

(...)

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## New Zealand

I am submitting to this Inquiry is because from the 1960s the Australian Federal government was in cooperation with the Govt of NZ in relation to uniform adoption legislation and that NZ participated in annual conferences with Australia and that this was not just an issue for Australian mothers and their children.

Bad girls go to borstal and are incarcerated for their crimes. Many unmarried mothers went to unmarried mothers homes, the equivalent – except their only crime was to get pregnant, hardly a punishable offence that equated to any type of punishment. In the unmarried mothers' homes there was no rehabilitation or redemption, the price for being 'caught' was the same for all those unfortunate girls including myself, the adoption of our babies. I met an Australian girl in the home who had flown over to hide her sin from her family, from memory I think she told them she was on a working holiday in New Zealand. We all knew the consequences for our actions, there was no way out or choice – adoption was the only 'solution'. In my case I was hauled out of my job and sent down to the south island to a friend of mums. When this didn't work out I was snuck home in a big coat to hide my pregnancy and then sent to the home. I was 16 and the year was 1973. My parents were more worried about me being seen by the neighbours and what they would think and my mother was from a prominent family in the area so was worried they would find out and I would kill my grandmother. I have since found out my grandmother was pregnant when she immigrated to NZ and unmarried. I can remember skipping with delight into the kitchen at the home one day as all the adoption thing weighed very heavily on me, I decided I was keeping my baby and the relief made me skip with joy even though I was heavily pregnant. I thought I had an option. I had been looking after all the salvation army people's children at the crèche and enjoyed it. She told me emphatically that I would move on and have children of my own, that I couldn't upset the people waiting for my baby as they couldn't have children and I was being selfish as I was young and had a life ahead of me. She also told me that I had chosen adoption and couldn't let the family down – remember I had a BIG decision to make after my baby was born, it was a forgone conclusion. How she could foretell the future is beyond me as she knew just as much as I did about the adoptive parents and she didn't know what lay ahead of me or she wouldn't have been that evil and sadistic and helped me

to keep my child. She made me feel guilty and ashamed on top of what I already felt being pregnant.

As the weeks went by and one by one a mother would go in to labour, sent to Wellington hospital and then sent back to the home the next day. We had to sneak upstairs to the hospital part to talk to the new mothers to ask what labour was like as we were like terrified children hearing scary stories, not knowing what to expect nobody enlightened us. We used to be scared on doctor day also, I have blocked a lot of it out of my mind but we had no say, we had a male doctor and he creeped me out. How could we, we weren't like 'normal' mothers who get to enjoy the milestones of pregnancy and all the highs and lows it entails – we were less than human, devoid of any feelings as these children weren't ours to keep according to the powers that were, we were merely breeding machines for more entitled people. We would look after our children round the clock until adoption papers were signed. We drank in every image we could, we snuck photos of our babies, we told them this wasn't forever we would be together again one day. During this period our breasts were bound so we couldn't 'bond further' with our babies. The adopters would visit to see the new babies and they were taken downstairs to meet them to see if they were what was ordered, this was usually done while the mother was resting but the other girls would report back what they looked like as we weren't even entitled to meet them. Signing day was the worst day of our lives. Distraught and powerless with no option but to sign your baby away is akin to getting a forged confession from a kidnap victim – it's valueless but the most powerful document you can ever sign, it seals your fate eternally. I can remember sitting there with the pen in my hand thinking what can you do to me if I don't sign. They kept saying 'come on Susan you know it is for the best' but it didn't feel that way and I didn't want to sign anything I wanted to run out of that hell hole with my baby. The rebel in me decided I wouldn't just sign – it was my last gesture of defiance as my child's mother. We then got guided upstairs to sit and wait while the apts came and took our children as they didn't want us to see who had taken them or follow them so we sat crying our eyes out, uncomforted and waiting for family to take us home. Can anyone with any compassion understand how that would feel when every fibre of your being is to protect, love and nurture your child especially after 10 days together whether they liked it or not you had bonded. The grieving started, the depression, the suicidal feelings, the not knowing set in - that was the cruellest punishment of them all. You aren't allowed to know how they are doing, where they are, who they are with, if you can't imagine then ask the (...) how it feels to have your flesh and blood out there somewhere and not be entitled to one snippet of information but have to trust in authorities without a shred of kinship, or compassion for the mother. Forced adoption has and still does affect me as my family was destroyed. Facing a young man who is like a clone of me, who carries my genes, my future and my soul yet is a stranger, there are no words to describe the indescribable pain of hearing him call some stranger 'mum'. I produced him, I carried him, I brought him into the world, I greeted him. Adoption is an invention of untruths, if you don't believe me look at us together we are like peas in a pod. My grandchildren call someone else nana and I am as defunct as I was after I produced him. His 'original' birth certificate states me as his mother. What a joke to have more than one 'birth' certificate. For goodness sake a baby can only be born once. Get a grip! It is an impossibility that he be born to them I have the stretch marks, he has my blood running through his veins, my DNA, ME in him, not a scrap of them so don't forge birth certificates because that is all they

are, fraudulent documents with no value that make a mockery of my 10 month experience. They didn't risk their lives bringing him into the world – I DID! Every child is interested to know the circumstances surrounding their entry to this world, how long their mum was in labour, who was there, what time, what did I look like, etc, I wonder how adoptive parents explain that important information as they were there, weren't they? According to the birth certificate they have, they were!