

## Transracial post adoption services

### What are The Benevolent Society's post adoption services?

The Benevolent Society is a non-government organisation. It began providing post adoption services in NSW in 1991 through the Post Adoption Resource Centre (PARC). PARC is a state-wide service originally intended to assist with the implementation of the NSW Adoption Information Act (1990) which enabled adopted people and birth parents to find each other and make contact. In February 2010, The Benevolent Society launched Post Adoption Support Queensland (PASQ) funded by the Queensland government due to the enactment of the Adoption Act 2009 which has made it easier for birth parents and adoptees to find each other in the state.

Our post adoption services offer counselling to anyone affected by adoption, assist in the search process, act as intermediaries, assist local mutual and peer support networks and educate the community and helping professionals on adoption issues. In recent years we have become more involved with people who were adopted transracially and/or from overseas and with parents who need support in their parenting.

While we receive a large part of our funding from government, as a charity, we have to raise money through fees and donations to meet our operating costs.

### What is our position regarding transracial adoption?

Our focus is exclusively on the post adoption needs of all parties, as we have no role in assessment or approval of applicants for adoption. Philosophically our position is that adoption should be essentially child-centred, and that frequently the most effective way of meeting the needs of a child is by supporting the family. We acknowledge the principles outlined in the Hague convention. We believe that every child deserves a supportive family in which to grow up. The preferred option is that a child be raised in their original biological family, but if this isn't possible, they should join another family, preferably in their country of birth, but otherwise in another country.

We fully recognise that the great majority of children adopted transracially or from overseas grow up well-adjusted, but a significant minority experience distress arising from the added challenges of being adopted. Our research is showing that the availability of professional post-adoption services in these circumstances is generally experienced as most inadequate. Where there is access to services, specific expertise regarding transracial adoption may be lacking, or parents sometimes feel judged by professionals from whom they seek assistance, hence creating added barriers to receiving help.

We're keen to develop working relationships with others in the adoption community, with a view to expanding the provision of much-needed services responsive to the needs of transracial adoptive families.

## **What has The Benevolent Society provided so far?**

### **1. Counselling**

Qualified social workers, counsellors and psychologists, experienced in this specialised field, are available to talk through issues of loss, identity, family relationships, parenting and its challenges and the various impacts of being a transracial adoptive family. This may be in person or over the phone, for people living outside of Sydney and Brisbane. A sliding scale of fees applies, intended to make the service accessible to anyone.

### **2. Library, including postal library**

We have a postal library which has expanded to include a range of books on topics of parenting, attachment, cultural/racial identity, racism and the more practical aspects of intercountry adoption.

### **3. Referral**

We assist people to find services which meet their specific needs in the area they live in.

### **4. The Colour of Difference**

This book was a PARC project, intended to give voice to the experiences of 27 Australian transracial adoptees, and ideas on how to best make transracial adoption work. This has been the basis for speaking at a number of forums in other States around Australia.

### **5. Collaborative work with others in the adoption community**

As part of the Transracial and Intercountry Adoption Working Party, we've worked with representatives of ICASN (Intercountry Adoption Support Network), ASIAC (Australian Society for Intercountry Aid for Children), Barnardos Adoption Agency, the NSW Committee on Adoption and Permanent Care and the Adoption and Permanent Care Service of the NSW Community Services and other professionals and individuals to provide a number of educational opportunities. Topics have included attachment and talking with children about racism. Less formally, we follow up opportunities to talk with and work with members of the adoption-affected community.

### **6. Internet-based services**

We offer support via e-mail and have a number of articles on our web site relevant to transracial adoption. We welcome personal stories, accounts and articles from those affected by adoption.

### **7. Research**

Our research into the service needs of transracial adoptive families and adoptees has involved a survey, interviews, study of literature and research, and data collection on services currently available.

### **8. Resources:**

We compile resource lists which can be used by self-help networks regarding potentially useful services, therapists, books and articles.

## 9. Advocacy

We see our role as including advocacy for improved provision of services.

## 10. Feedback

We're always happy to receive feedback on our existing services or ideas for new service development.

Please phone us if you wish to talk further about any issues raised in this information sheet.

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