

FORCED ADOPTIONS

Outcome: 2.1: Families and Children

POSSIBLE ISSUE: When will support services be available for people affected by forced adoptions? Will the Government table the Forced Adoptions Implementation Working Group final report in parliament?

TALKING POINTS

1. Negotiations with services are currently underway and support Services are expected to commence as soon as possible after 1 March 2015.
2. Department is currently finalising funding agreements with preferred providers.
3. A list of preferred providers will be published on the DSS website once arrangements have been finalised.

If asked whether the Government will table the final report of the Forced Adoptions Implementation Working Group.

4. The Working Group paper is expected to be with the Minister for consideration by the end of this week.
5. Decision to table the report is a matter for Government.

If asked why established service providers were not funded through Forced Adoptions round

6. This was an open selection round assessed through a rigorous and competitive process. All applicants were assessed against the criteria.
7. The Forced Adoption Support Services are intended to complement, not replace existing state based services.

Web resource

8. The Department is currently developing the Forced Adoptions website. It is expected that it will be in place later this year. The Department's current website will be updated with information in relation to the development of the web resource and other projects in the Forced Adoptions space.

Service standards

9. The Department will be working with the Australian Institute of Family Studies, new service providers and stakeholders from those affected by Forced Adoption to develop these.
10. Expected to be in place by mid-year.

Representation from Organisations

11. We are aware of representations made by a number of organisations and individuals about the outcome of the Forced Adoptions grant process.
12. The service delivery model was developed in consultation with the Forced Adoptions Implementation Working Group and with research from the Forced Adoptions Scoping Study, prepared by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.
13. The process was an open and competitive selection process. Preferred providers were selected through a rigorous, consistent and audited process to ensure high quality services to the community and value for money.

1. BACKGROUND

On 21 March 2013 the former Prime Minister of Australia apologised on behalf of the Australian Government to people affected by forced adoptions. The Government response to the Senate Inquiry for former forced adoption policies and practices was also announced.

Government Measures

The Australian Government has invested \$11.5 million over four years to 30 June 2017 to assist those affected by forced adoption practices. Concrete measures include:

- \$5 million for the Department of Social Services (DSS) to improve access to specialist support services, peer and professional counselling and support records tracing.
- \$5 million for the Department of Health (Health) to:
 - Develop guidelines and training materials for mental health professionals to assist in the diagnosis, treatment and care of those affected by forced adoption practices; and
 - Increase capacity under the Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) program for General Practitioners to refer those affected by forced adoptions with a mild to moderate mental disorder to mental health professionals who deliver psychological strategies services.
- \$1.5 million for a website and exhibition by the National Archives of Australia (National Archives) to record the experiences of those affected by forced adoption and increase understanding of these experiences in the community.

DSS Funding

DSS administered funding allocated for forced adoption specialist services is:

2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	TOTAL
\$300,000	\$1,350,000	\$1,376,000	\$1,377,000	\$4,403,000

Activities funded:

2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
\$300,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced Adoptions Implementation Working Group Meetings and Consultations • Forced Adoption Support Services Scoping Study • National Apology Anniversary Events 	\$1,300,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced Adoption Support Services \$50,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced Adoption Implementation Working Group Meetings • National Apology Anniversary event • Launch of Support Services 	\$1,300,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced Adoption Support Services \$76,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational costs 	\$1,300,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced Adoption Support Services \$77,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational costs

The advertised annual funding amounts to 30 June 2017 for DSS funded support services are:

State or Territory	Advertised annual funding amount	State or Territory	Proposed annual funding allocation
ACT	\$20,000	SA	\$102,400
NSW	\$420,300	TAS	\$32,600
NT	\$20,000	VIC	\$320,800
QLD	\$254,300	WA	\$129,600
TOTAL	\$1,300,000		

Funding is currently being negotiated.

Progress of the Concrete Measures

DSS is the lead agency coordinating the Government response, and is working closely with the Health and the National Archives

Enhanced support services

In August 2013 DSS contracted the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) **\$179,737** (GST excl.) to undertake a scoping study including mapping the current support available, determining how the system is meeting the needs of affected people, and suggest service model/s to complement and enhance existing services. AIFS consulted across the states and territories with service providers, advocacy support groups and state and territory governments. AIFS delivered their findings on 28 February 2014 and identified the following six strategies for the development of a service delivery model:

- Improve local post-adoption networks to enhance quality, coordination, flexibility, and diversity of existing post-adoption support services;
- Expand existing services focused on outreach and training, and increase capacity to meet demand;
- Develop a national web portal that provides a single entry point for web-based information and resources;
- Establish a Knowledge Translation and Exchange (KTE) for information sharing and improved coordination of post-adoption specific services;
- Establish new national services, including a search and contact database, assistance with DNA testing and matching, and assistance with international records and family tracing; and
- Formalise a national coordinating body to improve national consistency of service delivery.

DSS sought feedback on the strategies from forced adoption stakeholders, including the members of the Forced Adoptions Implementation Working Group (Working Group) and state and territory governments.

Service Delivery Model

The service delivery model is based on the AIFS findings with input from the Working Group. The agreed model has two tiers:

1. A National Coordination role administered by the Department (within existing resources) to:
 - coordinate NGOs delivering Forced Adoptions Support Services;
 - coordinate the delivery of a national 1800 telephone entry point service;
 - develop and maintain a national web portal to provide a single entry point for web-based information and resources (possibly building on Family Relationships Online);
 - organise national meetings/training of relevant services; and
 - coordinate the development of national standards for Forced Adoption Support Services.

2. NGOs to deliver Forced Adoption Support Services in each state and territory to:
 - deliver a telephone information, referral and support service via a national 1800 number for calls originating in their jurisdiction;
 - deliver face to face services where appropriate/possible;
 - develop networks of service providers – mainstream, post-adoption specific, professionals and peer support; and
 - administer small grants totalling between 5% - 10% of the funding through subcontracting arrangements to peer support and advocacy groups.

DSS is currently considering how the Knowledge Translation and Exchange strategy, recommended by AIFS in their scoping study report, can be implemented to help build the capacity of the forced adoption services sector.

Selection of Forced Adoption Support Services

On 19 June 2014 DSS invited organisations to apply for funding to deliver Forced Adoption Support Services in each state and territory. Applications closed on 24 July and DSS has assessed all applications.

Successful and unsuccessful applicants have been notified by letter on 22-24 December 2014. Emails detailing funding amounts and length of funding agreement will be sent to preferred providers from 30 January 2015 and formal negotiation of agreements will commence at this time. Preferred providers will be listed on the DSS website once arrangements have been finalised.

A number of stakeholders have written to the Minister raising their concerns that the Victorian organisation Vanish was not successful in the selection process. An FOI request has been received in relation to this decision.

Forced Adoptions History Project

The Forced Adoptions History Project, developed by the Archives, was officially launched on the first anniversary of the National Apology. People can still continue to contribute to the website.

The Archives is developing a forced adoptions exhibition which will open in March 2015 to coincide with the second anniversary of the National Apology. The exhibition will be officially launched on the 30 March 2015 by the former Prime Minister, Julia Gillard.

Any further questions should be directed to the Archives.

Department of Health

The increased ATAPS funding was a one-off funding boost to give people affected by forced adoption practices priority access to ATAPS providers following the national apology. The priority access funding ceased on 30 June 2014. People affected by forced adoptions can still access ATAPS services, but without priority access. DSS has received feedback that many practitioners have poor understanding of forced adoptions, the National Apology and the additional ATAPS funding. Stakeholders have raised concerns that affected people may not have been referred to the ATAPS services. The Working Group has specifically raised concerns about the apparent “clawing back” by Government of unspent funding to Medicare Locals in Victoria.

On 21 May 2014 Health invited tender applications for a consultant to develop guidelines, training materials and resources to support health professionals delivering services to individuals affected by past forced adoption. The Australian Psychological Society (APS) is the successful tenderer. APS is proposing a schedule of national consultations with stakeholder organisations to be held late February and March 2015.

Harmonisation of births, deaths and marriages records

The Senate Inquiry recommendations relating to integrated birth certificates, single access points for birth, death and marriage registers, and adding fathers’ names to original birth certificates fall within the responsibility of the state and territory Attorneys-General. On 6 June 2014, the Attorney-General informed the Chair of the Implementation Working Group that the issue of fathers’ names on birth certificates has been resolved as each state and territory has an administrative process in place to allow this.

The Attorney-General also informed the Working Group Chair that he had written to the states and territories encouraging them to progress records’ harmonisation and integrated birth certificates.

On 5 September 2014, the Chair of the Working Group also wrote to state and territory Ministers with responsibility for Births, Deaths and Marriages and other records regarding the harmonisation of records. Replies were received from NSW, WA, QLD, ACT, VIC and TAS.

Working with States and Territories

A number of the Senate Inquiry recommendations relate to the Commonwealth and the states and territories working together to improve outcomes for affected people. The Adoptions Issues and Directions Working Group, under the COAG process, developed Terms of Reference to guide the work. However, the current COAG structure does not include the work relating to the Senate Inquiry recommendations. However, work can progress with the jurisdictions informally and as identified on a needs basis.

It should be noted that the key areas for progression are those where the states and territories have jurisdictional responsibility under the Constitution – reparation, redress and records access.

Forced Adoptions Implementation Working Group

In June 2013 DSS established the Forced Adoptions Implementation Working Group to provide advice to Government on the implementation of services and projects included in the Government response. Professor the Honourable Nahum Mushin was appointed independent Chair of the Working Group, which also comprised representatives of mothers, fathers and adopted persons affected by forced adoptions.

On 9 April 2014 the Minister agreed to a six month extension for the Working Group to 31 December 2014. The Working Group has prepared a final report for Minister Morrison.

The report makes recommendations on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Senate Report *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* tabled on 29 February 2012 and the former Government's formal response to that report tabled on 21 March 2013. The final report also makes recommendations with regard to policies in the areas of domestic and intercountry adoption and surrogacy. The Working Group recommends that the report be tabled in Parliament.

The Department is considering the recommendations and will brief the Minister.

Governance arrangements

Following a COAG decision on 13 December 2013 to discontinue the Standing Council on Community and Disability Services, on 27 June 2014 the Standing Council on Community and Disability Services Advisory Council (SCCSDAC) agreed on a new governance structure which did not include the Forced Adoptions Issues and Directions Working Group and its activities.

The implication of this decision has been that the Adoptions Issues and Directions Working Group, established to progress the Senate Inquiry recommendations relating to the states and territories, has been dissolved.

Ad hoc work can still be progressed with states and territories at officer level, depending on the issue.

	Action Officer:		Group Manager	
Name:	Tracy Creech		Phillip Brown	
Position:	A/g Branch Manager		A/g Group Manager	
Branch/Group:	Families and Children Branch		Families Group	
Work phone number:				
Mobile phone number:				
Cleared by Group Manager	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Date:	GM Initial
Witness who will address this question at the Estimates hearing				Phillip Brown