

# Records of Victorian Adoptions

c. 1908 –

**To access these records:**

Please contact Adoption Information Services

Postal address: PO Box 588, Collins Street West, Melbourne VIC 8007

Phone: 1300 194 757

Email: [adoptionrecords@justice.vic.gov.au](mailto:adoptionrecords@justice.vic.gov.au)

## Records Location

Website: <https://www.vic.gov.au/past-adoption>

These records are held by [Adoption Information Services, Department of Justice and Community Safety \(2019 - current\)](#)

## Details

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Records of Victorian Adoptions is a collection held by the Department of Justice and Community Safety. The collection comprises records created by Victorian government departments and agencies involved in adoption. It also includes the records of former adoption agencies that were run by religious and charitable organisations.

## Access Conditions

Access to records in this collection is through Adoption Information Services, and governed by the Victorian Adoption Act 1984.

## Records

The records in this collection that relate to former Victorian adoption agencies were formerly held by those organisations and were transferred to the custody of the Victorian government when the organisations ceased to be adoption agencies (or adoption information services).

In many cases, organisations whose adoption records were transferred to the Victorian government still have records relating to out-of-home care in their custody. For example, an organisation might have been an adoption agency and also run babies' and children's Homes, or organised foster care placements. Records of these non-adoption activities should be in the custody of the charitable or religious organisation.

There are four organisations in Victoria that still hold adoption records: Anglicare, CatholicCare, Child and Family Services Ballarat and Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania) Limited. These records can be accessed through the Victorian government Adoption Information Services, or people can choose to access their adoption records directly from these organisations.

The Department of Justice and Community Safety's *Service Standards for funded agencies* state that an adoption person who applies for their adoption records should receive the following:

- certificate of counselling session (Section 87)

- a copy of the adoption file which may include their original (pre-adoption) birth certificate
- adoption order
- if available, adoption agency records

A parent who applies for adoption records should receive the following:

- adoption order
- notice of identification
- consent to adoption
- affidavit
- revocation
- summary of the court records
- full name of adoptive parents, their ages, occupations and address at the time of the adoption
- adoption agency records (if there is a time gap between the consent to the adoption and the actual adoption, an explanation will be given as to the delay in the finalisation of the adoption).

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(Parliament of Victoria, 2021, pp.276-277)

The collection of adoption records held by the Department of Justice includes the following series:

### Adoption Files of Defunct Adoption Agencies

This collection includes a series called [Adoption files of defunct adoption agencies](#). It comprises records created by as many as 30 different adoption agencies that were in operation at different times in Victoria.

The contents of files within this archival series will vary but may include:

- Application to Adopt form
- Documents and correspondence supporting the application
- Consent to Adopt and correspondence
- Legal documents
- Birth certificates
- Photographs

### De Facto Adoptions Register

The [De Facto Adoptions Register](#) was kept by the Neglected Children's Department and its successor departments. De facto adoption is the term used to describe the unofficial adoptions which were arranged by both Government and non-government organisations, as well as by individuals, prior to the commencement of the Adoption of Children Act 1928, the state's first Adoption Act. This Act regulated adoptions for the first time. It required that all legal adoptions had to be sanctioned by a court, to transfer parental rights, duties, obligations and liabilities to the child's adoptive parents.

Prior to 1929, adoptions were informal arrangements. The details of these unofficial, de facto adoptions however were still required to be disclosed to the Department who recorded them in the De Facto Adoptions Register.

The register for de facto adoptions kept by the department first started in 1908 and was kept until 1976. The De Facto Adoption Register continued to be used following the 1928 Act and contains records of adoptions that were formally legalised. It does not however contain a comprehensive listing of these adoptions. The Register also contains entries post-1928 where there was no legal adoption.

De facto, unofficial adoptions took place in Victoria from the nineteenth century, organised by, for example, organisations like the Victorian Infant Asylum, or by individuals such as midwives or solicitors. Some people brokered adoptions by taking charge of surrendered infants and matching them with adoptive parents for a fee. Private adoptions came under more scrutiny with the passage of Infant Life Protection legislation in 1890 and 1907, which required the registration of adoptive parents. (Information about adoptions can sometimes be found

in Infant Life Protection records.)

De facto or private adoptions continued to occur in Victoria until the Adoption Act of 1964. The Adoption Act 1964 banned all private adoptions and from this time, organisations had to be registered as approved adoption agencies under Victorian legislation.

Each De Facto Adoption Register has an alphabetical index of the 'Name of [Adoptee] Child' as well as the 'Person by Whom Adopted'. Additional information provided includes: Name of Child; date of adoption registration, Child's Date of Birth; Mother's Name (and on occasion Father's name), including residential location where known; Names, Address and Occupation of Persons by Whom Adopted; and Remarks, including adoptive person's relationship to child, by whom/which agency the adoption was arranged, whether any payment was received, or death of the child.

## More info

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### Organisations in these records

#### Related Organisations

- [Geelong Female Refuge \(1868 - 1928\)](#)
- [Victorian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children \(1896 - 1971\)](#)
- [Melbourne City Mission Maternity Home \(1900 - c. 1955\)](#)
- [Department for Neglected Children, State Government of Victoria \(1901 - 1924\)](#)
- [The Foundling Hospital and Infants' Home \(1906 - 1964\)](#)
- [Mission of St James and St John \(1919 - 1997\)](#)
- [Seventh Day Adventist Welfare Organisation \(1920? - 1993?\)](#)
- [Children's Welfare Department, State Government of Victoria \(1924 - 1960\)](#)
- [Bethany Babies' Home \(1928 - 1977\)](#)
- [Hartnett House \(c. 1955 - 1990s\)](#)
- [Aborigines Welfare Board \(1957 - 1968\)](#)
- [Social Welfare Branch, State Government of Victoria \(1960 - 1970\)](#)
- [Berry Street Babies' Home and Hospital \(1964 - 1975\)](#)
- [Melbourne Family Care Organisation \(1965 - 1987\)](#)
- [Social Welfare Department, State Government of Victoria \(1970 - 1978\)](#)
- [Children's Protection Society \(1971 - 2018\)](#)
- [Berry Street - Child and Family Care \(1975 - 1992\)](#)
- [Department of Community Welfare Services, State Government of Victoria \(1978 - 1985\)](#)
- [Gippsland Family Services \(1979 - current\)](#)
- [Community Services Victoria, State Government of Victoria \(1985 - 1992\)](#)
- [Health and Community Services, State Government of Victoria \(1992 - 1995\)](#)
- [Department of Human Services, State Government of Victoria \(1995 - December 2014\)](#)
- [Department of Health & Human Services, State Government of Victoria \(January 2015 - 2021\)](#)

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You can view this page online by visiting <https://findconnect.efront.digital/entity/victorian-government-records-relating-to-adoption/>