In 1963 I found myself pregnant to a long time boyfriend, apparently I committed a crime the way I was ostracised by my mother, she would not converse with me give any advice on the subject. When dad wasn't around I got called a few choice names when I was needed to do certain things at home. A few weeks later I was dismissed from my work place as the shearers were due & then a few weeks later on shearers were due at home & I was soon bundled off elsewhere before I was sent to a home for unmarried mothers, not in my home state just in case I was recognized & ruin the family name, so away to Victoria for the last 4 months. It was bad enough being pregnant & shunned by my own mother & boyfriend that I was to be married to but then to be packed off to a different state into a home with about forty to fifty strangers. It's amazing that it was the girl that had done the wrong, never was the male treated the way we were, the girls were the sluts, street girls etc.
The social stigma, attitudes & family shame back then were unbelievable & to think that one's own family banished their own flesh & blood for being human I will never understand & will never forgive.

The home I was in was a Salvation Army home & was called the Haven in Fitzroy. There were a large number of us there in varying stages of pregnancy. The girls ranged from 16 to I guess 25yrs. On entry we were given a name by the matron which we had to use, family names were taboo. We all got on well together as we were all equal to a degree, pregnant & unmarried. The staff in general were nice enough but the (...) was as hard as nails. Rules were ridiculous, you had no time to yourself, up very early & on the go till 8pm with an hour's rest at 1.30pm. That side was not a problem for me but it was the heavy chores we had to do. We were just cheap labour as there was an orphanage attached to the home, different floors for babies, toddlers & pre schoolers. We were moved around weekly to different areas, scullery, laundry, kitchen, dormitory, bathrooms etc. as well as the orphanage.

Once your baby was born you were in a different section next to the nursery where we had to bath & feed our baby till we left. The girl that I shared with in post natal asked me to take a photo of her & bub as hers was born on Australia day & was given a certificate that all were given to mark the occasion, she then took a photo of my son & I. The (...) happened to see this & the camera was confiscated & film removed & destroyed. We were given pills to dry up our milk & treated like second class citizens. Eight days after my son was born the (...) came with papers for me to sign with all the wording covered. She stood with forms in her hand & told me I had to leave the home & that she had booked me a flight home on Tuesday but I refused to leave as I was told I could not take my baby & strung it out for another week. The day I left my baby was 17 days old & at 10am I dressed my son in a gown & shawl I'd made, went to the office to sign out & was told that I couldn't take my baby & that I had given him up for adoption, I protested & said that I hadn't & she then produced the forms I'd been tricked into signing. (I had no intention of relinquishing my son & that is why I stayed in that home so long.)

There was no such thing as counselling or mediation, the trauma we had to go thru was horrific, just told to go home forget about it & get on with life & pretend that it never happened & never to talk about it or tell anyone. So why were we told that,,,because it was illegal !!! I WILL NEVER FORGET THOSE WORDS AS THAT HARD BITCH STOOD THERE WITH MY SON IN HER ARMS TELLING ME THAT. To think that we were so naive meek & mild & didn't fight back or stand up for our rights to these people. Then again we were not allowed to say what we thought or have an opinion back then, the adults were the only ones with a voice.

I will never forget leaving that home without my baby, I cried from the moment I was virtually shoved out the door & into a cab to the TAA depot in Melbourne & bus it to Essendon airport , through the flight home & for the next 2-3 weeks, plus at anytime I saw children & babies. The depression was horrific, my eyes were so red & swollen & I just had to get away & hide from people. On arrival home my mother didn't even give me a hug & show any sympathy, Just glad that my dad was there to show a bit of care.

Since being involved with Jigsaw I am amazed with the amount of birthmothers that were never able to have another baby. The trauma had such an effect on them & denied them of motherhood in their marriages. I was one of the lucky ones in that respect as I went on to have 2 more children but never could they ever stop the hurt of my son I had taken from me, the memories were always there & quite often I would cry my eyes out especially on his birthdays & family occasions, Easter& festive season etc. There have been buckets of tears shed over the years.
I would love to see some of those responsible & let them know that I now have been in reunion with

my son for 8 years & I have a really great relationship with him & his family, he has said it was as though we had known each other for ever. For some they haven't been so lucky & some adoptees don't wish to know their birth family & then again some of the birth mums don't want contact which I can understand as they were brain washed into the fact that it was NEVER to HAPPEN.

How barbaric were these practices, anyone would think we were back in the stone ages with the treatment we were given. As far as I am concerned these practices were illegal as many of us were under age for signing legal documents & to be done in the manner it was & to take a baby from its mother & place them with a complete stranger & that they were lied to about the birth mothers is absolutely criminal. Our babies were of the white stolen generation. If only some of the staff of these homes & churches involved were still alive, they should be tried in a court for any number of crimes they committed on us UNWED mothers.

The church hierarchy & bureaucratic idiots that let this happen to so many naive young girls were the lowest of low of the twentieth century. The practices were archaic & unwarranted not to mention barbaric to the highest degree. These babies didn't get a say & to be ripped from their mothers & placed with complete strangers was unbelievable. I hope the parliament can see fit to apologise to all birthmothers & our children.

Thank you & let us be heard for a change
Kaye