

**From:** Christine Cole  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 19 October 2011 4:14 PM  
**Cc:** arcs; Janet Henegan; Nikki Hartmann (RASA)  
**Subject:** Apology Alliance: WA Apology 12th month anniversary

Hi Everyone,

today is the **12 month anniversary of the historic WA Apology**. The following excerpts are taken from emails that I circulated around the Apology Alliance at the time. Gaining the Apology led to the Senate Inquiry which is apparent when one peruses the contents of the emails and the Hansard records. I have also included for historical purposes the motions moved by Senator Rachel Siewert that led to the Senate Inquiry.

Sue MacDonald and her MP David Templeman played a pivotal role in gaining the WA apology. The Greens played a very strong supportive role and used the WA Apology to call for a Federal Apology and the Senate Inquiry. Without the Greens and the Alliance's teamwork there would be no Senate Inquiry and the WA apology would have been confined to WA if it occurred at all. Senator Claire Moore, Labor Q'land, has also been very supportive of our cause, and has listened and offered support to the many mothers and adoptees who have contacted her. If we reflect back there were masses of publicity about our issue in WA because of the apology, but little in the eastern states so the continued lobbying from all of you was extremely important. The publicity fired up again in the last few months with the apology from Martin Laverty on behalf of the Catholic Church.

Again on behalf of the Alliance I would like to thank Sue and David, Senators Siewert, Pratt, Moore and Greens MP Alison Xamon. Personally I would like to thank all the members of the Alliance for their remarkable team work and those in the media that got our issue out there. A special thanks to Daniel Emerson who not only ran excellent articles in the *West Australian* but continued to contact Dr. Hames, over several months, about honouring his promise to come through with a apology. And what a remarkable and historical day the 19th October, 2010 was!

**Note: As the links are now 12 months old some may not be active and it is better if you copy and paste them into your address bar rather than clicking on them directly from this email**

Hi Everyone,  
fyi

RE: The forthcoming WA apology to women who had their children illegally taken from them at birth or soon after

<http://www.abc.net.au/local/audio/2010/09/29/3025126.htm>

I have had many emails from mothers all around Australia who are so looking forward to this momentous occasion. I was speaking with Dr. Geoff Rickarby today and he is very pleased with this outcome and stated that WA has led the way with regards to the human and civil rights of mothers' and their babies for decades.

kind regards  
Chris

**Dr. Rickarby:**  
Congratulations  
Regards Geoff

Hi Everyone,

I was moved to tears watching the WA apology - this is a great first step in our healing process and finding some sort of closure for what has been years of trauma and pain. Hopefully the other states and the federal government will follow WA's lead. The MP's who delivered speeches are to be congratulated for their compassion and empathy. The WA government's apology will go down in history as a truly historical event and for their handling of an emotive and sensitive issue with such dignity and sincerity. A mature country is willing to acknowledge its wrongs and support its most vulnerable citizens. The WA government has done that and should be applauded.

I hope others who could not attend personally were able to see the live stream of the apology from the parliamentary website - it was deeply moving. The WA government is to be congratulated for their bravery in acknowledging a terrible wrong inflicted on so many by the past federal and state policy of illegally removing a child from its mother at the birth.. This will assist hundreds of thousands of Australians who deal with the trauma of that failed social policy on a daily basis. The following are interviews with mothers or stories surrounding the apology - there will be more to follow and I will keep you updated.

The fact that so many mothers flew to Perth to listen to the first apology being delivered by a government in Australia indicates its importance and significance to a huge proportion of Australian society.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/10/19/3042758.htm>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/10/19/3042758.htm>

<http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/pain-of-adoption-still-raw-for-mothers-and-children-20101015-16n0o.html>

<http://radiotime.com/ProgramDetails.aspx?SegmentId=33512096&ProgramId=102>

kind regards

Chris

Hi Everyone,

fyi

<http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/tears-and-cheers-as-wa-apologises-to-unwed-mums-20101019-16sf8.html>

<http://www.watoday.com.au/breaking-news-national/wa-government-apologises-to-unwed-mums-20101019-16s9t.html>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/10/20/3043146.htm>

kind regards

Chris

**Hon Alison Xamon: 19/10/2011**

**Below is a copy of the speech I gave in the Legislative Council last Tuesday. I was the only one to speak to the Apology in the Legislative Council but I certainly spoke on behalf of all the Greens.**

**I am very keen to keep progressing this issue-obviously to see an Inquiry and Apology occur at the Federal level but closer to home I am concerned to ensure appropriate and well funded counseling and advice services are made available to the mothers and adoptees**

## **REMOVAL OF CHILDREN FROM UNMARRIED MOTHERS — APOLOGY**

*Statement*

**HON ALISON XAMON (East Metropolitan) [9.47 pm]:** On behalf of the Greens (WA) I wish to

acknowledge the significance of an event that occurred in the Parliament today. I speak, of course, of the apology given by the Western Australian Parliament to those mothers who had their children removed and given up for adoption either through coercion, intimidation, threats, guilt or just plain fraud. Today's apology was very important to so many people, and I thank the ALP, the Liberals and the Nationals for recognising how important this apology is and for treating it with the bipartisan approach it so deserves. I particularly acknowledge the hard work of the member for Mandurah, Hon David Templeman, whose perseverance, I believe, has been absolutely instrumental in bringing about this apology. I also thank him for the generous way in which he has been prepared to work with others, and for the sensitive and compassionate way in which he has worked with the mothers. I also acknowledge the role that Dr Kim Hames has played and the willingness with which he was prepared to ensure that the apology came about. For the women so tragically affected by past adoption practices, for so many of their children, for the fathers who never consented to give up their babies and for so many of the extended families, I hope and pray that this apology—the first public acknowledgment that what was done to them was wrong, and it was wrong—will be the first step towards some sense of healing, although I am not convinced that complete closure will ever be possible. To be honest, when I hear the stories of some of these women, I wonder whether I would ever be able to recover if that happened to me. I think about my own relationship with my children and how sacred that is. I think about my beautiful daughter, whom I had out of wedlock and raised on my own only 14 years after these terrible forced adoption practices ceased. I think that it is only because of an accident of history that I was able to have my little girl when I did and I was able to keep her when so many other women could not. The stories are horrendous and devastating. Around Australia thousands of young, unmarried, primarily teenage mothers, who in the period from the 1940s until as recently as the 1980s found themselves pregnant were subject to the cruellest adoption practices of their children, which in many instances can be described only as institutionalised baby theft. Young women were subject to practices that denied their rights as mothers and told them they were unworthy, sinful, substandard and selfish for even falling pregnant, and worse if they wished to keep their children. They were ostracised, degraded and diminished. They were denied the chance to see their babies, hold them or name them. The state and churches intervened to sever that primal relationship that exists between a mother and her child. These women were weak and vulnerable; they had no advocates and, in the face of the unassailable power of the church and of the state, they had no power. Some women tried to keep their children, or even just tried to see them, to assert their fundamental rights as a mother but were forcibly drugged and restrained. Many women were tricked into signing adoption papers, believing that they were signing other documentation, or were so deeply in shock or affected by medication that they were simply unable to provide legal consent as we know it. Women giving birth would have their face covered to ensure that they did not see their babies. The point is that they did not want to relinquish their children, yet they were forced to, whether it be by coercion or straight-out fraud. What we know now is that many of those women never survived this experience. We have been told of mothers

who, unable to live with the guilt and grief, committed suicide. I have also been told of adoptees who, never able to understand why they were given up, have also taken their life. What we also know is that for those who have been left behind lives have been shattered and families ripped apart. Mental illness and depression have become recurrent themes in the lives of these women. They live with the eternal shadow of grief and loss and, tragically, the sense of guilt at their utter powerlessness to keep their baby. Members who spoke in the other place referred time and again to their relief at today's changed social mores and their gratitude that the practices of those terrible times would no longer be tolerated or accepted. Of course, it is true that the absolute worst of it is in the past. Adoption practices are clearly far more stringent and models of open adoption are clearly designed to ensure the long-term emotional wellbeing of all parties—the new parents, the relinquishing mother and, of course, the child. We are also grateful that this is now the way. But I cannot agree that the thinking that drove these abhorrent practices is entirely dead. Prejudice and discrimination against women who raise their children out of wedlock and on their own are still very much alive and well. Those who peddle this hurt may not be stealing the babies anymore but they are still attempting to perpetuate the thinking that led people to think that it was okay, if not preferable, to steal these babies from their mothers. Every time someone claims that children raised by a sole parent are more likely than other children to become alcoholics or drug addicts, or have a mental illness or become delinquent, or every time they predict some other inevitable catastrophic and desperate outcome, or attempt to justify this warped thinking on some bogus study produced from some entirely partial source, they continue to be part of the problem, because this is the thinking that remains a painful hangover from exactly the same thinking that enabled the state and the churches to tear at the very heart of the mother-child relationship and to undertake the very behaviour that we are apologising for today. What we know now, which was not accepted then, is that marriage in itself is no guarantee of a happy and stable home, and that having a mother and a father figure is not automatically a substitute for the love of a birth mother. Families in all their forms can succeed or fail, and there is no one right or wrong way to do it. I am grateful for today's apology. I think it is particularly special that it has been Western Australia that has led the way. I would have liked the opportunity to have this chamber echo its support for the apology in a more formal way, but this was not meant to be. However, I hope that Western Australia's example is now just the beginning. I am aware that there were women from around Australia who flew here to hear the apology and who are desperate to have the role of their own state governments, departments and churches acknowledged and admitted. I also support calls for an apology and an inquiry to be issued in our federal Parliament, and I am pleased to know that my colleague Greens Senator Rachel Siewert will again be introducing a motion calling for this exact thing next week in the Senate. So to those mothers, to their children, on behalf of the Greens, you are not to blame for what happened to you.

And on behalf of the Greens, I am truly sorry.

Hon Alison Xamon MLC  
Member for the East Metropolitan Region  
Parliament of Western Australia

Hi Everyone,

The Hon Alison Xamon stated that she spoke on behalf of all the Greens.

I would like to thank, on behalf of the Apology Alliance, both the Hon Alison Xamon for her ongoing support and the Hon Meredith Hunter for her motion for a State and Federal Apology.

I have been inundated with phone calls and emails from mothers and adoptees about what a moving and healing experience it was to have what happened to them finally acknowledged by an Australian government. And that "It was wonderful the WA government had the courage to take the responsibility for the wrong it had done to us by separating us from our newborns." Some mothers said they had felt that "a great load had been lifted from my shoulders" and "it was one of the most amazing experiences of my life". Most agreed that it was deeply moving and a great step on their journey to find some peace. Some adoptees expressed sadness that their mother had passed on before having heard an apology but they also felt in some way that by their being there, so was their mother.

kind regards  
Chris

Hi Everyone,  
some of you may already have a few of the articles and interviews below but as the Greens are calling for Federal and state apologies I am resending as the information may be useful to them:

the following link is to an interview with ABC Radio National's David Weber  
<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2010/s3042713.htm?site=Melbourne>

To hear the extended interview with myself: Christine Cole, just click on the link 1/4 way down the left hand side of the page - I would also like to personally thank David Templeman who has worked for many months with Apology Alliance members to make the WA apology the meaningful and incredibly historical event it turned out to be. Already I am inundated with emails from mothers and adoptees who have been deeply moved by the WA apology and want to express their gratitude to David and the WA government. I have just spoken with David and Sue in the WA parliament and they have been inundated by media - so will keep you updated

<http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/connectasia/stories/201010/s3043302.htm>

[http://www.news.com.au/wa-government-apologises-to-unwed-mums/story-e6frg14c-1225940839634?from=public\\_rss](http://www.news.com.au/wa-government-apologises-to-unwed-mums/story-e6frg14c-1225940839634?from=public_rss)

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/newshome/8162322/govt-apologises-to-unwed-mothers/>

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/mp/7902233/plea-for-national-adoption-apology/>

To the Hon Nick Sherry.

I am sending free copies of my booklet entitled "Coming Home To Truth" to a number of politicians at random. Via the postal mail you should be receiving your copy this week some time. I truly hope you take the time to read it, shouldn't take long its only 76 pages all up. I am a Natural Mother who was deliberately lied too and had my first born baby stolen from me, for adoption.

My story is not a isolated one this happened to many unwed unsupported Mother here in Australia, I can assure you.

In reading my story in the booklet it will inform you of my journey on discovering the truth. This is a human rights issue and about social justice.

I request that you seriously consider giving your support for there to be a Federal apology by the Australian Government as soon as possible.

I have already received two apologies one from the sisters of mercy ( Perth) where I was incarcerated in one of their homes and then as you would be aware also the 19th Oct adoption apology here in WA.

Thanks for your time, and hopefully support also. This is for the others now, as mentioned I have already received two apologies.

Yours truly,  
Ms Judith Hendriksen,  
Western Australia.

Unfortunately Nick Sherry did not support the motion for the National apology.

## **A member of the Greens re putting pressure on for a National Inquiry and Apology:**

Senator Siewert made a motion, on 27 October, 2010, to move on the next day of sitting a National Apology and on the 15th of November a National Senate Inquiry  
<http://www.openaustralia.org/senate/?id=2010-10-27.55.2&s=forced+adoptions#g55.3>

Senator Siewert's call for a Federal apology was not passed because of the delay now occasioned by the Australian Institute into Family Studies Research  
<http://www.openaustralia.org/senate/?id=2010-10-28.33.2>

## National Apology for Victims of Forced Adoption Policies

[All Senate debates on 28 Oct 2010](#)« [Previous debate](#) [Next debate](#) »

10:55 am

**[Rachel Siewert](#)** (WA, Australian Greens) | [Hansard source](#)

I move:

That the Senate—

(a)

recognises the grief and anguish suffered by thousands of mothers who were victims of the forced adoption policies of the recent past;

(b)

acknowledges the recent apology given by the [Western Australian Parliament](#) to those mothers whose children were removed and given up for adoption from the late 1940s to the 1980s in that state; and

(c)

urges the [Australian Government](#) to commence the process of developing a national apology in consultation with state and territory governments, mothers and their families, experts and advocacy groups.

**[Nick Sherry](#)** (Tasmania, Australian Labor Party, Minister Assisting on Deregulation)

by leave—The Australian government recognises the pain and suffering of mothers and children separated by inappropriate and unethical past adoption practices. The government is committed to an effective and ongoing dialogue with women and their children affected by past adoption practices.

The Australian government, together with the state and territory governments, has commissioned a joint national research study to study the experiences of people affected by past adoption practices, as well as the support and service needs of people affected by past adoption practices. The study demonstrates all jurisdictions' commitment to understanding the pain and grief associated with past adoption practices. This new research will help us to better understand the experiences of people affected and, most importantly, to understand their current needs.

The [Australian Institute of Family Studies](#) will consult widely with affected individuals in undertaking the joint national research study into past adoption practices. This study is the largest ever conducted into past adoption practices in this country. It will report back to community services ministers in all jurisdictions in 2012.

The Australian government previously commissioned the Australian Institute of Family Studies to undertake a review of Australian research literature about past adoption practices and the impact on those affected. The literature review found that there is not currently a reliable evidence base for understanding the extent of past practices, the number of Australians who were affected and the long-term effects.

### Question negatived.

Naturally members of the Alliance were very upset that the motion was negatived. It is hard to understand when the Tasmanian and NSW Inquiries had substantiated illegal and unethical

treatment of unmarried mothers. So once again the National Apology was put on the back burner. We all wondered if we are going to live long enough to hear the PM apologise to us. We contacted the Greens and asked for their support. The following is an extract from an email the Alliance received from Alison Xamon:

"Rachel is happy to re-put the motion and we will try to shame the Govt for the position they have taken, but all the more important that pressure be put to bear from the mothers. Also her call for an Inquiry should come on in a couple of weeks so there is also time to lobby for that. We WILL win this one, we just need to make sure the pressure is kept up. The time is right".

This motion was successful and agreed to on 15th November, 2010.

<http://www.openaustralia.org/senate/?id=2010-11-15.50.2&s=forced+adoptions#g50.3>

## [The motion for a National Inquiry](#)

[Rachel Siewert](#) (WA, Australian Greens) | [Hansard source](#)

I move:

(1)

That the Senate:

(a)

acknowledges the recent apology given by the [Western Australian Parliament](#) to those mothers whose children were removed and given up for adoption from the late 1940s to the 1980s; and

(b)

notes that policies and practices resulting in forced adoptions were widespread throughout Australia during that time.

(2)

That the following matters be referred to the Community Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report by 30 April 2011:

(a)

the role, if any, of the Commonwealth Government, its policies and practices in contributing to forced adoptions; and

(b)

the potential role of the Commonwealth in developing a national framework to assist states and territories to address the consequences for the mothers, their families and children who were subject to forced adoption policies.

### **Question agreed to.**

**Sent: Monday, 15 November 2010 1:11 PM**

**To: [media@greensmps.org.au](mailto:media@greensmps.org.au)**

**Subject: [GreensMPs\_Media] Media Release - Senate backs Greens call for forced adoption inquiry**

Senate backs Greens call for forced adoption inquiry

The Senate has supported an Australian Greens motion for the Community Affairs Reference Committee to examine the Commonwealth Government's role in forced adoption policies from the late 1940s to the 1980s.

Senator Rachel Siewert, Greens spokesperson for Community Services says the Committee's inquiry is an important step in addressing the issue of forced adoption and **comes in the wake of the WA Parliament's formal**

## **apology to those affected by the policies.**

"Today's vote starts to recognise the suffering that so many people have endured as a result of forced adoption policies," Senator Siewert said today.

"The Community Affairs Reference Committee will now examine the role, if any, of the Commonwealth in policies and practices in contributing to forced adoption.

"The Committee will also look at the potential for the Commonwealth Government to be involved in developing a national framework to assist the many thousands of people who have suffered as a result of these policies.

"There is no doubt that many women were treated very badly as a result of these policies. Young and vulnerable mothers were pressured into adoptions, and often had to surrender their newborn children without being allowed to see them.

"For many mothers and children, the emotional and psychological damage of these policies continues, and will be felt for the rest of their lives. We must do all we can to address this," Senator Siewert concluded.

The Community Affairs Reference Committee will report back to the Government by 30 April 2011.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Subject: RE: Senate backs Greens call for forced adoption inquiry  
Tuesday, 16 November, 2010, 3:36 AM

Greens: "It is a Senate Committee with broad ranging powers of inquiry. I imagine the first thing that would happen would be to finalise the terms of reference. Rachel's office would have the details. It is good isn't it? I suspect that if things go well then things will be on track for a Federal apology after all."

Hi ...,

Yes it is good as long as a year doesn't go by before an apology. Some mums are in their eighties. I would not like one more mother to miss out on what we experienced in the WA Parliament. The terms of reference are vitally important ... The good thing is that many more politicians are now aware because of the apology here, the media coverage, the bi-partisan words of w.a. parliamentarians and Chris Coles intensive lobbying. We have had excellent radio coverage with interviews done by Chris and I and all the Politicians (in the 100's) get our radio interviews. The fact that Chris is finalizing her PHD which focuses on the Commonwealth Link to adoption policy and that she has been able to talk about her research on air, must have had an influence. The Canberra interview 2SR was brilliant.

When you add the magic ingredient, **politicians who really care** - the greens on mass, David and yourself, then this sort of pressure produces results. Chris and I thought that WA would pave the way and thanks to all concerned that has happened

and a special thanks to you and your colleagues. Bless you. Sue

**Subject:** Women's Mental Health Clinic

To whom it may concern

Last month I heard, I think, a Deirdre Cook being interviewed by Lindy Burns on the ABC drive program. I seem to remember her saying that research was being done on women's mental illness in so far as it was seen to be somewhat different from men's or to the one fits all approach which was felt to be not necessarily so.

I was interested because of the life experiences of myself, my friends and of thousands of other Australian women i.e. those who lost their children as babies to the Australian adoption industry from the 1950's to the 1980's. Post traumatic stress, suicide, breakdowns, continual anger etc -you name it, has been experienced by many women with very few professionals asking or indeed thinking that the adoption experience may have something to do with their mental health.

Yes, there have been papers done on how women feel about this dreadful experience but I do not know of any ongoing research done with those women who are now mostly in the late 50's + age group. How many doctors would ever consider asking a patient who seems to have problems which do not fit in with the parameters of physical health as to whether or not they might have some undisclosed sorrow etc.?

My own doctor who is excellent but a lot younger than I, didn't want to know about it when I mentioned on one visit that I was seeing a psychiatrist at the Mooroolbark Clinic (I had accessed him because he had said to my husband who was attending him that he wanted to see me etc). I had 15 visits to him and it was wonderful. What is bad about the adoption experience for many women is that no one talks about what did happen. It is as though a vow of silence has been taken.

There has been over the past 10+ years a considerable amount of agitation by various groups to bring to the attention of the public the long term effects on the mental and physical health of women affected by this experience.

Last month the Western Australian Parliament apologized to the Western Australian women who had lost their children to adoption. I have sent a separate email with the report that a friend of mine wrote after attending this wonderful occasion. It may give you some insight into the torment many women have suffered over the years and still do. One friend in the little group to which I belong, has in the ten years I have known her, bought and sold five houses. Her issues are compounded by the fact that she can never know under the existing laws in Victoria who her child is.

Dear Chris

I have received your email via Barbara Maison. Briefly I am a mother of more than 30 years whose baby was taken for adoption. My son has a veto in place. I can say that absolutely without a doubt this whole issue provides a key to my own personal psychology. It affects every area of my life to include lifestyle, interpersonal relationships, study, work and career choices not to mention my relationship with my subsequent son. I'm sure you are aware of all the implications of how past adoption practices have affected so many/all of us.

Thankfully WA has now set a precedence for the other States to follow and how can they not? ... It was fortunate to attend the Apology at Parliament in October, it was an extraordinary event.

Since then I have written to the Premier Mike Rann of Sth Aus to strongly urge that Govt to extend the same in Sth Aus.

All the very best and thank you for keeping the flame alive.

I've just watched the apology and, even though I was there and experienced it in person, I found it very moving to watch it again. I highly recommend it to anyone who is at all interested. If you are unsure about whether or not an apology is appropriate, or what exactly the Western Australian government was apologising for, then I suggest that you watch it. The speakers made it very clear and it truly was a momentous

occasion. You will hear us applauding from the gallery. We gave David Templeman a standing ovation. Someone asked him afterwards if applause from the public gallery was allowed and he replied, "No, but it was very welcome." You will see that many of the politicians looked up at us as they spoke and some wept. ...

This apology is a world first and has provided hope for so many around the world. I hope that you will watch it and feel uplifted by it. Of course, everyone's experience of adoption is unique, but this speaks to so many whose lives have been affected by adoption separation. It's a tribute to the dedication and determination of those who made it happen.

Hi Everyone

> >

> > Thanks very much Gary and VANISH for passing on the attached very  
> > important info - there is now a push by the Greens for an apology to  
> be > > issued by the Victorian Government - please contact the Greens and  
> show > > your support for a Victorian apology.

> >

> > On behalf of the Apology Alliance I would like to thank Senator Rachel  
> > Stewart (Greens) who is going to move for a Federal apology in the WA  
> > parliament next week and Alison Xamon Greens WA for her ongoing  
> support. > > I would also like to thank Sue Pennicuik MLC Greens for working  
> > towards gaining an apology from the Victorian government.

> >

> > The WA apology has created tremendous community debate about our issue  
> > and from the emails I have received many feel that the apology has  
> been > > a very positive and healing experience.

> >

> > kind regards

> > Chris

### **SEVERAL ADOPTEES SENT EMAILS OF THEIR SADNESS THAT THEIR MOTHER WAS NOT ALIVE TO HEAR THE WA APOLOGY**

my heart goes out to you. I had several emails stating similar

> sentiments from other adoptees, their mothers had passed away and would  
> not get to hear the apology. But I don't believe that to be true. I believe that through you  
> your Mum will hear that apology, understand it, and it will resonate down your family  
> generations as a healing vibration. The beginning of the closure of a  
> very painful wound. Many times, during my research, I felt like giving up this fight for  
> justice, but then I would read the heart breaking stories of little  
> children placed on boats and sent (what would have seemed to them)  
> millions of miles from home. Their voices called out to me through  
> time, I wept, and I kept on going. This journey, that you and I have  
> been part of, has been a torturous but necessary one, those voices are  
> still calling and there is still more to do.  
> Believe me your mum knows and is grateful. My love and thoughts are with  
> you.

>

> kind regards

> Chris

### **MOVING TOWARDS AN APOLOGY FROM THE ACT GOVERNMENT**

Subject: RE: Motion for ACT apology

Hi... ,

thank you very much for the copy of the draft. I have received a copy of the speech Alison Xamon gave on the day of the WA apology, have you a copy? - if not I can forward same.

I am happy to attach a copy of my draft chapter, pertaining to a Commonwealth population policy that was formulated early last century. The policy put simply was to improve racial fitness by restricting the reproduction of those deemed unfit and increasing the production of middle class families. This meant that the infants of single mothers were transferred to childless, white, middle class couples and this was achieved by the collusion/collaboration of the Commonwealth with state institutions.

The research being the basis for a chapter in my thesis is highly confidential. I got the draft ready for the apology last week so that David Templeman could use relevant parts to support the fact that it was governmental policy to promote adoption and to facilitate that end we were forbidden contact with our infants. Draconian legislation and policy were introduced during the 1960s, especially when the number of applicants increased and the demand for babies could not be met. The demand for babies though was stimulated initially by advertising campaigns instigated by Child Welfare Departments and because of protective legislation introduced to protect foster parents from their foster child's natural parents reclaiming them.

If you are agreeable to keeping the draft in its entirety confidential you are certainly welcome to use the relevant parts to support the fact that what happened to us was Commonwealth and state sanctioned.

The importance of this, as I explained to David, is that unless we get an apology whereby the government takes full responsibility for its past actions the apology may have the negative effect of re-traumatising us. As victims we need the validation of a sincere and honest apology.

kind regards  
Chris

**White mothers and stolen children also deserve an apology - Liz Hannan - Sydney Morning Herald**  
*December 8, 2010*

In an attempt to revive her battered image with Queensland voters, Julia Gillard and a dozen ministers and parliamentary secretaries journeyed north last week to convene a "community cabinet" in a school hall in the marginal Labor seat of Petrie. Little was expected of the evening. The Prime Minister's office did not keep a transcript of proceedings. But one exists and, among talk of sustainable fisheries and the \$1.15 billion Petrie to Kippa-Ring rail line, was a significant exchange between Gillard and one of the 400 locals on hand.

"My name is Margaret Hamilton," she began. "I'm from ALAS - Adoption Loss Adult Support. There are over 250,000 white mothers who lost their babies to forcible removal at birth by the same past illegal adoption practices as Aboriginal mothers. How do you feel personally? Should they receive an apology?"

The PM replied: "I see in the media - and have heard sometimes face to face - some of the stories of women who face very devastating circumstances of having children taken, or being put under intolerable pressure to relinquish their children, in a different age and a different time.

"So, as a human being, of course you extend your sympathy to anybody who lived through that and through years of not knowing what happened to their child. So I think it's something we can all say, we're sorry that ever happened in Australian history." It was a "sorry" heard by few that has since reverberated to broken-hearted middle-aged and elderly women across the land.

These are the mothers of the "white stolen generations", so-called to distinguish them from the mothers of the indigenous stolen generations, though their suffering is shared.

In the five decades up to 1982, the newborn babies of these young, unwed women were forcibly removed from them for adoption. Their stories are shocking. They were drugged, tethered to beds, not allowed to see their babies, told they were dead.

Margaret Hamilton had a son taken from her in Queensland. For Christine Cole - the founder of the Apology Alliance - it was a daughter. She says institutions such as Crown Street Women's Hospital in Sydney engaged in institutionalised baby farming, whereby those deemed inferior were taken and assimilated into the middle class.

Cole was 16 when, in 1969, her mother took her to Crown Street, where she was given military-style mind-altering barbiturates in the lead-up to the birth. She never saw her baby daughter's face. After five days on drugs to dry up her milk and sedate her in her grief, she was made to sign adoption papers and sent home.

An apology from the federal government - and to a lesser extent the states - is crucial to women like these two.

NSW held an inquiry more than a decade ago. These women are still waiting for a parliamentary apology, not the statement of public acknowledgment the then treasurer, Michael Egan, gave to Parliament in 2001.

At federal level, a Senate inquiry is under way, with a report due in April, but they fear a repeat of the *Bringing Them Home* report. It took more than a decade for one of its recommendations, a parliamentary apology to the stolen generations, to occur.

These mothers believe it is cause for hope that the federal government and two states are now led by women. Kristina Keneally knows what it is to labour and give birth to a child she will never know. Two months ago, she spoke publicly about the daughter she delivered in 1999, knowing congenital defects meant she would not survive birth. "I have a picture of Caroline next to my bed," she said. "She's often the first thing I think about when I get up in the morning and the last thing I think about when I go to bed at night. The person I am today is because I'm Caroline's mother."

The Prime Minister and premiers should follow the lead of the West Australian Premier, Colin Barnett, who, in October, in an Australian first, delivered a parliamentary apology on behalf of state institutions involved in the aggressive adoption practices and government policies that were unsupportive of pregnant, unmarried women. There was no political fallout, no avalanche of compensation claims, only joy and healing for the women whose babies were taken.

Last week's personal "sorry" from Gillard, while cause for excitement among the women, is not enough.

When Kevin Rudd examines the flaming wreckage of his prime ministership, he must reflect with satisfaction on the apologies he made on behalf of the nation.

The first, in February 2008, was to the stolen generations. The second, in November last year, was to the forgotten Australians - the half-million Australian children and British child migrants who suffered years of neglect and abuse in orphanages and state and religious institutions.

Some mothers of the "white stolen generations" are dead. Others are dying. Many live in despair, still longing for the chance to hold their baby, to see its face, to rewrite their sad history.

They deserve parliamentary apologies. Without delay.

## **TEAM EFFORT:**

Hi Everyone,

I had several members ask how the Apology Alliance got started and who are its members. So I thought I would attach the PARC newsletter of 2009, written by one of the Alliance members, that discusses how the Alliance began and what its objectives are. Throughout 2010 the Alliance has achieved many more goals, such as furnishing copious amounts of research to journalists and politicians and co-ordinating between member groups, individuals

and professionals, that eventuated in the WA apology which then culminated in the Senate Inquiry. I should also mention that I contacted Sue McDonald who is the Convenor of Mothers for Justice (WA), who joined the Alliance, along with co-convenors: Judith and Marilyn who worked tirelessly with the assistance of David Templeman MP WA, and Senator Louise Pratt to make the WA apology the success it was. The Greens of course, Alison Xamon MP and Senator Rachel Siewart who pushed for the Senate Inquiry on the back of the WA apology and Meredith Hunter calling for the ACT to apologise and for a Federal apology.

Jan Kashin published in 2009 the member groups of the Alliance as a direct rebuttal of the Furness campaign to expand domestic and intercountry adoption, rather than implementing measures to support vulnerable families stay together. The Alliance has a lot to be proud of - we have worked as a team and as a team we have achieved much. The following is another example of our team efforts. I was invited by Thomas Graham to put together an overview of the importance and effect on mothers of the WA apology. I put forward several mothers to discuss the impact of the apology and I contextualised their accounts by introducing their narratives with some original research that I have undertaken as part of my PhD thesis, which I am hoping to submit in late March. Meredith Hunter's (Leader of the Greens ACT) whose rousing call for an apology from the ACT govt and a Federal apology is also included in *The Apology* article.

I would suggest all the Alliance members read the article which is posted on the Australian Journal of Adoption site: :

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<http://www.nla.gov.au/openpublish/index.php/aja/index>

On behalf of the Alliance I would like to thank the editor of the Journal, Thomas Graham, for his support and his request that we record for historical purposes the significance of the WA apology

We have had many new members join the Alliance over the three years it has been operating. I hope to add many more in the coming months as we work together towards obtaining a Federal apology

kind regards

Chris

### **Conclusion**

Everyone should be congratulated for the part they have played in setting the historical record straight - in gaining the WA apology and because of that the Senate Inquiry - it has been a team effort of courageous mothers, adoptees, fathers, supportive family members, caring politicians and individuals who are part of the Alliance and support us in gaining a Federal Apology

kind regards

Chris

PS Who makes up the Alliance (email sent 15/11/2010):

ANNOUNCEMENT: The Apology Alliance email list has grown over the last three years. Alliance members now consist of support groups from all over the country, hundreds of individuals affected by past removalist policies, trauma specialists, psychiatrists, psychologists, post adoption resource centres, politicians, lawyers, journalists, artists, playwrights, authors and of course academics from leading Australian Universities. The emails received by the aforementioned are then past on to hundreds of others via Newsletters and their own email lists. Many names on the Alliance email list are placed on the Bcc line or 'undisclosed recipients' so the actual size of our membership is not discernible. This is purposeful as some of our members have been attacked in the past for their desire to receive an apology.

The Alliance has become a rallying point for activism for the rights of mothers and children stolen under past population policies. It has connected groups who in the past have been disconnected by such variables as the era in which they commenced their activism, the

amount of research available to them at the time they began, and the responsiveness to their plight by those in power over the years they have been in operation.

I now receive hundreds of emails each week , and I am sorry if I do not respond immediately to each and every email. I would like to take this opportunity to state that every email is valuable and will be answered. Thank you for your patience.

Kind regards

Chris