

Forced Adoptions Implementation Working Group

Communiqué #2

The second meeting of the Forced Adoptions Implementation Working Group was held in Canberra on 31 October 2013.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) provided an update on the support services scoping study, which is due to be completed in early 2014. The Working Group members provided input on appropriate models to support people affected by forced adoptions, including trauma models and restorative justice principles.

The representatives of the National Archives of Australia informed the Working Group that Archives' staff have undertaken consultations to gather input from people affected by forced adoptions to contribute to the Forced Adoptions History Project. This project will include a website and exhibition that will document the history of forced adoptions in Australia and will also help increase awareness and understanding of what occurred. On 14 October 2013 the Archives established a [Facebook page](#) to engage stakeholders and inform the website and exhibition content development. The page will close prior to the launch of the website. Members provided feedback on the proposed website and suggested content areas for inclusion, including details about previous inquiries, submissions, apologies, health impacts and support services, and made suggestions about preferred language and visual presentation. Feedback from the Working Group will be provided to the website developer.

Members of the Working Group also provided feedback to representatives from the Department of Health about the Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) programme. Feedback related to the availability of ATAPS for people affected by forced adoptions as well as highlighting the importance of GPs and other practitioners having an appreciation and understanding of issues related to the impacts, particularly mental health impacts, of forced adoption.

The Department of Health representatives consulted with members on a project outline for the "Forced Adoption – Guidelines and Training for Mental Health Professionals" project. The project will develop, pilot and implement guidelines and resources to equip mental health professionals with best practice, evidenced-based diagnosis, referral, treatment and management options, to address the mental health needs of people affected by forced adoption. Members provided feedback on the need for GPs and practitioners to identify people affected by forced adoptions, and to understand key features of good practice, including the role of trauma.

Representatives from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department informed members that work relating to the harmonisation of records is progressing through the Standing Council on Law and Justice. Members discussed the issues relating to restrictions to the Australian Electoral Roll for family searching purposes. The Department of Social Services provided information about work being undertaken to improve records access for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, which could be broadly applicable to all groups wanting to search for their records.

The next meeting of the Working Group is scheduled for Thursday 20 March 2014 in Canberra.