

Welcome to Summer, 2015 Newsletter



Dear Members

We were sad to farewell our Program Manager, Lindy Bok, who has made a valuable contribution to PCA Families. However, we are pleased that she will continue to provide training to our members on a contractual basis.

The staff team now consists of Deborah Hunt 2.5 days per week, Rita Sidlauskas 3 days per week, and Bronwyn Wagstaff (admin) 2.5 days per week. As you can see we are a small team doing a mighty big job!

Do you realise we do not receive any federal or state government funding?... and that we totally rely on donations and philanthropic trusts?

This year we are focusing on the important issues of ongoing funding, fundraising, and member engagement. The Myer Foundation has generously funded PCA Families \$80,000 for this purpose. I'd like to hear from you if you have any fundraising ideas, or want to help—don't be shy!

We have also received a \$2,000 grant from our insurer, Community Underwriting to run Life Story Work for parents and carers in Geelong, Ballarat, and Melbourne.

We are in the process of surveying our members on

- Social Media
- Legal Issues and,
- Peer Support

Please take the time to fill out these surveys as they don't take long and the information will assist us design and deliver services to you.

Brenda Carmen, General Manager

BREAKING NEWS

Joint Permanent Care Order *granted for first time!*

Jeanette who is a kinship carer was granted a Joint PCO for her granddaughter by the Children's Court in both Jeanette's name and also her son's name (being the Uncle of the child).

Jeanette would like other kinship carers to be aware that the Legislation does not stop the application of a joint PCO, it simply hasn't been done in the past. The magistrate in question commended Jeanette on her insistence to apply for the joint order to ensure ongoing stability and continuity of care for her granddaughter. He also stated to the DHS representative that he wished to see more joint applications in the future.

Jeanette is a member of PCA Families and is happy to share some aspects of her experience in dealing with DHS, Court and the local Kinship Support Agency.

Dates for Your Diary

Thursday February 12

6.30—9.30pm

Parenting Plus! - Moorooduc (Peninsula)

Thursday February 19

6.30—9.30pm

Parenting Plus! - Moorooduc (Peninsula)

Thursday February 26

6.30—9.30pm

Parenting Plus! - Moorooduc (Peninsula)

Thursday March 5

6.30—9.30pm

Parenting Plus! - Moorooduc (Peninsula)

Thursday March 5

8.00 – 9.30 pm

**Journal Club, Fairfield (*new venue*)
formerly Collingwood**

Wednesday March 11

10.30—12.00pm

Peer support Bendigo

Thursday March 12 (**NO Parenting Plus this week**)

Thursday March 19

6.30—9.30pm

Parenting Plus! - Moorooduc (Peninsula)

Friday March 20

10.30—12.00pm

Peer support Ballarat

Thursday March 26

6.30—9.30pm

Parenting Plus! - Moorooduc (Peninsula)

Thursday April 2

8.00 – 9.30 pm

**Journal Club, Fairfield (*new venue*)
formerly Collingwood**

Monday April 20

7.00– 9.00pm (doors open at 6.30pm)

Understanding Lying and Stealing - Footscray

Information including venues and how to RSVP, visit
www.pcafamilies.org.au/event-calendar-all



Commencing on 1 February 2015, the Intercountry Adoption Service Victoria (ICAS), will trial a new registration process for interested and eligible families.

The revised process has been designed to streamline requirements for interested families by reflecting the complex needs of the children requiring adoptive placement and to assist ICAS in targeting applications only to overseas countries currently accepting Australian files. The trial will be evaluated after nine months, running from 1 February 2015 through to 1 November 2015.

The most significant changes include:

- Families will no longer be expected to attend a mandatory information session
- Families may register their interest to apply to the ICAS program for a listed open country program at any time, simply by following the process outlined below.
- the website will always display an updated list of overseas country programs, for which ICAS is currently accepting applications.
- ICAS will not hold waiting lists for country programs that are inactive, suspended and or not detailed on the "currently accepting files" list mentioned above.

The information is provided on the website and in the ICAS Information Kit is to assist families in determining their interest and eligibility for both the Victorian program and an overseas country program.

From the 1st February 2015, our website pages and information kit will be fully revised and accessible. Once prospective applicants have read all the requested information, they are advised to complete the required paperwork and return it to ICAS. Processing of documents received by ICAS will occur in date order of receipt. When this is completed, contact will be initiated by an ICAS staff member to discuss whether they are eligible to make a full application to an active overseas country program.

Morning Tea peer support gathering for permanent care and adoptive parents in Bendigo

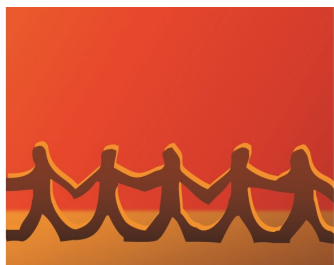
On November 27, PCA Families, together with St Luke's hosted morning tea for permanent care and adoptive parents. It was a chance for families with similar experience to come together and meet one another.



The peer support group meets on a bi-monthly basis at The Boardwalk café on the lake. Our next catch up will be **Wednesday 11 March from 10.30am—12.00pm. Please feel free to come along for a cuppa in a relaxed environment to chat to other parents.**

We are conducting a peer support questionnaire to find out what and where peer support participants prefer to meet. If you live in or near Bendigo, please take the time to complete the survey and email back to Deborah@pcfamilies.org.au as this will inform us on what you like, where, when, how often, etc.

Pre-schoolers are welcome to attend. We look forward to seeing you on Wednesday March 11 at 10.30am at the Boardwalk Bendigo café situated on the lake, Nolan Street, Bendigo.



Volunteer Program Update

Volunteers

Volunteer Vacancies

Peer Support Phone Volunteers

For those with the knack of listening who are willing to support other parents and carers with children who have come to them through permanent care, adoption or kinship care. You only need to be available for a minimum 2 hours per fortnight, and able to work from the PCA Families' office in the city. For more details contact Rita at PCA Families.

Book Reviewers

Volunteer from home! Read some of our existing books from the Book Store and write up a review to be published in our newsletter....or review new titles to determine their relevance for our membership families.

New Service for Families in isolated or regional areas - Peer Support over the Phone

Feeling isolated in your parenting role? Wish you had someone to talk to who understands the challenges? Not sure what resources are available?

PCA Families has long been committed to providing opportunities for families with shared lived experience to support each other through Peer Support groups. However we know that many families who live in isolated areas, or who can't attend these groups have been missing out on this peer support. So we have developed a volunteer program that may help to fill the gap.

The Peer Support Phone Volunteer program matches volunteers with parents and carers in order to offer regular phone calls for support and sharing. These volunteers are parents with lived experience of permanent care and adoption who are willing to lend an understanding ear, share some of their own experiences, and perhaps offer suggestions for resources.

All phone calls are completely confidential, and the arrangements for how and when calls will happen are by mutual agreement. You need not give your full name or details; you provide only as much personal information as needed.

If you are interested in using this service, or would like to apply to be a phone support volunteer, then please contact Rita by email or phone: rita@pcfamilies.org.au or 03 9020 1833

Peer support for permanent care and adoptive parents in Ballarat

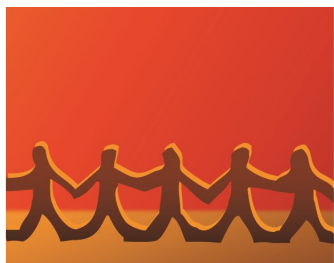
We are starting up a peer support group in Ballarat following our morning tea in October.

Our first gathering will be on Friday March 20 from 10.30am—12.30pm. We will confirm the venue shortly. It will be held in a child friendly venue; most probably a café.

Please feel free to come along for a cuppa in a relaxed environment and chat to other parents who have a similar lived experience.

We are circulating a peer support questionnaire and would appreciate you taking the time to complete and email back to info@pcfamilies.org.au. This will assist us to shape the group and understand your needs.





*Back by
popular
demand*

Understanding Lying and Stealing behaviour in traumatised children

Join us for a presentation by Catherine McQueen, who provides practical and supportive information for parents whose children have problems with lying and stealing. Catherine explores the meaning behind this challenging behaviour and ways parents can provide therapeutic care and respond to children's underlying needs.

Catherine's work has involved assisting children and young people to recover from the trauma of abuse, neglect and family violence. Catherine is a mother of three with a particular interest in infancy and childhood.

There will be ample opportunity to ask questions and talk with other parents.

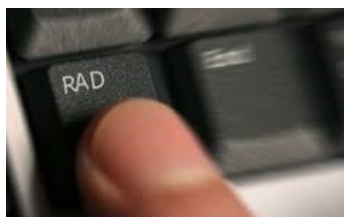
Date Monday April 20

Time 7.00 – 9.00pm (doors open at 6.30pm for refreshments)

Register By April 13 via www.trybooking.com/GSDE or call 9020 1833 to secure your place

Venue MacKillop Community Room, 118 Commercial Rd, Footscray

Cost FREE to Adoptive and Permanent Care parents, Foster and Kinship Carers



Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD)

Recently one of our members contacted us to offer their help and support to any families who have a child diagnosed with reactive attachment disorder. (RAD)

Their adopted daughter from Thailand was diagnosed at age 14; which meant the parents were sent on a steep learning curve whilst trying to implement ideas given to them by their psychologist.

After all this time they believe they have a good understanding of what RAD means and how it affects family dynamics and are happy to be a contact/support person to anyone who is struggling with this condition.

They are yet to come across anyone whose child has the same issues and have found the help and advice from their psychologist, invaluable.

The couple wanted to share their story in the hope that others may come forward and feel they are not alone.

For anyone who would like to be put in contact with this family, please email Deborah@pcafamilies.org.au and she will connect you both.



How our Information and Support Service to families is tracking

PCA Families had 123 contacts via phone and email in the six month period from July to December 2014 with families seeking information, advice and support. This included parents, carers and workers, with just over half of the requests coming from permanent care families.

These contacts covered a range of issues. Legal issues have consistently had the highest number of queries of any category; this included queries on obtaining Permanent Care Orders, conditions in PCOs, passports, and change of name for PC children.

Issue Category	% of total queries	Issue Category	% of total queries
Legal (PCO, passports, name change, Court, adoption process)	22%	Contact / Birth Family	3.5%
Seeking Resources/ Information	22%	Foster Care (includes conversion to	2.3%
Dealing with Govt Depts/ DHS	14%	Kinship Care	2.3%
Seeking Therapist Referral	8%	School	4%
Financial (includes Centrelink)	8.3%	General Support	6.5%
Child's behaviour/ Parenting	5%	Other	2%

Issues facing permanent care families:

Some of the recent scenarios that have been raised by callers to our phone service, and which are needing answers or clarification are:

- Is it possible to request a 'special adjustment' for Intensive Level of Care Allowance after the granting of a permanent care order if your child's needs change?
- What is the legal status of a young person with a permanent care order after turning 18, for Centrelink purposes? Technically the young person no longer has a legal guardian, yet they are not considered as 'independent' for Youth Allowance.
- As there is usually no tick box for 'Permanent Care' when dealing with Australian government departments such as Centrelink, how do you describe your family situation? One PC family who ticked the 'adoption' box was subsequently told they had been overpaid, and had to repay the allowance.

Most recently there has been an increase in queries to PCA Families seeking clarification about their financial entitlements as a result of a new document released by DHS, *Financial Support Guide for home-based carers*. Permanent Carers were seeking clarification about entitlements for the Intensive level of Care Allowance (carer reimbursement), or wondering why they were not advised of other financial supports such as for disability when taking out a PCO.

PCA Families believes that this issue warrants further investigation as the guide itself is somewhat confusing for Permanent Care families; there is insufficient information around the guidelines and eligibility for the Intensive level of reimbursement. We will pursue this by

- Seeking clarification from DHS, and
- Exploring a partnership with Social Security Rights Victoria to look at ways to raise awareness and influence policies around financial entitlements for permanent care families.

You can find a copy of the [full report](#) on our website .



Hurry last days!

Parenting Plus!

Mornington Peninsula Area

Don't miss out on this specialised parenting course! The course covers six separate modules built around the core challenges of parenting children with early experiences of disrupted attachment and trauma. The sessions explore:

- Impact of early experiences
- Understanding the impact of early experiences
- Models of Therapeutic Parenting
- Tools and strategies
- Triggers for parents and children

Date: Thursday Evenings – 6:30pm to 9:30pm
February 12, 19 and 26 and March 5, 19, 26
(no session on March 12)

Venue: Penbank School, Tyabb Road, Moorooduc

Cost: PCA Families members \$240,
Concession Card Holders \$150

Booking: <http://www.trybooking.com/GBHT>

Queries: PCA Families on 9020 1833 or
info@pcafamilies.org.au

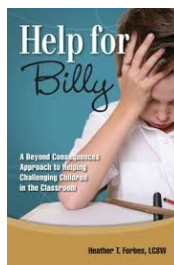
Testimonials from parents

"It is affirming, challenging and ultimately left me feeling empowered, optimistic and energised about parenting".

"Don't wait a minute longer before signing up for this course. It has been the most effective, practical course I have ever experienced. It has changed my life and our family for the better".



Book review



Help for Billy

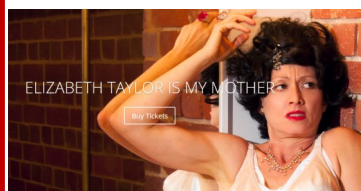
By Heather Forbes

In Help for Billy, author Heather Forbes provides a deep insight and manual for parents and teachers addressing essential methods for managing the school room behaviour of the child with complex trauma. She presents the essential concept of regulation rather than behavioural dysfunction in the disruptive child, and proves a wealth of strategies for both the parent and teacher to apply to assist the child to self-regulate.

"Help for Billy brings a compassionate voice to the thousands of children who attend school who have been impacted by trauma and the significant disadvantage that stress has on brain development.

Help for Billy is a must read for anyone looking to understand support and teach challenging and easily frustrated children. Heather writes with the knowledge of a professional and the heart of a parent.

Order now at <http://shop.pcafamilies.org.au/help-for-billy>



Play—2nd season

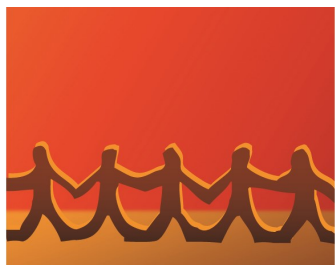
"Elizabeth Taylor is my mother"

is a play directed and acted by Suzie Hardgrave. It is about Suzie's personal adoption story and is rated for adults only and is not appropriate for children.

Suzie has already completed one season in 2014 with sell out seats & rave reviews. Please support Suzie and feel free to forward on to anyone who may be interested in the adoption & care community.

Tickets are hot so buy them soon!! Showing at La Mama Theatre, Faraday Street, Carlton

<http://lamama.com.au/2015-summer-program/>



Children as Contributors

**by
Professor Dorothy Scott *(a must read)***



In the fields of child and adolescent mental health, child protection and juvenile justice, children and young people are largely “clients”. In the wider society they are largely “consumers”. But are we missing the most important role children can play and which potentially brings them great benefits – that of contributor? Research shows us that children who take on developmentally appropriate caring of others, are more resilient. The Positive Psychology movements also emphasizes the importance of having a purpose, and belonging to, and being part of, something bigger than ourselves. How might this apply to children, especially those who have experienced adversity? How might we create ways in which children can be given the opportunities to be contributors in their families, school and communities.

http://www.futureleaders.com.au/book_chapters/pdf/Love-of-Ideas/Dorothy-Scott.pdf



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

Updates to the Attorney-General's Department Intercountry Adoption website are now live with a communiqué from the latest Central Authorities' meeting on 10 December 2014.

Please follow the link <http://www.ag.gov.au/FamiliesAndMarriage/IntercountryAdoption/Consultationandengagement/Pages/default.aspx>

Updates with information regarding investigations into a possible intercountry adoption programme with the United States is also available.

The department is seeking expressions of interest from US Hague-accredited adoption service providers about the possibility of working with Australia. EOIs will be accepted in good faith and for the purposes of determining the viability of a programme. The decision about whether to establish a programme with the US is one for the Australian Government, in consultation with the states and territories.

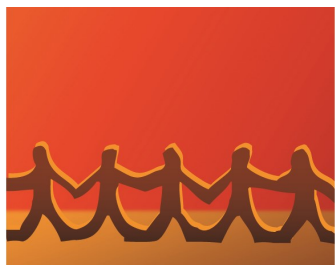
Please follow the link below to the Invitation to United States Hague-accredited Adoption Service Providers adoption page:

<http://www.ag.gov.au/USASPinvitation>

The latest news update is now live at www.ag.gov.au/intercountryadoption:

information that Australia will be able to send ten adoption files to South Korea in 2015. More information is available on the [South Korea page](#).

updated contact details for Special Needs Adoption Australia is at [Intercountry adoption Support Organisations](#) and [Post-Adoption Support Services](#) pages.



Message from Lynelle Long (nee Beveridge) - Inter-country Adoptee Voices

Hi all .. it has been a few years now since I took a break from ICASN. I am back and rejuvenated .. my two children are now 5 & 8 years old so I am feeling like I'm now starting to get some time to myself again .. and as many of you know I'm very passionate about inter country adoption and believe in empowering the voices of those involved and helping to educate the wider community of our experiences.

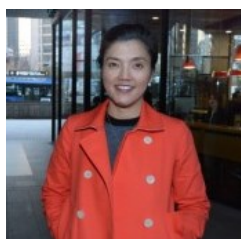
*I'm writing to let you know **ICAV** is still alive and well and we are reconnecting to let you know of our website so that you can refer any young inter country adoptee to us for connecting into the wider adoptee network worldwide, as well as a resource for the perspectives and experiences of us adoptees.*

Please feel free to share amongst your colleagues and workers who support Inter Country Adoptees and their families.

Our website is : <http://intercountryadopteevoices.com> and/or you can connect on FB <https://www.facebook.com/groups/4213333023/>

Regards
Lynelle Long (previously Beveridge)

Adoptee launches search service for birth parents and adoptees



Korean transnational adoptee Sarah Bowling was adopted to the U.S. in 1974 at age 3 from an orphanage in Busan.

Despite two DNA tests with potential parents in the 1990s — both came out negative — Bowling has not found her birth family.

However, her experience living in South Korea since 2009 as well as her own birth family search have inspired her to start a project with a very personal connection.

She recently launched Korea Reconnect, an online database that helps birth parents and adoptees look for each other without revealing their identities.

The database, with information provided both in English and Korean, currently holds hundreds of profiles of birth parents and adoptees, both transnational and local. In some ways, Korea Reconnect works almost like a matchmaking site, she said.

"You submit a story about your situation and then you can search," Bowling said in an interview with The Korea Herald in Seoul. You can read more about this article by visiting <http://m.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20141201001181>