

Jigsaw
Queensland
Inc.

2018

Support Connect Inform Advocate



Annual Report 2017-2018

Jigsaw Queensland Inc.

President's report 2017-2018

Keeping up the momentum

The 2017-2018 period was a welcome year of forward movement at Jigsaw Queensland. The Forced Adoption Support Service, which has secured funding through to 2021, received a stunning, positive evaluation from the Department of Social Service external evaluators. It is a testimony, not only to the hard work and professionalism of the FASS team, but also the very constructive synergy between the Jigsaw Qld as a volunteer-based organisation with a long history of engagement with those affected by adoption and a well-led team of trauma-informed professionals.

In 2012 and 2013, apologies for past involvement in forced adoption were delivered by the Queensland and Commonwealth governments respectively. We continue to be involved in the post-apology processes along with other stakeholder organisations and individuals-- listening to our members' and clients' views on issues such as discharging adoptions, continued recognition of the past, the future shape of permanency and adoption so the past will not be repeated, integrated birth certificates, accessing records and the vexed issues of fair redress for past wrongs. Some of these issues will take a long time to resolve, but we have come a long way already, as has been seen in the recent gains in accessing putative father names and removing penalties from the Adoption Act. There is always hope.

The easy availability of commercial **DNA tests** has introduced new dimensions to our work, with staff and volunteers scrambling to come to terms with the ins and outs of this new phenomenon. The government sources of information that we have for so long lobbied for the right to access are no longer either the first or last resort port of call in solving identity mysteries. DNA results are adding new mysteries to the equation. Our focus is on helping clients to manage their expectations in this area. We believe that the accumulated wisdom of Jigsaw's 42 year plus

experience can help to resolve the emotional impacts that this new technology is having on family relationships that have sometimes been overburdened with secrets.

We ran a two-day **Jigsaw Helping Skills course** in February. With the assistance of the FASS program, we invited members of other post-adoption support and advocacy groups to join us. The sessions were run by the Jigsaw team in association with Glen Guy from QUT, who provided excellent sessions on strength-based approaches to working with peers and peer support groups. Our goal was to increase the capacity of these other adoption peer support groups to offer practical and informed emotional support in their areas.

Jigsaw has been supporting a regular **adoptee support group meetings on the Sunshine Coast**, held at the Maroochy Neighbourhood Centre every two months, and facilitated by local adoptees who did our Helping Skills Course.

Staff changes

This year we said farewell to Chris Mundy, one of our original FASS team. We were very sorry to see Chris go, but he has scored a full-time job in community work, which is his passion. Chris has promised to stay in touch. Rachel Bell has been added to the post-adoption team and brings a wealth of experience in the providing information and trauma-informed emotional support.

It is not only our longevity but also our respect for the diversity of adoption experience that has earned Jigsaw Queensland its outstanding reputation as a trustworthy provider of post-adoption support and a valued contributor to state and national discussions on permanency and adoption policy and practice. The different colours in our Jigsaw logo represent the diverse ways in which we are all affected by adoption and the unique contribution each of us can make in transforming lives. They also remind us that *our* colour is not the whole rainbow and that working together and supporting each other on the journey is important.

Governance

Once again, we have relied heavily on the dedicated work of all our volunteers and committee members to keep us going week in and week out. I would like to offer a heart-felt thank you to our Management Committee team; in particular Robert White's assistance as Treasurer, Collette Glazebrook as Secretary and Heather Hermann, who helps us to maintain a sense of history and purpose in what we do. Speaking for myself, it is time for us to consider some serious succession planning over the next few years to ensure a vibrant and relevant future.

Trevor Jordan
President

Support group reports

Mothers' Group

The Mothers support meeting entered its 20th year in August 2017 and continues to function along the lines of the previous years. It now has been 3 years since we started the bi-monthly meetings and it still is working very well for all mothers that attend. There is a regular core of mothers up to 7. This year we have 3 new mums 2 travelling at least 1 ½ hours to attend the meeting. Again, I hear them say over and over how great it is to have a safe place where they can talk freely and not be judged. Also, a big thank you to Jenny C. for taking the meeting when I have been away.

Heather

Open Group

Another year of stimulating conversations and discussions has been the theme for our meetings this year. It doesn't matter whether we have first-time attendees or our regulars, there's been a strong determination to explore the many different perspectives of adoption.

Numbers have remained steady between 6 and 10 per meeting, somewhat lower numbers than previous years. But still a valuable experience for around 30 to 40

individuals a year. There is evidence Participants continue to feel free to ask questions and share their stories in a safe environment, and the often lively interaction confirms the benefits of having both adoptees and mothers together in this group. As facilitators, we wish to thank all participants in 2018. They have been generous in their support of each other and willing to share for the benefit of the group. We look forward to continuing the Open Support Group in 2019.

Collette

It is a pleasure to report that the Open Group has had another year of solid attendance and a regular balance of mothers, fathers and adoptees, both male and female. Generally, numbers remained stable at between 10 to 15 and, interestingly, this year there have been only a few occasions where a friend or support person who has not been impacted by adoption attended. Most who attend the Open Group for the first time have previously gone to either the Mothers or Adoptee only groups.

A massive thank you must go to our group participants who consistently show respect and encouragement to others in the group as they share. There is reward as a facilitator in being part of the process of sharing for the benefit of others and satisfaction in observing genuine connection and personal growth within the safe space created by Jigsaw. I look forward to welcoming familiar and new faces to the group in 2018.

Collette

Adoptee Group

The Adoptee support group has been well attended this last year average eight attendees every two months, with a mix of first timers and seasoned participants. The group has greatly benefitted in 2017-2018 from some rotating facilitation with Melissa, Trevor and Collette and Jo Hoffman and Lois Buch helping out from time to time.

Anna Kopeikin was able to sustain some interest in a regular Interracial & Intercountry Adult Adoptee Support Group for some of the

year but the meetings are currently in abeyance, although the network of contacts remains.



Forced Adoption Support Service

This year the Commonwealth Department of Social Service engaged external consultants to evaluate the Forced Adoption Support Services around Australia. This great news is that the FASS team at Jigsaw Qld got very positive feedback. Our team carried over 40% of the national client load and was the most economically efficient in doing so. Client satisfaction was outstanding. No doubt Jigsaw's long-standing reputation and goodwill is a factor in this, plus the fact the fact that Jigsaw is an organisation run by people affected by adoption.

This year the FASS team has assisted mothers, fathers, adopted people, and other family members with information, support and referrals. Our small team of part-time staff have provided services to 389 people delivering 2740 client contacts during the 2017-2018 financial year. The FASS team provided intermediary services and made contact with 33 biological relatives on behalf of clients this financial year. Adopted people were the largest client group followed by mothers.

Memorial Plaques Project



In this project, community arts worker Dee Martin worked with a stakeholder group from ALAS, Association for Adoptees, Jigsaw Qld and Origins Qld. The aim of the project was to educate the public about forced adoption history and the national apology through the placement of memorial plaques in sites of significance in Qld. The first plaque has been installed in the foyer at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH). This position in a prominent public space at the hospital means that the plaque will be viewed by many members of the public. The RBWH issued apologies to mothers and adoptees in 2009.

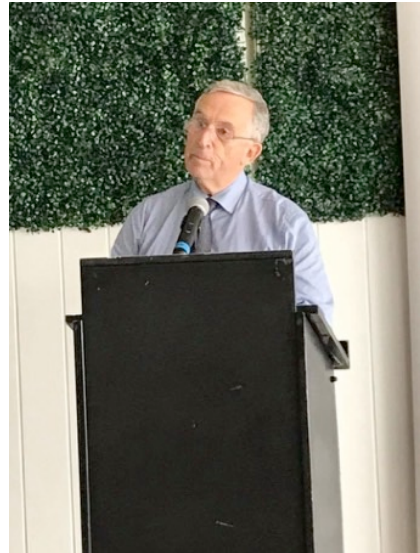
5th Anniversary of the National Apology in March 2018

Approximately 65 people attended the anniversary event on 21st March at Riverside reception centre at New Farm. On arrival attendees were able to view a moving exhibition of significant objects submitted by people affected by forced adoption with an accompanying story about the significance of the object in a person's adoption experience.



'Red Hat, Red Jumper, Red Socks, Red Mitts- photo and story submitted by a mother

The ceremony opened with a pre-recorded 5th Anniversary message from Julia Gillard produced by Jigsaw Qld and Relationships Australia South Australia. A big thank you to Jigsaw staff member, Jane Sliwka, for her energetic commitment to this project



“

Mothers' retreat 2018



In May, 17 mothers attended a retreat at Tranquil Park, Maleny. The retreat program was developed and facilitated by the FASS team and staff from Post Adoption Support Qld. Mothers attended workshops about identifying and managing triggers, went walking, practiced yoga, enjoyed the magnificent views, and most importantly had a chance to experience the healing power of sharing stories with other mothers.



Special guest speaker Professor Nahum Mushin (former Chair of the Forced Adoption Implementation Group) who spoke about events leading up to the apology, the day itself and what may lie ahead. His speech was very well received by the audience.



The feedback was extremely positive.

STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

FASS attended quarterly meetings with Qld post adoption service providers. In addition to regular phone contacts and meetings with stakeholders about various projects and events. Jigsaw Qld members also attended regular quarterly meetings with the Qld Stakeholder Group (peer support and advocacy groups).

State Library of Qld Digital Memorial

After the State Library of Qld (SLQ) was approached about the plaques project, they offered to work with FASS to produce (and fund) a digital (video) memorial to forced adoption in Queensland. Our team worked with stakeholder groups who were part of the film, along with people with lived experience and key political figures associated with the Senate Inquiry and Qld apology. It should be available on the State Library website by the end of the year.

National Archives of Australia (NAA) “Without Consent” Exhibition Tour

Our FASS team developed and provided handouts for the training of museum staff for the Longreach exhibition. NAA also asked FASS to organise a bus trip which NAA agreed to fund for people to travel to Hervey Bay to attend the exhibition there between December 2018 and January 2019 .

On the marketing side, a new FASS brochure was produced with assistance from Anna Kopeikin. A presentation was delivered to the Probus club at Chermside by the FASS team. This request followed a media release by Jo Sparrow and subsequent article in the *Senior News*. The article also generated referrals and another booking for a future presentation at a Seniors Club at Forest Lake.

The FASS team’s capacity to build relationships with clients and deliver quality services is due to the current staff’s knowledge, experience and commitment to professional practice in the post-adoption field. The team has a culture of collaboration and supporting each other, which contributes to good working relationships, team stability and better outcomes for clients.

Andrea Lynch
FASS Team Leader

We thank the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services for their continuing support of our peer support services. Though a modest contribution it is a crucial base for our volunteer engagement with all those affected by adoption. We also acknowledge the Commonwealth Government Department of Social Services for its generous funding the Forced Adoption Support Service.



**Queensland
Government**



**Forced Adoption
Support Services**

Funded by the Australian Government
Department of Social Services