

David Hyland

I David Hyland was born at the Queen Victoria hospital Melbourne on the 23rd July 1970. I was put up for adoption by my biological mother and this was primarily because she was 16 years old in 1970 and the church told her it was the "right thing to do". Over the next 3 months I went out to one couple and then back to an adoption home before I was finally adopted by my mother and father. I am incredibly fortunate as these people have done everything in their power to make sure I had the best possible upbringing.

We lived at first in Coburg in Melbourne and then moved over to Forest Hill at which point my also adopted sister joined the family. We from there moved to Anglesea to a house that my father built. I started school here and had friends but my mother did not enjoy the time here. Subsequently we moved into Geelong during the period of 1978-1980. We went to new school and I again established a friend network. I was always very tall for my age so I stuck out a bit. I was quickly taller than my parents but didn't think much of it. I used to cop the "how come you are so tall and your parents are so little" question. This used to become annoying but I developed coping mechanisms and retorts for this. It was around this time when I was about 10 that Dad told me one night I was adopted. This was a massive shock to the system. I cried and he hugged me and reassured me that we were both loved and cherished by mum and him. I asked him "why" at the time and he just said because some people can't have children and desperately want them. He also said that Mum and he waited to tell me of this as Mum was on a tram in the city and a little girl was walking up and down the tram telling everyone "I'm adopted" they felt it would be better to tell me when I was a bit older.

I decided at this point to tell no one and to just get on with things in general. I was good at most sports so I had a large network of friends and just decided that it was none of their business and that I really at this stage in my life didn't want to know. It was at primary school that I met a friend's mum whom did ask me a lot of questions at the time but she knew better and didn't pry. She was also featured in an article in the Geelong Advertiser talking of her adoption journey and the groups that she was involved in. I remember seeing the article and thinking "I have something in common with her maybe that was why she was asking so many questions".

My life continued on pretty well really I had a fantastic family went to a good school and had a very normal life during the eighties around the Geelong area. My adopted sister and I never really saw eye to eye. She I think didn't like the fact that I was good at sports and she wasn't. I was probably slightly better than her academically and I don't think this helped either. I probably could have been better to her over the journey. But we are very different people she is very creative and arty, a side that needs much work in me. I harbour no grudges and still accept her as family and hope that I was not so awful to her that she does not want to be a part of my family's life going forward. I see her at Christmas with mum and Dad for lunch every year. But she is welcome in house anytime.

During the 80's I met my wife at school and it took a long time for us to get together but when it finally happened it was special. We had two daughters one in 1996 and another in 1999 and it was around this time that my feelings towards my heritage and adoption started to change. I was pretty happy with my lot in life and thought as a minimum I would like to make sure my girls have no health issues they have to worry about. I really didn't feel that I needed much more than this. I decided to contact Human Services and set the ball rolling. Filled in the forms and was told it is about a 7 to 8 week wait.

I was working at a trade show when the phone rang and it was someone from Human Services asking if I was David Hyland from Geelong and would like to come in for an interview. The voice also said to me "I need to also at this point let you know who I am". It was the friend's mother from primary school in Geelong! This was a huge help in the process as she got my documents and got me in for an interview. When I arrived about a week or so later she gave me a kiss and a hug and explained that she would leave me to peruse the documents and she would come back shortly and explain them.

To open an envelope and see as the first document a birth certificate with your date of birth and a different name on it was one of the strangest experiences of my life. It absolutely floored me I needed the rest of the day off. It is quite draining to have another identity put in front of you having lived 30 years in another. This process was made incredibly easier by the fact that I had my primary school friend's mother to explain the documents and my rights as far as further access to the documents.

I was encouraged to attend some group discussions at an organisation called Vanish in Carlton. I was never throughout my life angry or looking something better from the whole process. At this stage even if I got told that my mother didn't want to see me, the medical information would have become a necessity and a minimum. The groups were ok, but I felt guilty at times being in room with people whom had vastly different experiences to mine. Most of their stories were pretty awful and I felt even luckier from hearing these stories.

The information was valuable at Vanish as the guides to letter writing and searches I used in most of the later process. I was also amazed that these people had similar moments (I was going to say problems) in their lives like me, lack of trust in people, clinginess and even some withdrawal. I was particularly interested in one woman whom stated that she had days where she didn't want to talk to anyone, 23 voicemail messages in a day was her record. This is a common theme in my life. I have days where apart from my wife and family even my close friends can't get me. It is not constant just something that happens from time to time. It is hard being in your own business some days as clients can be demanding but I have learnt to get away with bear minimums some days.

This led me to the search which started with the births deaths and marriages for documents like mother's birth certificate, marriage license etc. This is when I found out that my mother was 16 when she had me in 1970 and the interesting thing was that I had the same name on the old birth certificate as the man whom married her. My wife jumped up and said "she must have married your father" I just replied "no guarantee". Having heard all of the stories of how many mothers don't want anything to do with the adoptee's, even denying their existence.

Fortunately at the time (I have had a lot of luck with all of this) I had a guy working for me at the time whom was an ex-debt collector. They have means of finding people that most don't (whether they are legal or not is another story) and within half an hour I was able to find my birth mother under her married name in Melbourne. I set about writing the standard "I am enquiring about" letter. It took about two weeks and I was at home one night and the phone rang and it was her, my birthmother. It was a quiet chat but I found out that she had married my birthfather and I had a full sister whom did not know that I existed. We set about working out a time to meet and I was happy with working around her controlling the situation as she said she had no control of the original process and would like to control this one.

We finally met up in Richmond (just with her) which actually was less emotional than I thought that it was going to be. I asked about my birthfather and why he was not there and she said that he had had a nervous breakdown and was still getting used to the idea that I had appeared. I asked about my sister and she said she had not told her any of this yet and remarked that I reminded her a lot of her younger brother. None of this worried me as I knew that it would take time.

I did meet my father and sister with whom I have a good relationship with and I now have an instant massive other family. It was initially strange to look at people whom had a family resemblance. My father has the same small hands as I do. He is someone whom has worked hard in his life and it has taken its toll on him. Overall they are a huge positive in my life. My grandfather is 91 and still going, he is my birthmother's father. Sharp as a tack and my birthmother told me that when I was born he told her to "just bring him home we'll work out how to do this" but she was persuaded by the church. My family was accepted by my birth family instantly and we catch up at the very least at Christmas. The older brothers and sisters (my uncles and aunties) all knew about me and were thrilled to find out that I had reappeared in their lives.

My children were flower girls at my sister's wedding. Just prior to this I told them the full story as I had kept this from them for a long time. After the initial "wow cool" reaction, my eldest daughter said to me and I will never forget it "I wondered why they always came around and we went to see them so often". I also warned them that if they ever disrespected Mum and Dad I would be extremely angry and disappointed. I felt it just needed to be said but they are great children and it probably was not necessary. I rang my sister two days before her wedding and told her they knew the full story and she just burst into tears she was so happy.

The part of this for me that was the hardest was telling Mum and Dad that I had done all of this. I did keep it separate for a long time. I am extremely loyal to them and it took me a long time to pluck up the courage to tell them. It was probably about 18 months to 2 years after I had first met my birthmother. I had built the moment up in my mind to be much bigger than it needed to be. I went around to their place sat down and started with "you will always be my mum and dad" and proceeded to tell them about my other family. I was so unsure of their reaction as we had never discussed it. We are reasonably close but I really had no idea what would happen. I needn't have worried, mum whom I thought might have a problem just smiled and said "great we were wondering when you were going to do something about it". I just couldn't believe it, talk about an anticlimax. It has made absolutely no difference to our relationship between me my family and Mum and Dad.

I felt strongly about writing this for the website as I wanted to record my story in some way and also to express a positive story in amongst some truly saddening tales. I am passionate about adoptee's and their experiences and want to get across that there definitely are positive outcomes. I know through reading and group discussions that these can be rare. I have had a very lucky upbringing and sincerely wish that everyone else has the same experience as I have. I know that this is tough a lot of the time, but we are special tough people and we must remain so through trying times.