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To whom it may concern

This is my personal story of what happened to me twice - I was forced to give up one child for adoption and ended up giving another child (from the same father) for adoption. This happened once in Queensland and once in New South Wales. I feel I was conned, lied to, not given all the facts, and being drugged while signing a contract, I had no idea what was going on at the time of their births.

After falling in love and getting engaged, I fell pregnant and was deserted by the baby's father. I expected to raise my baby. Nothing about adoption was mentioned to me until it came time for me to give birth.

I went to Brisbane General Hospital to give birth and I was 21. I first knew something was wrong when a pillow was placed over my face during the birth, so that I couldn't see the child during the birth. After I had given birth, they wheeled me back to the ward and said that they were going to give me an injection to dry my milk up. I now believe this was an excuse to drug me out so that I wouldn't be aware of what was coming. The injection put me out for two to three days. Then I realised that they had taken the baby - I couldn't do anything. I felt helpless. I don't remember signing for this to happen because of the drugs. I named the baby , but I didn't get to see her at all. I specifically insisted on having the father's name on the birth certificate and the staff said no. They released me and said 'go and get on with your life'. I considered suicide via the Brisbane Storey Bridge. My girlfriend kept an eye on me and really helped me through this very difficult time.

A few years later, I reunited with the same man, we got engaged and once again I fell pregnant. Again his support was wavering, so I left and went to Sydney to stay with friends and then I got a job as an unmarried mother, looking after two children, and I lived with the family. My employer (the father of the family) took me to the Royal North Shore hospital when I went into labour on . I had decided by this stage, with much pressure from my friends, to put my child up for adoption. During labour, even though I had made this decision, they still put the pillow over my face so I couldn't see the baby boy. After labour, I don't remember anything that happened for three days, except for signing the papers. They shook me and said 'you have to sign this paper'. I presume I was drugged by them again, because I was out of it for three days, and only recently did I realise that my son was born three days earlier than I had thought all these years. I was put in 'The Cottage', into a ward where other women were nursing their babies. I was treated terribly there, and another mother in the ward at the time, stood up for me to the staff, because of the treatment I was receiving. Again, there was no counselling or caring, the staff just told me to get on with it. They told me that my son had gone to another state, to a church-going family who would love him like their own, and that they came from the same UK suburb that I had grown up in. I now know, having happily reunited with my son years later, that this was not the upbringing that my child received. When they told me that he had gone to a family, I was flawed, and I wanted to be able to

see him and keep him. They told me I couldn't change my mind, once I had signed. I once again insisted on putting the father's name on the certificate and they denied it.

Both times, the staff at both hospitals treated me without compassion or care, because they knew I was an unmarried mother. I was not told about any pensions, adoption services, or any other community services out there, and I didn't have any family here. I was actually told that there was no way I could raise a child by myself, and I believed it because they were in authority and knew better than me. I was told by staff that once I signed the form, there was no recourse and I couldn't get my child back - I was told this both times. In both hospitals, I had students observing me in labour (without permission), because they used unmarried mothers for their training.

Ever since this all happened, I have always believed it was a wrong, evil practice to treat people in such a way. I hadn't broken any law, I had been stupid, but I was shut away and treated like a criminal. The labours were not happy births and I wasn't allowed to see my children afterwards, even though I asked. I feel like my children were kidnapped from me - I didn't know I could change my mind after signing the papers.

I feel the hospitals could have been far more caring. As these terrible things happened to me in two states, I believe this was a policy across the country to treat unmarried mothers in this way.

Yours sincerely

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