



ADOPTION SERVICE

Information for prospective parents



Welcome to CatholicCare Adoption Service.

This document provides you with important information about our service. Please feel welcome to ask our staff for any further information.

Adoption services at CatholicCare

CatholicCare's Adoption Service is Victoria-wide. We provide support, advice and assistance in a range of ways including assessment and accreditation of adoptive families; relinquishment support and counselling; spousal adoption; pre- and post-legal adoption support for families; and adoption information and support for individuals who have been adopted to access their records, trace and potentially re-unify with family.

For more information about this, and other CatholicCare services, visit our website www.ccam.org.au

Adoption in Victoria

Adoption in Victoria is the legal process by which a child becomes a member of a new family. Making the decision to give up a child is never easy. But sometimes situations arise where birth parents feel it is impossible to raise their child. In these situations they voluntarily relinquish all their legal rights and responsibilities in relation to their child, and an adoption order is made by the County Court of Victoria. Adoption arrangements in Victoria can only be made by the Department of Human Services or an approved adoption agency.

When an adoption order is made, the birth parents no longer have any legal rights over the child. The adopted child becomes a full member of the new family, taking their surname and assuming the same rights and privileges as a birth child, including the right of inheritance. A new birth certificate is issued.

The order may include ongoing contact with the

child's birth parents and other relatives. Children's lives do not suddenly come into being when they're adopted. They have a past, which cannot be forgotten and which should be acknowledged. Their beginnings are a precious part of who they are and must be accepted, nurtured and valued by their new family. Older children, such as children with special needs or stepchildren, may also be adopted.

Applying to adopt

The first step in applying to adopt in Victoria is to attend an information session. Information sessions in Victoria are facilitated by both Department of Health and Human Services and non-government adoption agencies. For more information on the adoption process visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/adoption or contact a member of our team to discuss.

Important changes to the Adoption Act

On 1 September 2016, the Adoption Amendment (Adoption by Same-Sex Couples) Act 2015 came into effect. It means lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) couples can adopt in the same circumstances as any other couple. The paramount consideration of courts in considering adoption applications remains the best interests of the child to be adopted. Other existing safeguards continue to apply, such as the requirement that applicants are fit and proper persons.

CatholicCare and same-sex adoption

CatholicCare works with all applicants for adoption in the majority of the stages of the process – we respond to all enquiries from interested applicants,

we deliver information sessions and training, undertake assessments and accredit appropriate applicants.

Following the assessment and accreditation of couples, the matching process involves a family being selected as the best possible match to ensure the welfare and best interests of the child. Once a match is made, the adoption proceeds to legalisation through the court. CatholicCare, as a Catholic agency, is not able to complete these final two steps with LGBTI couples. We have a protocol in place with other adoption agencies to ensure that any LGBTI couples who are accredited through CatholicCare can be matched appropriately and supported by another agency for legalisation. This protocol also means that at any stage in the process, an LGBTI couple who chooses to transfer to another agency will be supported to do so.

Confidentiality and Privacy

CatholicCare is committed to protecting your privacy and the privacy of your information. We collect information from you in order to provide appropriate services. The information you provide may also be used to assist with referring you to other services, for reporting to funders (de-identified information only) and for quality assurance and internal service monitoring. If you choose not to supply your information, we may not be able to provide the most appropriate service for you.

We may disclose your personal information to other service providers (such as other community organisations, health services, Human Services) if this is required to provide you with the service you require.

We respect the confidentiality of personal information and use it only in accordance with the law.

Your consent may be sought to gather and/or use your information in other ways.

If you have queries or concerns about your privacy and/or confidentiality, please speak with your worker or Manager. If you consider we have breached your privacy, the law gives you the right to complain to the Privacy Commissioner on 1300 363 992.

Our staff

Our Adoption Services staff are qualified professionals with expertise and experience in their fields of practice. All staff receive regular supervision and support, as well as training aimed at ensuring they have the skills and knowledge to provide you with the best possible service.

Complaints

CatholicCare strives to provide the highest standards of professional service and complaints are treated with care and attention.

Should you have a complaint about our services, we encourage you to first discuss your concerns with your worker. If you feel uncomfortable doing this, the complaint should be made to the Manager, preferably in writing.

There is also a facility to lodge a complaint, or provide feedback of any kind, on CatholicCare's website www.ccam.org.au. Complaints lodged through the website are received by a central officer who then delegates follow up and response on a case-by-case basis.

If an immediate resolution of the complaint is not possible, it is referred to CatholicCare's Quality Manager for a thorough review of the situation. Written information will be provided to you about the outcome of such a review.

If you are not satisfied with CatholicCare's management of your complaint, the matter can be referred to the relevant government department or professional body.

Feedback and Evaluation

CatholicCare regularly seeks client feedback- we welcome feedback at any time. If you wish to let us know what you like about our service, or ways in which we might improve it, we invite you to write to the Manager where you receive service or use the facility on the website as detailed above.

CONTACT US

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