

MEDIA RELEASE

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A crèche in a large metropolitan hospital, 1953. NAA: A1200, L15676.

Without Consent reveals the truth of Australia's past

A new exhibition ***Without Consent: Australia's past adoption practices***, is opening at the State Library of South Australia on **Friday 7 February**. This moving exhibition, curated by the National Archives of Australia, brings to light a previously hidden aspect of Australia's past. It has offered those affected by forced adoptions the opportunity to share their experiences – some for the first time ever.

It is estimated that at least 150,000 adoptions took place from the 1950s to the 1970s; a significant number of them were forced adoptions. Many of the women who had their babies taken were unmarried and, because of the stigma attached to unmarried mothers at the time, were often forced to live a lie for decades. For some, it was a secret they took to their graves.

The National Archives curated the exhibition and developed a website, following former Prime Minister Julia Gillard's national apology to those affected by forced adoptions. The exhibition aims to show the truth – that the babies taken for adoption were dearly loved and wanted by their parents.

One letter in the exhibition, from a mother to her son, read 'I loved you so much it hurt, and I loved you much more than I loved myself; that was why I was prepared to sacrifice my happiness for yours'.

Geoff Strempel, Director State Library of South Australia, says “Stories of the past have a role in shaping who we are as a society today. History is not always pleasant but it’s important to share what has happened and give it meaning so we can all learn from it. We are pleased to host this moving and thought-provoking exhibition and have a role in explaining Australia’s past adoption practices and to acknowledge all those affected by it.”

The exhibition is a tribute to the courage and generosity of those who volunteered to share their experiences and, in doing so, exposed this aspect of Australia’s history.

The companion website can be viewed at <http://forcedadoptions.naa.gov.au/>

Without Consent: Australia’s past adoption practices can be seen at the State Library of South Australia until 26 April 2020.

EXHIBITION DETAILS:

7 February to 26 April 2020
Open daily (except public holidays)
State Library Gallery
Corner North Terrace and Kintore Avenue
Free entry

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