



ARMS (Vic)

**Association Representing Mothers Separated
by adoption**



**WINTER
NEWSLETTER
JULY 2022**

PO Box 645 Deepdene Vic 3103

Telephone: 0400 701 621

Email: arms@armsvic.org.au

Website: armsvic.org.au





elcome to our lovely newsletter.

I do hope everyone is coping with the latest Covid numbers and that you and your families have avoided it or recovered well. I have so far avoided it, but who can say what lies in the next supermarket visit or coffee get together.

This morning I woke to fogged up bedroom windows - it was 6.8 C according to the BOM. I had to think sadly of all homeless people trying to find shelter and feel gratitude for my walls and roof. Winter is definitely making itself known in Melbourne 2022.

Our May 2022 Mothers Day meeting was a great success with more than 20 women attending. It is a shame some of our ageing members were unable to travel to attend. It was fantastic ARMS was able to meet in person in a live venue. We were lucky to have Liz Tomlinson as guest speaker. Liz's vast experience and knowledge of all issues faced by us and her skill at presenting were greatly appreciated. Also Liz's gentle empathetic style allowed us to feel safe and acknowledged. Thank you Liz from all ARMS (Vic) mothers.

Insight, the program on SBS free to air television, had a program on Meeting Family Later In Life a few weeks ago. This show had some interesting stories although it wasn't a terribly in-depth coverage. But it might have given some viewers a little more knowledge of issues that face people when dealing with reunions. Not everyone's account was about adoption reunion. If you missed it, it's still available on SBS On Demand.....Insight - Season 2022, Episode 16. It is worth seeing in my opinion despite some shortcomings.

If you have any interesting articles or have written something you would like to share in our newsletter please send it to us. This is your newsletter also.

Wonderful news: the ARMS (Vic) committee has secured a central city venue for our support group meetings – St Augustine's Church, 631 Bourke St Melbourne - starting Saturday, 3rd September. We had looked at a number of possibilities but unfortunately they were not easily accessible by public transport. Many thanks to Gabrielle Davies and Pauline Ley for their wonderful help. The 6th of August meeting will still be on Zoom which does have its silver lining as it allows some regional and overseas members to attend.

Our Grant projects are still progressing:

- The National Network Committee is meeting and discussing possibilities
- The ARMS Banner project is coming along well and we are all looking forward to seeing the finished article.
- The Digitisation Project - 40 years of ARMS records – is being put onto hard drives for easy future reference and preservation. This huge job is also progressing very well.

Lastly, and very importantly, this year's Annual General Meeting on Saturday 3rd December will be something really special. We will be celebrating 40 years since the foundation of ARMS (Vic). I feel it has happened so quickly. Put the date into your calendar now and make a special effort to come along.

Thank you for reading my report. I have largely used Jo's wonderful meeting minutes to put it together as I was grounded for a bit with a fractured leg. This was simply caused by rushing and tripping and flying through the air down some stairs. It is very annoying to not bounce anymore. All good now though.

Stay safe and happy.
Faye Burnham Convenor





Relocation of the Taken not Given Memorial

I felt that we Mothers were put last again.

Not caring about our feelings being hurt again as we wouldn't speak up?

Bad luck ladies we have already decided to move your memorial.

Why couldn't it have been placed somewhere different at the start?

Or why couldn't the other memorial be put somewhere different?

Thanks for being able to express myself in the ARMS newsletter.



Gail

Dear Gail,

It does feel really hurtful to have been left out of the discussions about moving our memorial, until the plans were too far developed for us to influence the outcome. In so many ways it takes me back to our so called 'decision' where I felt coerced but somehow have had to agree, because there was no alternative. I am still feeling very bruised about it and can understand much of how you are feeling. I can't imagine it was deliberate on the part of the group doing the new memorial, but it feels deeply personal. Rage, frustration, hurt, helplessness - probably not really about the memorial being moved, but it triggers old wounds - and ends up feeling like it **is** about the memorial.

Stay strong. The journey is hard.

Love,

Marie



As well as the ARMS telephone number **0400 701 621** the following committee members are happy to be contacted (between 9am and 9pm) on their personal phone numbers:

Faye Burnham	0411 865 836	
Jo Fraser	0409 442 701	03 9882 6319
Dorothy Kowalski	0411 098 773	03 9889 3583



The world lost a beautiful soul this week. Sandra Sipavicius passed peacefully on June 8th, after struggling with poor health for some time. Sandra was someone who had a magical presence and could light up any room. She had such a great sense of humour and was a great story teller, often having her listener in stitches. Sandra always managed to find the good in everyone and people were drawn to her. She looked for the positive in every situation and her glass was definitely always half full. No matter what was happening for her she always had a smile.

Sandra was fortunate enough to find her firstborn daughter, and they enjoyed a beautiful, loving relationship until the end. This was in part due to Sandra's two other beautiful girls who made the transition easy, accepting her with love, and she became their sister.

Sandra was an original member of GAP (Geelong Adoption Program). She was heavily involved and was a loved member of the group. Sandra was able to support Pauline in helping many women with their grief and loss over so many years.

For me, I think the first time I met Sandra was in 1983 when I attended an ARMS conference in Geelong with Marie Meggitt. Sandra was one of those characters who you remember. She was glamorous, always done up beautifully, her makeup, bright nails and her "bling" as she called it. She was warm and friendly and of course we also had that shared loss.

Sandra volunteered for a pregnancy support group in Geelong, which was where we next saw each other after I had moved from Melbourne. We shared a passion to help young mums, and Sandra would help me with bits and pieces with the clients I supported. We became firm friends and over the years Sandra would cover my leave each year with the Salvation Army Young Mum's Outreach Program. She absolutely loved it and I knew the girls were in good hands. Sandra then took up a position in the Salvo's Women's program.

Around that time Sandra set up a social group for our young women at her Church. She was so wonderful with the mums and their children and they all adored her. The girls felt very special and it was a lovely break from what was often a difficult life. Sandra made a huge difference in their lives.

Sandra was a wonderful mum, she adored her 3 girls. She proudly talked about her grandchildren and loved them all so much. She will be such a huge loss to them all.

I will always be grateful for Sandra. We had a special friendship. I will miss her so very much, as will so many. I will miss our chats and laughing together. I will certainly miss those big beautiful hugs.

Sandra you left us way too soon. I love you, my friend. My heart will miss you every day. **Fae**



The profound loss experienced by Sandra when she and her firstborn daughter were separated is immeasurable. For many years this deep sorrow was disregarded by others. However, Sandra was herself unwavering in her determination to validate its significance in her life story. She was courageous as she spoke with others concerning the far-reaching consequences of losing her precious daughter. Decades later they met and gradually developed a close, loving, trusting relationship; a healing gift for both.

Sandra shared with others how deeply wounded she was after losing her daughter earlier in her life. At GAP (Geelong Adoption Program) she helped many others whose lives were similarly affected by adoption loss. She reached out to others, including adoptive parents with whom she connected in ways that were healing for all.

Dear Sandra, you will always be remembered for your generosity of spirit, your loving heart and courage.

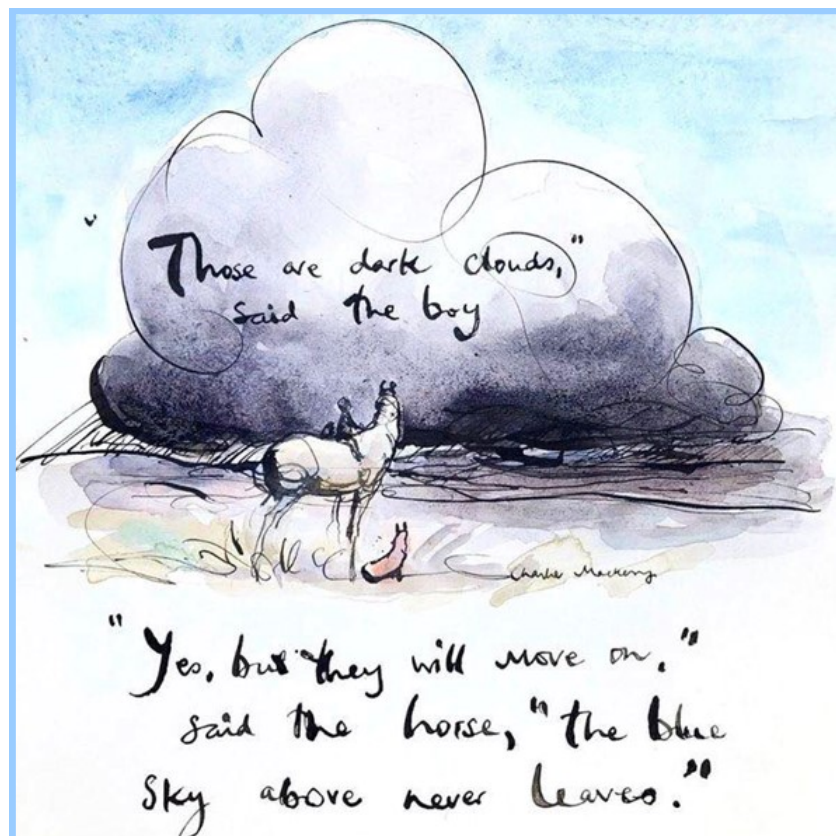
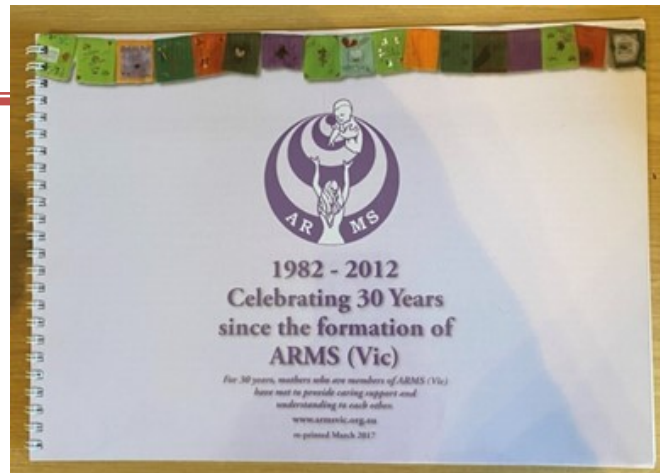
Posy for Sandra, picked from my neighbour's garden



Pauline Ley

Coming up to our 40th anniversary, it's interesting to look back at what ARMS has achieved. This booklet was last updated on 18th August 2015 when the Victorian government banned the lodgement of new contact statements.

We still have many, so you're most welcome to take extra copies and put them in your library or community centre.



Taken not Given

The committee has published a booklet which includes photos of the event, transcripts of speeches, artist Anne Ross' artistic statement, Daniel Andrews' message and the proposal by the City of Melbourne to develop the reserve into a place of reflection.

We would like to post a booklet out to every ARMS member, so if you haven't yet received your booklet, or would like another copy, **PLEASE** let us know your current postal address.

arms@armsvic.org.au

0400 701 621



TAKEN NOT GIVEN
UNVEILING
26 OCTOBER 2018
ST ANDREW'S RESERVE
MELBOURNE

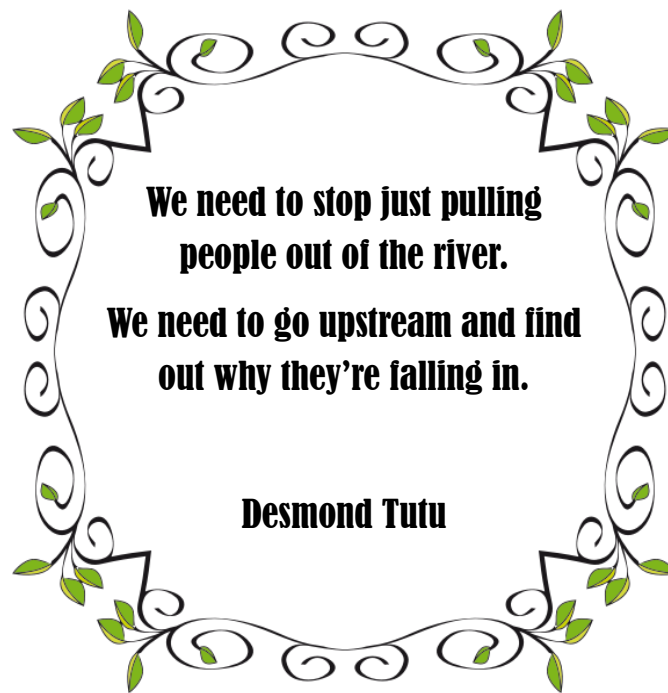
When I'm sad, I don't want someone to tell me how "it gets better" or how I need to "move on." I need someone to tell me that it's okay to be sad and that my feelings are validated. I don't need someone to tell me about how much happier I could be. I need someone to hold me and tell me that I've been strong and that it's okay to sometimes not to be okay.

SMILE & SHINE



DISCLAIMER:

All contributions are presented with the aim of sharing ideas. Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily endorsed by ARMS



FORCED ADOPTION REDRESS SCHEME

The Victorian government is working to design and scope this redress scheme. In the meantime they have committed \$500,000 for those in immediate need –

See justice.vic.gov.au/forced-adoption-hardship-fund

TO APPLY FOR THIS FUND, you must be both:

- a mother impacted by forced adoption practices that occurred in Victoria before 1985, and
- experiencing terminal illness or other exceptional circumstances.

Exceptional circumstances may include:

- critical illness, or
- other acute circumstances that may warrant a one-off payment, to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

You cannot apply for this funding on behalf of someone who has already passed.

If you are terminally or critically ill, your application will be prioritised.

ARMS is ready and willing to help. Please contact Jo on 0409 442 701 or Dorothy on 0411 098 773 if you need a paper copy of the form or any assistance in completing the forms.

ARMS (VIC) CALENDAR 2022



SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

1st Saturday of every month (except January)

6th August Meeting by Zoom 2pm – 4pm
contact Jo Fraser

3rd September **NEW VENUE** 2pm – 4pm

St Augustine's Church 631 Bourke St Melbourne

Bourke Street is in the free tram zone and trams 86 and 96 both stop at Stop 1 (Southern Cross Station). St Augustine's is a two or three minute walk from the Southern Cross Station.

There will be a yellow ARMS notice on the front gate at St Augustine's directing you to the correct entrance. Jo's and Dorothy's mobile numbers will be listed on the door notice.

1st October 2pm – 4pm

25th October **Recognition of 10th Anniversary of Victorian Apology**

5th November 2pm – 4pm

3rd December AGM and 1.30pm – 4.30pm
ARMS (Vic) 40th anniversary celebration

All regional members welcome and invited to all the Melbourne support groups

Association **R**epresenting **M**others **S**eparated by adoption



MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE: TELEPHONE/s:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

Tick here if you would like to receive your newsletter by email

I enclose \$30 annual membership fee for 1/7/2022 to 30/6/2023 financial year

SIGNATURE: DATE:

Membership fee \$30

I wish to make a donation to ARMS \$

Please post to: ARMS P.O. Box 645 Deepdene 3103

or email to: arms@armsvic.org.au

If you would like to pay online:

Westpac Bank - BSB 033039 Account 732592

Please make sure you enter your name as the reference

Membership fees are our only source of income, and are vital for paying regular expenses of telephone, stationery, rental of rooms for Support Group meetings and Mothers Day and AGM meetings, incorporation fees and annual Consumer Affairs audit and lodging fees.

The ARMS Constitution indicates that fees are not compulsory, but that "All ordinary members are encouraged to become financial members." (Section 4b of the Constitution)

Note: ARMS will continue to provide newsletters to members, regardless of whether membership fees have been paid