'We have not been blessed'
The interplay between infertility and adoption in policy and practice in Twentieth-Century Australia
Adoption statistics

[Graph showing adoption statistics over time.]
Senate Inquiry into Former Forced Adoptions

• ‘a Government policy to remove children from so called "lower classes" and "unfit mothers" to provide children for childless or otherwise infertile married people’
• ‘social workers ... were like vultures hovering over single girls to get their babies’
• ‘a very lucrative market’
Rise in concern about infertility

- NSW RC on the Decline of the Birth Rate, 1904
- Venereal disease, 1916-1918, 1930s
  - 'potent cause of sterility’
  - 'deadly ... from a racial point of view’
- Freudian theories arguing for psychogenic infertility
Helene Deutsch

Has her fear of the reproductive function proved stronger than her wish to be a mother? Is she still so much a child that she cannot emotionally and consciously decide to assume the responsible role of mother? Is she so much absorbed emotionally in other life tasks that she fears motherhood? ... Does a deeply unconscious curse of heredity burden all her motherly wish fantasies? And, above all, has the sterile woman overcome the narcissistic mortification of her inferiority as a woman to such an extent that she is willing to give the child, as object, full maternal love?
'The fertility of every married couple is today so vitally important to the nation that birth clinics ... set up for free investigation and the treatment of all wives and husbands desirous but unable to increase the birth-rate, would amply repay the expense involved'
Infertility as a motivation to adopt

Newspaper advertisements 1850-1954
Adoption as Cure: Becoming Fruitful by Induction


- Frederick M. Hanson and John Rock, “The Effect of Adoption on Fertility and Other Reproductive Functions,” *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 59, no. 2 (1950)
Adoption as Cure: Supplying the Market
a huge mass of people, wealthy people, that couldn't have children ...
people with some power and all this pool of women with no power, that ...
were like a labour force of people to donate their children to all the wealthier people