

# Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, Commonwealth of Australia

2011 – 2012

URL:

[http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Community\\_Affairs/Completed\\_inquiries/2010-13/commcontribformerforcedadoption/index](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/2010-13/commcontribformerforcedadoption/index)

## Details

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The Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices was a Senate Committee Inquiry that began in 2011. The Inquiry resulted from the efforts over many years of mothers who were separated from their children by adoption. The Senate Committee invited interested individuals and organisations to make submissions. It reported in February 2012.

The terms of reference were:

1. The role, if any, of the Commonwealth Government, its policies and practices in contributing to forced adoption; and
2. The potential role of the Commonwealth in developing a national framework to assist states and territories to address the consequences for the mothers, their families and children who were subject to forced adoption policies.

Using the submissions made to it, the Inquiry set out the experiences of birth mothers and fathers, people who had been adopted, and their relatives. It found the effects of forced adoption were far reaching and profound. It did not believe that social attitudes from the early twentieth century to the 1950s and 1960s were to blame for adoption policies of that period.

According to the Inquiry, the Commonwealth government's ability to affect policy was limited because the jurisdiction for adoption belonged to the states. However, between 1961 and 1964, it did develop model legislation in conjunction with the States and Territories which they had all implemented by 1968. Some of the provisions in the legislation should have reduced the number of forced adoptions. However, the Inquiry concluded that the States and Territories did not enforce them adequately.

The Inquiry found that the Commonwealth affected outcomes for single mothers through its system of benefits. Until 1973, when it introduced the Supporting Parents' Benefit, these were inadequate and poorly advertised. A number of submissions to the Inquiry showed that the lack of income for single mothers contributed to the adoption of many babies. Sometimes submissions gave this as the only reason for the adoption.

The Inquiry made 20 recommendations. These included the establishment of a national framework for addressing the results of forced adoption, a formal apology by Commonwealth, State, and Territory governments, specialised

counselling services, funding of peer support groups by the Commonwealth government, and mechanisms for hearing and addressing grievances caused by governments and institutions. The Inquiry suggested that the Commonwealth lead discussions with the State and Territory governments about setting-up a financial reparation scheme. It made recommendations to simplify and assist with searches for birth families and to improve the information on birth certificates. Finally, the Inquiry proposed that the Commonwealth commission an exhibition to document the experiences of people affected by forced adoption.

## Gallery

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### **The National Apology for Forced Adoptions - Prime Minister Julia Gillard**

**Description:** This is a link to a video on the Julia Gillard YouTube channel of the national apology for forced adoptions.

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## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Related Events

- [Apology to People Affected by Past Forced Adoption Practices, Parliament of the Australian Capital Territory \(14 August 2012\)](#)
- [Apology for the Removal of Children from Unmarried Mothers, Parliament of Western Australia \(19 October 2010\)](#)
- [National Apology for Forced Adoptions, Parliament of Australia \(21 March 2013\)](#)
- [Apology for Forced Adoption Practices, Parliament of New South Wales \(29 September 2012\)](#)  
The NSW Parliament Apology for Forced Adoption Practices was a response to the inquiry that led to the Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Practices report.
- [Parliamentary Apology for Past Adoption Practices, Parliament of Victoria \(25 October 2012\)](#)

#### Related Glossary Terms

- [Forced Adoption \(c. 1940 - c. 1970\)](#)  
The Senate report, *the Commonwealth contribution to forced adoption policies and practices* found that many adoptions between about 1940 and 1970 had been forced.
- [Child Endowment \(1941 - 1976\)](#)  
The Commonwealth Contribution to Forced Adoption Policies and Practices inquiry considered whether the allowances paid to single parents had an impact on adoption.

#### Related Legislation

- [Adoption of Children Ordinance 1938, Commonwealth of Australia \(1938 - 1966\)](#)
- [Adoption of Children Act 1965, Australian Capital Territory \(1966 - 1993\)](#)
- [Adoption Act 1993, Australian Capital Territory \(1993 - current\)](#)
- [Adoption of Children Act 1925, South Australia \(1925 - 1967\)](#)
- [Adoption of Children Act 1966-1967, South Australia \(1967 - 1989\)](#)
- [Adoption Act 1988, South Australia \(1989 - current\)](#)
- [Adoption of Children Act 1965, New South Wales \(1965 - 2003\)](#)
- [Adoption Act 1994, Western Australia \(1994 - current\)](#)
- [Adoption of Children Amendment Act 1985, Western Australia \(1986 - 1995\)](#)
- [Adoption of Children Act 1994, Northern Territory \(1994 - current\)](#)

- [Adoption of Children Ordinance 1935, Northern Territory \(1935 - 1951\)](#)
- [Adoption of Children Act 1935, Queensland \(1936 - 1965\)](#)
- [Adoption of Children Act 1964, Queensland \(1965 - 2010\)](#)

## Related Organisations

- [Adoption Services Queensland, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs](#)
- [King Edward Memorial Hospital \(1916 - current\)](#)  
King Edward Memorial Hospital was mentioned in submissions 48 and 73 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [Mothercraft Home \(1925 - c. 1988\)](#)  
The Mothercraft Home was mentioned in submission 367 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [St Anne's Nursing Home \(1937 - c. 1958\)](#)  
St Anne's Nursing Home was mentioned in submission 279 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [St John of God Hospital, Subiaco \(1898 - current\)](#)  
St John of God Hospital, Subiaco was mentioned in submissions 279 and 330 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [St Margaret's Hostel \(1918 - 1971\)](#)  
St Margaret's Hostel was mentioned in submission 279 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [St Vincent's Foundling Home \(1914 - 1971\)](#)  
St Vincent's Foundling Home was mentioned in submission 279 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [Department of Social Services, Australian government \(2013 - current\)](#)
- [Brisbane Women's Hospital \(13 March 1938 - 2003\)](#)
- [Boothville Mothers' Hospital \(24 May 1924 - 1994\)](#)
- [Mater Mothers' Hospital \(1960 - current\)](#)
- [Elim Maternity Hospital \(1897 - c. 1973\)](#)  
The report, *Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices*, includes submissions about Elim.
- [Royal Hobart Hospital \(1938 - current\)](#)
- [South Sydney Women's Hospital \(1905 - 1976\)](#)
- [The Foundling Hospital and Infants' Home \(1906 - 1964\)](#)  
The Berry Street Foundling Hospital and Infants' Home was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [Berry Street Babies' Home and Hospital \(1964 - 1975\)](#)  
Berry Street Babies' Home and Hospital was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [St Joseph's Foundling Hospital \(1901 - 1975\)](#)  
St Joseph's Foundling Hospital was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [St Joseph's Receiving Home \(1902 - 1985\)](#)  
St Joseph's Receiving Home was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara \(c. 1928 - 1977\)](#)  
Our Lady of Mercy Home, Waitara, was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [Scarba Welfare House for Children \(1920 - 1965\)](#)  
Scarba Welfare House for Children was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [Scarba House for Children \(1965 - 1986\)](#)  
Scarba House for Children was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [Crown Street Women's Hospital \(1893 - 1983\)](#)  
Crown Street Women's Hospital was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption*

- Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
- [Royal Hospital for Women \(1901 - current\)](#)  
Royal Hospital for Women was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Mater Misericordiae Hospital \(1906 - 1982\)](#)  
Mater Misericordiae Hospital was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [St Margaret's Home for Unwed Mothers \(1894 - 1998\)](#)  
St Margaret's Hospital was mentioned in submission 235 to the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Senate inquiry as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Carramar \(1961 - 1984\)](#)  
Carramar was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Holy Cross Retreat \(13 October 1889 - 1978\)](#)  
Holy Cross Retreat was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [St Mary's Home, Toowong \(1919 - 1991\)](#)  
St Mary's Home, Toowong, was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Wolston Park Hospital \(1969 - 2001\)](#)  
Wolston Park Hospital (referred to as Goodna Mental Asylum) was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [McBride Maternity Hospital \(1914 - 1975\)](#)  
McBride Maternity Hospital was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [McBride Hospital \(1975 - 1986\)](#)  
McBride Hospital was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [St Anne's Maternity Home \(c. 1958 - 1982\)](#)  
St Anne's Maternity Home was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Tresillian Mothercraft Homes, Royal Society for the Welfare of Mothers and Babies \(1918 - current\)](#)  
Tresillian cared for babies waiting for adoption.
  - [Ngal-a Mothercraft Home and Training Centre Inc \(1956 - 1989\)](#)  
Ngal-a Mothercraft Home and Training Centre Inc was mentioned in the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* Report (2012) as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Methodist Babies' Home \(1929 - c. 1974\)](#)  
Methodist Babies' Home was mentioned in submission 118 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Kedesh Maternity Home \(1926 - 1986\)](#)  
Kedesh Maternity Home was mentioned in submissions 89, 232, and 393 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Mission to the Streets and Lanes \(1886 - 1997\)](#)  
Mission to the Streets and Lanes was mentioned in submission 285 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Girls' Memorial Home \(1922 - 1973\)](#)  
Girls' Memorial Home was mentioned in submission 118 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Winlton \(1956 - c. 1991\)](#)  
Winlton was mentioned in submissions 130 and 271 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [The Harbour \(1898 - 1994\)](#)  
The Harbour was mentioned in submissions 130 and 157 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [The Haven \(1897 - 1988\)](#)  
The Haven was mentioned in submissions 167, 173, and 291 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that

- was involved in forced adoption.
- [Bethany Babies' Home \(1928 - 1977\)](#)  
Bethany Babies Home is mentioned in submission 178 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Melbourne City Mission Maternity Home \(1900 - c. 1955\)](#)  
Melbourne City Mission Maternity Home was mentioned in submission 130 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Australian Jewish Welfare Society \(1936 - 2001\)](#)  
The Australian Jewish Welfare Society is mentioned in submission 113 to the Inquiry Committee as an organisation that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Presbyterian Sisterhood \(c. 1900 - 1978?\)](#)  
Presbyterian Sisterhood was mentioned in submission 151 to the Inquiry Committee as an organisation that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Presbyterian Sisterhood Home \(1909 - c. 1978\)](#)  
Presbyterian Sisterhood Home was mentioned in submissions 33 and 381 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Catholic Social Service Bureau - Archdiocese of Melbourne \(1935 - 1956\)](#)  
Catholic Social Service Bureau was mentioned in submission 86 to the Inquiry Committee as an organisation that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Catholic Family Welfare Bureau \(Archdiocese of Sydney\) \(1941 - 1967\)](#)  
Catholic Family Welfare Bureau is mentioned in submission 123 to the Inquiry Committee as an organisation that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Catholic Adoption Agency \(1967 - 1993\)](#)  
Catholic Adoption Agency is mentioned in submissions 101 and 123 to the Inquiry Committee as an organisation that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [St Anthony's Home Croydon \(1925 - 1980\)](#)  
St Anthony's Home Croydon was mentioned in submissions 78, 112, 313, and 415 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Bethesda Maternity Hospital \(1957 - 1973\)](#)  
Bethesda Maternity Hospital is mentioned in submission 114 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Sydney Rescue Work Society \(1890 - 1982\)](#)  
Sydney Rescue Work Society was mentioned in submission 61 to the Inquiry Committee as an organisation that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Bethesda Home for Waiting Mothers \(c. 1904 - 1976\)](#)  
Bethesda Home for Waiting Mothers is mentioned in submission 61 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Royal North Shore Hospital \(1885 - current\)](#)  
Royal North Shore Hospital was mentioned in submissions 43 and 313 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Tufnell Home \(1901 - 1993\)](#)  
Tufnell Home was mentioned in submission 368 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Kate Cocks Memorial Babies' Home \(1954 - 1976\)](#)  
Kate Cocks Memorial Babies' Home was mentioned in submissions 59 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Queen Victoria Maternity Hospital \(1939 - 1966\)](#)  
Queen Victoria Maternity Hospital was mentioned in submission 59 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Magdalen Home \(1893 - 1974\)](#)  
Magdalen Home was mentioned in submissions 90 and 385 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Rock Lynn House \(c. 1895 - 1960\)](#)  
Rock Lynn House was mentioned in submission 81 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.
  - [Devonleigh \(1979 - 1987\)](#)  
Devonleigh was mentioned in submission 129 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in

forced adoption.

- [Hillcrest Maternity Home \(1922 - 1974\)](#)

Hillcrest Maternity Home was mentioned in submissions 62, 200, and 384 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.

- [Royal Women's Hospital \(1856 - current\)](#)

The Royal Women's Hospital was mentioned in submissions 8, 18, 28, 36, 83, 86, 118, 399, 407, 412, & 414 to the Inquiry Committee as an institution that was involved in forced adoption.

## Related Concepts

- [Adoption in the Australian Capital Territory \(1938 - current\)](#)

- [Adoption in South Australia \(1925 - current\)](#)

- [Adoption in Tasmania \(c. 1920 - current\)](#)

- [Adoption in Western Australia \(c. 1896 - current\)](#)

- [Adoption in the Northern Territory \(c. 1935 - current\)](#)

- [Adoption in Victoria \(c. 1928 - current\)](#)

- [Adoption in New South Wales \(c. 1923 - current\)](#)

- [Adoption in Queensland \(c. 1935 - current\)](#)

## Resources

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- Burrows, Anne, [Submission No 138 to the Senate Inquiry into the Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#), 2011
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- Treweek, Susan, [Submission No 218 to the Senate Inquiry into the Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#), 2012
- [Institutions](#), Forced Adoptions History Project, 2014
- [Apology for past forced adoption practices](#), Queensland Government Website, 2014
- [Young mothers 'drugged, shamed' inquiry told](#), ABC news, 11 December 2011
- Senate Community Affairs References Committee, [Official Committee Hansard. Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices. Friday 16 December 2011. Hobart](#), 16 December 2011
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- Department of Health and Ageing, [Questions on Notice No. 25-26 Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#), 2012
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- Hendriksen, Judith, [Submission No 13 to the Senate Inquiry into Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices](#), 2012
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## Other Resources

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**Title:** Commonwealth Department of Social Services: Benefits available to girls in homes for unmarried mothers

**Type:** Image

**Date:** c. 1969 - c. 1972

[Details](#)

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