

REFLECTIONS

Below are reflections from the anniversary program from Vivienne Timmermans and Joyce Westermann (You Gave Me a Voice), Jo Sparrow (Jigsaw Qld), Colleen Bernard and Therese Hawken (Origins Qld), Trish Large OAM (Association for Adoptees), and Kerri Saint and Judy Glover (ALAS Australia).

Reflection from You Gave Me a Voice (Mothers' support Group)

We didn't run our group during COVID but had our first meeting for 2021 in February. Participants made their own personal Vision Board showing goals & wishes for the year, and everyone enjoyed this craft project. We will be holding the group bimonthly this year. The next group will be held on the third Saturday of the month, on 17th April at 10am.

I think all our group members struggled our way through COVID lockdown, with some of us continuing to work on the front line. Isolation was a significant factor during this time. But we hope the group this year will attract more mothers who were victims of forced adoption, so we can discuss our experiences & provide information & support for each other. All mothers are welcome. Our contact details are in the program.

Joyce Westerman and Vivienne Timmermans, You Gave Me a Voice

Reflection from Jigsaw Queensland

Living in pandemic times has brought with it challenges that are particularly impactful for people affected by adoption. Government restrictions and unpredictable regulations on when and where we can connect with family, friends and our community brought back memories of when the Government and others controlled what happened to us and what we could do. The sense of lacking control over our lives and when we might be able to physically connect with friends and relatives can be overwhelming. Restrictions also saw limited access to electoral rolls, and travel constraints resulted in stalled reunions with no certainty about when this might change.

However, if people affected by adoption have superpowers, they're the ability to adapt to new environments and demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity. With this in mind, Jigsaw Qld sought to change our service delivery to meet the challenges of operating during Covid times.

Our Forced Adoption Support Service (FASS) staff began working from home to ensure the seamless delivery of services and we were able to continue to support clients.

Unable to continue our face-to-face support groups, Jigsaw moved forward the production of a podcast (Adopt Perspective) that was originally intended to reach people living in regional Queensland and others unable to attend support groups. The first episode was released in April and a total of 20 episodes were produced by the end of 2020. Adopt Perspective now has more than 2500 listeners across Australia and the world.

As the year progressed, we launched Zoom support groups and followed all Queensland Health regulations when restrictions eased enough for us to restart face-to-face groups.

Covid-19 and the restrictions that came with it may have been particularly challenging, however, it has also brought with it opportunity. An opportunity for people affected by adoption to spend time exploring their adoption experience and for services such as ours to rethink how we might best support them and let more people know that help is available now.

Jo Sparrow, President, Jigsaw Queensland Inc.

Reflection from Origins Qld

This past year has been a relatively difficult year for most people who have been dealing with the Covid 19 restrictions. But for the Forced Adoption community I have found most were concerned about our mental health. A lot of people in our situation are working hard to try and unite with our families and maintain those already established relationships. The difficulties with the many border restrictions and the large concerns of our old-aged people in our community, we are walking a very fine line so as not to make any wrong moves. Add to this each and everyone's society triggers that can impact on us at any time as we go about our daily lives and it can easily become a field of land mines waiting to explode at any point in

time. Just always remember you are not alone. There are plenty of people out there ready to talk with you at any time to supply you with the support that you may need to help you through your difficult moments. The one thing that I have personally missed is the ability give people a hug. I know that the great value of a hug in your darkest moments in life. Please be assured that the ability to hug one another will return, so please just hang in there with us and know there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

Colleen Bernard and Therese Hawken, Origins Qld

Reflection from ALAS Australia Inc.

The A.L.A.S Members felt that during the Covid 19 lockdown it really didn't affect us too much, as we continued to stay in contact. As our member Rosie wrote, "Around my daughter's birthday in April, I did think that it would've been nice to participate in my regular ALAS meeting. We meet in my area once every 2 months. I knew that I would be welcome to ring any member of my ALAS group for support and this was comforting.

The phone was our main form of communicating. Many days it felt like I was never off the phone, it was so good to talk to one another. We finally met again in June 2020."

Trish Large OAM, on behalf of all at ALAS Australia Inc. group.

Reflection from Association for Adoptees

Today we come to commemorate the 8th anniversary of the National Apology for Former Forced Adoptions. We welcome those who are in attendance today, victims, supporters, family, friends, advocates and politicians. This year has been a rather difficult one for all, as we all battled with our fears, feeling the effects of Covid19. Many adoptees found a great deal of support via many adoption Facebook groups Association4adoptees and its partner group #adoptionredressnow grew in number through this period of time as adoptees sought much needed support.

There were a number of issues adoptees faced as Covid created a greater divide in searching and connecting with biological family. What Covid surprisingly created and exposed was dialogue with non-adopted people who were now experiencing what victims of forced adoption have experienced all their life, "Forced Family Separation"! It is said that we often learn more when we experience what others suffer.

Adoptees have searched for their family with often broken hearts and grieving bodies, all the while enduring insurmountable challenges. Covid19 created more challenges, but it also created opportunities for victims to connect, conduct searches and learn from each other at a greater capacity, as many found more time on their hands to do so. It seems as if adoptee support groups have grown in strength and number through this pandemic. Like those victims who fought for the National apology we drew strength from each other, to forge forward in our own personal adoptee journey. Adoptees continue to stay focused on searching for the meaning of their life. They deserve to have this completeness understood and fulfilled through their adoptive and biological family connections, whether good or bad.

We are an unfinished painting, seeking the original artist. We are the canvas searching for the frame. Each of us a painting, each of us a story, each of us unfinished and still forming. Our adoption story is a painting in motion, ever changing and never really finished, just waiting to be valued as the original artist intended.

May today add to your story and bring you closer to the artist's hand.

Kerri Saint and Judy Glover, Association for Adoptees