

Dear Sirs

RE: COMMONWEALTH CONTRIBUTION TO FORMER FORCED ADOPTION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

I was 20 years of age in 1966, when I first gave my innocent womanhood to a man I had been going out with for many months, never for one moment expecting to also give up my soul.

I came from a family living in a War Service house in Scarborough, Western Australia, with a father who was a violent, abusive drinker and a mother of total victorian attitudes, whose motto in her life was *"you made your bed you lie in it"*.

When I first realised I was pregnant I was twelve weeks into the pregnancy. The man I was seeing was totally in denial and his parents came and saw my mother and told her I was nothing but a 'slut' and had slept with so many men that how dare I accuse their son of being the father. That was my first awakening to the hell I was to live for the rest of my life.

My mother physically attacked me when I told her. She told me I was nothing but a tramp, believing the father's parents, because they came from a wealthy suburb in Perth, and why should they lie?. I was told to get out and to leave my home and family, so they would not have to face the shame I had brought upon them. It was at this time I tried my first suicide attempt.

I went to a Doctor in Victoria Park that someone told me may be able to help in some way. Abortions were banned in my State and this Doctor told me not to worry because he would look after me. I thought he was so kind, so I took his help. He said for me to go away and if I had any problems during my pregnancy, I was to contact him. I had no idea what he was offering, only that it was the only answer I had to act upon. I was, at the time, a walking mute.

A dear close friend of mine found me board in Kalgoorlie with a relation of hers, who had a very busy life owning a Mining Restaurant. I was to keep house and work in the Restaurant for my keep.

When six months came I had to see a Doctor in Kalgoorlie as I was not well. He told me I had blood poisoning and had to go back to Perth. He wrote to my Doctor and from that moment on I remember nothing. I do not know how I got to Perth or to the Hospital. My next memory is of me in St. Anne's Hospital, Mount Lawley, Perth and living in a single room at the back of the Hospital with 3 other girls, two of which were mentally handicapped. We were treated like criminals. We were not allowed to leave our rooms and be seen by any visitors at the hospital, during visiting hours. If we disobeyed their strict rules, we would be told to leave. We were not allowed more than one visitor a week, and that was only one person. We were given meals and that was about it. I do not remember much else about this time before the birth of my child.

I do remember that when the time came, to give birth, I was locked inside a small room where linen was kept. I was told to lay on a bench made of wood, where they folded the linen and bandages. There was nothing over the bare wood. Many times a Nun would come into the closet and give me a needle in the bottom, without speaking to me except to move over. When the pains became unbearable they took me to a room and proper bed, where I was given strong oxygen through a mask. My legs were raised, in what I now know were stirrups, and I gave birth. I was torn badly in the birthing. The baby was put next to my head behind a curtain and cried non-stop. When I asked "was that my baby crying"? I was told "yes", nothing more. I listened to my baby cry for a long time before the Doctor arrived and angrily told the Nuns to take my baby away.

The Doctor told me I had a beautiful baby boy, perfect in every way. I never saw my son. I never got to hold him, I never saw him, I only heard his crying for me that one time. I will hear that crying for the rest of my life. Even now, when I hear a baby cry, I almost go mental and cannot stand it. When I had my first daughter in marriage, she would cry continually and I would have to put her in her safe cot, after checking that nothing was wrong with her, and go

out the back yard, as far away as I could, so I couldn't hear her cry. It was an increasingly distressing sound for me and still is to this day.

I do not remember anything else, except a very faint image of a man in a dark suit sitting by my bed handing me papers to sign. I did not know what the papers were and I was never told anymore. I don't know what day it was or how many days after the birth. I am quite sure I was drugged in some way as I have no memory left of that time.

I do not have any more memory of that event in my life, even all these years later. The next thing I have any memory of was going to work once more. I do not remember leaving the hospital, or who picked me up. Nothing! My memory has gone into a black hole.

I lived with my family after I got home until my father abused me more and more, and told me I was nothing but a 'slut'. He would beat me with his fists and then throw me out of the house in the middle of the night. I would find an unlocked car to sleep in until early hours of the morning, when I would go back home and crawl into my room on the sleepout. In time I would leave home and find a cheap furnished flat, where I would live until I tried to go back home again. My home days never exceeded more than about a month before I had to leave again, so in time I never tried to go home again. My father hated me for the rest of his life and I could never talk to him. It is a very deep hurt.

I never spoke to a sole about where I had been, or what I had done. My mother never spoke a word about it all those years. It was a taboo subject we never approached. Before she died in 2005 of cancer, I asked her what did she think about me finding my son. She turned to me with such rage and hate on her face and told me "I had ruined her life and my fathers". The stain of shame had never left her.

The hurt, the humiliation, the struggle in every day life, has been one hell of a punishment for something I did with a man I thought cared about me. The worse thing is, now still, nobody believes me when I said it only ever happened once. **Nobody, also, has ever believed me when I said I had no choice in giving my baby boy up for adoption. I was never counselled, never told of my options, never given any way of keeping my son. All I was advised was that I had to think of my child and give him a better life. I do not remember ever saying I would. I had no money and no means of supporting him, I knew. I NEVER HELD HIM, NEVER SAW HIM, SO HOW COULD I MAKE A CHOICE ON MY OWN.**

No one ever came to see me at St. Anne's, that I can remember, who talked to me about my options in keeping my child and how I could survive without having to rely on family. I never knew of any financial support by government and as far as I know there was none. I lived on the meagre bit of money my mother would send me occasionally while in hospital.

When I went back out into the world I was lost. I sort help from Phsycologists, Phsyciatrists and Doctors. I have been living on anti-depressants most of my life. I tried once more to end my life, as I could not cope mentally, before my marriage and having other children.

I met a man in 1969 that told his parents he wanted to marry me. When he made the mistake of telling them I had had a child out of wedlock, his mother told him I was beneath him and not to marry me. He did, but under the proviso that I never speak about my act ever in front of his family or friends. I never did. My treatment by his mother was totally without respect in any way.

In 1997 I rang Jigsaw again to tell them of my change of address, in case my son wanted to find me (as you can see, I was never going to be told I could not find my son in later years, not even my husband). They told me the Law had changed and I was entitled to my son's Birth Certificate and whereabouts. I had to fight Family Services for three years, as a Veto had been placed on me by the Adopted parents, and they never told me this until they could not get rid of me. I found out they never told my son he was adopted. I said I had the right, as he was now 34 years of age, to get the information and that if they did not tell me the truth, I would go to a Private Investigator to find out where he was, and how he was, without contacting him in any way. I was then told by letter that if I hired an Investigator, I could be fined \$10,000, or imprisoned.

It was during this time I found out that my son had been given to his adopted parents two days after his birth. I suspect all the fees paid in the hospital were paid by them. When the mother was told she had to tell her son he was adopted, as I was wanting details, and was given three months to do this, her reaction was not good and I found out she told her son I didn't want him then, so how dare I want him now - I was nothing but an Indian giver. He then put a Veto on me, thinking I was unworthy of his time and very angry that I had upset his mother through the Family Services enforcement that he had to be told. Once he had put his Veto on, I was told by Family Services that my only option now was to write to him. I did this straight away, and told him what I could about my family, health history, and how I had no option than to give him away, and that I will love him all my life.

He has never believed me. We now have a relationship and each day we connect a little more, but he still does not believe me when I tell him I had no choice. I have even sent him a copy of the WA Apology with information about other mothers, that they had no choice, and he says I was 21 when I had him, so how could I not make a choice of my own.

My personality is now one of strength and determination, and very sure that no one will ever hurt me like that again. He sees me today as this person I have become. Not the shy, naive young woman I was then. He will never understand how I let this happen and it is a thorn in our relationship that I don't know will ever heal properly. I cannot bear the thought that he will always think I gave him up deliberately so I could have a better life without him. It breaks my heart.

I hope this information will help in any way towards some kind of prosecution for the way our babies were taken from us. Also for the children who never had their mother's love throughout their childhood. Some mothers never had the joy of having other children. Some mothers did commit suicide. Some children had a terrible life with their adopted parents. Some mothers and children never met. Some mothers never told their husbands, or family, so refused their child coming into their lives when they approached. How terrible is that for the child? I cannot even imagine how that will affect them.

How dare anyone push this terrible period of adoption into the background. There has to be a better solution than just an apology. That is not enough to heal the wounds on all sides.

Yours sincerely

Sandra May Parker