Senate Inquiry into "Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices."
I request this submission be published

Preamble to Submission
I, ***Rosemary Harbison*** am a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia resident in California, U.S.A.
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 without, the borders of Australia.

Contemplate your child is kidnapped or missing. Panic and fear consumes you. Now imagine after suffering every parent's worst nightmare no one helping you to find your child. Consider the trauma of then being told that you have no right to look for your child. ***"This happened to me!"*** The adoption system devastated my life and permanently damaged my family. Public policies promote adoption as voluntary, while mandated secrecy allows practices to be unmonitored, cruel and unlawful. Supported by the Commonwealth Government, adoption practices were sponsored by State Governments, carried out by their employees, and facilitated by government hospitals and religious institutions. The Adoption of Children Act states, the consent for adoption must be; "Voluntary, without, duress or other undue influence." The statute also requires a thirty-day period in which mothers can rescind the adoption. State adoption workers contravened the law, violated my rights and kidnapped my daughter. I ask for an apology for myself, my kidnapped daughter, my husband and my other two children, who are all innocent victims of this sadistic adoption scheme. This submission shows the unlawful tactics and lifelong effects inflicted by State, Hospital and Church employees.

At no time did I consider giving up my daughter for adoption, or contact Adoption Services regarding adoption. My right to parent my own child was subverted by a State government adoption employee. The adoption worker obtained my consent by "fraud, duress and other improper means." I was taken to her desk in the hospital. She did not ask me if adoption was what I wanted or mention that adoption was "voluntary." She placed a form in front of me and told me to sign. When I did not sign, the worker pressured me stating that I was in no position to take care of "the child." She further stated that "the child" was "at risk" as I was unmarried. This person was required by law to advise me of my rights. Instead, she abused her position of authority to intimidate me, stating that I was "unfit" and had no right to raise "the child." She threatened that if I did not sign, "the child" would become a Ward of the State. The adoption worker did not advise me that I legally had thirty days to rescind the adoption. She did not warn me of "dire future regret" if adoption is being considered. She withheld information about alternative options or available government assistance. Her menacing and aggressive manner escalated until she achieved her goal of forcing me to sign the form. The adoption consent was not voluntary or informed. Her unlawful methods contravened the provisions of the Adoption of Children Act, violated human and civil rights and defied moral ethics. These tactics constitute kidnapping and my daughter's adoption is invalid.

As a patient in Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital, I endured humiliation and abuse by nurses and adoption workers as they conspired to take my child. During my two days of labour I was isolated and left in pain for long periods of time. Nurses glared at me with cold contempt when I asked for help, and laughed together in front of me making derogatory comments about my "unwed status." Despite their abuse, the moment I gave

birth was a deeply spiritual and profound experience in my life. To this day I cherish the brief time my doctor "allowed," me to hold my precious baby. I was devastated when she was wrenched from my arms. No one spoke to me as my baby vanished from my sight. I had not yet been forced to sign an adoption form. My human and legal right to nurture my newborn daughter was denied. Over and over I begged to be able to hold my baby. I went to the fourth floor nursery to find her and was told she was on the first floor. First floor nurses told me she was on the fourth floor. Dazed and confused I staggered up and down the stairs searching for my baby, and repeatedly they told me she was on another floor. Nurses systematically lied to me about my daughter's location. Refusing access to my child when I had not signed an adoption form was unlawful. Their actions conspired to defraud with intent to steal my child; this is kidnapping. Panic and fear internalized my body and I developed post-traumatic stress. After discharge from the hospital my over-medicated mind cleared and I screamed, "Oh my God! They've got my baby!"

My baby was born as the result of date rape. The perpetrator, who was not a steady boyfriend, has never been prosecuted. I remained silent about his attack, as most rape victims do. Despite the terror and trauma I suffered from being raped, and becoming pregnant, I knew I would be a caring and nurturing mother. I bonded immediately with my unborn child and loved her with all my heart. At that time I was employed full time and looked forward to raising my child. I had no idea of the betrayal that lay ahead. My mother took me from Perth, telling me the family was relocating to Brisbane, and that the rest of the family would be following. Without my knowledge or consent, my parents had contacted the institution and organised to take me across State lines with the intent of having my child taken away. This is a Federal crime.

I was institutionalised in St. Mary's Church of England home Toowong, Queensland. My mother then deserted me and returned home to Perth. I was isolated and stripped of everything I had ever known: My family, my friends, my church, my place of employment, and my home. Distraught and afraid, I lost faith in everyone and my ability to trust was forever damaged. The system I was forced into was structured to keep me ignorant of my rights and to control every aspect of my life. The matron refused to communicate with us about our children and prevented us from making any arrangements. We were not permitted to use their telephone and were not informed of available government programs or funds. We received no education about our pregnancies, confinement or childcare, even by our obstetrician. Deprived of financial support and segregated from society, we had no knowledge of the laws they were violating. Ignored by the Commonwealth government, State-run Adoption Services colluded with government hospitals and religious institutions to manipulate single mothers and take our babies for adoption.

The unlawful practices of the government adoption system caused lifelong suffering for my daughter and our entire family. My kidnapped daughter has shared with me that she was told she screamed inconsolably for the first six months of her life. My baby knew that I was not the one holding her; she was brutally denied her mother's love and affection. A baby remembers her mother in her senses and her body and to remove that bond is extremely traumatic. My daughter remains in a state of confusion today being unable to tell her twenty-eight year old daughter (my granddaughter) about her true heritage. My stolen daughter's heritage and genetic line have been undermined. The injustice of these unlawful acts will continue even after death. When my daughter was taken I became paralyzed by grief and felt that a part of me died. My unresolved grief did not diminish but *increased* over time. Three days after I met my husband he looked into my eyes and

said; “Something has hurt you very bad!” He has suffered greatly along with me for forty years. Having a wife and mother whose mind never stops agonizing for her missing first-born has emotionally damaged my husband and my other two children. The shock of having my first-born kidnapped caused post-traumatic stress and left me disconnected from my maternal instincts. I had extreme difficulty bonding with my other children following their birth. My children sensed that I was suppressing a secret and suffering from anxiety, even before they were told about their sister. They need to be recognised as collateral victims of this barbaric adoption scheme. The daughter whom I raised has suffered being the same sex as my kidnapped daughter. She has born the subsequent burden of trying to replace the hole in my heart caused by the loss of my first-born. My son was shocked when he heard an ambulance driver from Western Australia talk about his daily route to pick up babies for adoption. This route had been called the “daily baby lift.” My son expressed to us, *“That sounds like the holocaust!”*

Single mothers were targeted en masse by the State-sponsored adoption system. We had no Judge to whom we could appeal, no protection by the government or from the government, and no family to turn to for support. My body, mind and soul have been raped by the adoption system. Post-traumatic stress, and profound unresolved grief have crippled my life. After losing a child to forced adoption it is impossible to just, “Get on with your life!” as if nothing had happened. Anyone who has lost a child knows that you never get over the loss. “Contrary to conventional propaganda,” my education and career were not fulfilled following the forced adoption of my daughter. I suffered a horrendous trauma and part of my mind remained trapped in that time period. Rape counselling has been helpful with the rape trauma. However, therapists deny there is any pain from the loss of a child forcibly taken for adoption. To my distress, one therapist admonished me to “blow it off” when I cried over my stolen child. When I found my daughter in 1991, I felt as if five hundred pounds lifted off my head. Soon after, when my numbed feelings began to release, the pain increased and then turned to rage. After twenty-five years of unrelenting despair, my empty arms still longing to hold my baby, I began to grieve all that I had lost, and to try to bring my paralyzed emotions into the present. The effects of forced adoption practices continue to harm my family and my life today.

Thank you for addressing the Commonwealth Government’s responsibility concerning forced adoption policies and practices. Forty-four years I have pursued justice for my daughter’s unlawful adoption. Forced adoptions began with the drive to satisfy a demand for “adoptable” babies. Babies did not suddenly appear as “unwanted.” My baby was one of many thousands of babies taken for adoption who were very much wanted. Social mores are publicised as the reason for the proliferation of adoptions in the twentieth century. What has not been publicised is the massive exploitation of single mothers during that period, or the government’s plan to save money. Adoptions saved government money from being allocated to unmarried mother’s benefits. In addition, the introduction of baby formula allowed natural mothers to be dispensed with. National statistics provided evidence of the sudden surge in adoptions, however the Commonwealth government did not inquire or investigate. Unchecked by the government, adoption workers had absolute power over the adoption of my daughter. ***“Absolute power corrupts absolutely.”*** Lack of accountability, sealed records, and mandated secrecy cover up violations of adoption laws. Even today it appears this remorseless system permits unauthorized persons to file contact vetoes. Accountability for unlawful adoption practices is the Commonwealth Government’s ultimate obligation.