

Media Release

Jenny Mikakos MLC

Minister for Families & Children

Minister for Youth Affairs



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CRUEL ADOPTION PENALTIES REPEALED TO RESTORE EQUALITY

Amendments to the *Adoption Act 1984* repealing penalties for (birth) parents who attempt to contact their adult adopted children passed the Victorian Parliament today.

The Andrews Labor Government acted to repeal 'contact statements' introduced by the previous Liberal Government.

When the Parliament made a bipartisan apology to victims of forced adoption practices in 2012 it was expected that parties would work to address the hurt of the past. The Liberals' legislation is at odds with that and this amendment today rightly removes those cruel measures.

'Contact statements' restrict parents from contacting their adult adopted children if the adult adoptee lodged a statement specifying 'no contact'. If breached, they attract penalty fines of up to \$9100.

Under the changes passed today 'contact statements' will be removed from Victorian law.

Penalties that make it an offence for parents to contact their adult adopted children if the adoptee has lodged a statement specifying 'no contact' will also be removed from the Adoption Act.

Parents, particularly mothers, who had their children forcibly removed regard the contact statements as hurtful and discriminatory as they only target parents.

Adult adoptees, (birth) parents and other parties can still express their wishes regarding contact by recording them on the Adoption Information Register.

People affected by adoption who wish to access personal and family information, records and support about past wardship and adoption can contact Family Information Networks and Discovery on 1300 769 926.

The changes will come into effect once the legislation receives Royal Assent. Current contact statements will continue to be in place until they expire, but penalties will not apply.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos

"The Andrews Labor Government has removed the last aspects of the Adoption Act that unfairly discriminate against (birth) parents."

"The previous Liberal Government's cruel legislation made it an offence for mothers to contact their adult adopted children."

"This is an important show of support for (birth) parents, particularly mothers, affected by past forced adoption practices, many of whom have sat and observed this legislation being debated in Parliament."

"While this change does not heal the trauma of the past, it acknowledges the hurt and ensures all parties to adoption are given equal rights to register their wishes about contact with their (birth) family."

Media Contact: James Gunn 0416 525 656 | james.gunn@minstaff.vic.gov.au