

MEDIA RELEASE

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Prime Minister Apologises for Forced Adoptions

Relationships Australia today congratulated Prime Minister Julia Gillard, as she delivered an historical apology on behalf of the Australian Government, to people affected by forced adoption or removal policies and practices.

The national apology was witnessed by over 800 victims of forced or past adoptions in the Great Hall at Parliament House, including Meg Hale, who had her baby girl forcibly taken from her straight after giving birth as an 18 year old in 1968.

Meg said today's apology was a long time coming, ""As a mother who lost my baby 43 years ago I am glad to see the Federal Government acknowledge the truth about forced adoption so that my daughter may know the truth that she was not voluntarily given away. I am proud of the work we did to expose the myth about adoption and that after 30 years of hard work it has resulted in an Apology from not only each State and Territory but from the Federal Government of Australia."

Evelyn Robinson who had her baby son taken from her at the age of 19 was also in Canberra today to witness this historical moment of which she said, "The federal apology has the potential to contribute in a major way to healing and understanding. Australia is setting a commendable example to the rest of the world."

Relationships Australia (SA) Manager of Post Adoption Support Services, Nikki Hartmann said that today's apology will bring out a lot of strong emotions in those who have been affected by forced adoptions, "The countless women who had their babies taken away have lived with feelings of terrible guilt, shame and sorrow for a long time. Today's apology is an important step in validating what these families have suffered and for the children who were adopted out, to know that it wasn't by choice."

While it is difficult to know exactly how many people were affected by forced adoptions, the Australian Institute of Family Studies believes the number to be at least 200,000. It has only been since the 1980s that the policy was overturned and until very recently the trauma it caused gone unacknowledged.

Chair of Relationships Australia's National Board, Mat Rowell welcomed the Prime Minister's apology stating, "It is important to raise community awareness about forced adoptions and I believe the Prime Minister's acknowledgement of the trauma this practice caused will help to do that. We have seen firsthand the effect of forced adoptions which is why we have a range of services to help support people through this."

If you require professional support please contact Relationships Australia on 1300 364 277 or go to our website www.relationships.org.au

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