

Informal Placement of Aboriginal Children

Details

The Bringing them home report (1997) found that informal and formal foster care arrangements and holiday placements supposedly for a temporary period, were frequently the beginning of a permanent separation of Aboriginal children from their family and community.

The Victorian resource guide *Finding your story* states that: 'Whilst the informal placement of Indigenous children with relatives or friends had always occurred within Indigenous communities, the placement of their children with non-Indigenous families or services continued unabated from the 1950s to the mid 1970s'.

Some children placed informally, were passed from one foster home to another, names were changed and the child's whereabouts 'lost' to their parents and unknown to welfare authorities. Some of these placements may have led to the granting of an adoption order with parents' consents being dispensed with on the ground of whereabouts unknown, particularly as there was no restriction prior to the 1964 legislation as to who could arrange adoptions.

Organisations involved in such private placements of Indigenous children included Apex clubs, the Country Women's Association, the Save the Children fund, and the Harold Blair Aboriginal Children's Holiday Project (the Harold Blair Project brought many children from Queensland to Victoria).

In 1968, in its first annual report, Victoria's Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs expressed concern about 'unauthorised fostering arrangements of Aboriginal children' and stated that about 300 Aboriginal children were known to have been informally separated from their parents, with possibly many more unknown.

More info

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