Department of the Senate
P.O. Box 6100
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senators,

Commonwealth of Australia Inquiry into Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices.

I wish to submit the attached submission to your Inquiry. As the mother who had to give up three children for adoption, and also as an adopted person myself, I have suffered a great deal of grief and loss. In hindsight I can see that I was under considerable pressure to give up my children, and that it was not adequately explained to me that I could have kept them.

I thank you for the opportunity to bring this shameful period of our history into the open. I would appreciate your adding my name and address to your mailing list so that I can hear further about the progress of this Inquiry.

Yours Faithfully,

I would like this submission to be published on the internet, but I would prefer if possible to have my name removed from any publicly displayed documents.

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into "Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices."

Preamble

I, , am a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia resident in New South Wales.

As a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia I have an inalienable right to protection under the Australian Constitution and the Common Law of this country. As an Australian citizen, the Commonwealth affords me protection from the unlawful and harmful actions that threaten my right to life, liberty and justice from those who would deny me these rights, within and without the borders of Australia.

The submission

I was born in 1954 and was myself adopted. My adoptive parents were good to me, but I wanted to know about my natural parents. Eventually I met my birth mother, after my adoptive parents had died. Many years later, after the adoption laws changed, I applied for my identifying information and discovered that I had a half-brother. Meeting him was an important event in my life.

At the age of 17 I found myself pregnant. I was put into the Mercy unmarried mothers home, Waitara, and Villa Maria in East Maitland. Finding one good friend there made the experience bearable. I roomed with two 13-year-olds who did not understand how they got pregnant, or who the fathers were.

I went into labour on the of February 1972, the night after my 18 birthday party. It was not a pleasant experience. The midwife was unfriendly. When the child was born I asked the nun and midwife to give me my baby. The nun said "Take it away, it's for adoption". The doctor arrived, and then I was sent to the ward. I did not see my baby again and did not know where he was.

I was put in a bed with other women; no babies were in the room. Above my bed was an unknown name " ".

Mother would visit me. Then there was the harsh Sr who had counseled us in the home. My only memory of her interrogations is knowing I would have to cry in order to leave her room during interviews at the home. Mother visited me and said I was to sign the papers the next day in Sr social work office. This was about day 4 in hospital. I was told of the 30 days revocation period. That's all I recall. Although I was told about the option to revoke, I was left with the impression that I really had no choice.

I did not see my baby (now named) again until leaving hospital, when we viewed him through a window in the nursery. Nothing was said again about this experience. I would break down and would be told not to think or talk about it. It took me years to get over the grief.

About 1977 I went to the Mater Hospital Newcastle to ask for news of . The social worker told me that the law stated there was not to be any information given to the birth mother.

In later years (1979-1981) I gave birth to two other children who were subsequently adopted into the same family (but not the family who adopted my first baby). The adoptions in those cases were really because of pressure from my adoptive mother, who did not approve of single mothers. With my second child I was better advised about consent than with the first one, but the advice left me upset with the thought that I had done the wrong thing by giving up my first child.

Much later I visited and wrote letters to the Catholic Adoption Agency in Sydney, and , CAA Social Worker would try to comfort me and tried to tell me what they could about . (The second and third children.) Margaret MacDonald (PARC by then) helped with reunion. Both these women acknowledged my grief and it gave me a sense of being accepted and liked even though they knew my story.

Now, many years later, I have a good relationship with i . I did not manage to re-establish a relationship with my first child.