



Redress scheme proposed for victims of forced adoption

A major parliamentary inquiry has called for the Victorian Government to immediately establish a landmark redress scheme for mothers whose babies were forcibly removed from them because of historical adoption policies and practices.

An amendment of the statute of limitations to exclude those affected by forced adoption is also among the 56 recommendations contained in an extensive report into responses to historical forced adoption in Victoria.

The Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee launched the inquiry in November 2019.

“From the outset, the Committee was determined to hear from as many people as possible who were affected during this inexcusable time in Australia’s history,” Committee Chair Natalie Suleyman said.

The inquiry received 114 submissions and heard from many mothers and adopted people who bravely shared their personal experiences at 11 days of public hearings in Melbourne and regional areas including Geelong, Wodonga and Kangaroo Flat.

“We heard first-hand exactly what mothers have experienced and we witnessed their incredible strength as they spoke about justice, truth and recognition,” Ms Suleyman said.

Community and social service organisations, advocacy and support groups, peak bodies and non-government organisations also provided evidence to the inquiry.

“With recommendations to establish a comprehensive redress scheme and remove the statute of limitations, both without delay, the Committee hopes this report builds upon mothers’ efforts for justice,” Ms Suleyman said.

The Committee believes the redress scheme should include:

- a monetary payment
- counselling and psychological support
- a direct personal response from the institution and/or organisation involved in the applicant’s forced adoption.

The Government is being encouraged to work with responsible organisations to secure their involvement and consider sanctions for those that don’t comply within a set timeframe.

A fully funded legal advice and referral service to ensure applicants receive free, independent guidance on redress and/or civil litigation has been suggested.

Ongoing funding for state-based support service VANISH and further specific funding for the regular training of health professionals at the Melbourne-based entity has also been recommended.

“If implemented by the Victorian Government, the recommendations will enhance the capacity of people to address the trauma of historical forced adoption,” Ms Suleyman said.

“Particularly, through the provision of specialised and flexible mental health support services, and various measures to improve access to adoption records and make it easier for people to search and reconnect with their family.”

The Committee has also proposed a stand-alone inquiry to explore the impacts of adoption on adopted people.

“The Committee heard from many people who are adopted, nearly all of whom had negative adoption experiences,” Ms Suleyman said.

The Government has been urged to instantly introduce integrated birth certificates for adopted people who request them and ensure they are regarded as legal proof of identity.

“The Committee also recommends various measures to improve the operation and transparency of current adoption laws to ensure the mistakes of the past are not repeated,” Ms Suleyman said.

A designated day each year to commemorate historical forced adoptions in Victoria has been put forward by the Committee. October 25, the anniversary of the Victorian Parliament’s apology for past adoption practices, has been nominated as a suitable date.

To view all of the recommendations in full read the [final report](#).

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