

FROM THE DESK OF

**Shane Bouel**

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Dear members of The Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care in South Australia,

I am writing to express my concern about the absence of adoption-related topics in Early Childhood Education, Individual Support, and Aged Care vocational education courses. As an adoptee and learning management specialist, I have noticed that despite covering important topics such as culture, identity, heritage, socialisation, and disability, these courses ignore adoption entirely.

This exclusion is particularly troubling given that we are 10 years on from the Forced Adoption apology. It leaves adoptees feeling disenfranchised and isolated and fosters adoption trauma through the denial of their experiences. The absence of representation in educational contexts can cause significant harm to adoptees and their mental health.

It is important to recognise that the neglect of adoptee experiences in education and socialisation not only fails to address the needs of a significant population but also perpetuates biases and fosters trauma. This bias in content creates a stark contrast to the reality of the adoptee experience, further isolating adoptees and denying them the truth of their own lived experiences.

### **Scenarios**

Re: views on the policy settings and services that support:

- a child's first 1000 days
- 3 year old preschool
- Out-of-school hours care (OSHC).

As per submission instructions I am writing to express my concerns regarding the absence of adoption-related topics in early childhood education and care,

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particularly during a child's first 1000 days, and the lack of support for adoptees in out of school hours care (OSHC) and 3-year-old preschool.

Imagine a scenario where an adoptee, Sarah, is in OSHC, and a staff member makes insensitive comments about adoption, unaware that Sarah is an adoptee. This experience can be incredibly distressing for Sarah, triggering feelings of isolation, anxiety, and confusion about her identity. Such a scenario underscores the need for training and support for staff members to ensure that they understand the experiences and unique needs of adoptees.

Similarly, during Sarah's time in a 3-year-old preschool, she may not have access to materials or resources that represent her experience as an adoptee. This exclusion further reinforces the sense of disenfranchisement and isolation that many adoptees experience and it is crucial that adoption-related topics are included in early childhood education to create a culture of inclusivity and representation.

Furthermore, research has shown that the first 1000 days of a child's life are critical for their development, and early childhood education and care play a crucial role in supporting children's physical, emotional, and cognitive development during this time. Adoptees may have unique needs during this period, and it is essential that early childhood educators and carers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to support them effectively.

In light of these scenarios, I urge you to prioritise the inclusion of adoption-related topics in early childhood education and care, including 3-year-old preschool and out-of-school hours care. By doing so, we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for adoptees during their formative years.

### **Specific to a child's first 1000 days:**

During the first 1000 days of life, a child's development is crucially affected by their environment and relationships. For adoptees, this can be complicated due to the potential loss of their biological family and the trauma that may have caused. It is important for early childhood education and care services to understand the unique needs of adoptees during this critical period.

For example, imagine a newborn adoptee who has just been placed with their adoptive family. It is essential for the family and any caregivers to understand the importance of attachment and bonding during this time. Early interventions and support can help facilitate healthy attachment and promote the child's emotional well-being.

### **Specific to 3-year-old preschool:**

When it comes to preschool, adoptees may face challenges related to identity and belonging. For instance, imagine a 3-year-old adoptee starting preschool for the first time. They may struggle with questions about their family, origins, and identity, which can impact their socialisation and learning.

It is essential for preschools to create a safe and inclusive environment for all children, including adoptees. This can include incorporating adoption-related topics

in the curriculum, providing resources for adoptive families, and promoting empathy and understanding among peers.

### **Specific to out-of-school-hours care (OSHC):**

After-school programs and OSHC can be important sources of support for adoptees and their families. For example, imagine a 10-year-old adoptee who attends an after-school program. They may benefit from opportunities to connect with peers who share similar experiences and feelings.

It is important for OSHC providers to be aware of the potential challenges and needs of adoptees, such as separation anxiety, grief, or trauma triggers. Creating a welcoming and understanding environment can help foster a sense of belonging and improve mental health outcomes for adoptees.

### **Conclusion**

It is crucial that we take action to ensure that adoptee experiences and perspectives are included in education and socialisation. Adoptees deserve to have their experiences recognised and represented in a way that does not require them to fight for recognition and representation. We need to shift our culture and commit to empathy and inclusivity to provide adoptees with the support they need to thrive.

I urge you to consider the inclusion of adoption-related topics in vocational education courses and the creation of a culture that embraces and celebrates diversity in all its forms. This is about the need for society itself to change its perception of the current Adoption narrative for true inclusivity for all. Not one that continues to gaslight adoptees into disenfranchisement and disconnection.

### **Effects on policy**

Here are two simple things that would ease the burden on adoptees and their mental health:

1. The issuance of Birth Certificates that state the correct relationship between guardians and birth parents. Past and current process remove any mention of biological family and implies that the adoptive family gave birth to the adoptee. This is how adoptive parents get away with not telling adoptive children that they're adopted. Many people do not know that this is still a standard policy in today's adoptions.
2. Ease of access to no fault no fee discharges, so those of failed adoptions like myself are able to return to their family of origin. This would avoid going through extreme, unnecessary trauma, time and time again through lengthy excessively expensive court proceedings.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

**PLEASE SEE**

The Importance of Inclusion:  
Addressing the Needs of Adoptees in Vocational Education

Also see: <https://thoughtless-del.medium.com/the-importance-of-inclusion-7db402be8a3f#7b5d>

**And**

Education does not include Adoption!  
Vocational Education in Australia

<https://medium.com/thoughtless-delineation/education-does-not-include-adoption-cde4dc1b5049>

Sincerely yours,

Shane Bouel