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

15 March 2011

Dear Senators,

- I would like my submission to be published on the internet **without my name attached.**

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

As a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia I had and still do have an inalienable right to protection under the Australian Constitution, rule of law and the Common Law of this nation.

As an Australian citizen, the Commonwealth should have afforded us all protection from the unlawful and harmful actions that threatened our right to life, liberty and justice from those who denied us all these rights, within and without, the borders of Australia.

We must live by the Australian Constitution, Rule of Law, and the Common Law of this country and Commonwealth politicians are elected to uphold Commonwealth Law meaning they will prevail over federal legislation, and by operation of section 109 of the Constitution, will override inconsistent state laws (whether past or future.)

I am a natural mother who would like to register my interest in this Committee's inquiry and acknowledge that it is an important step in addressing the issues of forced adoptions in the 1950's to the 1970's.

As a direct consequence of the inhumane treatment I have received, I have suffered a lifetime of living grief and pain and now present my personal story for presentation to the Inquiry.

I believe the evidence into the Commonwealth Government's involvement in forced adoptions will change not only your understanding of this dark period of this country's history but will increase your determination for the truth to be recorded so that the past is never repeated.

I thank you for this opportunity and join my sisters in standing as one, as we eagerly await our great Nation to hear and see the truth unfold. I would appreciate you adding my name and address to your mailing list that I can receive future correspondence and documents on the progress of this Inquiry.

Yours faithfully,

(...)

This submission has taken me over two months to write. To revisit all the events surrounding the loss of my babies has been traumatic. Anyone who has not lived through this nightmare can have no idea what revisiting does to the mother.

MY STORY

In July 1965 I fell pregnant. Rather than tell my parents who I knew would send me away to unmarried mother's home I left my country home and moved to Sydney where I found a place to work and live. I worked until I was seven months pregnant then approached the Catholic Welfare Bureau for help and they advised me to go to Crown Street Women's Hospital.

At the hospital there was no discussion as to whether I wanted to keep my baby, it was assumed that it would be placed for adoption and my papers marked accordingly. UB- **Baby for Adoption.** I really wasn't given any option. I was told that it would be the best thing for me and the baby because I could not give it the life that two loving parents could and that if I loved it I would do what was best for it and I could get on with my life and put it all behind me.

I was just terrified, being in the city and being pregnant but did not receive any help from anyway. The social worker stated that I was terribly depressed as the confinement drew near..

On April (...) , 1966 I went into labour and was taken to Crown Street Women's Hospital at about 10.30pm. I remember arriving at the hospital but after that I have no idea. My son was born at 12.30 am on (...) April 1966. I have no memory of the birth of my son, only waking up in a corridor with blood all over my legs. I was heavily sedated during the birth and never even knew I had given birth to my baby until the early hours of the morning when I woke. I was crudely cut for the birth (this was standard practice for interns to learn how to do an episiotomy – just practice on the unmarried girls) and roughly stitched which resulted in surgery in later years to repair the damage. I was then sedated with 200 mgs Pentone and 20 mgs Stilboestrol to dry up milk. No one had told me about this.

The same day I was removed from the hospital by Ambulance to a place called Lady Wakehurst Home, where I stayed until I was discharged. I have no memory of this at all. (I have since visited this place but no memories came back.) On the same day I was moved from the hospital (for social reasons) but my baby remained at the hospital and they made sure I was too drugged to ask about it. From then on I was given Pentobarb and Stilboestrol on a daily basis, sometimes more.

At 3am 27 April 1965 my notes state – **"awake and very distressed about general problems**" (Time to give another 100 Pentobarb) and this occurred up (...) days before I was caused to sign the adoption papers. I now have a copy of the consent paper I signed, though I have no recollection of having seen it prior to viewing the copy because one could forget the words it relates. My records show that those who dealt with me were only concerned with my signing the papers, containing the note - "Home when papers signed". This is quite different from the records of other women at this time, which I have viewed, which note, "Socially cleared". I was under the influence of Pentobarb when my signature was taken on the 3rd May, they must have been going to take it on 29 April but this was crossed out for some reason – after all my baby was only three days old.

It seems I signed the papers on 3 May 1965 and the adopters picked up my baby from Crown Street on 6 May 1965. The papers I signed had already been typed out and my baby was not given a Name – the papers and his registration have "**Unnamed"**. (My son could not believe that I didn't even give him a name). This shows that there was no way they were going to discuss adoption with me. How heartless is this not to have given the baby a name. I did have a name picked out for the baby before it was born and for some reason I expected this to be on the birth certificate and was really shocked when I got the Certificate to find **Unnamed**. (Buy No name and name it yourself type of thing) I was never given any opportunity to say what I wanted for my baby. As this adoption was in 1965 I should have been advised that I could withdraw consent up until the adoption order was made. I was told nothing of this. This also speaks to me that the Matron, nurses and Social workers who had a code of Ethics which was developed in 1953 did not abide by that code.

Some of the core Values of Adoption were:-

- To act honestly and in a manner that promotes the welfare of society
- To respect the autonomy of the client – that involves ensuring that the client is able to make an informed choice which the professional will then act upon.
- To avoid conflicts of interest – for example by not acting for two or more clients who interest conflict.

None of the above was adhered to. The hospital only had one client to please and that was the adopter. This almost strikes me as being like the Hitler Regime where they carried out orders no matter the cost and no one was responsible. What they did to unmarried mothers could be seen as a "Moral or Social Cleansing".

I have no memory of any of these events. My mind is blank about that week in my life. I believe the drugs that were given to me blocked this out and they surely did as I have no memory of being at Lady Wakehurst, no memory of signing any papers, nor any discussion as to whether I wanted my baby adopted. The social worker made this decision for me when they marked my papers UB- (Unmarried baby for adoption) on my first visit to the hospital.

I have no idea how I left the hospital. It was only when I received my Medical record that I was able to find out some of the things that happened to me during this period although the Medical record has not jogged my memory at all. My first memory was about 3 weeks after the birth when I lived in Rockdale.

Never before or after the birth of my baby was there any mention of my being able to keep my baby. I loved my baby and certainly didn't want strangers rearing it as their own. I was not told of Foster homes, allowances etc, nor that I was allowed to see him. (I was too drugged to know what was going on and this was deliberate) My baby was kept at Crown Street Women's Hospital so there was no hope of my seeing him even if I had been alert enough to ask. From my records it appears that I signed the papers and was then discharged without any follow up or counselling or care. Crown Street Women's Hospital was nothing more than a baby factory for infertile couples. The Social Workers and adopters were like vultures hovering over single girls to get their babies.

I was definitely not warned of the ramification of giving a child up for adoption nor the mental anguish I would experience for the rest of my life. I never returned home to the country as I had become detached from people and could never let anyone know what I had done. I virtually cut myself off and became very self-reliant. I didn't trust anyone.

BABY USED FOR RESEARCH.

My son was passed for adoption on 29th April; his card was signed by a Dr (...) - the Hon. Pediatrician (...)

On the same day that my son was passed medically fit, this doctor selected and used him for research. It is clearly shown on his medical records that he was taken from the Nursery at 9.15am and sedated with 4 mls of Phenergan at 9.15am and another 2 mls at 1 pm. And returned to the nursery at 3pm. This was over a six-hour period. Phenergan is not recommended for children under two and my son was only three days old. The Phenergan was used to cause his breathing to become distressed to mimic that of a premature baby with respiratory distress. The dosage for children aged 2-5 years is 5 mls. 2-3 times a day. Imagine giving a newborn baby 6 mls. Dr. (...) was carrying out research on Respiratory problems in premature babies and was comparing the difference with full term healthy babies. My baby had an Apgar of 10/10 so he was in perfect health.

I have done a lot of research and made many phone calls in relation to this research and can positively say that "babies for adoption" were used for research. Because the for adoption were in a nursery which was attached to the Research Foundation so they were readily available and as the mothers were drugged and housed in Waverley they didn't know or give permission.

These are the reasons given.

* The babies for adoption were used because it wouldn't interfere with married women's feeding times and after all I was a charity case. So they had to recoup my medical expenses some way. (This was not true as I had Hospital Cover with HCF.) (Dr. (...)

* You had given your baby up for adoption so it was okay - (Dr. (...)

Dr. (...) had taken over the C.M.R.F after Dr. (...) retired and it moved to King George V Hospital Dr. (...) had worked with Dr (...) .

* These babies were abandoned and it was okay to use them after all their own mothers didn't want them.
(AM.A Ethics Committee) and they were wards of the state.
(Untrue I had not signed any papers at this stage he was still my baby)

* Dr. (...) was a wonderful and very humane man who would not hurt a baby. Dr (...) would not have done anything invasive – only sedated the baby and put a mask over his face to test the change in his breathing under sedation. (Dr. (...))

Dr. (...) actually came out from England and helped set up the Foundation and that is why pre-term babies have a much greater chance at life because of his research.
(Dr. (...)
)

(The adoption papers were not signed until my baby was six days old**.** I was still his legal guardian but of course I was drugged so they would not have worried.)

* The AMA Ethics representative thought this was all okay and above board. He said there was no code of Ethics in those days and this had only come into force in recent years because of the Chelmsford Practice.

(Yes, they used the same drugs on us at Crown Street as they did at Chelmsford)

The health department told me that those old records should have been destroyed years ago and that they were not concerned or interested.

I also wrote to Dr. (...) who passed my letter on to the Health Complaints Commission but they would not investigate the matter. I also wrote to Mr. (...) , who also refused to do anything.

Part 2.
In February 1967, once again fate played a cruel joke on me. I fell pregnant to a boy I had been seeing for some time - When I told him I was having a baby all he could think of was abortion and dumped me. He denied that the baby was his - very easy to do for a male. The nine months of this pregnancy were sheer hell. I begged him to help me especially when I wanted the baby so much. I even thought he might but at five months I booked myself into a hospital.

I was not given any advice by the social workers as to how I could keep my baby even though they knew of foster homes, pensions etc. The social worker even remarked that she thought I would change my mind once the baby was born. She wrote some very nasty things about me and passed judgment on someone she didn't know.
"M is a slight girl who appears to be relatively unconcerned about her pregnancy, she does not mind about her fellow employees knowing about her pregnancy. She may even be proud of it" She is flatting with other girls." later she says I was highly strung and keeps her feelings to herself."

Through the whole pregnancy I was prescribed Amytal which I now know is a barbiturate drug.

Late in the pregnancy I had a different almoner who took all my details - which I now know were submitted six weeks before the birth so they were not giving me any option to change my mind. During the last weeks of the pregnancy I contacted the baby's father a number of times but no response.

My baby was born on (...) October 1967 at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Crow's Nest. Once again I was heavily sedated and did not know my baby was born for some time after her birth. I can remember signing some papers at the hospital but I think that these may have been the Register of Birth. I had asked for my baby to be called Nicole Maree but she was registered as my name they couldn't even do this right. The birth registration shows her name as Monica Ann (...) not Nicole Maree (...) . On the adoption papers it has both names.

My Social Worker notes state that I was **"quite emotionally disturbed"** when I signed the papers and "Her feelings were dealt with as sympathetically as possible. She seemed to feel she had made the only decision she could about the present child." How could I make an inform decision if I was **"quite emotionally disturbed"**

The Catholic Adoption Agency had only been functioning since February of that year so they wanted to get as many babies as possible (There is written evidence to say that the Catholic Adoption Agency boasted that they could get a crop of 500 babies in its first year). It makes it all sound like a field of corn.

The only two things I was told was that I was not allowed to see my baby and that I had thirty days before she would be adopted, but what they failed to do was to tell me how to go about getting my baby back before the thirty days. I had no paper work. Nothing was explained to me about this. I later discovered that I never signed the paper that said I had 30 days to revoke the consent so how would I have known how to get her back? It was Form 9 which explained how to revoke the consent. The Supreme Court does not have this paper and my records never mention that form. I have done an extensive search and found nothing. The Catholic Adoption Agency had changed the forms to suit their own needs and deleted how to revoke consent – as shown in attachments . Therefore I was not correctly informed about this.

Over the next four weeks I rang the hospital a number of times asking if my baby was still there. Not once did the Social Worker discuss how to revoke consent. If only I had known that there was an allowance or a foster home I would never have let my daughter be adopted.

All records except the labour ward notes related to my stay in the Mater hospital were destroyed. My notes were kept but I had to pester Centacare over quite a long period before they would supply all papers relating to me and the adoption, travelling for hours from the country to get them.

It has been written that girls who fell pregnant had psychological and emotional problems. I didn't have them before I feel pregnant but I certainly had them after.

I carried guilt about my past, and hid it all from my husband and children for thirty years because I didn't think they would accept me if they knew. I had no idea how I could tell them how bad I really was. I have always considered myself to be below people because of my past.

SUMMARY:

For 30 years I truly believed that I was some heartless girl who had dumped her babies without any thought, but if this is true then why did I lock everything away and not even know anything about the birth or even the day they were born? Why could I not remember anything at all? For a person who has such a good memory, I could not explain this. It was only after getting my medical records that I realized the people in charge of adoption made sure we could not remember anything. I had a general anesthetic for the birth at the Mater Hospital, so that I would not remember it.

They drugged us so that we wouldn't ask to see our babies because they knew that if we were alert, we would change our minds. I never stood a chance with these people who wanted babies for infertile couples. They made sure our babies were marked for adoption before they were even born and made sure we didn't get a chance to make up our minds.

Single girls were just considered wombs for childless, married women. We just happened to be the by-product on the factory floor and were tossed away when empty. We had no proper counseling before or after the baby was born.

I have had contact with both my children but a real reunion was just not possible. Both wanted to lash out at me and were not prepared to listen to anything I said to them. They both seemed to want to punish me and I can only say this is the damage that adoption does to our children. My daughter's adoptive mother told me how my daughter cried every time she picked her up and that for about a month around her birthday, right from an early age she became very depressed. My son's adoptive mother told me he could only have one mother and that was her. Surely this gives you an idea of what adoption did to our children. **I am and always will be their mother.**

While I would never have aborted my babies, I sometimes think that it would have been easier to cope with. It always hurts when people ask "How many children do you have?"

While this inquiry is long overdue, I do believe an apology is not acceptable. I would like the Senate to acknowledge the following. **I want an acknowledgement that these adoption practices were illegal.**

Adoption practices in Australia were systematically planned to meet the demands of infertile or childless couple. Without this demand, girls would have been left alone to keep and raise their babies.

These adoption practices were highly abusive and are comparable to Sexual Abuse by Clergy and pedophiles. While we were not sexual abused we were certainly abused mentally, physically and emotionally and the scars are deeply embedded.

The practice targeted single mothers who were often very young, naive, and homeless and in desperate situations and who thought they would be helped.

Single girls were made to feel that they were not fit mothers for their babies and that the baby could only have a full life by being raised by a married couple.

Girls were denied their legal rights. They failed in their duty of care.

Many girls were not allowed to see their babies after birth. Girls were kept in the hospital or homes as prisoners – only allowed to leave after papers signed. No discussion before papers were signed as to whether they really wanted their babies adopted.

Mothers were not told of foster homes where their babies could stay until they were on their feet. Nor were they told there was of a pension which would enable them to keep their babies.

There was no counseling before or after the birth explaining what problems a mother would face after her baby was adopted.

Papers were marked – Baby for adoption without the mother's knowledge.

Papers were already typed up with names and dates before they were signed. This proves there was no discussion after the birth of the baby therefore our babies were stolen.

Girls were continuously lied to.

Worst two things in life – **liars and thieves**. We were lied to, our babies were stolen and along with that our reputations, self respect and the ability to lead a **normal** life. We were shunned by society and kept our secret locked away for fear of being branded sluts and worse.

Mothers were not asked if they wanted to keep their babies but were fed the line that if you loved your baby you would do what was best for it. And the best was to place their babies for adoption so that it could be raised by a married couple who could give it everything and that she girls couldn't and get on with their lives and forget all about it. Adopters could never give a child the love a mother could.

Many were given the hypnotic drug Pentobarb right up until the papers were signed so that they had no idea what they were signing and given drugs to dry up milk without being asked.

Why were single girls made to see a Social Worker on the first visit to a hospital?

Uncalled for comments were made about the girls looks, intelligence and morals – after one or two visits. We were belittled and made to feel dirty and unworthy in the way we were treated in the outpatients and hospital. Girls were crudely treated in the labour ward and subjected to an episiotomy and roughly stitched – which then required surgery in later life.

ADOPTION:

The mother was destroyed by removing the child without the mother's informed permission and giving it to two people who were not related to the child in anyway.

All links were severed with mother and child and no matter what type of reunion they might have, it can never be regained.

Mothers lost children, families lost grandchildren, brothers and sisters lost siblings, mothers lost their grandchildren.The name and the heritage of the child were removed by claiming that it was the child of the adopters.

Mothers lost all sense of decency and self respect because they were made to feel unworthy of being a mother to their own child. They had to hide their shame and secret from the world. They were branded BAD.

The 1965 NSW Adoption Act insured that a person's privacy was to be protected but this is not so. The adopters always knew about the mother. Before I had contact in 1994 with my daughter, after seeing my mother's death notice in a paper, her adopters contacted many of my relatives in their search for me and told each one of them about my private life - "in fact told every man and his dog about me" (one was my 84 year old uncle who was so upset that he contacted his daughter to find out what it was all about – his family were very distressed that anyone would do this to such an old man) Having a surname that was not well known it was easy for them to contact those people in a certain area. They did not go through the correct channels as was clearly set out by DOCS and the father being a high level NSW Public Servant, he would have known to use correct channels. Many years later in about 2002 they once again used the influence of a senior and important person in NSW Police Force and his friendships with a young policeman, (my cousin) and approached a family member and asked for my family history without mentioning my name. All this without speaking to me at all. My poor cousin who trusted this man and provided the information has never forgiven herself and it has caused a great deal of anguish for her. However, we were not allowed to know anything about them.

This type of harassment has caused me extreme pain especially with the knowledge that my daughter did not want contact with me. It seemed as if I was being punished over and over.

Many mothers never had any more children because they considered themselves unfit to be a mother.

Some women who believed they had given their children away felt worse than murders because what type of person dumps their own child.

The only way any good can come from this inquiry is that the people of Australia are made aware and education as to what happened to us and what adoption does to the mother and child.

It has always amazed me that people said that our babies were unwanted but when the Single Mother Pension was introduced in 1973, babies for adoption dropped immediately.

My belief is that is you are born with only one eye or arm, does that give you the right to demand an eye or arm from someone else. This is what adopters did. They could not have a child so they thought it was their right to demand one from someone else. No thought for the mother. They just wanted a baby. This is the most selfish act of any human being.

Attachments

Please find enclosed the following papers to add further evidence to my submission.

Section 1.

Consent to Adoption

Nursing Reports

Nursing Notes

Baby notes showing how my baby was used for research at Children's Medical Research Foundation.

Section 2

These forms show how the forms were changed and that the mother did not receive the correct information.

Adoption Consent and How to Revoke Consent information (NSW Child Welfare Dept. 1965)

Adoption General Consent

Adoption General Consent - Catholic Adoption Agency

Request for Adoption - Catholic Adoption Agency