



GREEK, ACTUALLY

Disentangling Adoption Deceptions

Penny Zagarelou-Mackieson

All I've ever wanted is the deep sense of belonging associated with knowing and being connected with who and where I've come from.

Penny Zagarelou-Mackieson always knew she was adopted. But she didn't know she was swapped at birth.

After a lifetime grappling with issues of identity and belonging, outlined in her earlier book *Adoption Deception*, Penny discovered that her natural mother, according to her adoption records, is genetically unrelated to her. Penny's family reunion of two decades was based on falsehoods. Her ancestry is Greek, not Celtic-Anglo as she was led to believe.

So begins Penny's new quest to learn about her origins. She confronts a shocking legacy of babies misidentified in the heyday of Australia's forced and closed adoptions and appalling medical record-keeping – meaning many adoptees may never know their true origins. Penny's quest leads her to court seeking legal recognition of her true identity, involving her 'de-adoption' – termination of the Adoption Order imposed on her in infancy.

This remarkable story of one woman's determination to uncover the truth and restore her dignity reveals human rights violations inherent in adoption. Penny questions continuing laws and practices that cement stigmatising secrecy and harm adopted people, arguing for wide-reaching reforms.

Penny Zagarelou-Mackieson is an Australian author who was adopted as a newborn in 1963 and 'de-adopted' in 2022. A social worker by profession, Penny achieved several qualifications from the University of Melbourne and worked for three decades in the child and family services sector. Penny's PhD research explored Permanent Care Orders for children in Victoria's child protection and out-of-home care system. From 2014 to 2019, Penny was Chair of VANISH Inc., a community-based organisation providing search and support services to people separated from their families through adoption. She is the author of *Adoption Deception: A Personal and Professional Journey* (Spinifex Press, 2015) and lives with her partner and their adult son in inner Melbourne.

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