



all yours

Adoption records : family history

Info Guide 3.4

What records on adoption are available in Australia?

Legal adoption commenced at different times in the various States but records generally began around the early 1920s. Access to records also varies from State to State but is usually conditional on neither party to the adoption placing a veto on access. Some States require a Court Order for access to adoption records. For information on access conditions in a particular State contact the relevant State government agency (See the list at the end of this guide), or consult Nick Vine Hall's *Tracing your family history in Australia – a national guide to sources* (FAMHIS 929.394 2002)

The State Library of Queensland holds resources helpful in placing and tracing the parties to an adoption including:

- Specialized indexes such as *Infant life protection act: Part 4: [Victorian] Adoptions 1901-1913*, compiled by Helen D. Harris (MFC 613.0432 2001-)
Check the One Search online catalogue for other titles <http://onesearch.slq.qld.gov.au>
- birth, death and marriage indexes for all States and Territories
- Commonwealth electoral rolls for all Australian States and Territories from 1903 onwards and some earlier Queensland State electoral rolls
- Post office and telephone directories – check the online catalogue for date ranges in the different States.

How can the parties to an adoption be traced?

- Start by applying to the relevant State government agency for identifying information on the adoption and/or access to records.
- Check electoral rolls to locate the birth parent's residential address and track him/her through the rolls in subsequent years.
- Check local and interstate births, deaths and marriages (BDM) registers for:
 - (a) marriage/s of birth parent/s
 - (b) birth/s of siblings from marriages of birth parents
 - (c) death/s of birth parent/s
- Apply for copies of the birth parents' individual marriage and birth certificates
- Re-check electoral rolls
- Check for possible changes of name by deed poll.
- Newspaper funeral, death and obituary notices and cemetery records can fill in missing links. See our information guides covering these records.
- See also Queensland State Archives *Brief Guide 28 - Orphanage and Children's Home records* <https://publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/9c0d39a9-1b8f-4cbb-bfbe-1170ca8eeabb/resource/e4d8fb54-8a60-4c62-a95e-45f2e1075bb5/download/bg28orphanage.pdf>
- Further research suggestions may be found in:
 - *Searching in adoption: a guide: a do-it-yourself guide designed to assist people searching for family members from whom they have been separated by adoption* (PAM 362.73409945 1990)
 - *Self search - a program for adult adopted persons: the Adoption Information Service Research Project 1990* / <Susan Tabak> (PAM 362.8298 1990)

Check the One Search online catalogue for other titles <http://onesearch.slq.qld.gov.au>

What about Indigenous adoption?

The State Library's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family history* website at <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/family-history/info-guides/atsi> provides information and useful links for Indigenous people researching their family histories.

National Archives of Australia holds extensive records for Indigenous people in Victoria (from 1860) and the Northern Territory (1911-1975). Records for other States may be found in their State government archives. Adoption records are often restricted and special authority for access may be required.

NAA also has the *Bringing Them Home name index*, which is an index to Commonwealth records relating to Indigenous children removed from their families for any reason. The index is not available for public searching and all searches are conducted by staff at the NAA. Further details are available online in the NAA fact sheet no.175 at <http://www.naa.gov.au/about-us/publications/fact-sheets/fs175.aspx>

What records are available on adoptions in England and Wales?

Adoption records prior to 1900 are rarely available. Often children were simply taken in and brought up by members of the extended family or family friends. Where solicitors or charitable institutions were involved in arranging adoptions, records may occasionally be found in county office files or in the records of the charitable institution. However, to locate these records it is necessary first to know the name of the solicitor or institution involved. In many cases the records have not survived.

In January 1927 an **Adopted Children's Register** was introduced recording all adoptions after that date. The adoptee was given a copy of his/her certificate of adoption which superseded the original birth certificate and was used for all legal purposes. The birth registration was retained in the Register Office where the birth was originally recorded and the entry was endorsed 'adopted'.

Indexes to the Adopted Children's Register are available for consultation at Adoptions Section Room C202 General Register Office Trafalgar Rd Southport PR8 2HH and information about applying for copies of adoption certificates may be found online at Gov UK website: <https://www.gov.uk/adoption-records/accessing-your-birth-records>

New Zealand?

Child, Youth and Family, a service of the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development, provides comprehensive information on their website for adult adoptees wishing to trace their birth parents
<http://www.cyf.govt.nz/adoption/finding-your-birth-family/index.html>

What State government agencies are responsible for adoption in Australia?

A.C.T. Department of Community Services; Office for Children, Youth & Families; Child and Youth Protection Services; Adoptions

<http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/child-and-youth-protection-services/adoptions>

N.S.W. Department of Community Services, Adoption Information Unit

http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docs_menu/parents_carers_and_families/fostering_and_adoption/adoption.html

N.T. Department of Community Support and care, Child protection and care, Adoption Unit

<https://nt.gov.au/community/child-protection-and-care/adoption>

Queensland. Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, Adoption Services

Queensland <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/adoption>

S.A. Department for Education and Child Development, Child Safety, Families SA

<http://www.families.sa.gov.au/pages/adoption/>

Tasmania. Department of Health & Human Services, Children & Families, Adoption & Permanency Services

<http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/children/adoption>

Victoria. Department of Human Services; Children, Families & Young People, Adoption & Permanent Care

Services <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/children,-families-and-young-people/adoption-and-permanent-care>

W.A. Department for Child Protection & Family Support, Fostering & Adoption, Past Adoption Information

& Services <http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/FosteringandAdoption/Pages/PastAdoptionInfo.aspx>

Any other useful websites?

Adoption Registry Connect <http://www.adopteeconnect.com/index.htm> provides a free searchable database of profiles posted by adoptees and birth parents seeking family reunion.

UK Birth Adoption Register <http://www.ukbirth-adoptionregister.com/> was founded in 2001 and registrations are accepted from adoptees, birth parents, siblings and other interested birth relatives. It is free to search but a small once-off registration fee is required to place your details into the database.

International Social Service Australia <http://www.iss.org.au> connects families internationally with professional support.

Jigsaw Queensland Inc <http://www.jigsawqueensland.com/> provides information and emotional support to those affected by adoption. The site outlines their support services and provides addresses for other national groups.

Post Adoption Support Queensland <http://www.benevolent.org.au/connect/post--adoption--support> provides professional support to those involved after adoption.

Australian InterCountry Adoption Network <http://www.aican.org> There are Australia-wide links and support groups for those adopted into a country or culture other than their own.

International Adoptive Families of Queensland Inc. <http://www.iafq.org.au/default.aspx> The IAFQ is an Australian volunteer, non-profit support group for Queensland families involved in overseas adoptions that offers a wide variety of support services and resources to member families.

Salvation Army Family Tracing Service <http://www.salvos.org.au/familytracing> Since 1885 the Salvation Army has been helping reunite broken families. Their Family Tracing Service also includes post adoption searches, but only if they occurred in Queensland and New South Wales. A donation is requested.

Post Adoption Resource Centre (PARC) <http://www.benevolent.org.au/connect/post--adoption--support/> Adoption search information for NSW is provided with links to adoption search information for the rest of Australia, NZ and the UK.

MacKillop Family Services <http://www.mackillop.org.au/HeritageService> This Victorian based service provides assistance with accessing government records and in reuniting separated families

Need further information?

State Library of Queensland, Queensland Cultural Centre, Stanley Place, South Bank, Level 3, Information Services. t. +61 7 3840 7810, w. <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/services/ask-us>

Visit <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/family-history> to access all family history Info Guides.