



Victorian Adoption Network for  
Information and Self Help



**Annual Report**  
2021-2022  
Year 34

VANISH is located in Naarm. We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Bunurong Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation and pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

## OUR VISION

That the human right to genealogical connection and identity is recognised and supported in the broader community and in legislation, policy and practice.

## OUR PURPOSE

To empower and assist those who have experienced adoption, donor-assisted reproduction or other separation from family members, by providing a formal structure through which to deliver efficient and effective advice, search and support services, and advocacy.

## OUR VALUES

- Respect
- Empowerment
- Integrity
- Professionalism
- Inclusiveness
- Self help

## OUR SERVICES

- Specialist search assistance
- Support by phone, email, or face to face
- Information and resources
- Facilitated support groups
- Counselling
- Referrals to other practitioners and services
- Training for professionals
- Public information sessions
- Advocacy and policy advice

## OUR SERVICE USERS

- People affected by separation and adoption (including de-facto adoption) - mothers, fathers, adopted persons and other family members
- People affected by donor conception - donor conceived persons, donor parents, natural parents and social parents
- Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers - former wards of state and/or people who were placed in institutional or foster care

# CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Fellow members,

The State Government formally responded to the recommendations of the Parliament of Victoria Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into responses to historical forced adoption in Victoria on 10 March 2022. The Government should certainly be congratulated for announcing a redress scheme for mothers affected by forced adoption along with other initiatives such as passing into legislation a right for adopted people to apply for integrated birth certificate in 2023. Even so, the children (now adults) affected by forced adoption are yet to be included in redress and so VANISH will work to ensure that the Government does as recommended: "undertake an inquiry into the experiences and the effects of adoption on adopted people". Likewise, VANISH will continue to work with the Department of Justice and Community Safety to help ensure prompt implementation of those recommendations endorsed in full and continue to advocate for clarity and further action on those recommendations not yet fully worked through or endorsed.

A survey of members following the Government's response yielded compelling messages you wanted our politicians and bureaucrats to hear. This was important because VANISH was able to use your experiences and stress your viewpoints when I wrote to the Premier seeking further support for the work of VANISH in these hectic times and when we met with the Attorney General to discuss implementation of the Government's response. At the end of the financial year our membership had grown to 987 – and in August Murray Salisbury joined us as member number 1000! On behalf of the staff and the CoM I thank you all for your support and continuing involvement in our work.

The VANISH CoM was proud to be able to support and sponsor the creation of Donor Conceived Australia (DCA), the newly formed peak body for donor-conceived people in Australia. DCA now offers support, education and advocacy on behalf of people conceived via Assisted Reproductive Treatments (ART) – make no mistake, this is a momentous step forward.

François Petitto has served three years as Treasurer providing knowledgeable guidance and has always made sure the CoM diligently performs its financial oversight and accountability responsibilities for which we are immensely grateful. Tricia Lester joined the CoM in 2013 and went on to serve as Secretary for seven years. Her counsel and wisdom will be missed. Likewise, Ross Hunter, who, having previously served on the CoM, joined us again in 2019 and has since been an active contributor to all of our deliberations and work.

For this last year and indeed for all the time I have been Chair, the excellent VANISH staff and volunteers have been the key to enhancing VANISH's reputation, capacity to serve and resilience. Thank you. And thank you CEO Charlotte Smith for leading so well. In particular, her advocacy work for us all over the last eighteen months has been outstanding.

As mentioned at the AGM I have served as VANISH Chair for three years and eight months. Although staying on the CoM, I will not be re-nominating for the role of Chair. It has been an honour and privilege to serve. The need for VANISH's advocacy and services will be never more critical than in the year ahead. There will be a refreshed but stable CoM with new leadership as we work to hold the Government to its promises, seek further reform, support those participating in the redress process and fight to make our services properly funded and truly accessible across Victoria.

**SIMON PRYOR**

CHAIR



Murray Salisbury  
1000th member



# CEO'S REPORT

Dear members,



It has been an eventful year for the sector and for the VANISH team. After a challenging two years of lockdowns and restrictions we have established a new operational normal with staff working from the office and remotely, including in regional locations.

Requests for our search, information and support services continued unabated through the pandemic and further increased this year after the Victorian Government's announcement of a redress scheme and hardship fund for mothers and Integrated Birth Certificates for adopted people. The resulting increase in media coverage has raised awareness about forced adoptions and VANISH services, resulting in more Victorians getting the assistance they need as well as helping younger generations and people who more recently made Australia their home, to understand past practices and their impacts.

VANISH has been a strong advocate for its members this year. We have advised the Premier, the Attorney General and colleagues at the Department of Justice and Community Safety of the challenges you face and what is required in terms of legislative change and services. Some of what we have said has been heard and responded to but there is still much work to be done. Specialist mental health and emotional well-being services are urgently required across the state. Adopted people must be recognised as victims and survivors alongside their mothers and also be provided with avenues for redress as well as better support across their lifetimes. The Limitations Act needs to be amended without further delay and institutions responsible for past practices must deliver proper apologies that are without caveats.

There is also still much work to be done in ensuring the rights and needs of children who are now adults created through donor conception be prioritised. VANISH continues to advocate with and on behalf of the donor conceived community and congratulates the newly formed Donor Conceived Australia on its achievements thus far.

I commend and thank VANISH staff and volunteers for their commitment and high standard of service delivery over the year. It is extremely rewarding to lead such a competent and professional team of individuals who are an absolute pleasure to work with.

I also thank the members of the VANISH Committee of Management for their leadership and advice, particularly our Chair, Simon Pryor whose sagacious guidance has meant better governance and policy outcomes for our organisation, members and service users.

I look forward to a year of promises being kept and us seeing significant change for the better for the many individuals whose lives and families have been so deeply affected by past and forced adoption practices.



VANISH staff training day with Raymond Burnett  
(Tracey, Patricia, Raymond, Charlotte, Lorna, Gail  
not present: SallyRose)

**CHARLOTTE SMITH**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



# COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT 2021-22

VANISH is governed by a Committee of Management made up of volunteers who, with the exception of the Independent Experts, have a relevant lived experience. Committee Members assist the organisation to achieve its mission, purpose and goals and ensure compliance with VANISH Rules and state and federal legislation.

<b>Members</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Term Commenced</b>
Simon Pryor (Chair)	Offspring	May 2017
Hannah Spanswick (Secretary)	Natural Parent	November 2020
François Petitto (Treasurer)	Offspring	July 2019
Todd Dargan	Offspring	September 2018
Ross Hunter	Offspring	September 2019
Tricia Lester	Natural Parent	September 2013
Maureen Long	Independent Expert	May 2018
Aimee Shackleton	DC	April 2021
Charlotte Smith	CEO (Ex-Officio)	May 2016

## STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

VANISH services are delivered by qualified professionals with extensive experience. The majority of our staff and volunteers also have a relevant lived experience.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Commenced</b>
Charlotte Smith	CEO	May 2016*
Patricia Navaretti	Search and Support Worker	June 2018
Tracey Hudson	Search and Support Worker	August 2019
Gail Holstock	Search and Support Worker	November 2020*
SallyRose Carbines	Search and Support Worker	March 2021*
Mary Rawson	Search Specialist	March 2021*
Lorna Sleightholm	Administrator/Receptionist	September 2018
Flavia Leser	Accountant	Jan 2020-Dec 2021
Ray Magid	Accountant	Mar-Sept 2022
Kerri Licheni	Bookkeeper (Contractor)	April 2011
Tracy Shand	Volunteer	Jan-July 2022
Anna Jenkins	Volunteer	June-July 2022

\*These staff members have worked for VANISH for significant periods in previous roles

## SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATORS

Melbourne Adopted Persons: Gail Holstock, Cal Spiers, Cheyne Bull

Zoom for Adopted Persons: SallyRose Carbines, David Cross

Regional: Ballarat Adopted Persons: SallyRose Carbines

Albury/Wodonga Adopted Persons & Mixed:

Dr Rosie Saxton, Vicky Graham

# SEARCH AND SUPPORT

This year VANISH registered 145 new searches and brought forward 128 searches from the previous year. Table 1 below shows who these searches were undertaken on behalf of and the total number of searches the VANISH Search & Support team worked on during the year.

Cohort Searching	Created FY2022	Brought forward	Total Searches
Adopted Persons	106	102	208
Forgotten Australians / Adopted	10	8	18
Natural Mothers	11	2	13
Children of Adoptees	5	7	12
Forgotten Australians	5	6	11
Natural Siblings	4	0	4
Natural Fathers	3	0	3
Other Natural Relatives	1	1	2
Donor Conceived Person	0	1	1
Unknown	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>273</b>

Table 1. Cohorts of people searching in FY 2022

Table 2 below shows people sought in FY2022 and Chart 1 shows the percentages with Natural Mothers making up 49%, Natural Fathers 22% and Other Natural Relatives 10%.

People Sought	Created FY2022	Brought forward	Total Searches
Natural Mother	62	71	133
Natural Father	33	27	60
Other Natural Relative	15	12	27
Natural Sibling	17	7	24
Records	7	7	14
Natural Son	8	2	10
Natural Daughter	2	0	2
Donor	0	1	1
Other	1	0	1
Unknown	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>273</b>

Table 2. Cohorts of people (or records) sought in FY 2022

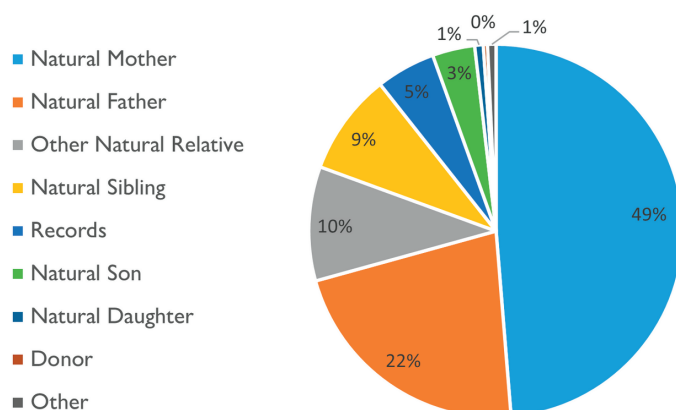


Chart 1. Cohorts of people sought in FY 2022

# SEARCH AND SUPPORT

## Completed Searches

130 searches were completed between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022 with the following results:

- 57 found living
- 16 found deceased
- 9 records found
- 21 not found
- 3 referred to another service
- 27 closed at the applicants request

Searches are closed (and can be reopened) when applicants want to put them on pause or when the search is solved by the applicant through social media, DNA or being contacted by a relative.

## Ongoing Searches

Of the searches still open at the end of this financial year:

- 71 were active
- 55 were waiting for paperwork
- 12 were in the queue
- 2 were on hold

## Geographical Spread

The majority of service users undertaking searches were from metro (40%) or rural and regional (33%) Victoria.

Location	#	%
Metro	108	40
Rural / Regional	90	33
Interstate	50	18
Overseas	14	5
Unknown	11	4
Total	273	100

Table 3. Location of people searching

## Trends

The most noticeable trends this year were:

- an increase in the percentage of searches being undertaken by mothers, particularly in the later part of the year following the Government response to the Inquiry report (see p11). Some of these searches are for records only.
- an increase in the percentage of searches being undertaken by children of adoptees, and a corresponding increase in searches for other natural relatives – mostly natural grandparents.

*"I would just like to say thank you for all the kindness and support Tracey showed me yesterday. Her listening skills and understanding meant a lot to me; it was so appreciated to be heard and able to speak.*

*Today I feel very empowered to get some more help and information and look forward to receiving her email with how and where to get further assistance.*

*Thank you again for the service you provide.*

*– Anonymous*



# SUPPORT SERVICES

## Support and Information Services

This year VANISH responded to an increased number of requests for support and information with a total 1741 requests compared to 1288 last year. The majority of requests were made by adopted people, mothers, children and natural relatives of adopted people, Forgotten Australians/Care Leavers and professionals. Charts 2 and 3 below show support and information service users by cohort and by location.

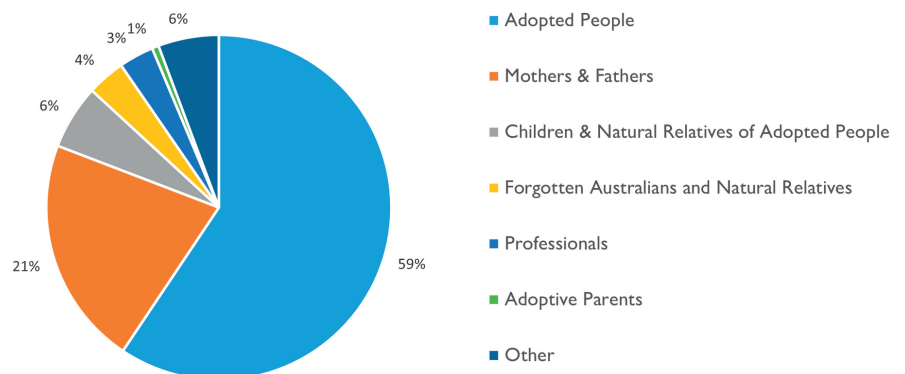


Chart 2. Support & Information Service Users by Cohort in FY 2022

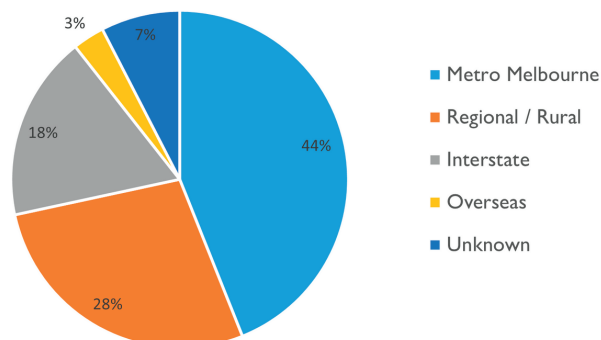


Chart 3. Support & Information Service Users by Location in FY 2022

## Enquiries

VANISH registers all enquiries which require detailed responses, follow-up or on-going support. Enquiries frequently related to how to access records or register searches, requests for counselling or support with DNA testing, and information about redress and referrals to other services. This year the number of enquiries (562) increased by 22% compared to last year (461) and by 63% compared to FY2019 (345).

# SUPPORT SERVICES

## Counselling

At the end of last financial year VANISH received funds to support individuals in urgent need of counselling. This service is being provided through a brokerage scheme, engaging 17 counsellors across Victoria to provide up to ten sessions per client. This financial year VANISH successfully delivered 313 counselling sessions to 59 clients, 21 of whom are mothers and 38 are adoptees. A further 231 sessions have been committed and the current funding provision is fully subscribed. VANISH has a waiting list of individuals needing counselling and has lobbied the Government to provide further funds until such a time that a proper mental health and emotional wellbeing program is implemented as per the inquiry recommendation. VANISH has also continued to provide referrals to specialist counsellors on our register to paying clients.

## Support Groups

Our support groups were able to meet again in person this year after almost two years of only being able to meet online. The bi-monthly Zoom group continues to be held for people unable to attend the Melbourne, Ballarat or Albury/Wodonga groups. All support groups continue to attract new participants. A total of 208 attendances were recorded this year as follows:

Location	No. of groups	No. of attendees	Adopted Persons	Natural Mothers
Regional Adoptee Groups	10	38	38	0
Regional Mixed Groups	4	23	11	12
Metro Adoptee Groups	17	147	147	0
Total	31	208	196	12

## Exceptional Circumstances Fund

In early July 2022 the Victorian Government launched the Forced Adoption Exceptional Circumstances Fund which can provide a one-off payment of up to \$10,000 to mothers affected by forced adoption practices who are facing exceptional circumstances such as a terminal or critical illness or other exceptional circumstances, to be determined on a case-by-case basis. The VANISH team assists mothers to apply and provides support including gathering evidence of their circumstances. Outcomes of this support will be reported in the next VANISH Annual Report.

## Legal Requests

This year VANISH received a considerable number of records requests from law firms acting on behalf of mothers and adopted people preparing their legal cases and from individuals wishing to have copies of their files. VANISH always contacts clients to confirm what information they are seeking and if it should be released to them directly or to the law firm, or both.

# COMMUNITY EVENT



## 10th Anniversary of the Victorian Apology

On Tuesday 25th October 40 people met on the steps of Parliament for a vigil to remind Victoria that justice is still to be served to the many victims and survivors of historical forced adoption practices which occurred last century involving thousands of babies being removed from their mothers without informed consent.

The vigil involved a display of children's shoes, signs including words from the apology and poems read by Lily Clifford, founding member of VANISH and ARMS.



Following the vigil, we enjoyed a morning tea in the Members' Dining Room at Parliament, arranged by the Victorian Government with Jo Fraser (ARMS Vic) and Charlotte Smith (VANISH) providing a program of guest speakers who acknowledged and provided encouragement to all those affected by forced adoption practices.

Former Premier Ted Baillieu spoke of his commitment and willingness to be involved in moments like these. Among other things, he reminded us that "It's your story to tell, and for us to hear it. And know that it was not your fault!"

Fiona Patten MP who has been a strong support to our community in Parliament, shared her admiration of all those who have bravely shared their stories and fought for justice. She undertook to continue to do what she can to shape policy and legislation in Parliament.



Natalie Suleyman MP described her experience of Chairing the Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee during the Inquiry into responses to historical forced adoption in Victoria. She thanked each individual who showed trust in the Committee by sharing their experiences with them and said she will never forget her time hearing from those who made submissions and her involvement in developing the recommendations.

Christine Campbell, former MP for Pascoe Vale, expressed her appreciation and reminded us of the fact that social workers are still taking babies from mothers straight from the delivery wards and that we need to continue fighting.

*"It was so wonderful, and daunting, to meet and share the afternoon with so many lovely ladies (and gentlemen) who are part of this team of survivors of that awful era.*

*The work you are all doing is astonishing and I am so glad I finally discovered you.*

*Thank you again for your work (and that amazing lunch/morning tea). I am now busily reading through all those documents that were made available for us, and sharing some of that vital information.... There must be so many more out there who, like myself, had no idea VANISH and ARMS even existed."*

*- Maureen (mother)*



# COMMUNITY EDUCATION

## Sandra Pankhurst Documentary *Clean* (featuring VANISH)

Award-winning Director Lachlan McLeod's new documentary *Clean* is a fly-on-the-wall exploration of trauma cleaning, following the journey of larger-than-life business owner Sandra Pankhurst and the workers at her business Specialised Trauma Cleaning.

*Clean* is a sensitive and inspiring portrayal of a remarkable woman who draws upon her extraordinary life experiences to promote compassion and kindness to everyone she meets, particularly her trauma cleaning business clients.

Sandra came to VANISH to undertake her search and became our firm supporter and friend. In the film you see Charlotte Smith talking with Sandra about possible search outcomes and describing past adoption practices and their impacts.

Sandra set up and chaired the VANISH fundraising subcommittee until she passed away in July last year. She was planning a film screening fundraising event for VANISH which we now plan to hold in her honour.

*Clean* was screened at independent cinemas across Australia and aired on SBS as *The Cleaning Company*. It is now available on SBS On Demand.



## Media coverage

In October VANISH featured in a print and online story "Forced adoption victim calls for justice", in which Committee member Tricia Lester shared her experience and described how she still struggles with a deep sense of loss.

Tricia told AAP, "You get by because you live your everyday life but I still struggle with my sense of worth, my sense of identity and an enormous sense of loss." With regards to the government response Tricia said, "So, as far as I'm concerned, they need to really step up. There are other mothers who are 80 and onwards and they need help. They need justice and recognition."

VANISH CEO Charlotte Smith noted, "The (2021 parliamentary) inquiry committee recognised the need for counselling and recommended VANISH be funded to provide state-based specialised mental health support services that individuals can access as and when they need."

"VANISH receives a constant stream of requests for support and counselling from mothers and adopted people because their lives are still profoundly affected by these cruel practices."

Regarding adopted people lobbying to be included in the redress scheme she said: "They have also suffered significant trauma and also had no say, and many mothers believe this too".

An ABC radio interview with Charlotte Smith on 25 October was focused on redress for mothers. You can listen to the interview here: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-10-25/many-victorians-still-waiting-for-redress-scheme/101575588>



# ADVOCACY

## Forced Adoptions Inquiry

In September last year the Legal and Social Issues Committee handed down its report on the Inquiry into responses to historical forced adoptions in Victoria. VANISH's analysis of the report included a member and stakeholder survey to garner feedback about the 56 recommendations which then guided our advocacy.

## Redress & Statute of Limitations

Establishing a redress scheme for mothers is key to reparation (Rec #18) and was supported by 98% of member survey respondents. Institutions including statements of responsibility or individualised apologies (Rec #2) was the highest scoring (96%) recommendation in the stakeholder survey. "I have already spent thousands of dollars just to keep putting one foot in front of the other. Money would help me visit Victoria where my son lives." (Anon, Mother). We noted the omission of fathers and adopted people and recommend that they also be eligible for redress (Rec #22). "Whilst I strongly support this recommendation I can only add that my experience as a robbed father has affected my mental health and is a challenge I have to address on a regular basis." (Colin, Father). "What about people who were put with "suitable" parents but still suffered psychological trauma - because they were adopted. I have spent a fortune in psych bills!" (Anon, Adopted Person). Amending the Limitations of Actions Act 1958 (Vic) (Rec #23) and removing the requirement to prove significant injury (Rec #24) also scored highly in both surveys.

## Records

Recommendations regarding hospitals and institutions identifying remaining records and explaining lost or destroyed records (Recs #5, #6 and #30) were deemed the most important in the combined survey results, and the courts and BDMs waiving fees to access records (Recs #29, #34), both received a score of 100% in the member survey. "Should not have to pay for personal information which was wrongfully hidden." (Anon, Adopted Person). Many have been devastated when told their records were lost in a fire or flood or were destroyed, yet evidence has rarely been provided. Hospitals and agencies must be answerable for managing adoption records according to the Act and be accountable if they have not. (Recs #6, #30).

## Support Services

It is essential that VANISH support services be sufficiently flexible to respond to the complex needs of people affected, and at the times in their lives when they need them. We must be properly resourced. (Rec #32). "Without VANISH and its exemplary work there would have undoubtedly been many more suicides of mothers and adopted people." (Anon, Mother) Mental health services and professionals must be trauma informed and have a full understanding of the context, impacts and what helps people affected (Rec #38). Funding VANISH to provide mental health and emotional services scored 95% in the member survey. "We need to have ongoing mental health and emotional support services by counsellors, who are caring, who listen, understand and accept our pain and confusion to help us undo the loss of our sons and daughters" (Nancy, Mother)

## Training Professionals

Mental health and emotional support services must be delivered by professionals trained in the unique and specific needs of people affected by past practices so that they do no harm. This requires both initial training and ongoing professional development (Recs #38, #39 and 40). "Health professionals, on the whole, are very ignorant of the long term effects of adoption in my experience." (Ann, Mother)



MPs Meng Heang Tak, Natalie Suleyman, David Southwick and Michaela Settle at the tabling of the Inquiry Report.

# ADVOCACY

## Birth Certificates

Introducing Integrated Birth Certificates (IBCs) for existing adoptions was recommended in the 2012 Senate Inquiry report and has already been implemented in NSW, SA and the ACT. The Government should address the lack of honesty about adopted people's identity (Rec #26). "Original birth certificates are factual. Adoption "birth" certificates are not – they are indeed "parenting" certificates" (Janice, Adopted Person)

## Future Adoptions

100% of VANISH members supported or strongly supported retaining original birth certificates for future adoptions to avoid repeating past harms in relation to identity (Rec #53). Adoption requires informed consent and is not, therefore, an appropriate instrument for child protection and should be removed from the permanency hierarchy in child protection legislation. (Rec #56). "Leaving adoption in the permanency hierarchy leaves open a door to the resumption of coercive adoption practices as a state sanctioned practice." (Anon, Adopted Person).

## Government's Response

On March 10 the Victorian Government tabled its response to the Inquiry report and on that day Premier Dan Andrews and Attorney General Jaclyn Symes announced the first steps of a redress scheme for mothers who "were subjected to cruel and damaging forced adoption practices, many of whom have suffered lifelong trauma." The Premier said it will take one year to design and in the interim a hardship fund will be established for mothers in exceptional circumstances.

As part of the announcement Jo Fraser, Secretary of ARMS, shared her experience of being separated from her son when she was 16 years old. The announcement and Jo's story were widely reported in the media and on social media and attracted strong public support. At the press conference the Attorney General also committed to lifting the statute of limitations and advancing that piece of legislation in the coming year.

The Report recommends a redress scheme for adopted people be considered and the Government response supports this in principle, stating that it will fund initial research into the establishment and costs of such a scheme and then act on findings. At the press conference the Attorney General noted that the redress steering committee will look at the impact of forced adoption practices on fathers and adopted people and provide advice in relation to the crafting of the redress scheme.

In its response, the Government fully supports the recommendation that organisations arranging adoptions in the stated timeframe issue apologies and the recommendations that public hospitals involved develop a specific form for applications for records and provide a full explanation to applicants if records are lost or destroyed. Disappointingly though, the Government response to the recommendations regarding waiving fees for hospital records and BDM certificates is that these require further consideration.

## Integrated Birth Certificates

On April 5 the Attorney General announced that legislative work will commence on the introduction of Integrated Birth Certificates (IBCs) which will be available by October 2023. Adopted people in Victoria will then be able to have a legal birth certificate showing both their original and adopted names and listing their natural and adoptive parents.





# ADVOCACY

## Counselling and Education

It is good to see the Government acknowledging the lifelong impacts of forced adoption practices and to recognise the need for appropriate support including mental health services. It is, however, disheartening that none of the recommendations relating to services for people affected are supported in full or in principle. The fact that these recommendations have not been picked up means services will continue to be underfunded and stretched which is regrettable given the number of people affected who need support, including those coming forward for the first time, having seen or heard media coverage of the Inquiry.

The Government has a duty of care to these individuals to ensure that services are well resourced.

The Government response refers to a review of services which we anticipate will involve consultation with VANISH members and service users. Given the lack of information, consultation and funding since the Government's response, VANISH Chair Simon Pryor wrote to Premier Dan Andrews expressing his concerns and requesting that the Government provide adequate funding for services including training professionals and publish a plan for implementing the Inquiry recommendations showing timelines and achievements so far. The Premier's response is published below.

### Update from the Premier on the Victorian Government's response to the Forced Adoption Parliamentary Inquiry

I would like to provide a brief update on the progress of our government's work since the announcement I made with the Attorney General in March this year to invest \$4 million to plan for a redress scheme, counselling and formal apologies from the Victorian Government.

As I've said before, the grief and trauma caused by shameful historical forced adoption practices have impacted families and communities for generations.

While we can't undo what was done, we can recognise the harm caused to individuals separated from their child or family by those practices and provide meaningful support.

Since the Inquiry recommended the immediate development of a redress scheme for mothers - we have gotten on with the job - setting up an implementation team within the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

Consultation on the design of the redress scheme is commencing shortly and the team will be speaking to service providers like VANISH, advocacy groups, mothers and other affected family members. To have your say get in contact with VANISH or email the team at [forcedadoptioninquiry@justice.vic.gov.au](mailto:forcedadoptioninquiry@justice.vic.gov.au)

Several of the Inquiry's other recommendations have been implemented through legislation passed in May this year, including Integrated Birth Certificates for adoptees, and many more will follow as the government's work on delivering our response to the Inquiry progresses.

These things are never easy and take time to get right.

I thank you for your patience as we work towards a good and just outcome. I'd also like to thank those who have already come forward and shared their experiences or sought information through VANISH and other organisations.

The redress scheme we are committed to delivering should provide meaningful support to mothers and go some way in acknowledging the ongoing pain of historical forced adoption - and that's why we are committed to delivering this important work.

Dan Andrews

# DONOR CONCEIVED AUSTRALIA



## A new national organisation for donor conceived people

This year VANISH proudly provided modest assistance towards the establishment of Donor Conceived Australia (DCA), a new national, not-for-profit charitable organisation led by donor conceived people, which offers:

- support to donor conceived people and their families,
- education on donor conception for current and prospective parents and donors as well as the wider community, and
- advocacy on behalf of people conceived via Assisted Reproductive Treatment (ART) including sperm, egg and embryo donation in Australia.

Since DCA's establishment, founders and directors Aimee Shackleton and Ross Hunter, together with other volunteers, have already made significant inroads. With over 500 members nationally, they are providing policy advice to five state and territory governments regarding legislation in the area of donor conception and to a range of organisations regarding how to provide the best outcomes for donor conceived people. DCA has also provided support to the many individuals who have contacted them since they established including counselling referrals, peer support groups, online support groups and supporting them to navigate the complex systems we have in our country regarding donor conception.

Significant media coverage across Australia of many members' lived experience has included both Aimee and Ross generously sharing their personal stories to promote awareness and understanding of the issues facing donor conceived people today.

In October, Aimee travelled to California to represent Australia at an historic meeting of all stakeholders in the US fertility industry for a think tank to come together and discuss ways to support donor conceived people into the future. This was especially important for Australia to attend as many donor conceived children born here in the past 10 years were born using gametes imported from the USA and other countries, so their laws have a direct impact.

More information about DCA can be found here  
[www.donorconceivedaustralia.com.au](http://www.donorconceivedaustralia.com.au)

# FINANCIAL REPORT

## Committee's Report for the year ended 30 June 2022

Your Committee members submit the financial accounts of VANISH Inc for the financial year ended 30 June 2022.

### **Committee Members**

The names of the Committee members at the date of this report are:

Simon Pryor (Chair)  
Hannah Spanswick (Secretary)  
François Pettito (Treasurer)  
Tricia Lester  
Todd Dargan  
Ross Hunter  
Maureen Long  
Aimee Shackleton

### **Principal Activities**

The principal activities of the association during the financial year were: search, counselling and support services for people affected by adoption, state wardship, donor assisted reproduction or other separation from family, as outlined in the Rules of VANISH Inc.

### **Operating Result**

The profit from ordinary activities after providing for income tax amounted to:

Year ended	Year ended
30 June 2022	30 June 2021
\$(57,775)	\$132,045

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the committee and signed for and on behalf of the committee by:

François Pettito (Treasurer)



Simon Pryor (Chair)

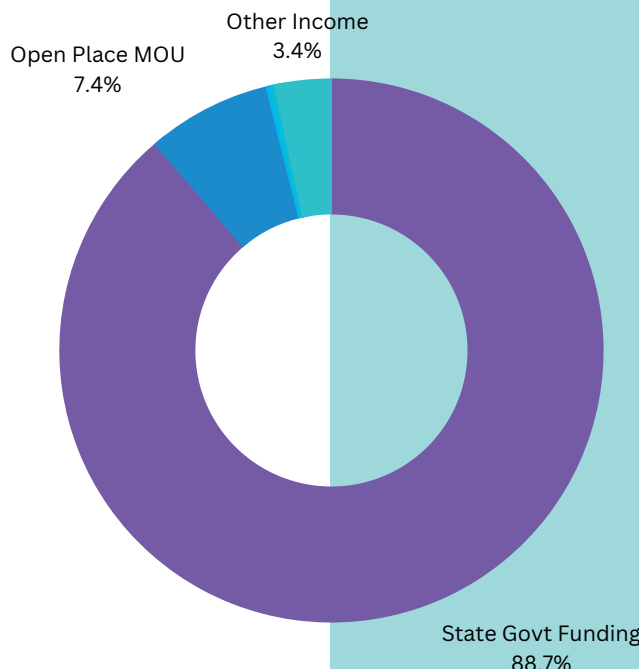




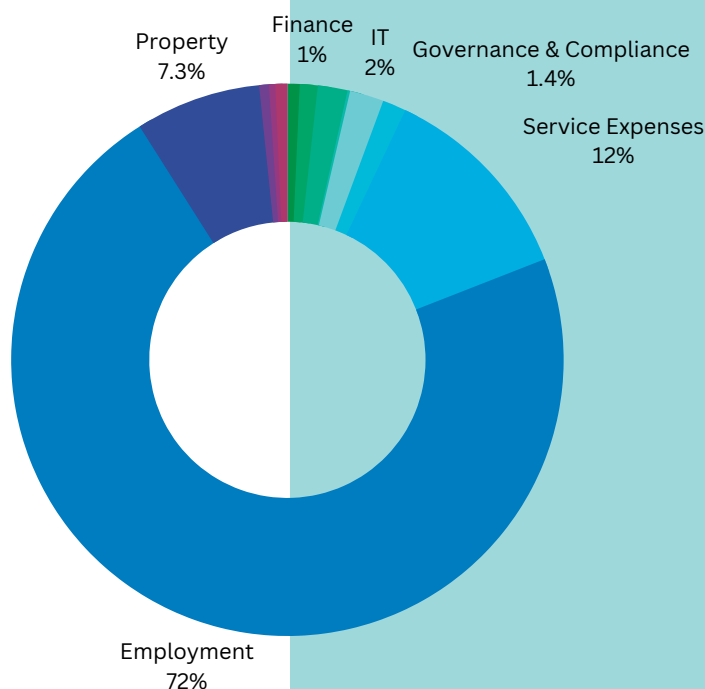
# FINANCIAL REPORT

## SUMMARY PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022

REVENUE	2022	2021
State Govt Funding	\$574,515	\$569,149
Open Place MOU	\$47,861	\$43,485
Interest Received	\$1,253	\$2,453
Donations	\$1,902	\$2,480
Other Income	\$22,130	\$166,022
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>\$647,661</u></b>	<b><u>\$791,659</u></b>



EXPENSES	2022	2021
Communications	\$5,025	\$5,136
Finance	\$7,377	\$11,530
Provision Expense	-	\$19,862
Administration	\$12,262	\$19,914
Depreciation	\$1,085	\$3,600
Information Technology	\$14,047	\$15,826
Governance & Compliance	\$9,760	\$4,938
Small Grants	-	5,731
Service Expenses	\$84,924	\$9,716
Employment	\$507,589	\$494,016
Property	\$51,803	\$55,612
Utilities	\$4,014	\$2,906
Stakeholder Engagement	\$2,582	\$3,688
PD/Training/Supervision	\$4,968	\$7,139
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>\$705,436</u></b>	<b><u>\$659,614</u></b>



<b>NET PROFIT</b>	<b><u>\$(57,775)</u></b>	<b><u>\$132,045</u></b>
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# FINANCIAL REPORT

## SUMMARY BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2022

<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$631,483	\$662,718
Accounts Receivable	\$40,188	\$11,000
Prepaid Expenses	-	\$654
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$671,671</b>	<b>\$674,372</b>
Non-Current Assets		
Security Deposit Howard Street	\$10,000	\$10,000
Property, Plant and Equipment	\$8,439	\$9,248
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>	<b>\$18,439</b>	<b>\$19,248</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b><u>\$690,110</u></b>	<b><u>\$693,620</u></b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Current Liabilities		
Trade Creditors and Accruals	\$12,586	\$18,577
GST Liability	\$12,320	\$14,067
Payroll Liabilities	\$13,456	\$12,231
Grants Carried forward	\$78,005	\$34,494
Provisions	\$112,915	\$98,356
Reserves	\$31,614	\$28,850
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>\$260,896</b>	<b>\$206,575</b>
Non-Current Liabilities		
Provision for Long Service Leave	\$14,816	\$12,421
<b>Total Non-Current Liabilities</b>	<b>\$14,816</b>	<b>\$12,421</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b><u>\$275,712</u></b>	<b><u>\$281,996</u></b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b><u>\$414,398</u></b>	<b><u>\$474,624</u></b>
<b>VANISH Funds</b>		
Reserves	\$(31,614)	\$(28,850)
Current year Earnings	\$(57,775)	\$132,045
Retained Earnings	\$503,787	\$371,429
<b>Total VANISH Funds</b>	<b><u>\$414,398</u></b>	<b><u>\$474,624</u></b>

# FINANCIAL REPORT

## SUMMARY STATEMENT OF CASH FLOW FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022

<b>CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
Net Income	\$(57,775)	\$132,045
Adjustments for depreciation and amortization	\$1,085	\$3,600
Changes in cash flow from trade receivables and deferrals	\$(28,534)	\$(9,557)
Changes in cash flow from trade payables, provisions and accruals	\$53,989	\$71,793
<b>Net changes in inflow/(outflow) from operating activities</b>	<b><u>\$(31,235)</u></b>	<b><u>\$197,881</u></b>
<b>CASH FLOW FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Payments for plant and equipment	-	-
<b>Net cash flow from investing activities</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of year	\$662,718	\$464,837
Cash and cash equivalents at end of period	\$631,483	\$662,718
<b>Net increase in cash and cash equivalents</b>	<b><u>\$31,235</u></b>	<b><u>\$197,881</u></b>
<b>MOVEMENT IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022</b>		
Opening Balance	\$503,474	\$371,429
Historical Adjustment	\$313	-
Cash Reserves	\$(31,614)	\$(28,850)
Current Year Earnings	\$(57,775)	\$132,045
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b><u>\$414,398</u></b>	<b><u>\$474,624</u></b>

# FINANCIAL REPORT

Certificate by Members of the Committee for the year ended 30 June 2022

The committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the Committee the Income and Expenditure Statement, Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Cash Flows and Notes to the Financial Statements:

1. Presents fairly the financial position of VANISH Inc as at 30 June 2022 and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. At the date of this statement there are reasonable grounds to believe that the association will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee by:

François Pettito (Treasurer)



Simon Pryor (Chair)



## Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year ended 30 June 2022

The functional and presentation currency of Vanish Inc. is Australian dollars.

### 1. Basis of Accounting

In the opinion of the Committee of Governance, the Association is not a reporting entity since there are unlikely to exist users of the financial report who are not able to command the preparation of reports tailored so as to satisfy specifically all of their information needs. These special purpose financial statements have been prepared to meet the reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012. Vanish Inc. is a not-for-profit entity as required by Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the recognition and measurement requirements of the Australian Accounting Standards and Accounting Interpretations, and the disclosure requirements of AASB 101 Presentation of Financial Statements AASB 107 Statement of Cash Flows AASB 108 Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors, AASB 120 Accounting for Government Grants and Disclosure of Government Assistance, AASB 1048 Interpretation of Standards, AASB 1054 Australian Additional Disclosures and AASB 1058.

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis and are based on historical costs modified, where applicable, by the measurement at fair value of selected non-current assets, financial assets and financial liabilities.

Significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of these financial statements are presented below and are consistent with prior reporting periods unless otherwise stated.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

## **2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies**

### **(a) Cash and Cash Equivalents**

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash on hand, demand deposits and short-term investments which are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value. Bank overdrafts also form part of cash equivalents and presented within current liabilities on the balance sheet.

### **(b) Provisions**

Provisions are recognised when the Association has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reliably measured.

### **(c) Employee Benefits**

Provision is made for the Association's liability for employee benefits arising from services rendered by employees to the end of the reporting period. Employee benefits that are expected to be settled within one year have been measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liability is settled. Employee benefits expected to be settled more than twelve months after the end of the reporting period have been measured at the present value of the estimated future cash outflows to be made for those benefits. In determining the liability, consideration is given to employee wage increases and the probability that the employee may satisfy vesting requirements. Changes in the measurement of the liability are recognised in profit or loss. Employee benefits are presented as current liabilities in the balance sheet if the Association does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement of the liability for at least 12 months after the reporting date regardless of the classification of the liability for measurement purposes under AASB 119

### **(d) Property, Plant and Equipment**

Plant and equipment are carried at cost or fair value less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation and impairment of losses.

Plant and equipment are depreciated on a straight-line basis over the asset's useful life to the Association, commencing when the asset is ready for use.

### **(e) Revenue and Other Income**

Revenue is recognised when the amount of the revenue can be measured reliably, it is probable that economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the Association and specific criteria relating to the type of revenue as noted below, has been satisfied. Revenue is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable and is presented net of returns, discounts and rebates.

#### Interest Revenue

Interest is recognised using the effective interest method.

#### Rendering of Services

Revenue in relation to rendering of services is recognised depending on whether the outcome of the services can be estimated reliably. If the outcome can be estimated reliably then the stage of completion of the services is used to determine the appropriate level of revenue to be recognised in the period. If the outcome cannot be reliably estimated then revenue is recognised to the extent of expenses recognised that are recoverable.

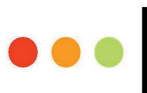
#### Grant Revenue

Government grants are recognised at fair value where there is reasonable assurance that the grant will be received and all grant conditions will be met. Grants relating to expense items are recognised as income over the periods necessary to match the grant to the costs they are compensating. Grants relating to assets are credited to deferred income at fair value and are credited to income over the expected useful life of the asset on a straight-line basis.

### **(f) Goods and Services Tax (GST)**

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). In these circumstances, the GST is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of an item of the expense. Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO is included with other receivables or payables in the balance sheet.





Directors

Lionel R. Arnold CA B.Bus  
Raelene Cheng CPA B.Com

**Independent Auditors Report**  
**Vanish Inc.**  
**For the year ended 30 June 2022**

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Report on the Audit of the Financial Report Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of Vanish Inc. which comprises the financial position as at 30th June 2022, and the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including summary of significant accounting policies and managements assertion statement and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Vanish Inc. as at 30th June 2022, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012.

**Basis for Opinion**

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Entity in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

**Emphasis of Matter - Basis of Accounting**

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist Vanish Inc. to meet the requirements of Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

**Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance**

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of the applicable legislation and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, management is responsible for assessing the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Entity's financial reporting process.

**Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report**

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

Lionel R Arnold Chartered Accountant  
Dated 11th September 2022 J L Collyer & Partners  
Unit 7 603 Boronia Road Wantirna Victoria

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The VANISH Committee of Management and staff wish to thank:

[The Department of Justice and Community Safety, Victoria](#) for funding VANISH services and for our positive working relationship with Adoption Services and Births, Deaths & Marriages.

[Open Place](#) for funding and a long-standing harmonious partnership.

[ARMS Victoria](#) for collaborating over many years on joint initiatives to support mothers.

[Herbert Smith Freehills](#) for pro bono legal advice.

[Walking Fish Productions](#) for including VANISH and information about forced adoption practices in the documentary about Sandra Pankhurst, *Clean*.

[Members and Friends](#) who have made financial donations to VANISH this year.

[Support Group Facilitators](#) who generously shared their skills, knowledge and time to facilitate VANISH groups. Your commitment is very much appreciated.

[Tricia Lester](#) retiring member of the Committee of Management who generously volunteered her wisdom, time and energy to VANISH for nine years.

[François Pettito](#) retiring member of the Committee of Management who provided sound financial advice and oversight to VANISH for three years.

[Ross Hunter](#) retiring member of the Committee of Management who volunteered his governance advice and practical contributions to VANISH for three years.

[Members and service users](#) who have trusted VANISH to assist and support them in a deeply personal and important area of their lives.

## THANK YOU!

VANISH welcomes voluntary donations at any time to enable us to extend our services.  
Give now at [www.givenow.com.au/vanishinc](http://www.givenow.com.au/vanishinc)

(03) 9328 8611  
1300 826 474 (1300 VANISH)  
[info@vanish.org.au](mailto:info@vanish.org.au)  
[www.vanish.org.au](http://www.vanish.org.au)

1st Fl, 50 Howard Street  
North Melbourne VIC 3051

PO Box 112  
Carlton South VIC 3053

ABN 35 582 901 627