



Senate Inquiry into

"Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices"

Preamble to Submission

I, Joy Goode, 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.

Submission dated : 29th March, 2011

When I was discharged from Royal Womens Hospital in Brisbane after giving birth to my son I stood outside the hospital waiting for a friend I had made at St. Mary's Home, Toowong, Brisbane to pick me up and take me back to the home for the optional 2/3days stay post birth. had given birth to her son a month earlier.

So there we were, two sad and extremely traumatised little ladies, now women, mothers, trying to reassure each other that things would be OK, things would work out, comforting and supporting each other as much as we could - totally traumatised by what we had experienced, demoralised, defeated, lacking self esteem, in shock, hurting, confused, in pain, (mentally and physically), empty, very frightened, numb, feeling totally shamed and guilty for an event which should have meant great happiness and joy.

How did this happen to me?

I am a country girl who made friends quite easily and spent most of my younger years playing sport. In particular I became a proficient competitive swimmer. I worked hard at school, attended business college and acquired a position with a Commonwealth Government Department.

I met when I was 17 years old at a dance and it wasn't too long before we were falling in love, young, innocent, happy, carefree little young people in love spending most of our time together swimming and surfing and once, just once, we made a very clumsy attempt to express this love.

My life was to change forever when my Dr confirmed my pregnancy.

was as young and as scared as I was - I was not to see him again until many years later. I was alone and pregnant.

Since my father did not enjoy good health, requiring ongoing hospitalisation, my mother was required to work and tend to my younger siblings - I could not add to their burden and have my child at home so I applied for leave and left for St. Mary's Home for Unwed Mothers on 19th February, 1966. I would have my child then apply for a transfer to Brisbane and commence our new life together.

I had not visited a city before - I was a shy, naive and extremely scared country girl and upon arrival at the home my intention was to just fill in time and keep to myself. Over the following months I was to find that every one of the girls in that home were just like me - young, naive, scared, sad, emotional, homesick, innocent - their journey to this place similar to mine!

Throughout my months at St. Marys there was no information forthcoming on what was to come. Not from the Matron, her assistant or from the Doctor who visited. We were never asked about our plans for our future - it became apparent early that their forgone conclusion was that we were to adopt our babies out. My thoughts were that I was the one carrying my child - he was my child - no one could dream of taking him away from me - I already loved him - we had already bonded - I talked to him and I sung songs to him and I 'patted' him - I already loved him! I told him of our future plans. If only I had known what was ahead.

Over a period of time the young ladies who had already given birth sometimes chose to return to the home for a time - I always noticed they were not the same young people who had left a week or so earlier - they were quiet, dreadfully sad, aloof, in pain spending much of the time alone and in tears - I felt for them but that was not going to happen to me - my plans were different.

At 5.25am on 3rd July 1966 I was in labour and the girls waved me off and wished me well as per the norm and that was the last time in a week I would see any form of humanity and equality.

I was shown to a little green room by myself - absolutely terrified and in dreadful pain - but thought the Doctor and Nurses would help me - they would explain to me what was happening and I would tell them of my future plans. There was no one - not one person for so many hours as I screamed until I could scream no more - finally a nurse appeared as I called for God to help she said words that will stay with me forever - "He won't help you - this is what you get for getting pregnant" - - I am now 64

years old and still cannot say those words without crying. I felt so hopeless and thought no one can help me now if God can't. I remember the Doctor arriving just as the baby was being born.

I was told that I had a son and I held up my arms to hold him - the nurse refused but I screamed for him until they relented and so I held him for probably 3 minutes until he was whisked out of my arms for what was to be forever. I will remember his beautiful little face until the day I die. From then on I remember being given much medication, none of which was explained to me, I remember being bound around my chest in tight elastic bandages to suppress my milk - this was extremely painful and I found it hard to breathe - as well I was given tablets to also assist with this. I felt very tired and I slept a lot of the time and was in extreme pain and discomfort from the many stitches that I was required to have.

I was put into a small ward specific to unwed mothers where I became the victim of ongoing blatant disdain from all of the nursing staff. I was made to feel ashamed, guilty, 'dirty', promiscuous, embarrassed and so very hurt. I was a broken young girl!

To this day I have to wonder if any of those people felt any regret for their disgusting treatment of innocent young human beings who were at their mercy!

I remember strangers visiting me and talking about the paperwork which required my signature. I was told that my son needed two parents, (particularly being a boy), that I could not offer him that stability and that he would be much loved and cared for. I remember thinking - but I love him - I am his mother - I love him more than anyone could. After telling them of my plans I was told that I could leave him at the hospital and to go ahead and apply for my transfer and then I could pick him up and I had SIX WEEKS to arrange this. I was bullied, coerced to the point where my only thoughts were - they must be right - that would be the way to do it. I felt broken and defeated, I felt unable to fight anymore and I remember feeling quite hazy and unable to concentrate.

I was very, very indecisive but with the promise and guarantee of SIX WEEKS before my child could be adopted out from these Welfare Officers - I signed the paperwork - I insisted on getting the appropriate phone number to call them and tell them when I could pick him up.

I stayed at St. Mary's a very short time afterwards - I did not belong there anymore and I had to get back home to arrange things at my workplace - I had to get things organised. Fortunately at my workplace I had a very understanding and empathetic boss who expedited my application for transfer I phoned the number given to me to check how my baby was and to update them on my progress - TO MY ABSOLUTE HORROR I was told that he had already been adopted out "to a very nice and financially secure couple" - that "I had done the right thing and that I should now get on with my life and forget it ever happened". My child, had been adopted out 15 DAYS AFTER HIS BIRTH AND NOT THE SIX WEEKS I HAD BEEN PROMISED AND HAD BASED MY DECISION TO SIGN THE PAPERWORK ON.
MY SON, WAS STOLEN FROM ME FOREVER!

To this day I have not recovered - I married the first reasonable man who came along and almost immediately had a child, a son - who was quite ill in earlier years and whom I was terrified I would lose. I absolutely smothered him with love and over protected him and over compensated him - I felt much guilt - I had 'given' away his brother - my marriage could never survive the insecurity, the lack of trust, the trauma of my experience AND OF THE GREAT LOSS OF MY CHILD. Before my marriage ended I made certain that I had another child - I was replacing my lost little child twice so I had at least one in my life!

I have never been able to maintain a healthy relationship since and have been diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder over many years. I have required counselling by psychologists and psychiatrists on an ongoing basis over the past 30 plus years. Sadly, even though I had met my first son at 24 years old (he is now almost 45 years of age), I still find myself looking at babies in their prams thinking - is that my son, is that - does that child resemble me - because I spent that first 24 years of his lifetime doing just that.

When secrecy laws changed in Queensland I was the second person to register and I was able to finally meet He is the image of myself - but he is an unhappy man. His adoptive mother was extremely possessive of him and very insecure which has caused conflict within his personal relationships. Although he returns emails to me at times and has phoned me once or twice over the past 21 years he has made it clear that he does not choose to become any closer which is heartbreaking all over again, to me.

I have a grandson, through my son - (as destiny would have it he was born on my mother's birthday). I met him once when he was 2 years old - he is now 14 years old - I have been denied my only grandson - seeing him grow up, loving him, knowing him - being part of his life being part of my family as much as I have been denied my son and my other children have been denied, not only their brother, but their nephew. My female grandchildren have been denied their uncle and their cousin - their family!

What has been taken away from me and us can never be replaced - my child was taken illegally and unlawfully and my expectation is that the Government and Parliament be informed of this horrific practice and that it be formally recognised and dealt with - that my plight be recorded. I would also like my parental rights re-instated.

I have three sons but I will die with only 2 of their names recorded on my Death Certificate. I request that my first son's name be included to enable future generations share true bloodline - and that at last he is formally the first son of my family.

I was devastated to learn, upon receipt of paperwork attained that my son had been 'graded' as fit for adoption. After I answered a question pertaining to the description of his father, (being dark hair and light olive skin) - the notation states "No dark blood" - there is also a notation relating to 'slight pigmentation of the scrotum - not significant' on this paperwork. This little innocent child had been 'graded' - fit for adoption!! I cannot even imagine what may have been his fate if he had been graded as unfit.

The following regulations of the Child Welfare Act 17, 1939 evolved in the early 1950's to explain that:

"A mother giving an adoption consent must be fully aware of the importance of her action and, must be emotionally and mentally able to appreciate all the implications of such consent. A consent should not be taken if there is any suggestion of indecisiveness or that she has not given sufficient consideration to the matter"

"To avoid any misunderstanding or any suggestion that the mother was misled or uninformed, District Officers are instructed to explain fully to the mother, before taking the consent, the facilities which are available to help her keep the child. These include homes licensed under the Child Welfare Act for the private care of children apart from natural parents, financial assistance to unmarried mothers under section 27 of the Child Welfare Act, admission to State control until the mother is in a position to care for her child, and assistance to affiliate the child and obtain a maintenance order against the putative father, when all of these aids have been rejected, the officer is expected to explain to the mother the full implications of the act of surrendering her child. (this included warning her of the risk of dire future regret if she considers adoption). Only when a mother has considered these, and still wishes to proceed with the surrender for adoption, should the consent be accepted"

The law is very clear in stating how a mother had to insist upon adoption before it could proceed.

In summary.

I thank you for your decision to hold an inquiry into the Federal Government's duties and responsibilities for past illegal adoption practices. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this inquiry and your recognition and desire to examine and rectify such a terrible wrong in Australian history.

I also ask for legislation for compensation for the life-long effects and costs of post-traumatic stress and unresolved grief. I ask for re-instatement of my legal parental rights with my son. Finally and importantly I ask for a sincere apology from Prime Minister Julia Gillard based on her admission of the crimes committed against my son and myself.

Joy Goode

30/03/2011