



## ADOPTION NEWS AND VIEWS

Registered Office  
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*Adoption News and Views* is a quarterly e-newsletter. Its main purpose is to provide information on current NZ adoption laws, policies and practices and on any proposed changes. Adoption reform developments overseas are also covered. It also provides progress reports on efforts by individuals and groups pressing the government to give a higher priority to enacting new legislation to replace the out-of-date Adoption Act 1955, and other adoption laws to bring them into line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the anti-discrimination provisions in the Human Rights Act 1993 and NZ Bill of Rights Act 1990.

Newsletters are sent out three or four times a year. Back issues can be sent by email on request. It is hoped that the newsletter will also provide a forum for people to discuss adoption issues. Contributions are invited including reviews of books, films etc touching on adoption.

*Adoption News and Views* is sent to you because you are believed to be a person interested in adoption. If you do not want to receive further issues, please reply to this email indicating this. If you know of others who would like to receive future issues, or you or others would like to submit news or views for inclusion in the next newsletter, please reply to this email or ask interested others to do so.

While the aim of this newsletter is to provide an open forum for people interested in adoption issues, the editors reserve the right to decline or abridge any contributions offered.

**Robert Ludbrook Editor**  
email [rh.ludbrook@gmail.com](mailto:rh.ludbrook@gmail.com)

## Editorial

Since the last *Adoption News and Views* went out we have had an election and the appointment of a new Minister of Justice, Hon Judith Collins. *Adoption Action* was disappointed that the Ministry of Justice *Briefing to the Incoming Minister* contained no reference to adoption reform nor did the Ministry's *Consultation Paper on Family Court Processes* circulated in September 2011.

The previous Minister, Simon Power, in his valedictory speech referred to adoption reform as one of the issues that the government should grapple with, notwithstanding the complex issues raised. This was heartening because Mr Power had previously told *Adoption Action* that adoption reform was not a priority in the National-led government's first term. We had high hopes of the new Minister who in 1995, when she was in legal practice, had expressed in strong terms her view that the Adoption Act 1955 was not working and there was a need for a comprehensive review of our adoption laws.

A recent *Close Up* programme (details given below) highlighted the pain suffered by young unmarried women who were pressured into giving up their babies for adoption and also referred to the archaic state of our adoption legislation and the need for reform. The programme elicited approaches to Marilyn McAuslin (who bravely told her story on the programme) from both Judith Collins and Lianne Dalziel (Labour Party associate spokesperson for Justice). A meeting was held between them on 21 March 2012. Lianne Dalziel reported immediately after this meeting:

"I had a really good meeting with Judith Collins – she is not unsympathetic. She is probably being pushed from all sides with people living with decisions on the three sides of the triangle that they feel compelled to stand by, reluctant to address, or determined to resolve (publicly or privately). I have suggested some ways forward which include addressing the current legal framework. She will look at all the issues and come back to me. I felt that she had a good understanding of the issues. Fingers crossed."

This gives *Adoption Action* hope that priority may at last be given to adoption reform in this term of government. The pain and injustice suffered by those affected by outdated laws and inhumane practices (and continuing into the present) is increasingly coming to light in Australia, Canada and the United States as well as New Zealand, as people speak out about their experiences

**Robert Ludbrook**

## Adoption Action news

Adoption reform seems to remain permanently under the radar of government agencies including the Ministry of Justice, which has responsibility for adoption legislation. Two recent Ministry documents which might have been expected to mention adoption law and the urgent need for reform are silent on the matter. In February this year *Adoption Action* put out a media release critical of the Ministry.

### **Adoption Law Reform Overlooked - Yet Again**

No one disputes that the Adoption Act 1955 is in urgent need of reform. It reflects social attitudes and values of a bygone era and arguably discriminates on the grounds of age, sex, marital status, religious belief, ethnic origin, disability and sexual orientation. The Law Commission in 2000 recommended more than 100 changes to our adoption laws. The Ministry of Justice in papers prepared for Cabinet in 2004 and 2007 made a strong case why the Adoption Act should be repealed and replaced. Some provisions of the Act have been criticised by our Human Rights Commission and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child as well as by judges, academics, Maori commentators and various official committees as well as by people affected by its outdated and discriminatory provisions.

So it is deeply disappointing to find that in the Ministry of Justice Consultation Paper *Reviewing the Family Court* released in September 2011 there is no mention of adoption processes and the need for reform. Earlier this month the Ministry released its traditional *Briefing to the Incoming Minister* and again there is no mention of adoption reform as an area deserving of the Minister's consideration.

Adoption has been described as the Cinderella of family law languishing in a dark back room while major reforms have been made to other family statutes. The departing Minister, Hon Simon Power, in his valedictory address to Parliament last year said "It is our job to tackle the tough issues, the issues the public pays us to front up to and come to a view on. There are many, many debates that Parliament does not want to have, for fear of losing votes or not staying on message." He gave three examples one of which was adoption reform.

Adoption Action has lobbied four Ministers of Justice over the last decade and has been repeatedly assured that adoption reform is a priority; yet despite such assurances, no Adoption Reform Bill has been drafted. Each time adoption reform mysteriously drops off the Ministry's work programme (see attached chronology). Adoption Action will be taking the matter up with the new Minister of Justice, Hon Judith Collins, in the hope that Cinderella may at last see the light of day and the public will be able to have a say on how adoption laws should look in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Opposition to accreditation of First Steps as intercountry adoption service provider**

In August last year *Adoption Action* made a submission opposing the accreditation of 'Adoption First Steps' as an organisation authorised to prepare Home Study reports and other delegated functions under the Adoption (Intercountry) Act. A copy of this submission is available to members of *Adoption Action* on request. Enquiries made recently indicate that Adoption First Steps has not been granted accreditation.

A copy of this submission is available to members on request to Secretary, Adoption Action, 38 Derwent St, Island Bay, Wellington 6023 or by emailing [rh.ludbrook@gmail.com](mailto:rh.ludbrook@gmail.com)

### **Submission to Ministry of Justice Consultation on Family Court processes**

In February 2012, *Adoption Action* made a submission in response to the Ministry of Justice consultation paper *Reviewing the Family Court*. One of the stated aims of the Review is to cut the costs to government on providing counselling, mediation, psychological reports, legal

aid and other services in respect of Family Court cases. Our submission makes the point that adoption proceedings are the poor relation of Family Court cases in that:

- Neither the person to be adopted nor the natural mother are parties to adoption proceedings, and adoption applications are rarely defended, with the result that the cost per case is minimal in comparison to other family law cases;
- The Family Court has no power to appoint Lawyer for Child in adoption matters nor to obtain a psychological report on the child. Applicants for an adoption order are very rarely granted legal aid.

The submission recommends that the changes to adoption law and procedures proposed by the Law Commission in 2000 be implemented as a matter of urgency, and that:

- children whose adoption is being considered be given a specific right to express their views about the proposed adoption and at a certain age have the power to consent, or refuse consent, to their adoption;
- natural parents and their family members be given a right to be joined as parties to adoption proceedings;
- Lawyer for Child be appointed on all adoption applications and the Court have the power to obtain a report from a psychologist or cultural consultant;
- adoption laws and processes be reviewed and revised to ensure that they reflect Maori, Pasifika and Asian cultural values and those of other cultural or ethnic minorities.

A copy of this submission is available to members on request to Secretary, Adoption Action 38 Derwent St, Island Bay, Wellington 6023 or by emailing [rh.ludbrook@gmail.com](mailto:rh.ludbrook@gmail.com)

### **Adoption Action Inc Annual General Meeting**

**Adoption Action is an incorporated society and as such is required to have an annual general meeting and to submit annual accounts to the Registrar of Incorporated Societies.**

**The 2012 Adoption Action AGM is to be held on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2012 at 12-30pm at the offices of Buddle, Findlay, Solicitors, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor, State Insurance Tower, 1 Willis St (corner of Willeston St), Wellington.**

**All members and persons interested in adoption are warmly invited. Tea, coffee and sandwiches will be provided. To become a member of Adoption Action Inc or renew your membership for 2011/12 complete the application form at the end of this Newsletter and post it to 38 Derwent St, Island Bay Wellington 6023 enclosing a membership fee of \$10. Nominations for the officers of the society or members of the committee are invited.**

**Special thanks to Kees Sprengers, a stalwart battler for adoption reform now living in Thailand, for his donation of his adoption library to Adoption Action Inc, Many thanks also to Anne Else for proofreading this issue.**

## NEW ZEALAND ADOPTION NEWS

### TV One *Close Up* programmes on past adoption practices

On 1 and 2 March 2012, TV One's current affairs programme *Close Up* looked at past adoption practices and their effect on the tens of thousands of mothers who were pressured to agree to the adoption of their children. The programme was prompted by the report of the Australian Senate Committee into forced adoptions: see below under International News.

Merilyn McAuslin (who has been active in the organisation *Aotearoa Birthmothers Support Group*) spoke of her own experiences, telling *Close Up* that even some members of her own family are not aware she had a child adopted. She told viewers that she has gone through the rest of her life feeling worthless, adding that "a number of women commit suicide over this - go to their graves without telling their children". Merilyn's mother gave her a wedding ring to hide her shame. "People would think I was married and it would be respectable". Merilyn gave birth, on her own, in Waikato Hospital without local anaesthetic.

"They put me in a huge room, and in the other corner diagonally, was the baby. I didn't know that was to be my only opportunity to see him, but I was so butchered down below from this experience that could only be called barbaric, that I couldn't move - I couldn't get out of bed."

Merilyn recounted that hospital staff shouted at her, and lied that she had syphilis and so had to be kept in isolation. "I felt so shameful, yes awful, awful, stuck in the bedroom and I wasn't allowed out...I thought they wouldn't leave a married woman alone to go into labour and then shove [her and her baby] in a corner."

The Minister of Justice, Hon Judith Collins, was also interviewed on the programme. Reference was made to the recent report of the Australian Parliamentary Senate Committee on forced adoption practices which recommended that State and Territory governments apologise and make redress to women who were subjected to forced adoption practices in the 1940s to 1980s. The Minister was asked whether the New Zealand government would give an apology to mothers who claim they were forced into adopting their babies. She replied that the situation in New Zealand was different and that the state had no official part in influencing mothers to give up their babies. "At the end of the day this was a decision that was made by their family members, and frankly society frowned very deeply on unwed mothers."

Many single women in New Zealand who became pregnant were sent to farms. This was known as "going up north for a while". Young pregnant girls were sent out of town, often to church-run homes, to have babies and avoid scandal.

Merilyn told the interviewer that she was informed by a Department of Social Welfare social worker that she would have to give up the baby, and told "If you love your baby you will have him adopted to a good home with a mother and father." Merilyn said she was made to sign a legal document saying she would never make any attempt to look for her baby. When asked whether she should receive an apology, Merilyn responded: "It's time the government came clean and brought the issue out into the open. I want more than 'sorry' actually - I'd like

government to stand up and say 'this is what we did to people and we shouldn't have'. But Minister Collins said a Government apology may not be what everyone affected would want and some women might prefer to keep it a secret. "I think we need to work out what would make a real difference for people like Marilyn. I'm always happy to look at what we can do, but I think there are a lot of others who would rather we didn't do this." Marilyn's story has a bittersweet ending. Her son tracked her down and made contact about 12 years ago but, despite building a new relationship with him, and even attending his wedding, she said "it does not make up for lost time. Meeting him doesn't make it right for me - it doesn't give me my baby back does it?" Her son Damian now lives in Ireland and supports Marilyn's attempts to bring the issue out into the open. "I'm delighted she's doing it, I'm delighted for her, for anyone who's going to be helped by this, it's fantastic," he said.

On the following evening on *Close Up* Anne Else, author of *A Question of Adoption: Closed Stranger Adoption in New Zealand 1944-1974* (and a member of the Adoption Action Committee), was interviewed. She stressed the urgent need for a new Adoption Act, saying the existing Act enshrined the attitudes of the past. Source: TV One News.

**Follow up:** Marilyn reports that since the programme, *Close Up* has been contacted by nearly 200 women who had had similar experiences and have never been able to talk about them.

### **Telling children they are adopted**

Family Court judges have in a number of recent cases impressed on applicants for an adoption order the importance of telling the child that s/he is adopted. The reason that the issue is now addressed by judges is that adoption social workers in their reports to the court raise this as a concern and sometimes oppose the making of an adoption order where parents have failed to tell their children the truth about their parenthood or have refused to give an assurance that they will do so.

A strong statement about the need to inform a girl aged four years and nine months that she was adopted was made by Judge Walsh in *Application by K and K* Christchurch Family Court, 13 July 2011. The applicants were the uncle and aunt of a Samoan girl who had been placed in their care at birth under a family arrangement which was an accepted part of Samoan culture. Judge Walsh, in granting an adoption order despite opposition from the social worker, urged the applicants to inform the child about the identity of her biological parents (whom she knew as her uncle and aunt) before she started primary school. He pointed out that, if they failed to do so, there was a risk that their daughter might be given this information directly by adults or children with whom she came in contact. The Judge commented that he had personally seen potentially disastrous situations where the parentage of a child had been kept secret until a child's teenage years.

The courts, while stressing the importance of telling the child, will not usually refuse an adoption order on this ground alone: see *Application by PHB* Auckland Family Court, 4 July 2011.

## **New Optional Protocol to UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

A 3rd Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) opened for signature at a signing ceremony held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 28 February 2012. The Optional Protocol provides for a Communications Procedure, which will allow individual children to submit complaints regarding specific violations of their rights under the Convention and its first two optional protocols.

New Zealand ratified the Convention in 1993 and has also ratified the first two Optional Protocols so it is likely that it will ratify this new Optional Protocol although it may be a year or two before it does so. If it does ratify the protocol, any person under 18 years who claims that his or her rights under UNCROC have been breached can forward a letter of complaint to Geneva. New Zealand entered three reservations when ratifying UNCROC and these remain in place despite the urging of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. A complaint which falls within the ambit of any of these reservations cannot be considered. Areas in which complaints might be made on adoption issues are:

- The Adoption Act 1955 does not make the best interests of the child the paramount consideration as required by Article 21 of UNCROC;
- The consent of children to their adoption is not required and there is no machinery for them to be given the opportunity to be heard in administrative or judicial proceedings for their adoption: Articles 12.2 & 9(2);
- There is no requirement that the parents of a child receive counselling or information about alternatives before giving consent to adoption of their child. This is contrary to Article 21(a);
- An adoption order replaces a child's names with names chosen by the adoptive parents and this change may be made without the knowledge and consent of the child concerned. This offends Articles 8.1, 9.2 and 12 and has been the subject of a recommendation by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child;
- Adoption by New Zealanders of children from countries that are not parties to the *Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption* is permitted in New Zealand and overseas adoptions are recognised as having the same legal effect as NZ domestic adoptions. Such adoptions do not always meet the criteria in Article 21(a), (b) and (c).

### **Can the Family Court make a contact order in favour of the first parent of an adopted child?**

Under our Adoption Act, an adoption order deems the adopted child to be the child of the adoptive parents as if born to them and deems the natural parents (and all members of their family) to cease to be the child's parents and relatives. However, the Act does not state anywhere that a contact order ceases to have effect on the making of a final adoption order or that a parent or other members of an adopted child's first family cannot apply for an order giving them direct or indirect contact with the adopted child.

The judge in *EMO v BSD* Hamilton Family Court 28 May 2011 had to decide whether a contact order in favour of a woman (who was not related to the child by blood or marriage)

remained in force after a final adoption order had been made. The judge was in no doubt that the earlier contact order had been discharged or nullified by the adoption order, remarking that the intent is that the Adoption Act overrides all prior legal relationships including any contact order. The applicant's right of contact had been removed despite her not having been served with a copy of the adoption application, nor having been given the opportunity to argue for its continuation. She had automatically been deprived of contact without any consideration of the best interests of the child.

Section 47 Care of Children Act states that any person can apply for a contact order provided the Court gives leave for the application to be brought. This can only mean that a parent or relative can apply for contact with a child relinquished for adoption even though the relationship has been severed by an adoption order. A contact order has been made in favour of the natural sibling of two children in respect of whom adoption orders had been made despite their sibling relationship having been extinguished by adoption orders: *Re Adoption Application by PLL* [2009] NZFLR 1081. In *H & H v K* North Shore Family Court, 29 August 2011 the Court accepted that it had jurisdiction to make an order granting contact to the natural father of an adopted child, although dismissing the application on the particular facts. In *TAN v DJS* Wellington Family Court 17 August 2007 the judge favoured the view that a natural mother could seek leave to apply for a contact order.

These cases illustrate the difficulties facing the courts in interpreting the deeming provisions of the Adoption Act which replace the child's first set of parents and relatives with a new set. People with whom the child may have had close personal ties instantly become strangers to the child. t

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

### ***Australian Commonwealth***

#### **Release of Commonwealth Senate Report on Past Adoption Practices**

Anyone in doubt about the negative effects adoption can have on some relinquishing mothers and some adopted persons should read the Australian Commonwealth Senate Community Affairs References Committee's report *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Practices* released in February 2012, especially Chapters 3 and 4 which contain first-hand accounts from many of those affected. While no inquiry into past adoption practices has taken place in New Zealand, there is no doubt that many young mothers were heavily pressured to give up their child for adoption by nurses, social workers, religious organisations and others operating mother and baby homes. While the accounts of Australian mothers make depressing reading, it is important to remember that there is a great diversity of experience of mothers who place their children for adoption and of adopted persons. More detailed coverage of this report will be provided in the next issue of *Adoption News and Views*. For report go to [www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Committees/](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Committees/) under "completed inquiries"

## ***Western Australia***

### **Including names of both sets of parents in adopted child's birth certificate**

Western Australia now provides adopted children with an integrated birth certificate that records details of both sets of parents: see Report of Australian Commonwealth Senate Community Affairs Committee on *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices*, February 2012, para 12.32. The Committee recommended that all Australian States and Territories should move to integrated birth certificates: Recommendation 13, para. 12.33.

The New South Wales parliament is considering whether details of sperm and egg donors should be mandatorily recorded on their children's birth certificate. Under the current law, only the two legal parents of the child can be recorded and there are concerns that this limits the children's access to details of their biological parents later in life. Currently, donor information (including full name, address, ethnicity and medical history).is kept on a central register held by Department of Health. The New South Wales inquiry is looking at whether this system for record keeping is adequate and whether there should be provision for the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages to include donor details on the register of births. Source: Dr Rebecca Robey BioNews 64520, February 2012.

### **Editor's comment**

A recommendation that the names of a child's first parents as well as those of the adoptive parents should be included on a child's birth certificate was made by the New Zealand Law Commission in its report *Adoption and its Alternatives*: NZLC R65, September 2000, paras. 103, 477– 480.

## **South Australia**

The premier of South Australia announced on 28 March 2012 that the State will apologise for past adoption policies and practices on the 13th of June.

The Uniting Church in South Australia has accepted responsibility for the past practice of forced adoptions for which it was responsible and has urged other welfare and church groups to prepare for a wave of victims seeking help for decades of suffering.

## ***United Kingdom***

### **Children adopted from care being contacted by their natural parents via Facebook**

*The Times* reports that English adoption charities are claiming that hundreds of children who were adopted from care after suffering abuse and neglect from their families are having their lives thrown into turmoil as their natural parents use Facebook to track them down. The United Kingdom has, since the 1990s, encouraged adoption as a means of providing a permanent placement for children removed from their families by child protection authorities.

The Facebook contact is said to risk seriously disruption to the lives of already troubled young people and, in the worst cases, the young people have broken off all contact with their adoptive families. In one case a brother and sister adopted as toddlers and now in their teenage years ran away from their adoptive parents home and have since lived with their natural parents. Jonathan Pearce, chief executive of *Adoption UK*, which supports parents who adopt, said that unplanned contact was fast becoming the greatest problem that adoptive parents with teenagers now faced.

However, contact is not always initiated by natural parents. Research by the *British Association for Adoption and Fostering* found that 53 per cent of adopted children have used unofficial means, including Facebook, to trace their birth parents. A quarter said that the outcome had been unsettling.

*The Times* has been campaigning for an overhaul of the adoption system, calling for more and speedier adoptions for neglected or abused children.

Source: *The Times* 5 January 2012.

### **Can children benefit from having three parents?**

A dispute between a gay man on the one hand and his lesbian wife and her partner on the other reached the English Court of Appeal. The wife had married the gay man in order to appease her parents who had difficulty accepting her lesbianism. It was a marriage in name only and the parties had not cohabited but his sperm had been used to enable the wife to conceive and bear a child, who was being brought up by her and her lesbian partner. He had been allowed contact with the child once a week for five hours. The lower court had refused his application for extended contact.

Lord Justice Thorpe, giving the unanimous decision of the Court, said: "It is generally accepted that a child gains by having two parents" but added that "it does not follow from that that the addition of a third [parent] is necessarily disadvantageous". He refused to endorse the concept of "principal" and "secondary" parents being developed by the family courts, saying, "it has the danger of demeaning the known donor and in some cases they may have an important role".

Source: Rosie Beauchamp, BioNews 649, 19 March 2012; Case: *A v B and C* [2012] EWCA Civ 285.

### **Canada**

*Origins Canada* is urging the Canadian federal government to launch an inquiry into past adoption practices but has been told that this is a matter for provincial governments. A class action against various provincial governments is anticipated with damages being claimed for lost opportunity to parent, medical treatment without consent and mental distress.

Source: *Canadian National Post* March 2012

## Spain

### **Allegations of baby trafficking by nuns, priests and doctors**

The floodgates have opened with allegations of baby trafficking in Spain. A Spanish lawyer Enrique Vilas represents a number of women who believe that their babies were stolen. The allegations include:

- In the early days of the Franco regime (1939-1973) children were removed from mothers because of their left wing political views;
- A Madrid clinic which closed in the 1980s, after being investigated for arranging illegal adoptions, is said to have kept the corpse of a child in its fridge and showed this to mothers to convince them that their child was dead, when in fact the child had been placed for adoption;
- There are accounts of empty coffins being buried in respect of children alleged to have died shortly after birth, but in fact adopted out;
- Doctors, nurses and nuns are suspected of lying to mothers by telling them their apparently healthy baby had died, when in reality the child had been placed with adoptive parents;
- An 80 year old nun has been formally named as a suspect accused of trafficking of babies from hospitals.

The group ANADIR (National Association of Irregular Adoptions) which represents families of more than 260 babies believed to have been stolen, is pressing the Spanish Attorney-General to set up a government inquiry into the allegations.

Source: *Associated Press* March 2012

## **NZ ADOPTION RESEARCH**

### ***Adoption of Maori children into pakeha families***

*Belonging and Whakapapa: The Closed Stranger Adoption of Maori Children into Pakeha Families* explores an area of adoption that has not received much attention. While there is a lack of statistical data, it has been widely believed (contrary to historical fact as, as recorded in *A Question of Adoption*, that few Maori children were placed for adoption, because if their parents were not able to care for them, other members of their whanau would take over their care and upbringing. Now, a thesis by Maria Haenga Collins (a Maori woman adopted as a child into a Pakeha family) draws on in-depth interviews with six Maori (five women and one man) who had been adopted into Pakeha homes between 1955 and 1985 under closed stranger adoption. The overarching theme from the interviews is the different experiences the interviewees describe in “walking between worlds”. They experienced tensions and contradictions (and sometimes a conflict) between “belonging” and “not belonging”, in relation to both their Maori families and their adoptive families, and their Maori and Pakeha cultures. Haenga Collins analyses the ways in which adoptees in childhood and in adult life navigate between the two worlds detailing specific narratives that emerged from the interviews. These include:

- How you came to belong to us
- The gratitude story – I was saved
- The same, yet different

- Breaking out of the pretence
- The physicality of belonging
- Death - the second leaving
- Navigating the unfamiliar
- I was remembered.

There is detailed discussion of whakapapa and the sense of loss and embarrassment suffered by Maori adopted persons who had not been able to identify or establish links with their whanau, hapu or iwi. Haenga Collins summarises her findings:

“Race played an important role in New Zealand’s adoption history. Decisions made at both legislative and practice levels were inherently racist and based on assimilationist strategies which did not take into account Maori cultural values or practices. This, coupled with the stigmatisation of Maori during the period of closed stranger adoption, severely disadvantaged Maori families who tried to keep a child relinquished for adoption within the whanau.”

“Systemic and personal social work decisions, which were in the 1950s –1970s influenced by the ‘clean-break’ theory, can in hindsight be seen as having aided in the marginalisation and loss of identity for Maori adopted into Pakeha families. Further, it was found that as Maori children were harder to place than non-Maori children, Maori were often placed in homes which were considered marginal in some way, hence the term “matching for marginality”.

“Even when Maori were adopted into secure and loving Pakeha homes, they were forced to navigate the constructs of race, questioning themselves, or being questioned by others on why they looked different from their adoptive family. Some participants also experienced racial discrimination within and/or outside their family setting.”

Source: *Belonging and Whakapapa*, Master of Social Work thesis by Maria Haenga Collins, School of Health and Social Sciences, Massey University 2011. Maria can be contacted at: m.haengacollins@gmail.com

### ***Parenting children adopted intercountry***

The task of parenting children born in a foreign country who spent their early months or years in that country (often in orphanages, hospitals or children’s homes) is a formidable one. In order to adopt the child, the prospective adoptive parents will have incurred considerable expense on air fares (usually two return trips to the child’s country of birth), accommodation costs, and other expenses incurred both in New Zealand and overseas. If the overseas country is a party to the Hague Convention (or a non-Convention country with which Child, Youth and Family has an agreement) the couple will have to participate in an investigation by Child, Youth and Family for the purposes of the preparation of a Home Study report and this will mean undergoing a police check and providing medical and financial information.

New Zealand research by Anita Gibbs and Jocelyn Johnstone (see references below) has looked at the difficulties encountered by parents adopting intercountry and how these parents have met the challenges. Personal experiences of the adoptive parents surveyed reveal that:

- Adoptive mothers usually stayed at home with the child for the first six to 12 months;
- For many of the children their adoptive parents had to teach them how to play, as they had had so little experience of play in their home country;
- Where the children had been brought up to speak a language other than English, early communication was often made through repetition of words, drawing of pictures, and use of gesture and body language;
- Children needed to be shown lots of attention and affection with frequent cuddling and holding, although some children were unused to, and uncomfortable with, physical affection;
- Parents were aware of the risks of over-stimulation of the children and often limited their environment in the months after adoption by keeping the child centred in the home, delaying the child's introduction to formal education, limiting social activities, and discouraging visitors to the home;
- Parents benefited greatly from involvement in support groups of other parents who had adopted children intercountry but considered that there was a pressing need for a wider range of post-adoption services.

Experience showed that adoption of older children posed greater challenges for parents and children. Some adoptive parents had experienced negative attitudes towards their adoption from members of their family and the wider community.

Sources: A Gibbs *Parenting adopted children and supporting adoptive parents: Messages from research* Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work, Issue 22(2) 2010 44; .J Johnstone, A Gibbs *Love them to bits; spend time with them; have fun with them: New Zealand parents' views of building attachments with their newly adopted Russian children* Journal of Social Work Sage Publications October 2010. Anita Gibbs who can be contacted at [anita.gibbs@otago.ac.nz](mailto:anita.gibbs@otago.ac.nz)

## EVENTS

#Melbourne is to host the 10th Australian Adoption Conference on **22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2012 at the Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre**

The Conference is an opportunity for adoption professionals from Australia and overseas, and for individuals and families affected by adoption to meet. The Conference themes are:

- **Reconnecting:** search and reunion, including use of media, social networking.
- **Outcomes of adoption and permanent care:** historical and research perspectives
- **Therapeutic perspectives:** loss and grief, post adoption trauma, healing, wellbeing,
- **Aboriginal and cross-cultural and Aboriginal and perspectives:**
- **Strengthening outcomes for children in adoption and permanent care:**

Further conference program details and information on how to apply to present a paper can be located at [www.berrystreet.org.au/events](http://www.berrystreet.org.au/events)

#Forum and address by Dr Rhoda Scherman **Adoption doesn't mean disordered: what therapists need to know about adopted children and families Thursday 26 April 7-30pm at Seminar Room AH214, AH Block, AUT Sports & Fitness Centre, North Shore Campus, Akoranga Drive, Northcote. Auckland Contact: [rhoda.scherman@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rhoda.scherman@aut.ac.nz)**

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF ADOPTION ACTION INCORPORATED**

**Adoption Action Inc  
38 Derwent St  
Island Bay  
Wellington 6023**

**I wish to apply for membership/ renewal of membership of Adoption Action Incorporated and attach a cheque for \$10 in payment of the fee for membership for the period to 31 March 2013.**

**Name  
Address**

**Email  
Phone or mobile no.**

**Signature**

**Date**

**#Optional: My interest in adoption is as an adopted person/ natural parent/adoptive parent/ academic/ other professional/other (please specify)**

**#Members receive a copy of the quarterly e-newsletter *Adoption News and Views*  
If you do not want to receive copies of this newsletter please state here:**

**#Adoption Action Inc is planning a conference in July this year with a focus on reform of New Zealand's adoption laws. If you are interested in attending or contributing to the conference please indicate below:**

**Interested in attending conference Yes/No**

**If yes: I am interested in contributing in the following way**