child as improving legal protections were not conferred through the system.

Forced adoptions were most often 'closed adoptions' where no record of the parents were kept – some children remained unaware they were adopted, and in some cases there was no way for mothers or their children to find each other.

Forced adoption was the subject of a 2012 Senate Inquiry that led to a National Apology to those impacted by past practices, and the establishment of "seven support service organisations to provide coordinated, specialist support services across Australia for those affected by forced adoptions policies and practices."

Adoption Records

Forced Adoption Support Services

The Australian Government Department of Social Services is funding seven organisations to provide coordinated specialist support services across Australia for people affected by forced adoption practices. The [Department's website](#) has a list of these organisations as well as other support services and advocacy groups for people affected by adoption.

To contact a Forced Adoption Support Service in your state or territory call **1800 21 03 13**

Adoption legislation is state-based in Australia, so the records you're able to access, and how you access them, will depend on which state you were adopted in. Be aware that in some states, contact between adoptees and their birth parents can be prevented if either party does not approve. Birth Certificates are held at the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages Office in each state.

To request information about adoption and adoption records, contact the department in the state you were adopted:

[NSW Department of Family and Community Services](#)

[Queensland Department of Communities \(Child Safety Services\)](#)

[South Australian Department for Families and Communities](#)

[Tasmanian Adoption and Information Service](#)

[Western Australian Department for Child Protection](#)

[ACT Community Services – Family Information Service](#)

[Department of Children and Families \(NT\)](#)

[Victorian Government Adoption Information](#)

For more information about adoptions, such as institutions (like [babies' homes](#) and [maternity hospitals](#)) and agencies that carried out adoptions, search for “adoptions” and filter the results to find what you’re looking for.

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/finding-family/adoptions/>