# *Senate Inquiry into*
# *"Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices."*
## Terms of reference
## This submission will address

(a) the role, if any, of the Commonwealth Government, its policies and practices in contributing to forced adoptions; and
(b) the potential role for he Commonwealth in developing a national framework to assist states and territories to address the consequences for the mothers, their families and children who were subject to forced adoption policies.

**I David Jefferys**
**Of Adelaide, South Australia**
***Make this submission to the above Inquiry***

As a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia then resident in South Australia I had 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.

My submission is made late in the extended period for submissions, so much so that I have had the opportunity of reading a number of those already received by the Committee. I would advise at the outset that my story differs from many, at least in its opening chapter, in that my late mother did not submit to the pressures and demands to relinquish me at birth.

I was conceived in late May 1928 during celebrations at the West Darling Picnic Race Meeting, as a consequence of a casual liaison between my mother and a then local young man. My father was made aware early in my mother's pregnancy of the coming birth. My mother's parents were connected to the pastoralists industry and lived somewhat remotely on a New South Wales station. They showed great understanding of my mother's situation and given the need for her to maintain herself and employment, assisted her to travel to Adelaide.

I am not to know what the initial reaction of my father may have been. However during the pregnancy a representative of a law firm approached my mother with an offer of 500 pounds if she was prepared to sign a declaration that the young man concerned (now deceased) was not my father. My mother was advised that this was necessary as my father, who was pursuing a career in law, had made some rapid advancement and "nothing must stand in the way of his career".

This approach included the threat that unless the statement was signed and the inducement accepted, the child would be taken from my mother and "adopted out".

My mother was in no doubt that my father's family connections both Lay and Church were well positioned to attempt to carry out that threat; however my mother risked confiding in a parish priest of long acquaintance who expressed concern and support for my mother to keep her, as yet unborn, child.

This priest, I must assume, contrary to the wishes from others arranged for my mother to give birth at home so avoiding the fate of many others captive to State or Church facilities. I was born on 27 February 1929. Throughout her life, my mother whom I know loved me dearly, continued to reject overtures presumably involving payments to formally repudiate my father's paternity.

The resolve of he and supporters was such that, now late in my life and long after his death, the attempts for me to now give the undertaking initially sought from my mother, continue.

My birth certificate shows my mother’s name but not father’s name and although baptised in the church my baptismal certificate shows neither my mother’s name nor my father’s name.

While rejecting the "pieces of silver", my mother never divulged to me the name of my father. My youth, and the bulk of my teenage years, did not bring me into contact with those who had connections with the place of my conception however inevitably such re-acquaintanceships were made and it was in this way that, with that cruelty often unconsciously exhibited by the young, I had thrown at me "I know who your father is"

Confronted with this, my mother confirmed to me the name of my father when I was in my early 20s.

It is in later life, that one comes to understand the amount of time and pain that this issue can occupy and is now largely by reflection that I think about the effect this had on me as a boy and young man and can only guess at, witnessing this, the cost to my mother for her silence for so long.

Perhaps in anger, as much as by curiosity, I sought out my father who had by this time fulfilled early predictions, and occupied a position of respect within his profession. That first meeting, and those subsequently were both awkward and cold with my father's early repudiation and actions to reinforce that precluding any storybook reconciliation.

Far worse, was the fact that all too soon after establishing my father's identity and confronting him, my mother passed away and any hope for a relationship with two parents, for me, ended also. To me, my father not only repudiated me but also abandoned my mother and his responsibility to her (although he in later life expressed regret at this). Nevertheless it was from me he learned of my mother's illness and later passing.

I have shared, in many other respects the anguish of others who have made submissions, in attempting to make bearable the circumstances of being denied "first family". For me the situation was not bettered by that period in which I knew who my father was, but finding that this knowledge did not resolve the difficulty that frankly my mother, and I (and surely my father) confronted.

I have always been conscious of the debt that I owe to my mother and her resolve to resist the attempts to participate in the act of denying me my natural father, and indeed in other circumstances so sadly recounted by others, my natural mother as well.

Having avoided this there may be difficulty in some understanding why I believe my story belongs here. While there is a clear difference in outcome, I am easily able to see the community of interest comprised by young mothers-to-be both of the long ago, and not so long ago.

While grateful for those circumstances which provide a not insignificant difference in the initial outcome of my (and my mother's) story, I am saddened and angered by the recurring theme of the involvement of powerful (and often identical) interests which have had an involvement in the harm in misery inflicted upon so many mothers and their children.

Now in my later years, I want my story told, I wish for all the stories to be heard and acted upon.

I thank the Committee for its time and wish its members well in their deliberations.