

# ARMS SPRING NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2021



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**H**ello all, and welcome to our Spring 2021 newsletter

I'm sure everyone is getting a bit worn down by the current situation, well, all of us in the metropolitan area of Melbourne. I know that I am. However humans have endured far worse situations throughout history so I know I'm not too badly off. I am really looking forward to a bit more human contact and seeing my family members that I haven't seen for what seems like years, well it's been almost 2 years. I hope that everyone is staying safe and healthy.

As you know from past news ARMS Vic has received several grants from Relationships Australia Victoria. These grants are a result of the recommendations from the Senate Inquiry.

The resulting projects are progressing very well considering much of the recent time has been affected by lockdowns.

- ✓ The digitisation of ARMS records is moving along very well, largely thanks to the hard work of some committee members.
- ✓ The banner rejuvenation is also moving along. We are looking forward to seeing our lovely old banner updated and refreshed.
- ✓ Our book of the unveiling of the Taken Not Given memorial has been distributed to many ARMS members. I look forward to getting mine. Please call ARMS or email if you would like to get a copy. There is no cost.
- ✓ Another project that committee members are working on is a National Network Committee.

You may remember the founder of *Brave Foundation*, Bernadette Black, who became a single mum at 16 year old, spoke at our 2016 AGM about her organisation that supports expecting and parenting teens. *Brave Foundation* has been granted funding of \$1.4 million dollars in the Tasmanian State Government Budget to enable them to expand their support. What a wonderful gift to the organisation and to the young people who receive the support.

The Report of the Victorian Inquiry into Responses to Historical Forced Adoption was recently tabled in Parliament. There were 56 recommendations, which we will urge the Victorian Government to implement at the earliest opportunity.

The ARMS Vic website has had a few updates and our newsletters will now be available to be read on our website for anyone interested in our organisation.

Thank you for reading this report and I'm sure that you will find the rest of our newsletter very interesting. If anyone has a cure for Covid Lockdown Procrastination I would love to hear from them! I do have to add that Spring is lovely and watching things grow and bloom around my street is very encouraging.

*Faye Burnham*



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
Dorothy Kowalski	0411 098 773 03 9889 3583



May your day  
BE FILLED WITH BLESSINGS  
like the sun that lights the sky,  
and may you always have the courage  
to spread your wings and fly.

IRISH BLESSING

## THE IRISH TIMES

Mon, Sep 27, 2021 : The term “birth mother” is set to be dropped from legislation on adoption and tracing. Some mothers find the term ‘reductive and hurtful’; no alternative has yet been chosen

## What I did to keep (relatively) sane during COVID lockdown

**Nancy Johnson:** During lockdown I have been making Christmas puddings (4 puddings) for family. Doing my Christmas cards, listening to music on Gold 104.3 Music, singing and dancing around the kitchen, walking the dog, on nice days taking my husband out in his wheelchair, letter writing to my elderly family members.



**Maria** said: “The ARMS Zoom meetings were a lifeline for me”.

**Shirley:** My knitting and the Olympics have kept me company! I watched all of the swimming events. I'm knitting a 'Bombers' blanket for my friend's little grandson and the more exciting the swimming gets the faster I knit. My friend has 5 grandchildren and I've decided to knit them all a blanket for Christmas.



**Di:** I've managed to successfully strike a number of plant cuttings, including chrysanthemums, sedums and the challenging native geraniums but my greatest achievement has been the aquilegia seeds I harvested from a friend's garden in Healesville, now flourishing. I'm giving them pep talks daily, encouraging them to flower.

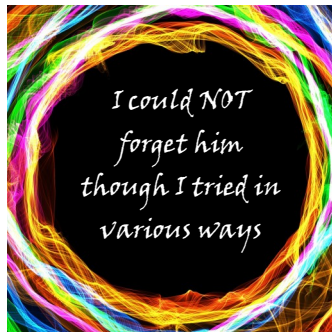
***Evelyn Robinson received a message from Elizabeth, a friend of hers who wrote an impassioned response to hearing a discussion about adoption being a better solution than abortion.***

There is no doubt abortion is a hotly contested issue for a number of very good reasons. In many places, adoption is still offered as a 'better' - read more acceptable, more moral, solution to an unplanned pregnancy, all without the nuances of a true or honest unfolding of the issues contained in both paths. Elizabeth Gellatly discusses this in her article below, still feeling the rage and loss of her first child being taken for adoption. We can hear her anger at the simplistic approach that reduces this very difficult decision to the notion that abortion is immoral and adoption can just be done and forgotten about. She reflects accurately on the manipulative messages and guilt laid on us that covered up a system designed to take our baby from us, to be given to a 'more deserving' couple.

Everyone involved in the adoption racket knew of the shocking pain and loss of having one's child taken. Everyone in society knew too - our parents (who had had children); the community, the Church. We know from research that our grief lasts a lifetime and for many, it becomes stronger over time. It is not like other griefs - not like the death of a child; not like abortion, not like the death of any other person in our lives. Our grief is complicated because it was not acknowledged; because it was denied; because as Elizabeth says 'we live outside society' - our identity is conflicted. We are a mother, who to the world is not one; or a mother of two, when in truth we are a mother of three. Unrequited grief is our constant companion and our silent shadow because it changes. We grieve the babyhood lost and once gone, we grieve that *and* the childhood not spent together; and, when gone, we grieve the adulthood not spent together and the loss of the person they would have been, had we raised them ourselves. So many griefs. It is good to hear from our sisters from over the seas and we thank Elizabeth for her contribution.

**Elizabeth Gellatly of Huntington Beach, Ca USA gave ARMS permission to reprint part of her article, and to use her name:**

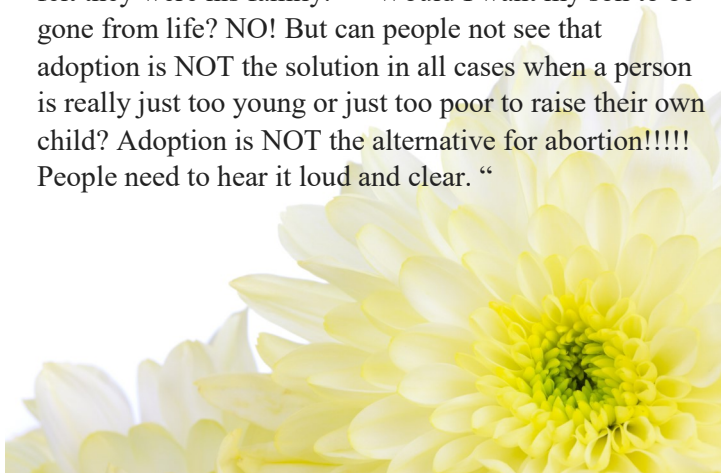
"In 1967, no birth control pills, no abortions available except through certain doctors and then, only illegally, and very expensive. You had to know someone who knew the doctor. I could not get one. I had no money. To be clear, the fact that my first child was born, after all, doesn't mean I don't want him to be alive, don't want him to have been born. These two things are very different from each other and NOT RELATED in the least. At some point, you have to have the baby- it is too late even if you had the money, or the doctor connection. So girls like me were sent away, most of the time, and given the 'choice' that if you really REALLY loved that child, since you are SO young and all, you'd 'choose' to give the baby a better life than you could EVER give them since you are broke, uneducated (age 15), and not supported by anyone in your family or elsewhere that would enable you to keep your own flesh and blood. SO what did girls like me do? We did what they told us to do, what they told us was the right 'choice'. "Oh you will go on to have other children whereas these fine people cannot ever have children!" or "Oh you will forget this ever happened- just go on about your life!" or "This



child will never know the new parents are not his real parents." or "It is a selfish act to think you can keep him at your age and a very noble act to give him up, sacrificing your own selfish feelings for the future of your baby" or "You do not have what it takes to raise a child in any way, shape, or form" or "Don't mention it to anyone, for your own sake, and it will disappear" or "Do you want your son to be known as a bastard child?" or "Yes, there is welfare, but do you really think that is the life you want to give to your child? Don't you want better for him?" All these messages

formed impenetrable barriers to what seemed so natural- take my baby home with me! But, like so many- especially during the 'baby scoop era', I relinquished my child and left him to the unknown, but more deserving parents to be. Almost none of what they said was true, it turned out. I could NOT forget him, though I would try in various, self-destructive ways. Yes, I did go on to have other children [but] I lived on the outside of society, largely because of the secrets. No counselling, no after meetings to see if we were faring well, it was all just supposed to disappear into thin air. I had to start tenth grade three weeks after giving birth. I showed up to my new school and could not for the life of me imagine how I was going to settle in and read books and listen

to lectures or to meet people my age. Forget it. I decided it was better to get a job so I quit. I felt old. I felt used up. I was worn out already for life... I was scared to bond with [my next] baby ... I was haunted by the thought that they would find out that I was not equipped to raise a child, just as they had told me before ... I feared the authorities would come to retrieve this baby too... I found myself wondering if the new parents were good to him- how he was growing- what he was like- missing him and missing being his mom now that I knew a bit more what that was about. I wrote to the adoption agency when he would have been seven... [They] wrote back that he was fine and did I forget my promise to never pursue him? To forget that it happened? I still have their letter. Devastating... I met my first child 34 years later ... There was joy and anguish at what had been missed between us... It was good to hear his parents had been good to him and he felt they were his family. Would I want my son to be gone from life? NO! But can people not see that adoption is NOT the solution in all cases when a person is really just too young or just too poor to raise their own child? Adoption is NOT the alternative for abortion!!!! People need to hear it loud and clear. "



**ARMS (Vic) warmly invites you to the  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021**

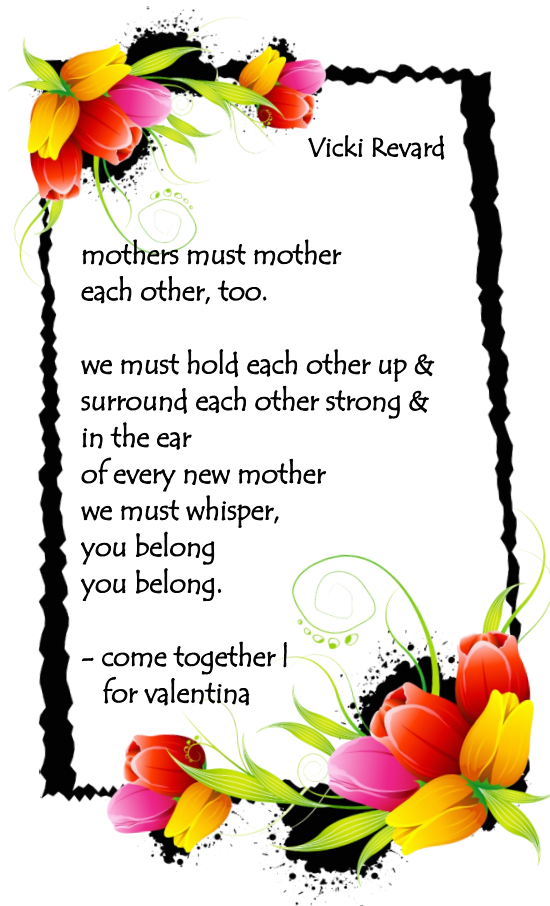
**SATURDAY, 4th December 2021  
1.30pm to 4.30pm**

**Level 5, 50 Market Street, Melbourne**  
Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

Near corner Flinders Lane and Market Street  
Melway Ref 1A G8

## **Adoption Information Services Victoria**

The Manager of AIS (formerly known as FIND) has informed us that as of 1<sup>st</sup> October the agencies Uniting Limited, Catholic Care and Anglicare will no longer arrange adoptions in Victoria. They will continue to provide services such as releasing adoption information, but AIS will have sole responsibility for assessment and approval to adopt and release of adoption information. This was recommended in the 2017 Victorian Law Reform Commission's Review of the 1984 Adoption Act, and was also recommended (#31) in the Victorian Inquiry recently tabled.

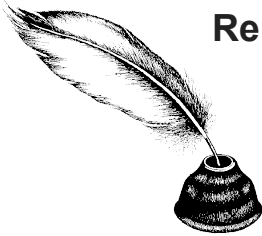


Vicki Revard

mothers must mother  
each other, too.

we must hold each other up &  
surround each other strong &  
in the ear  
of every new mother  
we must whisper,  
you belong  
you belong.

- come together |  
for valentina



## Report from the Inquiry into Forced Adoptions – we need to act to get recommendations over the line

You will be aware that the Victorian State Government has released the Report from the Inquiry into Forced Adoptions. It has 52 recommendations which we published in our last Bulletin.

Unfortunately, they did not recommend an end to adoptions but there are other recommendations that are important, like changing how family information on Birth Certificates is recorded and providing a redress scheme.

There have been previous inquiries and our experience to date is that very few of the recommendations make it into law. It is important that we all make an effort to ensure that the recommendations in this Report are acted upon.

Every one of our members can help make this happen. Read the parts of the recommendations that you are interested in and then write to, or ring your local member and tell them that this is important to you and you want that member to make sure that the government does something about the issues you are concerned about.

If you need help to write the letter, or would like to talk through what you might say to your member of parliament, then give one of our committee members a phone call and we will assist.

**If you think politicians don't listen to what we have to say, please read the following letter. It was written to Anthony Carbines, Member for Ivanhoe on 10th October and received by him on the 13th. You will see his reply was written on 15th October and received by the woman who wrote to him on 20th October.**  
**PLEASE WRITE TO OR CALL YOUR LOCAL MP.**  
**THAT IS WHAT THEY ARE THERE FOR AND THEY DO LISTEN.**

Dear Sir,

10<sup>th</sup> October 2021

I understand that Recommendation 36 of the recently tabled report into forced adoptions states:

*“That the Victorian Government explore opportunities to notify a natural parent if their child dies and an adult adopted person if their parent dies, taking into account any privacy concerns for all relevant parties.”*

*My (late) husband and I adopted a girl whom we named ..... in 1955. Sadly, she died when she was almost six years old. At that time I urged the adoption agency ..... to allow me to have her family contacted and informed of her natural daughter's death. That agency told me very firmly that it was not up to me to make such a request, nor was it my business to do anything about it. I contacted the agency in later years, more than once, asking if her natural parent/s had been informed. The agency's social worker at the time made some effort on my behalf, but told me it was fruitless.*

*I contacted FIND in 2012 making the same request. They were unable to find her natural family. I am currently making enquiries (elsewhere) and hope that we will be successful this time.*

*It is important for her natural family to know what she was like, what a beautiful little girl she was, and what happened to her – a highly intelligent and sensitive little girl.*

*It is also very important to me that her natural family be told. There are photos that I could give them.*

*At the age of 93 and a half years this desire is as strong as it ever was.*

**PLEASE take action on Recommendation 36. It is unconscionable that a family is not told of their child's death.**

Yours faithfully,                      xxxxx

Response from Anthony Carbines MP to the writer

**Anthony Carbines MP** STATE MEMBER for IVANHOE  
Parliamentary Secretary for Health | Parliamentary Secretary for Carers & Volunteers



*Dear Mrs [redacted]*  
*Please find enclosed a copy of the letter sent to the Attorney-General.*  
*Upon receipt of a reply a copy will be sent to you care of Jo Fraser.*

*Kind regards,  
Bianca*

*With compliments*



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9457 5328

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram icons: **acarbinesmp**  
Email icon: **anthony.carbines@parliament.vic.gov.au**  
**anthonycarbines.org.au**

**Mr Carbine's letter to the Attorney General regarding Recommendation 36**

**Anthony Carbines MP**  
STATE MEMBER for IVANHOE  
Parliamentary Secretary for Health  
Parliamentary Secretary for Carers & Volunteers



15 October 2021

**COPY**

The Hon. Jaclyn Symes MP  
Attorney-General  
Level 26, 121 Exhibition Street,  
Melbourne, VIC 3000

Dear Attorney-General,

I write to you on behalf of Mrs M [redacted], who has contacted me seeking to show her support for the recently tabled report into forced adoptions, in particular, Recommendation 36.

Mrs [redacted] has outlined strong reasons for the need to notify a natural parent if their child dies, and an adult adopted person, if their natural parent dies.

I have enclosed the correspondence received.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to your reply.

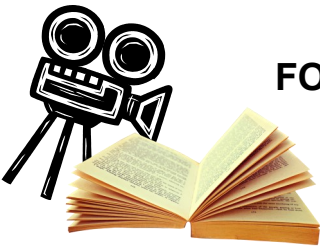
Yours sincerely,

**Anthony Carbines MP**  
State Member for Ivanhoe  
Parliamentary Secretary for Health  
Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers  
Enc.



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## FOR YOUR VIEWING, READING AND LISTENING PLEASURE

Sebastian Barry's book, *The Secret Scripture*, is now a heart breaking movie on Netflix, Amazon and Prime and well worth the tears!

It is in the ARMS library.



Kelly Clarkson sings the theme song of the movie, *The Cry inside my Head*:



*I poured my soul in a heart of glass  
Then the Autumn sun turned red  
The only thing they did not take  
Was your cry inside my head*



## ABC Melbourne Conversation Hour

Charlotte Smith (VANISH) and Dr Sue Green (psychologist) were joined by Jo Fraser and Elaine Legg from ARMS on the Conversation Hour on 29<sup>th</sup> September. Richelle was interested in Recommendation 18: *That the Victorian Government establish without delay a redress scheme for mothers whose babies were forcibly removed from them. The redress scheme should comprise the following: a monetary payment, counselling and psychological support and a direct personal response from relevant institutions and organisations.*

Richelle's mother was adopted so Richelle obviously has a personal interest in adoption, and unfortunately she has an idealised view of her grandparents "choosing" her mother as a baby.

Charlotte, Jo and Elaine shared their views and experiences, as did another ARMS member, Nancy, who rang in on the talk back line. Regrettably the daily Press Conference was broadcast for about 20 minutes, cutting into the Conversation Hour and resulting in reducing the time Jo had been given to speak from 10 minutes to about three, as well as shortening the time for other participants. Sue spoke about the psychological effects of separation and it was pointed out to Richelle that redress is not only about money, but, importantly, also about psychological counselling – preferably at no cost – and a direct response from the institutions and organisations that took the babies away.

The interview can be heard on:

<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/melbourne/programs/theconversationhour/the-conversation-hour/13553908>



## What's Happening at our Taken Not Given Memorial at St Andrews Reserve? (corner of St Andrews Place and Lansdowne Street, East Melbourne)

ARMS and Origins have been in consultation with the City of Melbourne and the Victorian Government for almost two years concerning a new memorial to be placed at St Andrews Reserve – the home of our Taken Not Given statue. A Family Violence Memorial is being created to honour victims and survivors of family violence and to raise awareness of the ongoing work towards a future free of violence.

This memorial will largely take the shape of a garden, footpath and seating. The stand of palms that form a beautiful green backdrop to our memorial will be removed and Taken Not Given is being relocated a few metres to the north of its original position, under the tree on the St Andrews Place edge of the Reserve. A new long seat will also be installed nearby.

Due to the Covid restrictions and the recent construction lockdown the works have taken longer than anticipated. They were not finished as promised by 25<sup>th</sup> October to enable us to acknowledge the anniversaries of the Victorian Apology and the unveiling of Taken Not Given.

The Reserve is currently fenced off with earthworks in progress. We look forward to the time when we can gather at Taken Not Given to reflect, enjoy each others' company and acknowledge the wrongs of the past.



Notice on the temporary fence



Moving the statue from its original position



Sandra Stickland, whose daughter was born at Royal Women's Hospital in January 1964 would like to connect with other RWH mothers who were at GMH (Girls Memorial Home) Station Street, Fairfield between August 1963 and February 1964. Sandra would welcome calls to her mobile **0411 814 564**

Did you pay your \$30 membership fee online on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2021 to the ARMS Westpac account and have not yet received a receipt?  
This payment was unidentified and Westpac has no information as to who made it.

2 Aug 2021	<u>DEPOSIT 037621</u>	\$30	\$30.00
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Let me know and I'll send a receipt. Dorothy Kowalski, Treasurer . 0411 098 773

## Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver, Canada

### Mothers Day Blessing by Archbishop Miller

After 3 years of lobbying and communication with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver (RCAV), a Canadian Mothers group *the Forget Me Not Family Society*, has succeeded in gaining recognition and acknowledgement of the impact of forced adoptions on mothers and their families. The Canadian Catholic Archbishop Michael Miller has, for the first time, included mothers who lost children to adoption in his Mothers Day blessing. You can watch the short video message on YouTube <https://youtu.be/l7OjThRma7s> but here is a summary of Archbishop Miller's greeting.

"As we celebrate Mothers Day, let us not forget those who find this day painful, including those who lost their little ones to miscarriage or suffered the death of an infant.

Let us also acknowledge those mothers who, for far too long, were not recognised or celebrated as mothers and were coerced or forced to give up their children for adoption. All too often, we denied them the compassion and support they deserved.

Archbishop Miller then went on to recognise and pray for

- women aching to be mothers, but suffering infertility
- consecrated women, who have forgone motherhood but have become spiritual mothers
- all women who, by their very nature, exercise an affective, cultural and spiritual motherhood which has inestimable value for the development of individuals and the future of society

We treasure and esteem all mothers on this day when we recall the beauty and wonder of their calling."

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver appears to be the first in the world to create a link dedicated to Adoption loss and support on their website. Please search <https://roav.org.adoption>

#### **DISCLAIMER:**

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

# WOMEN

SOAR LIKE



AMELIA

RESCUE LIKE



HARRIET

STAND LIKE



ROSA

EMPOWER LIKE



MALALA

HEAL LIKE



FLORENCE

CONSERVE LIKE



JANE

EMBARK LIKE



RUBY

DISSENT LIKE



RUTH

RISE LIKE



MAYA

CREATE LIKE



FRIDA

SPEAK LIKE



KAMALA

EXPLORE LIKE



SACAGAWEA



# ARMS (VIC) CALENDAR 2022



## SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of every month (except January)

5th February	Re-starting Support Group	2pm Support Group
5th March		2pm Support Group
21st March	<i>Recognition of Anniversary of National Apology on 21 March 2013</i>	
2nd April		2pm Support Group
7th May	ARMS Special Mothers' Day	1pm to 3.30pm
4th June		1pm Winter start time – Support Group
2nd July		1pm Winter start time - Support Group
6th August		1pm Winter start time - Support Group
3rd September		2pm Support Group
1st October		2pm Support Group
<i>To be advised</i>	<i>Recognition of Anniversary of Victoria Apology on 25 October 2012</i>	
5th November		2pm Support Group
3rd December	<b>2022 AGM</b>	1.30pm – 4.30pm

Meetings held at **Level 5, 50 Market Street**  
**(Centre For Excellence in Child and Family Welfare)**  
**Near cnr Flinders Lane & Market Street**  
 Melway Reference 1A G8. Flinders St & Collins St trams: Both Stop 3