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Australian Government's adoption apology spotlights need for reform of New Zealand's outdated adoption law

On 21 March, the Australian Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, will deliver a national apology to people affected by forced adoption or removal policies and practices.

Adoption Action welcomes this apology and public acknowledgement. Both will be beneficial to all those who have been hurt by adoption, including birth mothers, birth fathers and adopted people.

"It's good to see the Australian Government openly acknowledging that its past actions caused so much hurt and pain — and acknowledging that the effects of adoption are inter-generational", says Adoption Action Convenor Fiona Donoghue.

"This public apology will be very helpful in the healing process for those people."

Importantly, the apology is backed up by adoption law reform in several Australian states. The changes do away with the legal severing of all the adopted child's ties with the birth family. They are designed to bring honesty and integrity into the legislation and to ensure that the best interests of the child are paramount.

New Zealand's Adoption Act dates back to 1955. It has been used to sanction hurtful, damaging practices similar to those now being apologised for in Australia.

For decades, a wide range of people involved in adoption, including lawyers, social workers and people affected by the legislation, have been urging successive New Zealand governments to overhaul our outdated Act.

"Let's hope the Australian Government's apology will spur our Government to follow Australia's example, and not only apologise for past wrongs, but also undertake the comprehensive reform of adoption law which is so long overdue" says Fiona Donoghue.

Adoption Action Inc. is committed to working to bring about adoption legislation that:

- is based on openness, honesty and integrity
- makes the best interests of the child paramount
- protects the right of adopted people to know who you are
- aligns with other New Zealand child legislation
- is compliant with international obligations

For more information

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Australian apology: <http://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/Mediareleases/Pages/2013/First%20quarter/22-February-2013-Forced-adoption-apology-details-released.aspx>