

FORCED ADOPTIONS

Petition

HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan) [2.03 pm]: I present an e-petition containing 318 signatures couched in the following terms —

To the President and Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled. We the undersigned ...

We call upon the Legislative Council of Western Australia to conduct a parliamentary inquiry to investigate the systematic and systemic removal of newborns from their mothers' care via past adoptive policies and practices (1939 - onwards). In 2010, the West Australia parliament was the first jurisdiction in the world to apologise for the illegal removal of newborns from their unwed mothers. However, we are now one of the last states left in Australia to conduct an inquiry. WA Survivors have waited decades for the government to accept their moral obligation, to publicly reveal the truths of this painful past. During the era of closed adoption, society treated teenagers and young women as a moral panic, punishing those who found themselves unmarried and pregnant. An estimated 63,000, West Australian mothers, fathers, sons or daughters have been permanently separated by adoption (DCD. ROADS, 2006). Adoption rates remained high in WA even after PM Whitlam created the single parent benefit in 1973. Survivors of past adoptions are not just numbers; they are West Australian people who were wrongfully burdened with a life of secrecy, shame, guilt and disenfranchised grief. For many adopted people, their lives are lived through the lens of pre-verbal/neonatal trauma (mother-loss), displacement and family estrangement. Hundreds of WA survivors have a lifelong VETO of no contact/no information held over them, against their will. An inquiry would give survivors the opportunity to share their lived experiences protected by parliamentary privilege. An inquiry will shed much needed light on those who have yet to openly disclose and take full responsibility for their role in the states past adoptive practices. Importantly, legislation reforms are required for adopted people, so they can access the same human-rights as non-displaced people.

And your petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[See paper 1805.]