

## Using a mediator

Greetings, I am the Jigsaw mediator and counsellor. This pamphlet will answer some of your questions about search and mediation. My role is to provide information, support and expertise to guide you and to help make your contact a success.

*Isabel Andrews*

### Why use a mediator?

Loss, shame, guilt, anxiety, fear, anger and sadness are just some of the emotions that can be experienced by people involved in adoption. Search, contact and mediation can trigger these and more.

A mediator gives everyone the opportunity to discuss the impact of adoption on their life and their wishes about future contact. The 'found' person usually appreciates the chance to discuss things with a neutral person and at their own pace. A mediator provides support and assistance for both parties.

### My Experience

I have been involved in all aspects of adoption work over the last 18 years and am currently one of the most experienced mediators in WA. I am a licensed mediator and qualified Social Worker.

### What happens?

**Step 1 - Search** - We can assist with search, or you may prefer to do your own searching. Search can be simple and straight forward or it can be like looking for 'a needle in a haystack' with many hours following up leads and obtaining certificates.

**Step 2 - Mediation** - You will be asked to attend an interview. We will discuss how adoption has impacted on your life, how it might be for the other person, the potential consequences of search, your wishes for future contact etc. *Allow 1½ hours for this interview.*

I will then contact the 'found' person by phone or letter. Contact is nearly always a shock and people need varying amounts of time to decide what to do. If possible, I invite them in to see me personally. An interview with them gives me the opportunity to explore the impact of adoption on their life and to discuss their wishes. If the response is unsure I will ask if I can phone back in a week or month, whatever seems appropriate. If the response is negative I will try and obtain medical and other information and again ask them if I can phone back some time in the future.

My aim is to reassure them that we will respect their wishes, to give them an opportunity to talk and think through the issues and to 'keep the door open' if they do not want contact.

Often people need time and I will offer them the opportunity to continue counselling (*at their expense*). When each party feels ready I will establish each ones wishes in regard to contact eg letter, phone or personal meeting and discuss the practicalities, that is, when /where and how.

Good mediation is time consuming. Unless the found party rejects all contact, it can involve many phone calls or letters and interview(s) for each party. Mediation may be spaced over two weeks or many months. Once the person is found, I will try and keep you up to date each step of the way.

Re-union impacts on every family member and if appropriate (*and with your consent*) I am happy to talk to other family members eg parents, spouses, children.

### **Costs**

Search can take half an hour or many phone calls, letters and months of painstaking work. Fees include local and short interstate calls. You will be charged any additional costs such as long interstate, international or mobile phone calls and the cost of certificates.

In order to reduce administrative costs we charge everyone the same rate, regardless of the time taken. We are a 'not for profit' organisation and we receive some government funds that enable us to charge much reduced fees (*private counsellors charge \$75-\$120 per hour*). Our survival is dependent on fees and donations. Donations are gratefully received and are tax deductible. We realise some people will not be able to afford these fees, please discuss it with us and we will try and assist. Accounts can be paid off over time.

### **How long will it take?**

Search time is impossible to predict and can be one week or one year. Once 'found' the time taken can vary from a few days to months, depending on the client's response and our resources. We are the main providers of mediations in WA as well as providing a specialised counselling service, professional consultancy and a newsletter. Due to funding restrictions I am only employed for 3 days a week thus some delays are possible. If you have special circumstances please discuss it with us and we will endeavour to assist you.

### **Further questions?**

Contact Jigsaw on 9388 1922 and we will try and answer your questions.

*Isabel Andrews*  
Counsellor