



About the scheme

The Victorian Government established the scheme to acknowledge the impact of historical forced adoption practices and provide support to the many mothers who continue to live with the serious, complex and ongoing effects of the experience of forced separation.

The scheme opened on 1 February 2024 and is available to mothers who gave birth in Victoria, or were a Victorian resident but gave birth interstate, and were forcibly separated from their newborn baby prior to 1990.

Redress support delivered by the scheme includes a one-off financial payment of \$30,000, as well as access to counselling and psychological support, and an individual apology process.

A dedicated support team is available to answer questions, guide mothers through the application process and assist them with any supporting information that may be required.

The scheme is administered by the Department of Justice and Community Safety and is independent of institutions involved in forced adoption practices. Any information provided to the scheme will be protected in line with the [Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 \(Vic\)](#).

Establishment of this scheme delivers on a key recommendation of the [Inquiry into Responses to Historical Forced Adoptions in Victoria](#) (the Inquiry), published in September 2021. We would like to recognise the many mothers and adopted people who bravely shared their personal experiences through submissions to this Inquiry.

Terminology

The Victorian Government acknowledges the term 'forced adoption' may not resonate with all mothers, noting not all mothers' experiences of past policies and practices resulted in adoption. As this term was used in the Inquiry, it is used to refer to forced separation practices that the Inquiry and scheme cover.

The scheme uses the term 'mothers' to refer to its applicants to mirror the terminology that was used in the Inquiry. However, the Victorian Government acknowledges that some applicants may not identify with this term. People of diverse backgrounds and gender identities can apply to the scheme, if they were the person who gave birth to the baby that was forcibly separated from them.

Contact the scheme

People can contact our support team for a confidential discussion

Phone: 1300 217 425 9:00am – 4:30pm, Monday-Friday (excluding public holidays)

Email: forcedadoptions.redress@justice.vic.gov.au

Website: <https://www.vic.gov.au/redress-forced-adoptions>

Who can apply to the scheme?

Mothers who gave birth in Victoria, or were a Victorian resident but gave birth interstate, and were forcibly separated from your newborn baby prior to 1990 are eligible to apply to this scheme.

Mothers who received funding through the Forced Adoption Exceptional Circumstances Fund (ECF) can apply to the scheme.

The scheme will not accept applications on behalf of mothers who have already passed away.

It is important to be aware that an individual mother can only make one application to the scheme.

How to apply to the scheme

The scheme opened on 1 February 2024. We encourage mothers to contact the scheme for a confidential discussion with our support team. The support team can help mothers through the application process and talk to them about any information or records that may be needed.

It is important to be aware that the application process does not require mothers to provide extensive documentation or records.

Mothers can obtain a copy of the application form by visiting <https://www.vic.gov.au/redress-forced-adoptions> or by contacting the scheme:

Phone: 1300 217 425 9:00am – 4:30pm, Monday-Friday (excluding public holidays)

Email: forcedadoptions.redress@justice.vic.gov.au

Crisis support

Our support team is available to assist mothers with their application and answer questions about the scheme. If a mother needs more immediate support, the following organisations offer phone counselling and other support.

<u>VANISH</u> Telephone: 1300 826 474 Email: info@vanish.org.au	<u>ARMS</u> Telephone: 0400 701 621 Email: arms@armsvic.org.au
<u>Link-up</u> Telephone: 03 9287 8800 Email: linkup@vacca.org	Independent Regional Mothers Telephone: 0409 711 627 Email: motherstruth@gmail.com
<u>Relationships Australia Victoria</u> Telephone: 1800 21 03 13 Email: fass@rav.org.au	Lifeline Telephone: 13 11 14
Beyond Blue Telephone: 1300 224 636	Suicide Call Back Service Telephone: 1300 659 467

Frequently Asked Questions

What records do mothers need to apply for the scheme?

Mothers will not be required to provide extensive documentation or records to make an application to the scheme.

There is a dedicated support team who will help mothers through this process and talk to them about any information or records that will be required to support their application for redress. In most circumstances, it is unlikely that records would be requested directly from a responsible institution.

Do mothers need to provide proof that the separation or adoption was forced?

The application process has been developed to be as simple and straightforward as possible. The scheme will not ask for extensive documents or records to be included as part of an application.

There is a dedicated support team to help mothers through the process and talk to them about documents that will be relevant for their application.

Can mothers still apply to the scheme if they have received a payment from the Forced Adoption Exceptional Circumstances Fund?

Yes. Mothers who received funding through the Forced Adoption Exceptional Circumstances Fund can apply to this scheme.

Who will make a decision about an application for redress?

All applications received will be assessed fairly and impartially by the scheme and outcome decisions will be approved by the scheme Director. All decisions and outcomes are independent from the responsible institutions.

What is included in the redress package provided by the scheme?

Mothers who apply to the scheme will be supported by trained case managers throughout the application process and will continue to be supported for the duration of the scheme.

The redress package includes a one-off financial payment of \$30,000, as well as access to counselling and psychological support. This counselling support will be in addition to the financial payment and funded by the scheme as part of the redress package.

The scheme will also provide mothers with the opportunity to participate in an apology process. Mothers can choose if they wish to participate and will be supported by the scheme through the process.

The scheme will work with responsible institutions to tailor appropriate apology processes to meet the needs of individual mothers. It is anticipated that these processes will be available later in the year.

How long will mothers have to wait before they receive a redress payment?

The scheme intends to process applications and redress payments within reasonable timeframes. The timing will depend on each individual case as well as the overall demand for the scheme.

Does applying to the scheme affect a mother's right to pursue civil/legal action?

No. The scheme will not ask mothers to sign a waiver to accept a redress offer from the scheme and they will not be restricted in their right to pursue legal avenues.

Will a mother be eligible for more than one payment if they had multiple babies forcibly separated from me?

An individual mother can only make one application to the scheme. Applications approved by the scheme will receive a single one-off redress payment, as well as access to counselling and psychological support.

What will personal information be used for?

The scheme will only ask for information that is needed to confirm a mother is eligible for the scheme and to assess their application for the purposes of receiving a redress outcome.

Information that the scheme will ask for includes:

- personal information, so we can identify a mother as the person applying for the scheme
- details of their experience of forced adoption.

How is the information provided to the scheme protected?

The Department of Justice and Community Safety (the department) is committed to protecting information in line with the [Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 \(Vic\)](#). You can view the department's [information privacy policy](#).

All areas of the department have security measures in place to protect personal, sensitive and health information from misuse, loss, unauthorised access or disclosure.

Does receiving a financial payment affect Centrelink payment or other government supports?

Our support team will talk to mothers to understand their individual circumstances and identify relevant options. We recommend that individuals consult with an accountant, financial advisor, Centrelink or other service provider to obtain advice on what is best for their individual circumstances.

What supports are available for adoptees and other family members affected?

The Victorian Government is committed to providing comprehensive post-adoption support services to people personally affected by forced adoption, including adoptees, children of adoptees, fathers, and other close family members.

A range of services are already available directly through Adoption Information Services at the Department of Justice and Community Safety, and through the Victorian Adoption Network for Information and Self Help (VANISH), which receives funding from the Victorian Government. The Commonwealth Government also funds support services for people affected by historical forced adoptions through Relationships Australia Victoria.

Information on existing support services, access to adoption records and information, searching for family is available on the Department of Justice and Community Safety website at www.vic.gov.au/past-adoption.

The Victorian Government recently announced an additional \$530,000 to provide dedicated post-adoption services to support people affected by historical forced adoption practices, including adoptees. This support is expected to commence from July 2024.

Integrated Birth Certificates are now available for adopted people aged 18 years or older who were born in Victoria and had their adoption registered here. The first issue is free. Apply to Births Deaths and Marriages Victoria at <https://www.bdm.vic.gov.au/births/get-an-integrated-birth-certificate>.