Helping to mend broken family ties

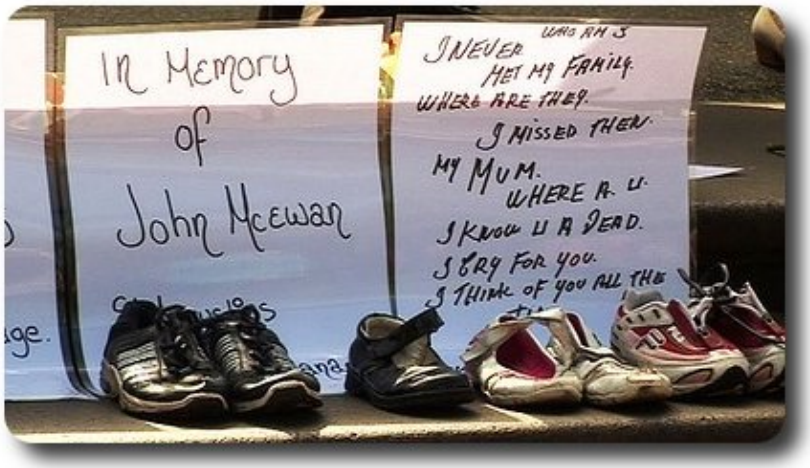
Jenny Fawcett at home in her research library. Her research skills have helped to mend broken family ties.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] E [/dropcap]arlier this year, we revealed the full story behind the "Granny" of Granny's Grave, in Warrnambool, with the help of volunteer researcher **Jenny Fawcett**.

What we didn't tell you at the time, but have kept up our sleeve, is that Jenny has also used her substantial research skills to help some of the people affected by forced adoptions – or other family separation – to piece back together their family history.

In November 2009, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and

Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull delivered a bi-partisan national apology to the more than half a million children – the so-called Forgotten Australians – who were raised in institutions, foster homes and orphanages where, more often than not, they suffered mental, physical or sexual abuse. Many of these children were forced child migrants from the UK who were told they were orphans, when in fact their parents were still alive.



A poignant symbol of the effects of the forced adoption policy and the agony of not knowing. Image: The Age.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] A [/dropcap]nd in March 2013, the then Prime Minister Julia Gillard issued another, equally emotional, national apology to the parents and children at the centre of the nation's forced adoption policies from the 1950s to the late 1970s. It is estimated up to 150,000 children were forcibly removed from their (usually single) mothers during this time.

Together, these two historical wrongs equate to a lot of hurt…and a lot of not knowing the truth.

And this is where Jenny comes in. Some of those affected by

either of these wrongs have asked Jenny, of Warrnambool, for help in tracking their past.

While Jenny can't personally track every family history, she has provided guidance on where to look for information and records, and how to interpret documents that can lead to more clues: this is the art of the researcher.

It is such important, healing work and, for this, Jenny is our very deserving Quiet Hero.

[box] Jenny will receive a pack of four coffee vouchers from The Pavilion Café in Warrnambool. Thankyou to owners Mary-Ellen and Jon Watson for supporting this week's Quiet Hero.[/box]

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Giving comes naturally: Virginia Marshall

Australia Day awards – did we forget someone? Vicki Jellie

Oh Possum, you're a hero in the heat: Nalini Scarfe

Walking with strength and purpose: Susie Alexander