



I Patricia Gall also known as Patsy of (...) citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia and am a resident of Victoria. As a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia I have an inalienable right to protection under the Australian constitution and Common Law of this country.

As an Australian citizen, the Commonwealth affords me protection from unlawful and harmful actions that threaten my right to life, liberty and justice from those who would deny me these rights from within and without the borders of Australia.

I lost my first two children to adoption. Unexpected bonding problems arose with my third subsequent child and I succumbed to heroin dependence nearly losing my mind and almost my life. His paternal grandparents raised him. The first pregnancy was the result of rape the second the result of repressed trauma and grief. Many mothers who lost a child to adoption had serious bonding problems with subsequent children. In the mid to late seventies I recovered from heroin dependence living in a community of women in the country. I later married, had three loving well nurtured daughters. But I also had problems raising them because of psychological disassociation. However while my three later children whom I raised were young I returned to school completing year twelve and gaining entry into university attaining a B.A. in

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Asian Studies and Professional Writing. I finally became conscious of the details of my adoption experience in the nineties which was initially traumatic but eventually very healing. My whole life fell into place, finally made sense.

I spent the first pregnancy in St Josephs Foundling Home in 1966 and gave birth at the Womens Hospital which was attached to St Josephs. The second pregnancy was spent at St Anthony's Orphanage in Kew - 1968 and the birth was at St Georges hospital also in Kew. The voluntary agency who carried out the adoptions was the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (CFWB) now Centacare. I believe that both State and Church are guilty of violating my human rights and Common Law Parental rights primarily by denying me access to my babies at birth and after. This occurred before a consent to adoption could be signed by me. I clearly asked to hold them – in fact I was reduced to begging to embrace my babies. This could fall under the Crimes Act, a Federal Offence, taking the baby by improper means. Under Commonwealth Law I am entitled to protection by the Commonwealth Government.

I believe that the adoption of my babies not only left me psychologically disassociated which I of course I had no insight to at the time. My two adopted children and my third were also adversely affected – separation was traumatizing for them. My first two children searched and found me around

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1992. I have a loving and enduring relationship with both. Other ethical and legal violations occurred with the so called adoptions, particularly with the Consents to Adoption procedures and practices. These will be explained – will become self evident as my story unfolds. The Commonwealth government had a duty to make States accountable for adoption practices to ensure our legal rights were upheld as adoption institutions couldn't have survived without Commonwealth funding.

I have been writing a creative non fiction memoir for many years now and decided to take excerpts from it to present as my submission. It is interspersed with research and academic conclusions. The story will also reveal the serious harm caused to my parental relationships due to the adoptions, practices and adoption authorities.

The story is broken up into two parts. The first is partly memoir the second is academic writing.

### **Part One**

#### ***REVALATION OF PREGNANCY***

I hear my mother's snores revving up, getting louder and louder. My doors ajar. I want to shut it but cant move from my swaddling blankets and feel like I'm shrinking smaller and smaller ... It's 1966. I'm in a glass box sitting on

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our coffee table, I see everyone around me. They view me from every angle, but cant hear me, only one another and even that's not clear. Inside sounds like rows and rows of steel gates opening and shutting, grating at once, the iron bolts slide, Bang! locked in unison, a bang so loud, so reverberating that even if I shout as loud as my 15 year old lungs possibly could, even if I wasn't in a glass box, my cry will never be heard, even by my own ears ... But I catch snippets, slivers of what they speak, don't ask how or why - that's just how it is. I'm in bed with Mum - (...) ... Two nights since she told me the news that changed the course of my life forever and ever - over and over.

She said the rosary out loud, as she often did when I slept with her for comfort as a girl, "... the Angle of the Lord declared unto Mary and she conceived of the Holy Ghost ...

We finish the rosary, "blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus, I repeat back "Holy Mary ... pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."

The day she told me the news, Id left work early that day ... "*I was sick on the bus again mum... but I'm starving now what's for tea?*" She was perched on the edge of our couch , rocking her crossed leg backwards and forwards lighting a cigarette from the butt in her fingers then placing it to burn in the large glass

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ashtray with swirls of red running through its middle, she stretched, twisted strands of hair round her finger, curling ringlets down the front of her face, as she often did, then stopped dead still; flicked the ringlets back from her eyes and with intense calmness said,

*"Patsy, I've something to tell you, you're, the results of the test..."*

*"What test?"*

*"... you're pregnant, her words tumbled out - just like that."*

Her voice ground down to a graspy whisper. Her cig burnt to the filter, tumbled to the carpet from shaky fingers as if in slow motion. Transfixed I watched in fascination as a black singe formed, my lips stirred to speak, felt toffee locked - was going to say, "mum! look! its burning the ..." but forgot, her words now clipped whispers until fainter and fainter, melting into far off waters ... I thought, her voice is quivering; she means it, she could be talking about someone else ... that's it, she means someone else; no, she said *you're pregnant, you're pregnant ....* Her mouth moved but all I heard was the tick tock of the clock on the sideboard, it was loud, louder than I'd ever heard before; rhythmically at first, it rocked back and forth, back and forth missed a few beats, then just when I'd think it'd stop forever ... tick tock, tick tock ... I suppose I could have walked over, taken it's glass cover off and physically stopped the

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hands from turning - but why bother, they'd move the instant I took my finger away.

The words screamed out from somewhere inside of me, " somewhere alien, they didn't sound like mine - "*Pregnant! Pregnant! - how can I be pregnant? I haven't done anything!!*"

"Ak! in God's name Patsy!" then imploringly "the test ... it says your pregnant ... be honest with me now, I already know so I do, you may's well tell me."

" I couldn't be ... you can only get pregnant if you have sex and I haven't, I haven't done anything, I haven't!..." as though I were flinging off swarms of wasps, with my words and hands. That was the last time I screamed until..?

"I know, god knows ... you've nothing to fear... you've nothing to fear ... the test, Ak! be honest with me ... " the words, knocked round my head like my brain had shrunk to a ping pong ball waking backwards and forwards backwards and forwards ... but there's no net, just the seas green foggy denseness ...

Mums rosary beads rattle, fall from her sleeping soft hand to the bedroom carpet. And while I lay stiff awake, listening to her snores and the rhythm of my rapid heart beat I strained to remember, make sense of it all, the young blokes I knew, what male contact I'd had, didn't have a boyfriend ... and the last time I sat with (...) who lived in our street on the concrete steps of my front

(...)

veranda, staring at the glittering lights that peaked the bluestone walls of Pentridge ... his embarrassed fingers roamed by curly hair ...

It was very easy to be labeled slut! Loose, animal, piece of shit ... a nothing, in our district ... I saw it happen... What she told me, each nuance the way she said it two nights before ... played over and over ... Her snores wind up again, lightly at first then to a deafening crescendo and the barking of Nippy, my girlhood dog shut outside sounds like an electric drill, a high pitched one. "Wake up mum," softly, fearful at the sound of my own voice ... wake up." I nudge her with my elbow, her snoring pauses, she dozes on again.

The only sound now was the odd car whizzing past the top of our street ... I shot up startled ... heart banging, the side gate squeaked and screamed. My bladder is bursting but looking back the thought of moving scares me, I'm unable to budge then finally tossing the covers back tear from her bedroom - on to the pink and black tiled kitchen floor, through the laundry out to the back porch, to our toilet, almost hyperventilating as though someone shadowed my every step. A plum splattered on the concrete outside and I suddenly remembered mum calling last week from the kitchen "Patsy! "

"I'll be there in a minute!" Tugging up my pants ...

(...)

"Here, do a piddle in this," mum said, thrusting a jar through the open door, I'll find out what you're sickening for ... "here, just a wee drop."

After the revelation that changed my life for ever and dad came home from work, mum called for my aunt (...) who arrived in a cab, I lay in my dark bedroom, listening to their hushed and muffled voices buzzing from the lounge room discussing, arguing or both. I've no idea what went through my head but I was sure of one thing – they didn't believe me! And on reflection how could they? Now, in the present, I hear, imagine, what dad may have said, no thought ... *"Sure it's not the farken immaculate conception (...), the child must be lying! ...* I was tempted to slightly open the door, listen to their whispers ... but why bother, from the waist down felt like someone else's body ... "They're working it out now .... they'll find out it's a mistake ..."

Laying there my mind in a frenzy, I nudged mum a few times, she stirred, shifting sides, the engine sounding snore came to a halt, it'd start up again soon, but for the time being peace to hear my own engine... Silence ... then a dog at the top of the street barked, I think, it wasn't (...) 's next door.... it was the top of our street ... howling as though just locked out ... they wouldn't let it in... they'd relent soon and bring her in... please! For gods sakes let it in! A slither of light streaked across the bottom of my bedroom door ... My mind races on...

(...)



... I haven't been knocking around with any one much because ... they've all got boyfriends and the last time I saw (...) and (...) ... my best friend ... Fragments of that fateful night, each detail, newly remembered details and their significance jarred into place - a piece here, a piece there ... a door slamming, wet sensations, I feel myself fly but don't land, just keep dropping... The sound of boots scuffling ... and begging. I shouldn't have climbed out the window that night! ...

Yes! The drive inn, we went to the Drive Inn, (...) and me. She was one of ten in a single parent family, lived next door to (...) and for some reason rarely invited us in except when her mother was at work, her father died in war service. She hugged and pashed with her boyfriend in the front seat of his Holden, he brought his mate for me, so I wouldn't feel 'out of it' I guess. But in my youthful way even then I distinctly recall feeling a sense of sadness or concern that she was so involved at her age and I think not long after, they moved in together.

When our tires hit the curb outside my house that night the soft rain was now pelting, I heard someone calling, "Patsy!" Rain was thick, I couldn't see, voices yelled from the top of my silvery misty street, I walked faster and faster to see who it was, two shiny silhouetted figures waved, they seemed to know me, at least my name. A face came into focus, yes! It was (...) 's boyfriend I'd met

(...)

him for the first time on the Murray Road bus coming home from work about a week before. He was gushy – “Are you Patsy, (…)'s mate?” I felt agitated, flushed with shyness which comes from going to all girl schools, and yes, that's it! - (…)' told me he'd just been released from Turana which made me very uneasy. As I hopped off the bus he called “come over to (…)'s.”

And here he was, standing, waiting for me in the pouring rain but I didn't think that then.

He blurted, “there's a party, (…)'s there, she told us to come and get ya ... she's waiting for ya ...”

Now I hadn't seen (…)' for quite a while and 11pm was my curfew.

“I'll be back in a minute” – I said breathless from excitement and fear as I'd never been to a real party before especially without permission.

No snores came from mum and dad's bedroom, which meant mum was still awake she couldn't sleep until I was home. My creaky window screeched as I slid it up, quietly as I could, in stages, coughing to drown out its noise and recall thinking as I lay in bed fully clothed waiting for the snores, “I hope they don't go without me!” But there was no party.

I never saw (…)' again and about 12 months later, when it was 'all behind me'- so I could '*get on with my life*' – I'm walking across to the Murray Road bus shelter and was startled by her mother standing firmly rugged up – she didn't

(…)

say "hello Patsy love," as she would have once upon a time –instead her eyes flashed away, slowly turning she stood like a soldier with her back to me. Her family sided with him, he boarded with them.

*Present –2000 – I'm at home in my early fifties with my sick mother. By this stage I am finally conscious of the details of losing my two children to adoption*

5am, 5am, 5am, still flashing off and on my unadjusted radio clock.

Mums coughing again - ... I tug my Holland blind cord a little to gauge the time, it shoots up, flaps, bangs round and round. "Jesus Mary and Joseph, what's wrong!?" She shouts.

"Nothin mum ... go back to sleep," real casual like.

It's nearly dawn, the rains on for the day, I flop back on the pillows spread-eagled, panting like a women in labor, my eyes dart from the sinking full moon to red ... 5am - 5am - 5am ... What a idiot ...I cant believe I bought her here... and me in this state; at this very moment - when I cant hide it! I glimpse out the blue and yellow crystal rain splashed window, scan the bare black limbs of the plum tree glistening in the darkening sky and shiver ... and remember 1966.

*Past*

(...)

As the days and weeks blur into one, unbeknownst to me mum consults social worker Father (...) who works at St Josephs Foundling Home. "The kind nuns have a wee place away, do ya not think it id be better Patsy...?" said mum. I nod distractedly. At that stage, I wasn't capable of thinking about who knew of the pregnancy, in fact everyone who was anyone in my life knew. My only thought was that he'd tell everyone Id 'asked for it' which I discovered later is exactly what he did.

That final meeting with Father (...) is clear... when it was 'all over, behind me, so I could *'get on with my life'* but I wont think about that right now, not now ... What strikes me about Father (...), on reflection, when finally meeting him, was the dark circles under his eyes, at the time I thought how sick he looked. It's working out ... everything will be alright ... the vivid purple curtains wafted, then sucked in and out so hard I thought they'd tear but they didn't appear to. I needn't fear... its all being taken care of ... But *how* will it be alright, *when* would it be alright? That tight gripping heartburn stinging my chest; no! - it would never be alright, it wasn't, still isn't...but I couldn't say that then, I wasn't asked, you can only say "yes" if you're asked.

I was cold and wanted to drag myself up from the chair, slam the window shut, but the thought of moving my body felt like dragging chains in choppy seas waist high and I feel I'll never move again. I noticed the hairs on my arms

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sticking up and felt that wetness, like fine drizzle that's so soft you barely feel but soaks to the bone, that's it – I'm cold, trying to remember, like I'm catching thoughts in mouse traps, so they can't budge. I'm freezing, no matter how our briquette fire dances the flamingo, licking flicking yellow leaping orange red and blue swirling flames ... Its beauty - its warmth, will never touch me again or I'll never feel moved by the magnificence of Saturday Arvo's, like behind the Pavilion at boarding school, staring at the hills for hours my eyes roam from gum tree to gum tree, their slinky swaying limbs and glittering leaves mesmerizing till they were me. On those scorching bush days 30 - 40 degrees, I could actually see the heat rising from the blonde grass in the distance - the earth rippled ... But I don't realize that then; sitting in my lounge room in 1966 and the intolerable insight that forms as the seconds, minutes hours, days, months, years blur, flash by is I know it should move me, *could* move me ...

***PRIOR TO MY ADMISSION TO ST JOSEPHS BROADMEADOWS BABIE S HOME 'BROADY'  
- REPORTING THE RAPE TO POLICE***

I want to close the window, I'd repeat it over and over to myself, so I'd retain it, so it couldn't be snatched away by another less important thought, but no sooner would I think the thought that I was trying to recall, and I'd be left to wonder, what is was that I forgot ... like puffing smoke rings across an ocean ...

When I finally pulled myself up, the window was shut, the gold floral Venetian  
(...)

blinds drawn. There was this noise, like metal hitting metal, it sounded like a factory in the far distant background ... or a room full of typewriters banging, clacking in unison ... I'm being taken to Brunswick Police station, with two giant men, its night. Soon after it was all settled, the 'solution,' she started, "Patsy we'll have to go to the police, it's got to be reported! "

Ding! I felt another lever ripping away, tearing ...

"No! don't do that! ... I don't want that ... please ... mum it wont help! ..."

"Why?" She shoots back in disbelief, standing up quickly, waving her hands frantically, why *shouldn't* we go to the police, he cant get away Scot free ... it'll be better for you... then people will see ...

... I don't want to, please.

... I want them to know he *forced* himself on you.

No! ...

I'm being shuffled in and out of different darkened rooms - from one to another ... it could have quite easily been a dream... Two tall plain clothes policeman are playing what I now realise is the 'good cop bad cop' routine continually asking questions that I don't understand, or rather, cant figure what their getting at ... I'm bewildered ... I only remember four questions, it was four ... the harsh bullying one leads me down a well trod corridor into yet another box

(...)

"... Had you or they been drinking, tell the truth ...?" I glance up at his face, stare down at my red shoes, his thick black leather boots, say – "no ... no!"

Then the civil and courteous one relieves him, guiding me into yet another office, the same darkness with the focused brightness of a lamp and a typewriter sitting on the desk... another giant uniform strolls in, begins typing, I don't know what they want from me as the questions feel like they will never end, I'm exhausted, scared and want to go home but don't know where my mother is ... or why they're doing this to me and then the nice one says, "It'll all be over soon Patsy, behind you ... Do you go to church on Sundays? Are you a good Catholic? ..... Did you tell it in confession? Then disappears, I heard the soft click of a door lock behind him ... and me, sitting, waiting, wringing, locking my fingers together on my lap, glancing up and down where the light hit the grubby walls ... black scuff marks, chunks of plaster dug or knocked out ... a torn poster, half hanging off the wall – "WANTED." I stared at the wholes, the deepest, strained to see a pattern like tea leaves stuck to the sides of an empty cup but the longer I stare the more they seem like miniature quarries, and I wonder now, how many bodies from my district were shoved up against that wall.

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At the time, when I told my mother what the policemen said "*did you tell it in confession?*" she was beside herself and told me a life time later she'd reported their treatment of me to the Police Commissioner. He said "*no, it shouldn't have been handled that way.*" But I'll never know if any action was taken and I believe these tactics were systemically practiced with working class families, especially those without proper legal representation.

### *Records*

9th February 2000. I begin accessing my records, documents from Catholic institutions like the MacKillop Foundation which holds records of my confinement in St Josephs and St Anthonys, and adoption documents. "I request under Freedom of Information any records your organizations holds ..." But I was unprepared for the block, sit paralyzed, almost every patch of floor and surface in my study is scattered with papers, letters, rubbishy looking notes to myself, half filled exercise pads, newspapers, stories that I rarely finish and I cant think where to find anything but too I'm scared to shift a scrap because in its own certain way, it's my own disordered order, I've attempted to do this several times ... but today's the deadline... I forage, confused, on the verge, know I had them in my fist last night ... then Ah! Spy it, sticking up from behind the computer in front of me all the while, catch a fleeting glimpse of the Royal

(...)



Women's Hospital Logo in its corner, bend over, clutching the large white envelop and weep, quietly, softly as I can, with relief, grief, dread excitement, until the writhing settles; I notice silence, not a snore ... nor a cough, which means mums lying there awake ... listening to me.

"...Patsy, Patsy! Will none of ya's make tea ... I'm gasping! ... What ails ya? Have ya been at that computer *all* night again!?"

"I'll be there in a minute, tch ... I'm searching for something ..." I run, jam the kettle plug into the wall ... then briskly back to my room, ignoring her behind the screen, she had a locum yesterday, and if she can yell that loud, it couldn't be that serious, still hugging the envelope to my chest.

"Why did ya bring me here if it was to leave me lying alone, sick! - coughing, Patsy!, what ails ya ... freg me. Oh sweet Jesus...!"

"Yes!" talking to myself why the hell did I!?" ... Its not as if she didn't know, warned her well, told her I was up to my neck, I'm screaming in at her doorway now ... "*when I picked you up from dads, remember, I said you may's well look at my four walls as your own at home - at least there's someone here ... around, Pip... I told you I had to work!*"

(...)

23rd March 2000 I've only skimmed the hospital confinement sheets, but pages are missing ... I see with my own eyes - the doctor who initially examined me with mum - 2nd July 1966 - his letter of referral: Dr (...)

(...) –“ She is pregnant as a result of an alleged rape. Her hymen is still intact but she has symptoms of pregnancy.” I recall him saying to my mother “due to circumstances there is abortion.” My mothers reply from behind the screen was simply - “We’re Catholics doctor we cant do that.” My intact hymen gave great inner comfort to my mother for she thought just maybe, I wasn’t pregnant. When she explained what a hymen was I became Mary a virgin like Mary – an immaculate conception. Roughly 2 and half months pregnant, when she told me the news... I longed to be free, left school the day I turned 15, April Fools ... it must have happened the month of my birthday, or early in March because (...) was born the end of December, 9 months later ... to anyone else this may seem obvious, but it wasn't, not to me...

My mother screams from the next bedroom “bring me tea Patsy, what ails ya” Balancing two mugs of tea with two bags in each, saucers on top for brewing, to keep the heat in... She wants to know “what’s wrong ...” I shove the phone in her lap that’ll shut her up for a while, she can ring her prayer partners instead of crying out for me, It rings, my heart sinks ... I yell back “tell

(...)

them I'm out all day!" I hear her say "yes, she's away to the shops, she'll not be long ... how do you spell that?... MacKillop Foundation ... She doesn't do her usual ... covering the receiver with her freckled hand " no! I'm not lying, sinning my soul for anyone..."

When I returned (...) call, (...) of Heritage and Information Service at MacKillop Family Heritage Service in relation to records of my stay in St Josephs 1966 and St Anthony's 1968 she said that she'd sent all she had but obviously they were incomplete. It was during this phone conversation that (...) accused me saying " you're just wanting compensation!" This was untrue because I didn't have that on my mind at the time but she said it as though compensation *wouldn't* be my right and as though my grievances were fictitious. This is the kind of understanding I received when trying to access my records from Catholic Institutions. As far as compensation goes, of course financial compensation is a rightful issue and of course it's important! Mothers and their children not only lost each other unnecessarily but often the ability to work due to its causational on going life time and intergenerational trauma. Some later developed serious self medicating drug problems as I did, among other symptoms of their trauma such as attempting suicide.

“Patsy will ya come here a wee minute - I’ll not bother ye again...”  
branches knock, scratch on window panes, leaves, twigs patter the roof ... “ just  
bring me the bible I’ll not ask again”... talking, praying out loud to herself,  
“...Oh sweet Jesus ... “ now she’s gabbling in tongues ... and me in *no* state to  
humor, not now ... she’s had the locum twice this week and I did suggest an  
ambulance because nursing staff - not well paid - were striking - but no! she  
waits till the middle of the night when she doesn’t need one ... I leap from my  
desk, run in and snipe, “ when I’m sick they just leave me alone til I stagger from  
bed better, don’t think I get waited on cause I don’t!!” She’s thinking I’m callous  
and from her point of view I am... But in truth I swing from feeling overwhelmed  
with sorrow, to wildly irritated by her imploring ... I think how easily I could  
crush her, as once upon a time I believed she crushed me, only I’ve just  
remembered, what is was that we were meant to forget and for a life time,  
thought she was to blame. I could *make* her listen now, *make* her see as I drove  
myself to do back then ... silently ...

She’s singing now, I hear it ... “ *I thought that life held naught but love for me  
... and even though we drifted far apart ... I never dreamed but what I dreamed of you ...  
for I love you, as I’ve never loved before ... when you were sweet .... when you were  
sweet, 16 ... “* tears force their way out, splash gently to the keyboard.

### *Aftermath of Pregnancy and 1<sup>st</sup> Adoption*

I thought of me at sweet 16, when the entire episode was over, behind me, so I could 'get on with my life.' While she'd be distracted, cooking stew, I'd call, "I'll be back soon" only to return three days later. They were getting used to it, had to ... But now as a mother of six I know my parents *never* resigned to it .... How could they? It was a Saturday afternoon. Reaching the lounge room, I glanced at her, then him - they'd have done the rounds, searched, she'd have trotted down our steep Parade to the phone box to ring whoever, she certainly wouldn't have gone to (...) 's ... in any case by then (...) was my new mate - from the 'Catcher' the first club in Melbourne to be modeled on the Beatles Cavern - but I didn't know that then - and mum didn't know her surname, unless she'd been through my draws or bedside table ... She was staring out the window, I noticed the street lights were glaring - her crossed leg rocking backwards and forwards, puffing on a fag with her back to him ... dad, in the armchair, pretending to study the racing guide, with his tranny to his ear, pricked, as though nothing in the world mattered except those seconds while his filly bolted ... spitting out flecks of imaged tobacco from his tailor made, a muffled race commentator, Bill Collins who my mother always said like a junkie as his saggy eyes and boney cheeks sucked in, drawn, and I never knew what she meant - "here comes 'Reckless Virgin' up from the back nosing in, she's first, her filly's it'll be worth a fortune!" I thought, was hoping, he'd be at Flemington.

Normally Id sheepishly creep, or stagger back late at night ... there were never any snores ... hide the beer bottle carefully beside my bed and the wall... sinking into the mattress, fall unconscious ... But this day, I had no choice. Strolling in chirping, real brazen like, didn't say "who wants me to comb their hair?" as I would have once, and they didn't say "yes! - me first!" You can only say yes if you're asked. Or "I know its dark, but, only turning ... sorry I'm late, I've been playing monopoly at (...) 's, the games still not finished... can I still go to Brunswick skate rink tomorra ... and the dance Satdy night, its only at the Town Hall, please" she nearly always said "no" to that. Instead, I heard myself quietly say, " its cold outside I'll throw a few briquettes on the fire, which was a stupid thing to say because the embers had well and truly gone, soft charcoal lay ... hadn't been lit since winter and it was a stinker of a day, I could tell by crispy cold sweat trickling down my back... every blind in the house was drawn to shut out the sun, except one , but the curtains, not a flutter, air hovered, hazing round from somewhere. Glancing up, the overhead electric fan was on full speed, not a hair on their heads shivered, which astonishes me the more I think of it. My eyes darted to her then him, not a stir... just a loud gliding silence, that everything, yet nothing to say feeling, that's all I could hear and my own thoughts racing and the clock ticking ... I looked to him then her, neither budged ... I was past the chatty stage, said nothing, not a word, my mind was consumed with the

(...)

Mandy's (barbiturates) and where I'd hidden them ... I had to knock myself out, come down, slip into a coma for three days then start again ...

Turning slowly away heading for my bedroom, ghostly our grey cat purred, curled up like a fetus at the end of my bed. I flopped stretched out flat on my back with my arms behind my head pretending to look casual, like " I'm alright, your worrying for nothing ..." She came in to communicate with me, it was one of the few times, of late that I was really up front with her, which was all she ever wanted. Pinning on her nurse's cap on for work, her eyes met mine, transfixed she studied my face. The bundle of clips clutched in her quivering hand fell silently to the floor as if in slow motion. I lifted myself up casually resting on both boney elbows , studied her face, as she passed me a cup of tea ... didn't quiz her about the mystery of life, how we got here in the first place and that if god started the whole thing who started him? Or what happens if a crumb from the Eucharist falls to the ground and the priests stands on it, is it still the body of Christ? ... I didn't say, Oh (...) 's mum asked us to mind the house for a few days while they holidayed ... and I got sick so couldn't get out of bed and how do you expect me to let you now if you wont get the phone on? ... Or I stayed at (...) 's house ... Instead I go, sorry I didn't come home, smiling in between sips , I took Purple Hearts and Methedrine. (Amphetamines) It was that

(...)

static grin on her face, then with a weak laugh ... said matter of factly, "where did you get them?" with both hands behind her back ... that's all, didn't say, Jesus Mary and Joseph Patsy! lets talk about this ... you know honesty's what's needed ... communication ... and who's giving you these ideas and keep away from that'n – that'ns a bad'n ... and "sure, what about you help out the Sisters of Charity in Fitzroy with your cousins ... what about you stay with Sister so and so - she was tutoring these two Irish St John of God nuns with their psychiatric nursing training at Royal Park ... I realize now, the intense calmness, that unnatural sparkle in her sea blue eyes was fear and that in truth she didn't know what to say ... It frightened, threw me.

It was a good thing she didn't ask where I'd been, cause all I remembered was tearing out of the Park View Inn in Royal Parade, staggering through the fancy glass back entrance, balancing one of those huge silver antique engraved cash registers with (...) on the other end and splitting the money amongst ferns near a mercury blue, chrome like pool, Robby and me, the others partied on upstairs ... The Small Faces, "Itchy Cue Park" echoed through corridors, palms swayed in the brightly lit courtyard, the Street below "*... it's all too beaut - ifull , its all to beaut - ifull ... what did you do there? we got high, what did you feel there - we touched the sky ....*" little wonder I caught a taxi from Flinders Street to Black Rock ... I must have crashed at (...) 's, at least one night ...



(16th Feb 2000 ) I begin writing a Victims of Crime Tribunal application–  
for the rape roughly 38 years later but became so distressed my psychologist  
investigated on my behalf and reluctantly passed details on to me two days ago,

(...)

He was four years older than me at the time of  
crime, was charged with Carnal Knowledge of a child 10 - 16. He served a three  
month sentence in a Youth detention centre and was convicted in the Melbourne  
General Sessions - 2.11.66. For some reason Id always believed he was given a 2  
year sentence and can't understand the discrepancy. This must have taken place  
in my absence for I was only a month off having (...) confined in the "nuns  
kind, wee place away" - St Josephs Foundling Home Broadmeadows.

But yes, there was an initial hearing. My legs wobble on a platform. Giants  
mull round with bored faces, strange straw curly wigs bob up and down  
whispering, tall men in suits and uniforms amble in and out of the highly  
lacquered room, stark like a church. I have a red tartan pleated skirt on and a  
twin set but cant recall its color – pleats were all the rage then. I'm facing my  
persecutor. To my horror smiles stretch across my face, threatening to burst into  
uncontrollable laughter which must have seemed odd to those witnessing the  
spectacle. The last words he barked when finally 'freeing' me as I fled into the

(...)

blackness of that fateful night were - "don't lag or I'll kill ya!" And in my heightened state of fear that threat lodged very deeply indeed.

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### *Confinement in St Josephs*

In 1966, 255 expectant mothers were channeled to St Josephs and I was one of them. The overwhelming majority of these lost their children to adoption. (Moore. H. 1982;76 "Better for the Babies:" An Interpretative Oral History of the De – Institutionalization of Infant Care at St Josephs Babies Home." Social Enquiry and Social Work Professional Project. ) Little did my parents realize that acting on the advice of a 'kindly' social worker priest ensured they'd lose me almost forever and that I'd be too traumatized to speak of what actually occurred for the next 38 years. I hid the details from myself to cause mischief at random. On arrival at St Josephs I notice deep green fan spreading pine trees surrounding the complex. Next my feet trot down a long narrow empty corridor tailing clacking wooden rosary beads swinging from a nun's hip. She unexpectedly turns round " *the girls don't get friendly here – you don't want to get into the wrong company, keep yourself to yourself.*" Her abrupt words instill fear – I don't know what she means. I expected soft kindness. Perhaps they said this to everyone. In some Josephite Homes such as Gratten Street Carlton expectant mothers were issued with false names to use and "not tell anyone." Other Catholic Homes such as The Holy Cross in

(...)

Queensland had this practice. (Arther L. 1<sup>st</sup> National Conference on the Mental Health Aspects of Persons Affected by Family Separation Sydney, "Brainwashing and Depersonalization to comply"... Published by Origins 2004;1 )

### MATCHING SESSION

Next I'm sitting in a small cluttered office facing who I now know from the records is (...) Adoption Officer for the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (CFWB) now Centacare Her head moves from left to right studying my bewildered face. Stern lips begin reeling off a string of questions "how tall's the father ... what was his nationality, was he dark or fair skinned? Gripped with panic I stifle a compulsion to scream "go away!" The records say "German" a misconception I held until 2000. I didn't know - she guessed his nationality from his surname. Cited together with my personal details around four or five lines - " a rather defensive girl" – and she knew of the rape - "court case pending" and below ... "is wanting adoption" Senior social worker (...) (...) said in 1965 "there must be no moral pressure brought to bear, no condition laid down when agency help is offered" (Australian Association of Social Workers Ninth National Conference Proceedings, People Are Different: Social Work and Social Norms. A Biennial Conference of the Australian Association of Social Workers. "Unmarried Mothers" Adelaide August 1965;112) But there was a condition – adoption. Yet I wasn't asked and the word adoption wasn't mentioned. In my mind I was simply staying there during the pregnancy. They claimed the right of my child

(...)

before I even delivered. Unbeknownst to me at the time, this interview was a “scientifically” (Hansard) conducted matching session with prospective adopting parents when I should have been counseled. (Adoption Legislation Review Committee – Victoria Report, March 1983;132. 8.2.3.)

I soon fell into the tightly structured routine. Kept in a state of mystery I was capable only of existing in a trance like state, surviving moment by moment. I was sure of one thing only rising early and working in the giant kitchen nothing else. We worked seven days a week. The place would have been inoperable but for our labor, and our babies. Yet my parents paid fees for my confinement. Though around a hundred children resided there -I never saw any. But some mothers worked in the nurseries when the nuns were short staffed. The striking aspect on reflection is I only recall two faces - yet around fifty expectant mothers were confined at any one time - (...) 's on **kitchen duty** and (...) 's who slept next to me in the dormitory. It was (...) 's third admission to St Josephs, her third child. She tells me she'd been gang raped. I turn away, barely able to look at her, felt overwhelmed with a kind of sorrow that makes you want to shun. I partly identified with her. She was what I'd now call borderline intellectually disabled, quite capable of caring for a child given the right support.

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(...)

As my watery eyes stung chopping onions for soup in Jumbo pots, I longed for afternoon rest breaks so I could talk with (...) in the dormitory. Rows and rows of beds, desolate, clean like an army camp, no personal touch of any kind. The moments we'd catch were precious. She spoke incessantly of her fiancé the father of their child which she intended keeping.

She spoke of how he'd take her to the pictures, his lips, the way he kissed, plans they made for their wedding, the home they wanted, how he approached her parents about marriage and was just as in love with her as she him. I relished every word. Eventually both sets of parents brought her home to marry - then there was no one.

Isolated and separated from my parents there was no communication at all in St Josephs. The nuns were completely unapproachable and didn't approach us unless it was in relation to our daily work. The whole experience could have quiet easily been a dream. Others say the same. Apart from my **previous** trauma, the rape, I believe this was due to the profound isolation we were subjected to. Even the nurses, who I never saw, were barred from having any involvement with us – that was strict policy. (Moore. H. 1982;40 "Better for the Babies..." ) I also believe it was the depersonalization aspects accompanying large congregate care which social worker Father (...) was well aware of. Other options were

(...)

meant to be discussed particularly for minors such as remaining with parents, or boarding with a family, none of which were raised with myself nor my parents. St Josephs stigmatized me. My mother expressed disbelief a life time later when I told her St Josephs was an orphanage, and I had no idea. It was described as a 'Home' where expectant mothers could be cared for by (...) and Sr (...) (...) senior social worker at St Josephs and St Anthony's. I now believe that expectant mothers were channeled to Orphanages to keep us under surveillance. It also fostered public perceptions that our babies *were* abandoned orphans.

### ***DURESS and INCULCATION***

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**I think of Father** (...) **weekly "Pastoral visits"** as dusk hovered. I see round fifty expectant mothers quietly herding into what could have been a dining room but there's no tables as far as I can see, or maybe we're sitting at them – just rows and rows of silver streaked bodies, backs and shoulders in front, I slouch seated near the door – I don't recall one meal which astonishes me now the more I think of it – yet I know we ate.

Reason tells me a dim light could have come on but in truth I recall it as almost dark throughout. I hated and dreaded these monologues they seemed

(...)

endless but they were compulsory. Tired and extremely restless I shuffled continuously in my seat with eyes glued to this large dark figure walking backwards and forwards backwards and forwards in the front of the group like giving a lecture - backwards and forwards ... my hands cradle my stomach, feel my growing baby, "its mine" I think, I'll work it out later..."

(...) continues" ...the child will have two *real* parents who are waiting to give it more than you can imagine ... one day you'll have one of *your* own ... " Our babies were never referred to as YOUR baby but as already belonging to some idealized affluent couple ... "unselfish, mature girls can think of the child not themselves ... Mary sacrificed her only son..." I identify with this. I don't recall the *word* adoption being mentioned. It was assumed - there was no asking. Father (...) had more than sufficient time to counsel us, as adoption manuals stated, as to what would occur once in labor wards and after - help us work through any so called decision. He was instrumental in hundreds of adoptions and was also highly aware of laws yet he blames the law " due to adoption laws ...some felt *pressured* into giving up their precious babies ..." ( Kairos. 13 - 20 May 2001) But it was Father (...) not the law that placed expectant mothers under *duress*. Isolated and separated from familiar surroundings in St Josephs I was subjected to sustained indoctrination- extreme pressure - by Father (...) for close on four months and not a word was said

(...)

about my legal rights entitlements or practices that awaited me once in the labor ward.

Regardless of “good faith” the absolute aim of these sessions was to psychologically disassociate us from the reality of our baby, breaking the maternal bond in utero. Dependent, and already disorientated, some traumatized particularly rape sufferers, these types of environments created psychological states – hyper alertness – numbing and passivity making it impossible to critically judge. But the unspoken message conveyed was – you are incompetent, unworthy of your own child – a nothing – these impinged at an unconscious level taking a life time to dislodge, if ever. In 1979 Child Care academics pushing for ‘open records for adoptee’s said “So thorough is the (natural parents) conditioning to their wrongdoing and ...sense of worthlessness and socially necessary is repentance the parents ...repress their feelings and accept official perceptions they believe that even if they keep their child they are not capable of ever parenting that particular child as well as adoptive parents could.” This is very true, with some qualification. What they failed to recognize was repetitive ideas and phrases used by the likes of Father (...) and others impinged at an unconscious level impacting on *any* subsequent children we mothered in greater or lesser degrees. The sustained inculcation altered my self

(...)



perception and self as mother interfering with my capacity to securely bond with subsequent children, particularly my third child the one I could keep the one I so longed for. I was unconsciously terrified not only of losing him but fears of inadequacy implanted during Father (...) mind bending "pastoral sessions." This aspect is quite separate from the way in which separation from my child actually occurred. Adoption was described by these academics quoted above as a "diabolical plot devised to deprive mothers of them of their babies."

(Picton. C. ....Adoptees In Search of Origins. Picton 449 Swanston St Melb Nov 1982.)

Depending on duration and intensity, this kind of isolation and inculcation was systemic throughout the adoption area nationally.

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**"The power difference had reached an incredible pitch"** by the time of the legal consent to adoption taking. (Dr Rickarby. A. Consultant Child psychiatrist with thirty five years expertise in all aspects of adoption and who worked for the NSW Health Department during these decades testified in the (NSW's Inquiry into Adoption Practices 1998-2001 on behalf of mothers. Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1998;66) **And our** view was restricted to authorities' perceptions only. For our psychological survival we had to believe that officials had our best interests at heart and so did our parents - this was unquestioned. Regardless of 'good intentions' we were reduced to a carrier for another's reproductive problems and childlessness

**BIRTH**  
(...)

There may have been more but I only recall being taken out of St Josephs twice by my parents when visiting. Once my father surprised me by arriving up to bring me to the Melbourne Cup and my mother brought me out to my Aunt (...) 's in Sunshine. She knew my time was near and wanted to be close.

Strangely enough labor pains started that day. My aunt prepared one of her delicious dinners, we chatted around their kitchen table. Auntie said "don't be worrying Sheila love" to my mother. At one point mum said "Should we go to the hospital?" Auntie said, "No don't go yet the pains are too far apart, stay a little longer darlin, you don't want to be hanging about the hospital too long ..."

Mum stayed by my side at the Royal Womens Hospital rubbing my back when a sever contraction came ... Then she's gone, she was asked to leave.

#### *Medical and Other Records - BIRTH*

The records arrived 23rd of March 2000. My finger scrolls the page, I skimmed their surface in April... I was admitted on the 27th December 1966 at 9.35 pm, two days after Christmas - funny, never really thought about it being that time of year - the birth of Christ – no signs of festivities anywhere. Some mothers say they fall apart on their babies birthdays and its *not* just grief ... I never did, didn't know what date it was ... didn't enter my head for a second and ... "For Heroin 10 mgms IM" in big bold letters and Chloral which induces unconsciousness, administered at what looks like 2.20 am ... (Another illegible entry in the drug

column) In 1953 top doctors at the Royal Women's Hospital reluctantly accepted a United States led international ban on the use of heroin in obstetrics (even though its side effects were less harmful for baby than other more commonly used analgesics) International treaties were contravened by its use. It was obviously used for single mothers for its heavier sedative effects, its residual sleepiness lasting up to at least 24 hours particularly in pure form and no tolerance in the patient. The recordings come to a halt at 5 am, (...) of December - his birth - the Feast of the Holy Innocence, "He wasn't born on that day for nothing, that was no coincidence, god was talking to us there Patsy, sure he was ..." said my comforted mother. Underneath the time of birth - "To have Morphia 10 mgms" intramuscular - ordered by Dr (...) ... administered at 6.15 am **after** the birth ... no wonder labor, delivery and after is ... a vague impression? A sense of ... My next memory is fuzzy, blurry white in a darkened room. Hands and arms mill around, dart out from all directions, I recall struggling to sit up, a distinct feeling of euphoria sensing my child's presence and I may have even touched him, fleetingly... but having no visual memory, just a sense of? ... I'm overwhelmed with spontaneous joy, the reality, the shock of my very own son impacts... Then another black out when morphia was administered according to records, *after* the birth. ( Some mothers were not allowed to name their child but I call him (...) after my cousin.)

(...)

The begging is clear.

### *Post Delivery*

My next memory is being in a back ward veranda, a long narrow room with rows of thickly coated cream colored iron beds on one side and a wall of slatted windows on the other. My floral nightdress is blotched with thick dark clotted blood. I see myself tearing up to the nurse's station at the top of the room. I'm euphoric, pester, pleading with nurses to let me hold him again and again. One nurse says "no" awkwardly, another follows saying "No!" emphatically, loudly it takes me aback; she's in plain clothes - I'm bewildered ... she marches back into the nurses station and leaves me standing in my dressing gown. The other nurse said something like – "later, later go back to bed!" As I don't budge, can't, I'm so desperate to hold him. The plain clothes lady pops her head out again says "No! you can 'view' him once, only through the nursery window" ... At that stage I don't realize they're planning *never* to let me hold him and kept thinking "They'll let me nurse him later." I believe the only reason I was permitted to "view" my son through the nursery window was because my parents were around, visiting during that time. Their repeated refusal to allow me to hold my baby when I asked – begged - was a "violation of (my) the mothers parental rights ..." (Chisholm. Report on Adoption Practices. Second Interim Report 1999. 16<sup>th</sup> June – 25 October;5)

(...)

On reflection, the atmosphere is electric, the fear of us bonding is almost palpable ... but it was too late for that ...

The moment comes. I'm allowed to leave the veranda for a nursery where my son sleeps but I take no notice of *where* it is. Its visiting hours ... I'm excitedly dragging my mothers limp hand over to the pane of glass - I'm ecstatic. She's reluctant, wiping her eyes, turning away, glancing back with a weepy smile, she's already taken a peek without me knowing ... she told me this in January 1999 and said she was broken hearted. What strikes me on reflection is - I don't tell her anything about anything; my confinement in St Jo's as I didn't know there was anything to tell, or in hospital - their refusal to let me nurse him - I'm oblivious, only my baby, is all I can think of and how perfect he is – but I recall feeling a deep frustration at not being able to see him properly because of his blankets.

In law mothers had the same common law parental rights as any mother to her child with or without a ring regardless of how young she was. Her consent and her consent only was required. She was the sole legal guardian anything done to the child or the mother was the same as if it was done to any parent.)

Chisholm. Report on Adoption Practices. Second Interim Report. Transcripts of Evidence 16<sup>th</sup>

June – 25 October 1999;7) The Adoption Act could not come into play unless a

(...)

consent to adoption form was signed until then the Adoption Act was utterly meaningless. Officials acted unlawfully by refusing to allow me physical contact with my son.

My stay in the Royal Women's Hospital was six days, the only other memory is pleading again at the nurses station at the top of the verandah I tried to slip passed authorities unnoticed to find him but there was no way of passing them positioned at the top of the veranda undetected. And believe me once that child was born, in my conscious recollections I was on full alert like I'd woken from a gripping passivity, from the dead. For while a bond forms as the pregnancy progresses, and it does, the reality of your very own child doesn't impact until delivery and this is the very thing that throughout the pregnancy all efforts in St Josephs went into denying ... "one day you'll have one of *your* own ... the baby will have real parents..." during Father (...) 's mind bending sessions. While the pregnancy may have been unwanted once that child was born the child was very much wanted. In the nineties I had a sudden flashback and the words poured from my astonished lips "he wasn't mine anyway" I was referring to my third subsequent child. Through extreme bonding problems and unresolved trauma I lost him also. When I was just at home from hospital with him my cousin from England was staying with me. I see myself standing paralyzed in the dark shaking with his cries in the background when he woke for

(...)

his nightly feed. I put him on a bottle and my cousin fed him at night. In retrospect I unconsciously felt profoundly incompetent and terrified of losing him. Unbeknownst to me at the time his birth triggered this trauma.

I was confined in the Womens hospital for 6 days then sent back to St Josephs. The consent wasn't signed until 7 days after his birth up until then I had every right to see and hold my baby when ever I wanted to. Refusing me to let me leave the veranda to see my son was false imprisonment of me but also my son as he was in a room somewhere and the nurses and medical social workers and doctors would not allow me to find that room or inform me of where he was and I was asking for him and pleading to leave that ward so I could find him. The consent was still unsigned. I knew nothing about such a legal procedure or that they were going to confront me with this on my own. I didn't know that I would be returned to St Jo's to sign the consent.

*Legalities of Refusing Me Access To My Son.*

Judge Chislom was asked "could the refusal to allow access to the child prior to giving consent ... be unlawful or unethical or both"

"My view is that the mother was remained the guardian of the child until she gave consent till then she had all the rights of a parent over the child I think that means in theory any actions in relation to the child by someone else would have had to be with her consent ... So my answer (is) ...that if somebody, a social

(...)

worker or someone at the hospital or someone else prevented the mother from having contact with or access to the child prior to her giving consent, that would not be authorized. That would be as unauthorized as if any other person stopped a parent having contact with their child. (Judge Chisholm Report on Adoption Practices Second Interim Report Transcript of Evidence 16<sup>th</sup> June – 25 October 1999;5)

If he said this then surely their refusal to let me see my child when I asked and hold my child or have access to him could be called kidnapping – “ the same as if it were happening to any parent...It could be called kidnapping in a non technical sense, that seems to me pretty right. It certainly was an unauthorized taking of the child” (Report on Adoption Practices Second Interim Report Transcript of Evidence 16<sup>th</sup> June – 25 October 1999; 6,7)

The Hon H.S.Tsang asked Judge Chisholm could staying in the Home almost the same as a verbal consent (by the mother) Judge Chisholm said that “...this would be reliant on what she was told before hand if authorities said prior to birth when you go into the hospital we are going to take the child you will not see her or him... If she was told of her alternatives to adoption” – no duress - all that. (Report on Adoption Practices Second Interim Report Transcript of Evidence 16<sup>th</sup> June – 25 October 1999;7) But I wasn't told and I've never met another mother who was told this. And as said previously (...) social worker for Centacare said “There must be no moral pressure brought to bear, no condition

(...)



laid down (to mothers) when agency help is offered..." (Australian Association of social Workers Ninth Conference Proceedings. "People Are Different" (Social Work and Social Norms) "The Unmarried Mother" 1965;112) The legal act of signing a consent was needed for guardianship to transfer from the mother to the State until then she had all legal rights over that child –How the child would be wrapped, how it would be fed – everything. The taking of my child at birth was totally unexpected which I will discuss later. Other mothers may have been informed but I certainly wasn't and neither was my parents told that I couldn't hold or see him when I asked. Even the word adoption wasn't used. As one regretful nurse explained, "Lest the mother be distressed by the word adoption." (Farar. P1997;121 Separation, Reunion, Reconciliation. 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Conference on Adoption Queensland 13 – 15 June 1997. Published by Janice Benson for the Conference of the 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Conference on Adoption.)

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Single mothers were even excluded from antenatal classes conducted at the Royal Womens Hospital since the 40's so they wouldn't be prepared even in the normal way for the birth of their baby, let alone the way in which separation actually occurred. Giving birth in the most humane circumstances is shock inducing and for most it was their first child. Single mother's exclusion from birth preparation classes was practiced nationally. Sydney nurses confirm my

(...)

experience “Unmarried mothers didn’t go to antenatal classes” Mothers in the NSWs Inquiry also testified to this. The unexpected element will be discussed in more detail later. (Farar. P. 1997;125.. Seperation, Reunion, Reconciliation. 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Conference on Adoption Queensland 13 – 15 June 1997. Published by Janice Benson for the Confernece of the 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Confernece on Adoption.)

### *Medical Records*

Frantically I flip through correspondence I’ve written in order to extract what they released, Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, now Centacare, St Josephs, the Attorney General, Minister of Health, Ombudsman, Human Services, the Catholic MacKillop Foundation, incomplete and all as they are, every word means so much, details, newly noticed and remembered details, their significance ... I glimpse a page which says Progress Notes in scrawly writing that’s virtually illegible, what there is of it, at least to my untrained eye, I’m in hospital for 6 days I can only read the comment beside the last two days of my stay:

31.12.66 – “Well”– (I was distraught.)

1.1.67 - “Back to St J tomorrow” (St Josephs)

Beyond this nothing - no Treatment Sheets for the rest of my stay all up 6 days.

From 6 .15 when the Morphia was given directly *after* the birth - nothing – except

(...)

for two words on a chart: **“lactation suppressant”** to dry up my milk, even before a Consent to Adoption form was signed which according to records occurred back in St Josephs. They intended taking my baby for adoption regardless of what I wanted. They certainly didn’t give married mothers “lactation suppressants” in labor wards rendering them unable to breast feed their new born. In law a Consent to Adoption form can’t be presented to mothers until five days after birth. **“The general consent given when having a baby could never be construed to involve lactation suppressant without **mother’s knowledge or consent.**”** Consultant Child psychiatrist Dr G.Arnold Rickarby with thirty five years expertise in all aspects of adoption and who worked for the NSW Health Department during these decades said in the NSW’s Inquiry 1998 “... this is prima facie evidence to take the baby, surely? ...” (New South Wales Parliamentary Inquiry into Adoption Practices Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1998;65)

I return to the Progress Notes - and it **sinks in** - I’m discharged back to St Josephs Foundling Home - **2<sup>nd</sup> January – for four days.** Happy New Year! - I must have been in a stupefied state – those days don’t exist for me – but New Years will never be the same. I’m astounded to find it wasn’t all over in 1966. Again, the records say the Consent to Adoption form was signed back in St Josephs in 1967... CFWB (...) was the consent taker. Until now I had no idea they’d sent me back to that horror House without

(...)

my baby in spite of my begging. In hospital he was all I wanted, more than anything on earth, and my feelings were constant, wouldn't have changed overnight once back in St Josephs – or after. I was a nuisance, a headache for them and wouldn't take no for an answer. My son (...) was also admitted to the Foundling Home on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1967 according to the records but I did not know this. I did not sign the consent to Adoption until the 4<sup>th</sup> of January I was still my sons legal guardian and did not give my permission for him to be admitted to the largest Foundling Hospital of its kind in Victoria – discussed later – I still should have had access to him as I wanted.

*Back Home Post Adoption.*

Once back home I think I recalled something about a 30 days but was unaware of its legal significance except in my mind he was mine. Mothers had a thirty days "cooling off" period after signing the Consent to Adoption form during which they could "change their minds." Other mothers who gave evidence in the NSW's Inquiry into Adoption Practices 1998 – 2001 were rarely informed of their legal rights of revocation. Telling me my child was mine even if I signed must have been how they tricked me into signing. For had I known its implications, signing would have been unthinkable. He was the joy springing from the tragedy. As far as adoption *practice* went, once this consent was signed, the baby was gone, irretrievable. Countless distressed mothers returned to claim

(...)

their babies during revocation time but were invariably told “its too late the baby’s gone.” (transcripts from NSWs Inquiry find) One Labor politician said, while debating the 1964 Adoption of Children Act in Parliament, “why not take consents from mothers after the thirty days, she may feel committed ”(14<sup>th</sup> April 1964; 3645) when in fact no obligation existed which I feel is exactly why “expert” doctors and voluntary organizations advised legislators that consents *should* be taken 5 days after the birth, so mothers *would* feel compelled. FIND

According to records it was (...) Officer for the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (CFWB) who placed the Consent to Adoption form in my shell shocked face back in St Josephs. Consent takers were routinely the only person present when mothers signed this “momentous” document – there was no independent witness, no other witness at all. My parents were unaware of this procedure and I was a minor. Why weren’t they invited to be with me when I signed? I had no advocate present and no legal representation, none of us did. I have no memory of signing. My mother in recent years said “the word legal wasn’t mentioned”

A massive conflict of interest existed as the CFWB and St Josephs - its residential arm acted on behalf of adopting couples, the natural mother, and her child, not a shred of independence existed.

(...)

In her Affidavit (...) testified I freely chose with informed consent to 'relinquish" my baby - I did so without duress, was "in a fit and proper state ...understood the nature of consent" (1964 Adoption of Children Act) But was I in a "fit and proper state" did I understand the nature of consent and was there no duress? 7 days after the birth, the shock and profound distress of not being allowed to hold him. My unexpected return to St Josephs. I wasn't issued with a copy of the consent form as the Adoption Act also required with the 'How to Revoke' instructions which were incomprehensible to most ordinary people with presence of mind in any case, let alone someone young , unworldly and traumatized. This was on the bottom of the Consent to Adoption form:

I understand that this consent may be revoked in the following manner but not otherwise – If before the expiration of thirty days from the date on which I sign this consent I serve on the Registrar of the County Court , Law Courts Melbourne, notice in writing in the form or to the effect of the form of revocation set out in Part "B" of the Third Schedule to the Adoption of Children Regulations 1965. How would I have understood this – how to go about this and where to go??

Weeks later (...) Justice of the Peace witnessed CFWB (...) Affidavit. Absent from this document was the fact that (...) was Sister (...) a superior Josephite nun working at St Josephs at the time, (...)

indeed enjoyed senior positions for well over 31 years. (...)

She acted in the capacity of Justice of the Peace for countless many when it was improper of her to do so, if not unlawful. The CFWB and St Josephs were indeed part of the same organization, Saint Josephs and the CFWB were “ all part of the same adoption team” according their mouth piece - the Australian Journal of Social Workers.(O’Collins M. “Some Aspects in the Field of Adoption” February 1966. Vol19, No1.) The CFWB was the public face of adoption lining up prospective adopting couples and channeling expectant mothers to - St Josephs which was its residential arm. St Josephs also had the power to arrange adoptions, be part of that process. And they did. Yet in 2001 Sr (...) senior Josephite nun at St Josephs and St Anthony’s said “St Josephs was not an adoption agency” Historically management had powers to arrange adoptions equal to the State at one point.

Social workers in the NSW’s Inquiry testified that routine practice was to relay our legal rights at the time of signing the Consent to Adoption form – 5 days after delivery. If this is true - and many mothers refute this saying they were told NOTHING – particularly about the 30 day “cooling off” period, why wait until we were traumatized or deeply distressed after having our babies unexpectedly “whipped away” at birth and pens placed in our unsuspecting

(...)

hands to shove forms of such magnitude in our faces and read out our legal rights. Why wasn't information in regards to legal rights relayed early in the pregnancy? Why weren't these FULLY explained in a timely manner? As said previously most would have been incapable of understanding the highly legal jargon in any case under "distressed, stressful" circumstances such as these - described so by male politicians when debating - the five day consent time before it could be taken from a mother - 1964 Act in Parliament Fulton a Labor member said " I do not think she would be in a condition to make that decision..."(14<sup>th</sup> April 1964;3645;) 5 days after birth.

~~~~~  
**Father** (...) never spoke to me personally throughout my time at Broady (St Josephs) or before confinement and not a word was mentioned during "pastoral visits" about the "kind" procedures that awaited me in the labor ward, that routine practice though unlawful, if I did not agree to this, was to take the infant at birth. And any legal decision – in law – could only be made **after** the birth, which is what I assumed would happen. Not a word was mentioned that on the 5<sup>th</sup> day after delivery I'd be presented with a legal Consent to Adoption form and expected to sign away forever the child I had just given birth to – on the spot – with No prior warning or information regarding my legal rights and entitlements under State and Commonwealth legislation; "unmarried mothers

(...)



receiving a special benefit may be transferred to unemployment or sickness benefit" (Kewley .T.H. Social Security in Australia 1900 – 72 University Press 12<sup>th</sup> September 1973. Department of Social Security P.O.Box 1. Woden ACT 2606.) Yet in social worker manuals 1971 it was said "the unmarried mother should (also) have casework service as early as possible so that she may reach a decision regarding plans for her child... and have help she may need with other problems." (find) Apart for the "Scientifically" conducted matching interview there were no others.

Mothers were repeatedly told - "*Put it all behind you ... you'll forget and get on with you're life – One day you'll have one of your own.*"

### *The Final Meeting with Father Wright and my Parents*

As those four days after the birth back in St Josephs are a complete blank, in my mind, one minute I'm in hospital pleading to see my baby and the next I'm at home in our passageway tugging my mothers sleeve "I want to keep him," She's hesitant, wavering, her pained face looks torn, helpless. In recent years she said (...)  
 "I was so distressed and uncertain of everything" she contacted Father  
 to come and sort out the situation, of all people! At this stage and for the next 36  
 odd years she's knows nothing about what occurred during my confinement in  
 St Josephs or in Hospital for I was later psychologically disassociated from the

(...)

whole experience once losing – being denied contact with him. As for being returned to St Josephs after the birth I still didn't know myself, have no memory of this, except as records say, the Consent to Adoption form was signed there and I wonder now, how they transported me back to St Josephs?

*Official Sins of Omission.*

Its 1967 and I'm two months off 16 years old and I've been back home with my parents for at least two weeks after discharge from 'Broady' – St Josephs – during the 30 day revocation period. I'm sitting in a circle in our lounge room, with my father, mother and Father (...). Our purple curtains flail. I repeat – "please can I keep him?" My indecisive mother's eyes glance helplessly from me to (...) looking up at him as though he were god incarnate. Dad remains silent, typical poker face - then tears wet his eyes, his face seems as though he's straining to hear. Wright does the talking, "How are you going to support him ...be realistic ...there's a couple waiting to give him more than you can imagine ... if you truly love him, think of the child not yourself..."

The only words my mother spoke were, "*Patsy I have to work.*"

Like actors on a stage all present freeze under blazing blinding spotlights.

~~~~~

Little did my parents or I realize the existence of real help enabling babies to stay with family and that for mother and baby's psychosocial wellbeing according to

United Nations “ - the last step should be to take the baby from its mother.”

(find) The “little UN book” was referred to throughout the while debating the 1964 Adoption Act. According to the UN, the Adoption Act and its underpinning social mores assumed all available assistance to help me keep my child was relayed to me in time for me to process absorb and deliberate but **no counseling happened and it should have.** **The Adoption of Children Regulations 1965 required counseling of expectant mothers. I believe the 1964 Adoption Act assumed this.** In effect (...) testified in her Affidavit that I had “rejected” all available assistance such as a social welfare benefit built into the sickness befit ‘not looming large in the public eye’, (I wasn’t eligible for this benefit until I was 16 years old) “unmarried mothers receiving a special benefit may be transferred to unemployment or sickness benefit” (Kewley .T.H. Social Security in Australia 1900 – 72; 460. University Press 12<sup>th</sup> September 1973. Department of Social Security P.O.Box 1. Woden ACT 2606.) I was also entitled to Child Endowment until my child turned 16 which my parents nor I knew nothing about. St Josephs received this and later it was paid to adopting parents (Commonwealth Social Services A Handbook of Information issued by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services November 1956; 8-11) Day Care Centers established primarily for the “single mother who keeps her child,” cash assistance, temporary accommodation for my child while I arranged my life accordingly. (McLean. D. 1956; 53. “Children In Need”

(...)

World Health Organization of the United Nations "A Meeting of Experts on Mental Health Aspects of Adoption" Conference held 1953. Printed by Government A.H.Pettifer. ) Free Infant Welfare Centres with qualified Mother Craft nursing staff whose job it was to teach mothering skills were available to any mother and her child but social workers remained silent about this service. If mothers were unable to attend, nurses did home visits. The Josephites were Mothercraft nurses and teachers whose job it was to impart mothering skills, some adopting parents had parenting classes. (Moore. H. 1982 ;59. "Better for Babies" ...) Until these alternatives were "carefully considered" and rejected by me adoption wasn't to be "broached." According to Sister (...) all information and casework should have been carried out "well ahead of confinement" – *before*. (Australian Journal of Social Work. 1967- Feb;12-13. Vol 20, No 1.)

I had contact with three CFWB senior social workers throughout the ordeal, (...) It was their legal duty first and foremost to inform, to relay very real alternatives to adoption outlined above...particularly Father (...) in that Final Meeting (when my mother said "Patsy I have to work " I worked before the pregnancy, jobs were plentiful then I could have returned ) – According to WHO conference 1953" to avoid any misunderstanding or any suggestion that the mother was misled or uninformed the District officer/ social workers (were) instructed to *explain fully* to

(...)

the mother *before* even the consent could be taken, the “facilities (and financial assistance) which are available to help her keep her child... When all these aids have been *rejected*, the officer/social worker is *expected* to explain to the mother the *full implications* of surrendering her child. Only when the mother has *considered* these and still wishes to proceed with the surrender for adoption should the consent be accepted.” (McLean. D. 1956; Chapter IV. World Health Organization of the United Nations “Meeting of Experts on Mental Health Aspects of Adoption” conference held in 1953 published in 1956) And during that Final Meeting with Dowling, during which he did nothing but coerce me, place me under overwhelming pressure – “duress” and my parents to “relinquish” Sean, it was still within my legal revocation time which my parents knew nothing about. Our view was restricted to his view only. My parents particularly my mother held Father (...) in the highest of esteem.

Also he mentioned nothing about the harmful effects, for example the possible “dire future regret” of adoption separation for myself, and my child and the life time psychological problems that do arise for adopted people growing up. He forcefully promoted, misrepresented adoption, ignoring my human and legal rights and my baby’s rights to me, his mother. If my parents had been availed of all this information, free Day Care Centres so I could have returned to

(...)

work, particularly the harmful effects for me and my child, I know they would have surely kept (...). In 1952 Dr (...) said "Separation from mother or rejection by her predisposes to mental illness which may or may not be precipitated out later, the roots of all disturbances" (Stirrat 1952;153 Forum/Australian Journal of Social Work. August – September 1952 Vol,vi No4. Second Series) Thank God humans are resilient! In 1949 the institution of adoption was seriously questioned by officials because of the numbers of children presenting at Mental Health Clinics, understandably seeking psychological help. (Australian Journal of Social Work Dewdney . "A Brief Review of Adoption Research ..."M. May 1967;13 Vol 20, No 2.) In the sixties and seventies adopted children/adults were referred to Dr A Rickarby for help. These were more often the healthier ones able to face the source of their distress.

Little did we know that in law and according to the UN Consents to Adoption were invalid "if she is indecisive" – I was clearly asking to keep my child, begging, and Father (...) should have set in motion the reclamation of my child, put adoption proceedings on hold until the issue was fully explored and all avenues explained and exhausted – the whole picture. My parents should have been made aware that support for them to help me keep (...) existed and that "If there (was) any sign of uncertainty or vacillation in me (the mother ) the

officer/social worker (should) *insist* that the mother *consider* the question further... the decision must be her own." (McLean. D. 1956; 53-54 WHO conference on Mental Health Aspects of Adoption) **Only** she had the sole authority to consent or refuse – not grandparents. As (...) of Origins rightfully says the law doesn't state the source of duress just, "there must be no duress." (1964 Act) Even today grandparents have no legal rights over their grandchild. And I believe this situation exists because of adoption.

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### *My flight back to St Joseph*

When what I believed would be a reprieve turned into a death sentence – adoption going ahead - my survival as Patsy depended on finding my son. I see **myself** running frantically back to St Josephs Foundling Home, during my legal 'cooling off' time, the overwhelming relief when a train stood at Coburg station, its whistle sounded as I jumped on. I ran down Camp Rd and into the complex and recall a flight of stairs but not knowing where to go. I remember the arresting shock when I saw the babies en masse. Just rows and rows of thickly covered cream colored cots I ran from one to the other "*Has he gone, have they taken him yet? ... Please god let him be here.*" Then I saw his name, my name above his cot. A tall nurse trotted towards me ... I stood fast at the end of his cot and said "*please can I hold him?*" Forcefully she said, "No, you're not allowed to, " I

(...)

don't know in what state I must have looked but felt frantic and defiantly said "Well I'm not leaving until you let me." She seemed confused, as if she didn't know what to do, kept turning to the empty nurses' station then said, "Just for a minute." I lurched to pick him up and she signaled to say "stop!" She picked him up and placed him in my arms. I walked ever so slowly with him back down the stairs, out into a concrete yard below. I held him for ... I don't know how long. I felt a deep peace, that frantic feeling dissipated, it was a sense of oneness – as though time stood still while he I cradled in my grateful arms, enraptured, I felt deeply bonded to him, studied his little face ...his black fluffy hair and long black curly eyelashes and these tiny white dots on his nose. I glanced up and saw her peering down at me from a window. I don't recall giving him back. She came to fetch him.

The nurse had no ethical or possibly legal right to impede my access to (...) or to limit it as it was still within the 30 days revocation time. The Adoption Form of Consent Third Schedule - Part "A" states:

- 
1. I understand that the effect of an adoption *order* for which application may be made.
  2. In particular I understand that the effect of such *order* will be permanently and totally to deprive me of my parental rights in relation to the above named child..."

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(...)



At the time if (...) did read out my legal rights I know I would not have understood what an Adoption Order was. Secondly my parental rights according to this document ended with the Adoption *Order* when the adoption became official. The consent form says nothing about losing my full parental rights permanently 30 days after signing this document. I believe that the consent was not binding in any absolute way until the adoption Order became Official usually about 8 months after the child was placed in the adopting parents care. The other point is that I signed the consent when I was returned to St Joseph's 7 days after the birth of my son. My son was also sent back there on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January as I was. I did not give my permission for him to be placed in the largest institution of its kind in Victoria – a Foundling Home - my permission was not sought neither was I informed that he was indeed on the premises. When I ran back to find him I was just hoping he was there but I didn't really know if he would be.

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As I had this opportunity to nurse my son and perhaps say hello and 'goodbye,' if indeed I did, there *may* have been something of me left –Patsy – who I was. But at the time I thought "*This must be what happens to girls like me.*" When my 'fantasy' of keeping my child was completely shattered I was left with

(...)

a crushing sense of defeat and told myself – ‘*He wasn’t mine anyway*’ so profound was the impact of Fathers ‘pastoral’ mind bending sessions – “one day you’ll have one of *your* own.” It wasn’t until round 35 years later that I would recall in any detail my flight back to the orphanage, my last chance to see and hold my child, as I must have seen it at the time. Reading the records triggered this memory. Disconnected from myself and now my parents, those I once turned to for nurture and support - I was left with a profound sense of meaninglessness - nothing mattered anymore least of all myself.

***“Best Interests of the Child – a legal requirement.***

It was only my growing consciousness about the details of my ‘adoption’ experience in the late 1990’s and when reading the records I realized **my son was also sent back to the Foundling Home**. Here, he was in an existential vacuum handled by up to seven strangers, trainee mother craft nurses or helpers, in a twenty four hour period when he could have known my love. (Moore,H. 1982;33 “Better For Babies: An Interpretive Oral History of the De – Institutionalization of Infant Care at St Josephs Babies Home. Social Enquiry & social Work, Professional Project Department of social work Melbourne University. ) How could this have been in the best interests of the child? The first months of being in the world are critical and senior social workers knew this, CFWB social workers said in the mid fifties children “thrive better in bad homes than good institutions ... It is generally accepted that health

(...)

and intelligence and the seed of individual personality are established in infancy and gradually the growth that takes place as a continuous process is a variation on the original theme and design. Whatever makes or mars during this time is absorbed and becomes a part that can never be removed or recovered." (Sharpe. E. Social "Work with the Day Nursery Service in Victoria" IN Forum 1956;15,16)

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**Also** new born babies need the nurturing that can only come from mothers who they've already bonded with in the womb, they recognize the mothers smell and sounds for instance and optimally need the comfort that comes from suckling and, not to be placed in "sterile nurseries" particularly institutions such as St Josephs Foundling Home. Authorities knew that breastfeeding and continuity of mothers caring for her own baby was far superior than the baby, being one among a hundred babies, handled en masse by strangers only to experience human contact at feeding and nappy changing times. No bonding takes place – psychologically and emotionally the child is connected to no one - any attachment let alone secure attachment is impossible. And there *was* an alternative – As others have said it has always been recognized in law that the best place for a child is with its own mother. According to Minister Fulton for Labor when the Bill was debated in Parliament "*The consensus of world authorities and the report of the United Nations make it clear that the last step should be to take the baby from its mother*" ( Hansard 14<sup>th</sup> April 1964; 3645.) When the 1964

(...)

Adoption of Children Bill was debated in Parliament it was said that the principles of the UN was foundational in deciding the Bill (29<sup>th</sup> April 1964; 4171) Babies had a human and legal right to be nursed by their mothers. For those who had little or no family support why couldn't they have remained in St Josephs and breastfeed their babies, this was the case in previous decades, although some were still forced to "relinquish" their child later. Or temporary foster care while mother arranges her life accordingly. There were many options none of which were raised. The nuns were mother craft nurses who taught mothering skills to trainee nurses why not to the child's mothers.

**In 1952 based on Bowlby's theories social workers described the separation itself as "so traumatic" for the child it should happen when there is no other alternative.** (Forum 1952;163. "Maternal Love and Emotional Health" Vol vi. No4. Second Series) In a Child Care Week 1966 held by the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria the peak body for orphanages it was said in their opening speech "The deprivation of mother love a lack of which may permanently stunt the growth of love." (Lumsden. B. Childrens Welfare Association of Victoria 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Report 11;1966 – 1967- CWAV). Florence Clotheir a psychiatrist who anticipated themes of attachment and loss that became common place later on said in 1943, "this trauma (of separation) and the severing of the individual from his racial antecedents lie at the core of what is peculiar to the psychology of the adopted

(...)

child ... The adopted child is called upon to compensate for the wound left by the loss of the biological mother. "She worked at the New England Home for Little Wanderers from 1932 – 57 and said that some babies who were later adopted were fed by propping a bottle onto their pillow so there was no human contact even during feeding times. Could this practice have happened in St Josephs with one hundred babies to feed every three or four hours? (Clothier F. "Adoption History: The psychology of the Adopted Child" 1943. I believe

(...) failed in her duty as guardian, failed to act in the best interests of the child, as did every other adoption official acting as guardian working for the CFWB and St Josephs and the Director General of the Social Welfare Branch. (Acting on behalf of the State ) Babies were obviously harmed, some severely by adoption separation, deprivation of mothers love and institutionalization. The nuns now say they didn't realize the harmful effects of large congregate care for children.

But it had long been known. Also in the Survey of Child Care in Victoria 1962 – 1964, statutory and voluntary survey, it was said, " It is a generally accepted principle that infants ... should not be placed in large institutions ..." (A report by the Committee appointed by the Chief Secretary of Victoria . A.G.Rylah, M.L.A.. A C Brooks Government Printer Melb.) Institutionalization was last on the list. And the

(...)

Adoption of Children Act required that adoption be in the best interest of the child discussed again later.

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Institutionalization after Bowlby's theories 1952 were internationally recognized was particularly damning as single mother's babies served a **double function** at St Josephs not merely adoption. The Josephite nuns readily tell that they - unlike the "Women's and Mercy Hospitals" who handed new born's directly to adopting couples - "foster parents" within the mothers legal revocation period, St Josephs kept our babies for the full duration of thirty days. (There was a conflating between foster parents and adopting couples. In the Survey of Child Care Victoria 1962 - 64 it was stated that "most hospitals placed babies for adoption by the time they were two weeks old" and authorities would never risk taking the baby back from adopting parents which was thought of by them as the cruelest of cruel. This is how contemptuous of our legal revocation time they were. ) But that babies were kept for the full 30 days at St Josephs and often beyond had little to do respecting mothers' legal rights of revocation and everything to do with needing infants - not just for adoption but as objects of study. (And in the process claim mothers Child Endowment which mothers were never availed of. (Children's Welfare Association of Victoria 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Report 11;1966 - 1967) **In 1931 the Mother Craft Training School was set up at St Josephs under**

(...)

**the auspices of the Health Department.** Their trainee nurses needed experience with infants to qualify, not older babies, wards or toddlers who'd suffered multiple failed placements with adopting couples. The School needed new born's and social workers promoted these to adopting couples who also expected them. Eighty five percent of babies adopted were those of single mothers. (Survey of Child Care in Victoria 1962 – 1964) Their new born babies were **indispensable** for the running of the school. The attitude of the Josephite nuns towards "the toddlers (was they) were a rather sad group once they had outgrown their usefulness for the **Mothercraft training school**" as objects for trainees to practice on. (Moore H. 1982/63 "Better For Babies:" An Interpretive Oral History of the De- Institutionalization of Infant Care at Saint Joseph's Babies Home.) Trainee nurses started at 17 years old. As others have said if teenagers could be trained to care for another's child surely mothers could have been' trained' 'to parent their own. When the Hospitals and Charities Commission ceased funding a financial crisis loomed and St Jo's was forced to close – with great reluctance. (It was the first to undergo deinstitutionalization which is the more pertinent reason why the numbers of single mother's babies for adoption diminished in the 70's, not just rapid social change and the sexual revolution) the Josephite nuns attributed the drop in babies for adoption to changing social attitudes but the drop was due to funding. Institutions had to close because funding from the Commonwealth Government ceased. (Moore H.

(...)

1982 "Better For Babies:" An Interpretive Oral History of the De- Institutionalization of Infant Care at Saint Joseph's Babies Home. Some of the nuns at St Josephs were so alarmed at the closing of the school that they saw this as " the beginning of a downhill slide for the Josephite Order" (56)

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While the 1964 Act was promoted by Premier Hammer as saving thousands of children from institutionalization the numbers of children in institutions actually increased from the 1950's - 1970's. Age Journalists Gary Hughes and Ryle touch on this point in a series of articles in the late 1990's. They attributed the increase in wards of the State to the effects of the 1954 Act which apprehended children on the grounds of their parent's homelessness alone. Copies are held at the State Library. But I believe that the 1954 Act merely gave recognition to what was already practiced and the more pertinent cause of the increase in the numbers of children in intuitions during these decades was a result of children losing their mothers at birth and then failed adoptions; children returned by very distressed couples unable to cope. Wards up to three years old who'd suffered separation from their parents and families due to poverty – the primary reason why children were made wards - weren't generally offered to couples and not in demand. The real target of the 1964 changes to the Adoption Act – was perfect white new born infants. Social workers promoted new born

(...)



babies to couples “ as if conceived of the marriage.” Older babies, those with medical problems or “Non Europeans” weren’t readily offered to childless couples and not in demand. And black babies who were adopted went to white church going folk remember Aboriginality was THE problem.

When senior social worker **Margaret McDonald** says that “ hospital nurseries were overflowing with babies awaiting placement” they were overflowing with medically deferred babies and institutions full of children who’d grown too old for adoption.. (Royal Womens Annual Report. Medical Social Worker 1968) Although by the end of the sixties there was an increase in single mother’s babies for adoption placement.(2001 Marshall & McDonald. The Many Sided Triangle. Melbourne University Press Victoria) Margaret McDonald wrote this book when she was under scrutiny herself during the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Past Adoption Practices 1998 - 2001

Officials were well aware of the risks of **permanent institutionalization** if the child had medical problems or the adoption failed. Couples who were unable to cope for many sound reasons (or the child did not fix their marital problems after all (find) as they were led to believe. )Disruption, discontinuity of care and

(...)

rejection compounded the child's insecurities including the trauma of the initial separation. Consents to Adoption said nothing of this and neither did officials. Many babies whose placements failed spent the rest of their youth in orphanages after being taken from their mothers at birth...and natural mothers were never informed of this and they were meant to be. (Also, according to Hammer minister for immigration "the would be adopters (had 6 months ) and were free to take the child or reject it as they felt fit" (Hansard 24<sup>th</sup> March 1964; 3284)- once again like an object. In 1963 in the lead up to changes in the Adoption Act Leonard Tierney Child Welfare Academic who did one of the few in depth studies of the orphanage system – why so many children were in the system – noted "Social workers are only too familiar with the poorly organized foster placement after the honeymoon period the foster mother angrily rejects the child" He points to the need for careful selection and support for 'foster parents' which was virtually absent. "Many good homes are lost and children suffer needless rejection." (Tierney Leonard. "Children Who Need Help" 1963;79 Melbourne University Press.) Later in the 1960's my consent taker Principle Adoption Officer

(...)

admitted that matching based on physical appearance and birth certificates was no more than "chance" as though this were a ground breaking discovery. "In the stress of the moment we place a child hurriedly, perhaps too

(...)

soon perhaps to the wrong couple, perhaps to unsuitable people" (O'Collins. Maev. 1966. Australian Journal of social Work "Some Aspects of Research in the Field of Adoption" Vol.19. No. 1 February 1966;5)

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***MEMOIR - AT MY HOME WITH MY SICK MOTHER IN LATE 1990'S – 2000.***

I cant absorb any more, throw the book and records back on the printer, pages fly everywhere ... "Patsy, Patsy here a wee minute..." I'm scared she'll never want to go home to that house I so hate visiting at times ... Its not the coming its the going - and the way she stalls, keeps me talking, waiting, dallying at her front doorway, dangling car keys, loaded up with parcels and bags full of fruit she'd always give me, shuffling from foot to foot ... wanting me to wait that one more second, as though her life depended on it ... "hang about, I'll think of it, what I wanted to say, in a wee minute ... it'll come to me, sure it will ."

I write in my diary 2000, then run on tip toe to what's now my study, till one of my children's friends or they move back home,

19th of August ...

*Relaying to My Mother for the First Time what Actually Occurred with*  
(...)  
*Adoption.*

I'm bringing Mum back home to her house but decide to stay overnight as she's still needs someone around and I can lie in bed while she sleeps, read,

(...)

take notes, do something constructive. The problem was writing this story seemed to me at the time the *only* constructive project in my life. Every thing else, all other obligations served only to leave me with a somewhat urgent sense of 'wasting time.' In hindsight how wrong I was. I regret now not having the emotional space to enjoy more those I loved, the important people in my life.

I've given up sealing the gap under the door with towels so the smoke wont waft out, couldn't give a shit about her asthma or anything, except writing this and those missing hospital treatment sheets... and that's the other thing,  
 (...) my daughter rings, she's needs space from (...) "its only temporary"  
 ... I daydream about how brave she was when she first made the split, and the agonizing grief I lived through with her - she let herself feel it for months, I move in and out of mine like a ghost passing through invisible walls... sometimes it sends me into a whipping frenzy " *Despite my best efforts ... unable to confirm if registers still exist, enclosed is the date of admission and discharge from Broadmeadows*"  
 ... That's it? ... Best wishes! ..... Best wishes?" ... I invite you to contact me! ... MaKillop Foundation, "set up to protect their own records!" This is what I scream down the phone at the Freedom of Information Ombudsman ... don't know his name, don't give a shit what's said, dont say goodbye, clonk! ... Best wishes!! ... I'm yelling now ...

(...)

22nd August 2000. My portable computer's ready to crash, the car needs servicing ... She says, "buy a wee bike and Ak! Computers - bolocks - use a pen!" She's wanting me keep her company, console, listen to her latest spiritual insight "I'm realizing more and more how much we don't trust that's our problem ... - not believing God loves us ... stepping out in faith ... that's all he asks ... handing our troubles to him, he cant help us if we dont ask, he wont force our will ... " I run back to the bedroom pick up the pen, "If my records, still exist, were not destroyed - why are these pages missing ...? "

"Patsy! I'll not bother you again, sure I wont, bring us the bible..." Its her fourth lot of antibiotics, unbrushed knotted hair, I said Id untangle again an hour ago, that frightened look in her crouchy top eyes; the way she grabbed her rosary clutching, rolling its wooden beads in her finger tips ... when our voices reach that hysterical pitch ... cause I cant hide it anymore, its too late for that... I know too much... she's heard bits and pieces since Christmas 1999 The antibiotics pulmicort puffers and things ... and don't want to hurt her anymore, "Ive punished you a life time... it slipped out, " I'm sorry," she and I alone know ... I sob, deeply - rhythmically, doubled in two ... slump on the bed, grab her paper tissue hand with a love that hurts, lose control, it pours from my lips, even though I dont want it to ... for the first time ... "I begged them to let me hold (... ) dont you understand?" ... heaving now ... "they wouldn't .. "

“... wha ...who’s they? ... ”

...That was Unlawful!”

“... Father , he was helping us ... anyway sure, why did ya not *tell* me Patsy ? ...” I look at her in speechless disbelief ... I realise what I already knew, she too ‘closed down’ again, can grasp it only in fragments.

“... they were only trying to protect ya Patsy ...” She bends over the doona, messy grey hair, sticking up, dangling round her shoulders, there's still a few ringlets left, earnestly, desperately, finger pointing, digging her chest, “ we think we’re in control ... but god is ... “let go of this adoption stuff and let god ... freg me - if we could only learn that! ... there’d be nothin left to learn!”

“... how can I let go , Ive only just remembered ?! ... And your lucky I have !”

I know too well that her sanity depends on the Church and that facing the painful truth of what I’m saying puts that at risk and I’m already scared she’s dropping her bundle like I fear I’m dropping mine... but the more she defends, the wilder I get. “We’re the body of Christ ...” hand over heart, “the church! ...Patsy, you’ve lost your faith ...

“I think, “Ive gotta get out of here - go for a walk ... reaching the door, “You just hate the church! ...”

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(...)

“Yes I do ... those men in the Vatican are obsessed with sex, the hows, whens and whys of what people do in bedrooms and anyway, thats not what I’m talking about here, I’m talking about FATHER withholding vital information!! “

“...wha what ... Jesus Mary and Joseph” she repeats over and over

“Trying to help! ...why wont they give my records? !”

“who’s they?...”

“ ... what are they hiding!? “ You know those times, when your so outraged that you cant care what you say or who you say it in front of ... Im fighting that. I see I’m frightening her, frightening myself ... strain with every muscle taught not to say another word ... run back to my room ... “be honest Patsy, that’s the trouble there’s no communication ...”

“ Your Callous!” ... I scream

“... I couldn’t!” she yells back

“I know - especially with Father (...) by your side ! It was callous to deny me (...) ..”

“...Patsy, hand it over to the Lord ... you should let it go, so you should ... its not good for you, too much study ... think of your health ...” My mind is blank, forget what I was thinking about so intensely or how and what I was going to tell you next, you know, my story ... what I was doing or searching for, forever losing things and it sends me into a helpless heap, when I really cant find what I’m

(...)

looking for, like my glasses, cig papers, my purse or car keys or why I went into this room, or left my seat in the first place ... Im sobbing again, walking, lurching from room to room, actually in a circle because if you run into the kitchen then through the lounge room past the front entrance round narrow hallway past a bedroom and back into the kitchen again you've done a full ring cause the living rooms in the middle - and she's watching me, running in circles, crying, "Oh sweet Jesus ... this is a mad house ...Patsy, Patsy what are ya doin..." I ignore her – realizing she can only absorb in stages the full import of what REALLY HAPPENED.

When the reality of what Id been trying to relay to my mother finally hit home - that from the moment I entered "the nuns kind wee place" - St Josephs - the prospective adoptive parents were already in the process of being chosen without my knowledge or consent and that I was reduced to begging for (...) in hospital - she was visibly shaken. *"Its cruel it's cruel I've never heard of such a thing... why didn't you tell me?"* When I asked my mother if knowing any of the above, the existence of Day Care Centres enabling me to return to part time work, if this would have made a difference she said "yes" She wanted to keep (...) and so did my father had he known the entire picture.

### Grandparents

(...)



Yet officials, when cornered, still blame parents who they say consented to this savagery. I certainly can't prove ALL parents weren't privy or were kept in the dark about their daughter's human and legal rights or entitlements or about what actually occurred behind very closed doors – "Homes" and labor wards. But I can say for certain my parents knew nothing, certainly not about the traumatic unlawful practice of preventing me physical contact with my son. The point is no one knew. The general community believed, including adopting couples that mothers freely "relinquished" with informed consent. Some daughters spent the rest of their lives punishing their parents as they thought their parents knew how they were treated in Homes and labor wards when nothing could have been further from the truth. Relying as they did on coercion practices were covert unethical and unlawful.

#### *Post Adoption.*

Adoption played havoc with mother daughter relationships. "A time lost which can never come again." In its aftermath I had no insight into being driven or what drove me and was 'closed down' to direct abuse by Christian officials. Instead my unconscious outrage was directed towards my parents, particularly my mother who was beside herself with worry, for I couldn't stop running away from home. 'I punished them by punishing myself.' This is a common feature for mothers who've lost a child in this way and officials were well aware of the harm

(...)

done to parental relationships. Parents go largely unrepresented and/or stigmatized.

Exacerbating parent daughter conflicts, the dominant discourse is “parents were the driving force” (McDonald. M. 2001;49) For some this may be true but if this is so why weren’t my parents advised of my legal rights and entitlements or alternatives to adoption. Or adoptions downside in terms of child and mothers psychosocial health. Why weren’t they told I wouldn’t be allowed physical contact with my child after birth – hospital practice? That on the fifth day after the birth I would be presented with a legal consent to adoption form? Parents were largely left out of the picture – kept at arms length – where ever possible which is the reason why, among others, officials channeled expectant mothers to their institutions.

I can also say that officials were well aware of the parent’s distressed state of mind and exploited their unquestioning trust, particularly my parents as Irish Catholics. This is evident in Rowe’s English Adoption textbook for trainee social workers 1966, one that (...) my consent to adoption taker recommended for Victorian students. Rowe explains: “the chance to work with the parents ... comes right at the beginning when their need is great and their anxiety acute. This is the time of crisis and if the opportunity is not seized it will usually slip away, unrecoverable.”(Rowe. J. 1966; 42 Parents, children and Adoption:

(...)

Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.) She meant the baby would be unrecoverable for adoption. She goes on to quote "They (parents) are often confused by the ...intense and apparent conflicting emotions ...This makes it a particularly opportune time for **offering interpretations** ...when the crisis is past – (its ramifications never are) few will be willing or able to study and change their attitudes ..." (J.Rowe 1966) She means once they've had time to consider the baby as THEIR grandchild. My sister in laws sister (...) also had an adoption and wasn't allowed to hold her son when her parents asked to see their grandson the Matron said "no you're not allowed to." In Rowe's manual for trainee social workers her depiction of grandparents is slanderous - "When a grandmother offers to care for the baby while her daughter works it is really because the girl can earn more money ...Like their own boy crazy daughter ...(it) is not unusual to find these mothers have either been sexually deviant themselves, or else severely repressed" (41 - 42) Grandparents helping their daughters to keep their child wasn't on the agenda. These ideas were taught to young trainee social workers, with little life experience.

### *Aftermath of Adoption*

~~~~~  
 After the adoption I couldn't be at home with my parents for long without either terrible fights erupting, none of which on the surface had anything to do  
 (...)

with losing (...), or a still, painful silence. It was never mentioned again until recent years. One of the reasons for the ensuing silence when "its all over" among family members is that mothers were psychologically disassociated from the experience or suppressed the details. The whole issue is so excruciatingly painful for everyone concerned – No one knows HOW to talk about the "momentous" and its either suppressed or repressed. As a general rule mothers and their families were left to their own devices unless as in my case *parents* sought advice or help. My parents were traumatized at the time too, particularly as my pregnancy was the result of rape, they were very much involved, lived through the entire ordeal with me. As a mother I know now what your child lives through you also live through, that their painful experiences often act as a trigger for the reliving of their own past painful events.

My parents were very distressed about my behavior after the adoption as I would impulsively disappear for days on end and tore round Melbourne 'off my tree' in a very confused and I now realize distraught state. It's a blur. But I have fragments, flashes of memories.

Sometime after it was **all** over, behind me so I could '*get on with my life,*' I was absentmindedly strolling down Murray Road. Paralyzed, I spot the figure of (...)  
walking towards me, a mirage like apparition. Next thing he's

(...)

standing beside me and says, "I'm sorry about what happened, what about the baby?"

"He was adopted" - my feet kept walking.

Unbeknownst to me at the time, I held very complex conflicting feelings in regards to (...) for he was my persecutor and my savior. His friend guarding the door that fateful night also wanted 'his turn' but for some reason (...) defended me, refused to allow him to come near me. Vitriol flew in all directions nearly coming to blows with (...) insisting I be released -'free.' At least he, unlike Christian authorities who committed the worst atrocity by unlawfully denying me my own son, apologized. He acknowledged fault which was tremendously healing for me, although I couldn't know this at the time. He recognized something of my humanity. That I felt, reflecting the fact that he too was human, not completely diminished.

(...) who I met at the Catcher Club in the city is now my constant companion, we run away from home. She gets a flat in St Kilda Road right next door to Dunlop where she's a receptionist. I'm always at her flat - we're inseparable. I don't have a job and constantly fret and think about money. I nick Prue Acton dresses and leather bags, something I've never done before. Vanda's Italian mother and mine agonize together, exchange notes, any information as to our whereabouts. (...) 's mum hires a private detective to find us. Worry

(...)

gnaws my chest, I fret, think about mum and dad and how I'm hurting them, but ignore, or don't know I'm tormented. (...) is besotted by the lead singer in the Chelsea Set so we always go to the Catcher Club when they play. She meets (...) there, I meet (...) his mate who's a linesman for the council and although a strange unpredictable gleam in his penetrating eyes frightens me I can't leave him. (...) doesn't work. (...) badgers about engagement, buys Tupperware kitchen plates and bowls for what he calls my glory box, I'm surprised and think how quant or square. We throw down handfuls of Purple Hearts, (Amphetamines) dance till the sun comes up then sore down Sydney Road through red lights at 100 miles an hour. I'm exhilarated, gripping the car handle with my eyes tightly shut screaming "Stop ... Stop" to myself.

(...) went to a private school, had piano lessons, learnt how to write shorthand and type. She often misses days at work and we spend hours with elocution lessons "don't say *me* mum say *mu* mum." Larry moves into (...) 's flat. Eventually (...) and I move to a large room in an old Victorian boarding house in East Melbourne. A communal dusty kitchen is on the other side of the landing with a large blue Kookaburra greasy stove just outside our room and all I cook is baked beans on toast. | (...) and (...) are always there especially on weekends. (...) and (...) sleep in a single bed on one side of the large room and (...) and I sleep on the other side. We listen to each others groans as blankets

fly round beds, but pretend not to hear each other. As his body writhes up and down I'm on the ceiling glancing down at myself, we don't sleep much.

Its daylight, I'm alone shivering and shaking, my jarmies are wet with sweat but my body feels like a brick and I can't move from bed. When (...) arrives home from work she helps me dress and I return home to mum who takes me to the doctors – "glandular fever"

Unbeknownst to me mum finds a script for Drynamal – purple hearts – (amphetamines) in my draws, goes to the doctor in Otter Street Collingwood who prescribed them, gives him a dressing down. I see myself frantically searching, ripping out draws, emptying all my cupboards, running back to Collingwood, knocking on the doctor's door and him refusing my requests for more.

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At home I feel safe and in time appear to stabilize. With Mums support I undertake my nursing aid training. My father is delighted. In the mornings we stand together chatting at the Murray Road bus stop on the way to work until I move into nurse's quarters at Fairfield Hospital. (...) arrives up at my house to take me out mum hates him, dad ignores him. We sit parked outside my house in his car – he always locks the doors – and when we go dancing my eyes cant leave him, I know better, and his doesn't leave mine, following my every step.

(...)

Two months off finishing my nursing aid training I finally tell (...) "I'm pregnant." It's dark. He locks the car doors and the interrogation, pleading and shouting begins again "lets get married ... Why not ... Its my baby too!" Pow! to the side of my face, my eyes smart he continues ... "marry me!..." I see myself fleeing from his car in the black night tearing up my front steps bashing on my door with my fist screaming "let me in – let me in" he's close behind, chasing me. The door opens just in time I scoot past mums frightened face yelling "shut the door – don't let him near me, don't let him in, don't let him near me..." I crouch like a fetus on the floor in our dark passageway, hiding behind her skirt. We hear banging.

*St Anthony's Orphanage.*

It's a rainy day. I'm gripping mums limp hand as we trot up the front stairs of an old Edwardian house, from the records I now know its St Anthony's orphanage in Kew, today a revamped Archbishops residence. (When returning here in 2001 I was told by a nervous secretary or house maid, a nun in Civvies that I was in the wrong place, that the redeveloped complex belonged to the Baptists. Later due to my persistence she admitted it was indeed Catholic and in the past was St Anthony's - "*we do get nasty calls... what would the nuns want with babies?*") At the time the church was reeling from allegations from mothers like myself and from the public exposé of physical and sexual abuse of children in

(...)



their orphanages giving rise in 2003 to a Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutions. Children in Care - *their* institutions but all denominational voluntary organizations who ran these 'Homes' were implicated.

But in 1968 I thought St Anthony's must have been some kind of temporary live in crèche while parents worked. In between my experience of divulging my pregnancy to (...), fleeing to my mother and arriving here is a total blank. I don't know why but Mum doesn't want me to tell dad about the pregnancy. Next I'm alone standing at the bottom of a spiral stair case with my bulging suitcase of clothes and belongings at my feet. Another very pregnant mother glances down at me from the landing above, cups her hand across her mouth and whispers, "*I'm due soon, you're taking my place ...*" I never saw her again. I'm on my own until another one arrives just before my birth. My room upstairs is surprisingly quiet pleasant, has a big window, the tips of trees sway outside as I lay in bed thinking about, I don't know what. Consciously (...) 's adoption doesn't exist for me.

Its 6 am next morning I'm standing in a kitchen with Airoplane – this is what I call her – the mother craft matron with her veil. I know now her name is (...). She was a mother craft nurse and in all probabilities undertook her training at St Josephs or the like. My eyes dart from huge cooking utensils, from one jumbo pot to another and I'm bewildered, don't know what to do. I

(...)

look through glass which almost covers one wall and my eyes widen, the shock of terror seeing little children en mass pouring into the miniature dinning room immobilizes me. Startled I hear Airoplane's shrill voice - "don't just stand there bring in the porridge ... Ive already set the tables" pointing to the tot's room, "you'll be doing this on your own..." Next I'm cracking eggs into a huge pouching pan of boiling water. After the children eat they seem to vanish silently into nowhere again. Matron and Sister sit at a small table a picture of the Madonna and child hangs down on us from the wall. Eating breakfast in cheery moods they wave to me in the kitchen. I bring them eggs on toast then I'm told to fetch mine and eat with them too. I'm to take all my pills, I'm not allowed to smoke, go beyond specified shops, eat lollies, have sugar in my tea or butter on my one piece of toast and one pouched egg - it's bad for me. I don't put on weight. I can't go out without permission and when I return Airoplane's eyes dart to her watch. Most of the time is spent wondering where I was and never knew it was an orphanage until the late 1990's. In fact the word orphanage wasn't in my vocabulary.

Next the children and I walk single file with Matron at the lead down a dirt track, with straw like long grass on either side, some kind of parkland at the back of the house. The sight of nature, not a building in sight, momentarily brings me to life, gives me a fleeting sense of freedom. Until Johnny, the only

(...)

child's name I recall, drops to the ground, his blonde head refuses to budge, he's roughly three years old but I think he still wears nappies. Airopplane shouts "get up Johnny!" no movement. She's furious, drags him up by the arm and slaps his little legs over and over. He doesn't cry just whimpers. The children and I stand petrified. His chubby legs are covered with red hand marks but to my horror he plonks down again. She drags him up by the arms repeating the same performance. She Prods, pushes his back on up the path and little feet begin walking again. This happens almost every day and I wonder now why she didn't ask "what's wrong Johnny?" Whether this is one or more memories flashing or blending into one, I recall escorting them on my own. I had to control the group and when Johnny did this I feel so out of my depth. I scream, "run" to the others hoping he'll chase us and to my great relief he does. We were repeatedly given the explicit or veiled message that we could never care for our own child, that we were incompetent. Yet I was expected to care for a group of traumatized children -distressed expectant mothers cared for distressed children.

A life time later I wondered about little Johnny whether or not he ended up in Jail or a psychiatric facility as disproportionate numbers of State Wards do, many gifted intelligent people who would have otherwise made their way in the general community if not for unnecessary deprivation of parents or close relatives. When first arriving at St Anthony's I felt overwhelmed with sorrow for

(...)

all the children, in fact at times I felt one of them. But for the most I think I was emotionally dead, we all were.

Some day's visitors pop in, share lunch with Sister and Airopplane, I now know they're officials from other institutions. They discuss children in front of me as though I'm not there "Johnny's an attention seeker ... so and so "manipulates." Then all eyes fall on me, "*...and what about the father? I suppose he's not interested ... a clean break's better, shot gun marriages never work ...*" chatting over the top of me in front of the visiting stranger. My ears are full of banging noises, my eyes smart, I'm frantic, need them to know he craved a Tupper wear wedding not me, I wasn't a 'slut.' I was subjected to these 'conversations' almost daily. I told them the fathers name but the alternative of maintenance was never raised. Whether I would have accepted or not is irrelevant I should have been availed of this option.

I'm in the front playroom supervising children when a French father appears with his little boy clasping his worn trouser leg, escorted by Sister. He gescalates, waving, looks panicky, while his son wrings both hands and of course he too can't speak a word of English. I think the fathers trying to say his wife's sick and can his child stay as they have nowhere to live. I sit at the tiny tots table doubled in two, and want to scream "Please, please help them!! ... help them to find them somewhere to live!" They are migrants and so were my folks. And the

(...)

sight of parent and child separating leaves me almost hysterical but my lips don't stir.

Not long after my arrival I'm told to go to my room for my afternoon nap earlier than usual "some ones coming to see you." I hear gentle knocks at my door. I now know it's a social worker from the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau. Unlike (...) her face is young, sympathetic. According to the records her name's Miss (...). For some unknown reason my eyes are fixed to the window, a tempest storm brews, I can tell by tree tops tossing wildly in the wind, birds wobble, perched on electricity wire, I'm one of them peeking in at myself. I'm gripped, but can't think why and reflection, it doesn't occur. She asks about the fathers coloring, his race and interests. The records say "likes boxing... does not know of pregnancy and is not helping." About me, " nice little girl who feels very sensitive about the situation and has difficulty expressing her feelings ..." The records say I'm 18 years old but I'm 17. They describe the father as "Unknown" routine practice, but I told her his name - and I wonder now, didn't adoption courts think "doesn't one of these mothers know who the father is?" As with the first adoption I wasn't asked about adoption and I didn't know what this interview was about. Fathers were marked down as "Unknown" on birth certificates or adoption documents because if the mother named the father and his whereabouts to claim maintenance, or he wanted involvement, to

(...)

support his child, his legal consent to the adoption would have been required or he would have been sought for maintenance and mothers could have claimed benefits. Many fathers who approached their partners in Homes or hospitals were chased away by nuns with the threat of carnal knowledge. ( Dr (...) ) Who knows the father may have wanted marriage, and many did, fallen in love with their child. This wasn't on the agenda - nothing was to interfere with adoption proceedings.

Miss (...) asks if I want letters to my father sent to and redirected from Sydney back home so it really seems I'm there and arranges for a Sydney CFWB social worker to send them on to him. Sisters now say that mothers asked for this arrangement. But as child welfare adoption worker academic Robert Roberts said of adoption agencies in 1966 "they (agencies) provide out of town mailing addresses." (Roberts. R. *The Unwed Mother* 1966; 114. Harper and Rowe) I was certainly incapable of concocting an arrangement like this, it wouldn't have entered my head. They promoted secrecy reinforcing any sense of shame mothers felt due to *their* "moral codes."

My mother visits every week. I'm told to bring her to the quiet café round the corner. These moments are very awkward apart from asking how everyone is I'm stuck for words, don't know what to say. Her eyes are red. She looks tired from doing twelve hour shifts at Royal Park were she's been a charge Sister for

(...)

many years. I wonder now how heartbroken she was and probably couldn't share our plight with anyone. Perhaps my Aunt (...) was her confidant.

One day (...) comes to visit, heavily pregnant, I drop the mop and quickly tip toe across wet floors with open arms. Airopplane and Sister are nowhere in sight and Aretha Franklin belts out from the radio "*I Feel Like a Natural Women...*" We sit in the café round the corner. I have no idea what words pass between us.

When my time is near - another expectant mother appears, I'm relieved to have her company. Jamming clothes into washing machines it's my job to show her the ropes.

I have no memory of the onset of contractions or how and when I was admitted to St Georges Kew which was part of the Womens Hospital. I just remember waking in a hospital bed in St Georges. Anecdotal evidence says other mothers report being given some form of tranquillizer in the Home. Dr. (...)

(...) also says this.

### ***Birth***

Next memory is not knowing if its night or day, the delivery room is darkened throughout. I'm very distressed. All I hear is my rapid heartbeat. No one comes near me for what seems like a very long time. Then it's a black out until the birth. I see split second forms, the shape of my new born baby held -

(...)

mid air by a pair of anonymous hands. I remember so vividly, so desperately wanting, needing to embrace her. I struggle to sit up, reach out my arms to hold her and say “can I hold her?” but she’s literally snatched away into the dark. I try to sit up again, my eyes catch sight of what I now think was some kind of wire cage contraption covered with blazing white blood stained sheets at the end of the bed. It blocks my view cant see the bottom of the bed. A hand shoots out from the other side forcefully shoving my shoulder down again – then another total blank - (opening device) another blackout. I now think of boarding school, the way I dived at my first lizard, stared in fascinated horror as its disembodied tail convulsed round my palm like a guillotine had sliced the creature in half.

I only hold one memory, in between the birth and my discharge from Hospital. I had no idea where (...) was and was incapable of thinking of anything clearly. Next memory, I’m robotically marching into the foyer of the hospital to ring my friend (...). I feel machine like with a strange sense of unnatural energy as though driven by some hidden propeller that can’t stop running. She asks “what did you have?”

“It’s a girl,” the only words spoken to me in the delivery room. I called my baby (...). My voice sounds like a strangers I quickly change subjects and tell her I’ll ring later, once at home. Another self exists now.

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(...)



(I feel certain that I was drugged throughout but I am unable to prove it as my St Georges records which were held at Box Hill hospital were destroyed.)

I'm back in St Anthony's. My mother was also unaware that St Anthony's was an orphanage as once again it was described to her as a Home for expectant mothers. (find) The children were called "unadoptables" – by social workers, channeled there from St Josephs at three years old. I'm putting on a black chiffon dress to go home, one of my favorites. Next I'm standing in the front garden, it's a blowy day, a piece of paper crackles, flaps in my hand which I can't bring myself to read. I rip, tear it into little bits, scatter tiny torn pieces to the winds, and watch fragments gliding in mid air. I circle round to see if Sister's behind me and catch the swirling tip of the convent chapel above the dark sky. She appears beside me. The cab Matron rang for me pulls up outside the gardens violet flower beds. Sister leaned over to catch my ear *"I hope you've learnt something from this experience..."* Before I climb in say, *"at least I've got my faith back."* I felt compelled to say something I knew she wanted to hear. All their work on me wasn't in vain. We went to mass on Sundays.

### ***BACK AT HOME POST ADOPTION***

When I arrived home my father thought I'd been in Sydney working. He hugs me tightly, is thrilled to see me and almost cries. I want to sob and sob. I was sitting on enormous emotion, but I'm smiling, I want to cry but I'm smiling.

(...)

A life time later when he's an 87 year old man the truth is revealed, I tell him.

He's overwhelmed and wants to know everything about her, then says "I feel as though I love her already."

In recent years I learnt that (...) too was sent to St Josephs Foundling Home for over a month awaiting adoption and used as an object of study for St Joseph's **Mother Craft Nursing School** when she could have known my love. Keeping (...) would have been enormously healing for me and her had we been allowed time together, to embrace, for her to become real I had very little conscious memory of her for one reason - I didn't *see* her. Even this would have made a difference, far less harmful particularly for tender minors who cannot psychologically process what has happened once in this machine. On recollection my perception is that two adoptions were vastly different, the second far more traumatic. One reason is because I held (...) he became real for me a real person who I must have grieved for. I have a sense of instances where I spoke about him to more than one person but I'm unsure of to whom. I see myself saying "it was better for him..." as we were repeatedly told during Father (...) 's "education sessions" I recall once mentioning him to my friend (...), there were probably other occasions, but I never or rarely spoke about my second child

(...) (fix) My daughter (...) is now on a disability pension, has panic attacks – did not bond with her mother and is incapacitated by depression and anxiety.

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*Difference Between Seeing and Not Seeing the Baby*

In the late 80's after I separated from my husband I had to sell the marital home because my husband left the house in arrears. Shortly after my daughter told me she been sexually abused by who I thought was a close family friend. I was in my first year at Latrobe University and was so traumatized by this revelation that I had to defer. I had a breakdown and relapsed back into heroin dependence which lasted round 8 months. I lost confidence in my ability to care for my children. During this time I was largely separated from them and they were separated from each other as no family member or friend could care for all three. I had flashbacks of the details of losing my first three children but repressed them again. I finally recovered from heroin and we reunited. During this time I received intensive counseling but could not articulate the details of the adoptions. My children and I were homeless staying with friends and family until I received a loan from the Ministry of Housing and our lives began again. Around a year later my first son (...) contacted my mother by phone. She rang me with the news and I slumped to the kitchen floor with receiver still in hand. I was working for a politician at the time who gave me time off work and I met my

(...)

son. When we embraced I abreacted - all those feelings that I felt when holding him in the orphanage returned I was transported back to those moments of bonding with him and our embrace was instant intimacy. We both said we'd never felt so close to anyone before. Perhaps a year later my daughter searched for me and the social worker told her she had a sibling also adopted which she had no right to do. However when we finally met I felt deeply distressed by the sense of emotional distance which retriggered the trauma of not seeing her, of my senses not experiencing her. **Because I had the opportunity to say hello and goodbye to (...) at least I had something of him to take away – something of him with me, but with (...) it was, as said earlier like being cut in half, far more traumatic. (...) existed while (...) didn't.** This is a very important point as not seeing or holding the child you have just given birth to is so traumatic so brutalizing. A sudden and immediate sever – not seeing or holding the child is far worse than seeing the child in my view. Pamela Roberts said at a Conference in Hobart “we need to be flexible about such things as seeing the baby, whether or not it is up for adoption ... The whole experience – the birth can be traumatic and damaging ... to know that she has acquitted herself well and produced a healthy baby that she was able to see for herself if she so wished” (Roberts. P. Australian Association of Social Workers – Eleventh National Conference Proceedings “Social Issues of Today” Hobart May 1969; 54) In 1965 Mary Lewis also called not having

(...)

physical contact with the child as "harmful and illegal...Some Agencies refuse to allow the unmarried mother to see her child, nor do they tell her the child's sex. While this may be done from the best of motives, these misguided people should look more carefully at the situation." (Lewis, M. Australian Association of social Workers Ninth National conference Proceedings. "People Are Different" ( Social Work and Social Norms) Adelaide August 1965;112)

However from the time of (...) 's birth except for my memory of ringing my friend (...) in the hospital foyer and finding myself back in St Anthony's is a complete blank- I feel I must have been inappropriately drugged. Neither do I have any recollection of when and how I was transported back to St Anthony's or how long I was kept there, just like my return to St Josephs post birth. Apart from ringing (...) in the hospital foyer the only other memory I have post birth is finding myself in St Anthony's garden waiting to go home there are no other memory's of the aftermath of (...) 's birth.

### *Records*

#### SOME ASPECTS OF LEGAL CONSENT

Adoption records say (...) was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1968. (...)

(...) Adoption Officer for the CFWB took my Consent to Adoption

(...)

on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December, but I have no memory of this. Ironically the 28<sup>th</sup> of December was (...) s birthday. Now, knowing that mothers unconsciously tried to recapture the child they'd lost, it seems more than coincidence.

As consent taker it was (...) legal duty to ensure that I *freely* chose with *informed* consent to “relinquish” my child and was in a “fit and proper state ...understood the nature of such consent” as the Adoption Act required. Not possible – on the spot with no prior warning. It was assumed that I had been *previously* told of all procedural steps, that signing a legal consent form would *occur* days after the birth if I “insisted” on adoption - that this administrative step would happen. Yet the forms were unexpectedly presented to me days after the birth. In fact I didn't know that I *had* signed a consent and what it meant until a life time later. (The legalities of the consent taking itself, the administrative steps of the adoption process are complex and are not readily found in adoption literature, here I mention only some. It was also *her* duty to explain the function of the consent taking interview but whether this was explained to me at the time I will never know, it certainly wasn't mentioned before the consent was presented. Or in St Josephs with the first adoption.

### ***COUNSELING BEFORE CONSENT***

Under the Adoption of Children Regulations 1965 mothers were to be counseled. (Adoption Legislation Review Committee Victoria Report March 1983) The

(...)

adoption Act assumed this. **Social worker manuals stated** that legal advice, counseling and even psychiatric help should have been given during the pregnancy over a period of time which never occurred. Because my first pregnancy was the result of rape I should have had psychiatric help then.

(Roberts. P. Hobart, May 1969;49. Australian Association of Social Workers. Eleventh National Conference Proceedings "Social Issues of Today") It was my legal right to be made aware of services to help me keep my child and all of the above. In order for me to have consented *freely* at the time of signing I should have been made aware of all alternatives to adoption, information and entitlements under State and Commonwealth legislation, including the option of claiming maintenance from the **father**. A choice is possible only if a person knows they have a choice. **These** should have been relayed and reviewed ...during the pregnancy (Review) prior to consents being drawn up and presented. This meant that at the time of signing I was aware of – the entire picture. How else could I have had time to consider, been free in *any* decision? CFWB was meant to ensure counseling. ( Pamela Roberts senior social worker in charge of Womens Hospital Crown St Sydney. Australian Association of Social Workers. Eleventh National Conference Proceedings "Social Issues of Today" Hobart May 1969; 50-57)

Sister Borromeno said "The natural mother should be given all information and assistance about her sole right to keep or surrender her child ... *before* confinement ..." The social worker should have been seen regularly over a

(...)

period of months ...” Australian Journal of Social Work. February 1967. 12 – 14; Vol 20. No

1.) According to Sister (...) senior Josephite, the purpose of St Josephs was to “provide a secure and calm environment ... a place where she could be enabled to think through her current difficulties and plan ... for her child” and no obligation or condition could be laid down when mothers were channeled to these ‘kind’ places. When was this planning meant to occur? When were we meant to be informed. When were we meant to be advised of the existence of Day Care Centers with highly qualified staff. These had affiliations with other nurseries run by local municipalities and other groups - in fact a support network. It was the duty of the social worker to arrange Day Care for the child, to make the mother aware that this help was available. In 1956 according to Elizabeth Sharpe senior social worker “the basic method of preventing a child from suffering maternal deprivation is to see to it that he receives nurture within his own family... and it is the skilled social workers job to help develop the *capacity* for self help in the parents of these children we seek to serve through Day Nursery service” (Sharpe. E. Forum/ Australian Journal of Social Work 8-15 “Social Work With The Day Care Nursery Service in Victoria” 1956;7) The 1960 Social Welfare Act was introduced in recognition of the harm caused through viewing children in total isolation from their parents and families - to prevent “family breakdown.” In statutory and voluntary research material single parents are referred to as

(...)



families.(find) The machinery was meant to be geared towards mother and her baby remaining together.

Apart from CFWB Miss (...)’s interview in St Anthony’s, no counseling or information sessions occurred then. Only one interview for the purpose of ‘match making’ with adopting couples took place. At the time Miss Fish did not explain the function of her interview and I don’t recall the word adoption being spoken. As this was a second adoption it could be thought that I would have already understood the procedures and what they involved, the reason for this interview. But I was psychologically disassociated from the loss of my first baby and at the time of my one and only interview with (...) in St Joseph’s I did not know the reason for that interview either, until a life time later when reading the records. But its function was the matching session before any decision could have possibly been made by me the parents were in the process of being chosen. Yet according to social worker manuals just because I spent my confinements in St Josephs and St Anthony’s didn’t automatically mean adoption was on the agenda or compulsory.

It was (...)’s legal duty to ensure that I understood my legal rights and my right of revocation which I knew nothing about. (It was her legal duty to ensure that I was *capable* of signing. ) According to the Adoption documents (...) was to supply me written information regarding my

(...)

revocation rights as well as a copy of the consent. She testified in her Affidavit that she had supplied me a copy of the consent and “the said form of the revocation of consent to an adoption order.” But I only had one piece of paper in my hand in St Anthony’s garden waiting to return home which could have been a copy of the consent to adoption. The other issue is that the consent taker was the witness. Surely this is wrong. Perhaps this is why the Adoption Legislation Review Committee Victoria states “the parent should be allowed to have other persons present at the consent taking” other than the consent taker ... “a social worker from another agency.” (146)

#### DURESS

In terms of me consenting *freely* to the adoption of (...) my consent was invalid. When I was forbidden to see or hold her at birth or after, when I held out my arms to embrace her and said “can I hold her?” apart from other legal considerations their refusal was clearly “duress” *before* the consent taking, “there must be no duress” (Adoption of Children Act 1964) In fact the taking of my baby and after was outright violent – constituted assault in itself. When I tried to sit up and held out my arms to see and hold her, a hand from the other side of the bed forcefully shoved my shoulder back down. The aftermath of this occurring is a

(...)

complete blackout until my next memory of walking into the hospital foyer outside my room to ring my friend (...)

With the first adoption medical records state that I was administered “lactation suppressant” at the birth without my knowledge or consent. This showed intent to take my baby for adoption *before* consent was taken. After (...)’s birth I must have been given a “lactation suppressant” then too as I had no milk. I was unable to obtain my medical records from St Georges as they had been destroyed. Doctors had no legal authority to violate my parental rights in this way as I was my child’s legal guardian having the same parental rights as *any* mother to her child.

Also the practice of “idealizing adoptive families as necessary and desirable” over and above the child remaining with his or her mother was “illegal”... as was “repetitive use of such images in promoting adoption to the potential provider of the baby” ( Dr A Rickarby NSW’s Parliament Standing Committee on Social Issues. Inquiry into Past Adoption Practices Origins Website 2000) Father (...) “pastoral sessions” during my confinement at St Josephs in the first adoption and “daily conversations” – monologues by Matron and the Josephite nun in St Anthony’s for the second did just this.)

In the first adoption I was made to feel by Father (...) like Id be letting the prospective adopting couple down if I kept (...) “*real parents are*

(...)

*waiting who can give the child more than you could possibly imagine ... Unselfish girls can think of the child, think him not yourself...it's the loving thing to do...*" As though I was not a real parent. Adoption officials identified with adopting couples and mothers were made to feel guilty and ashamed if they "changed their minds."

In terms of being in a "*fit and proper state*" (*Adoption of Children Act 1964*) to sign a legal consent to the "relinquishment" of my child, I obviously wasn't. (...)

(...) as consent taker **and the absent witness** was meant to ensure that I was. Social workers also knew the psychological harm to mothers of adoption separation itself and were meant to warn mothers of this - including the possibility of "dire future regret" let alone the way in which separation from my baby actually occurred against my will. In fact instead of warning mothers the opposite happened. Not even the "a time of mourning" was mentioned. (Roberts. P. 1969;54) Also the Adoption Legislation Review Committee Victoria Report 1983 admits that mothers were under duress from hospital staff – "institutional pressure" – to sign consents yet no person or organization has ever been held to account – why? (152-153)

### **Conflict of Interests**

(...)

When CFWB (...) Adoption Officer (...) took my legal Consent to Adoption signature for the CFWB she was supposed to be acting for *me* the parent, but she was also in effect acting for the CFWB's adopting childless couple when she should have been independent. If I didn't sign the consent the prospective couple on the CFWB's adopters register would not get the baby. Placement and the Adoption Order could never have been made. As Dianne Welfare past secretary of Origins NSW's said this is a shameful conflict of interest. (...) was acting for me and the CFWB couple -carrying out *two* roles. The Adoption Legislation Review Committee Victoria states: "...the appropriate person to "take" the consent ...should be seen to have an objective view. There may be ... a conflict between one role of the social worker – that of acting on behalf of the parent – and another role involving the provision of a family for the child, especially if the social worker has identified with the prospective adopting parents" (145) Adoptive parents were also misinformed. Based on (...) 's word the adopting couple believed we chose with informed consent and so did their solicitor if they had one. My signature may have been on that consent form but I did not consent.

CFWB was an adoption agency – and although it was meant to provide homes for children in need it was in practice providing babies for childless

(...)

couples, so called “unwanted” (Marshall & McDonald .M. 2001;20) babies. When debating the 1964 Adoption of Children Act Hammer said “For many years the demand for children for adoption in Victoria has greatly exceeded supply” ( Hansard 3286; 24<sup>th</sup> March 1964) When the numbers of babies for adoption steeply declined in the early 1970’s with most unmarried mothers keeping their babies officials bemoaned this drop as a “community crisis ... all members of the Principle Adoption Officers Conference are deeply concerned at the resulting frustrations experienced by many couples wishing to adopt” (Sister Kathleen R.S.M. Mercy Maternity Hospital Second Annual Report 1973; 36-37) As one commentator Vincent Clark said “the goal of providing babies for childless couples conflicted with the goal of premarital chastity” (Vincent. C. 1961. Free Press Glencoe, Inc U.S.A.) – They needed our new born babies. Some adopted two, three and four in the “busy 60’s” – a real family – like my second child’s adopting parents did, with serious psychological ramifications for all the children including them. One of my daughters brothers shot his baby then shot himself. He always had psychiatric problems but (...) adoptive parents need to appear to be the perfect parents hindered them from seeking help for him. (...) ’s adopting father said he wished he’d never laid eyes on him.

Again with (...) I had no advocate present at the time of signing the Consent to Adoption form and my mother wasn't informed that I'd even had the baby. (...) my consent taker was the ONLY witness to my signing, routine practice. I should have had an independent witness, for example, a social worker who had presumably *already* counseled me, or my own solicitor this was not the case. As I was a minor my mother should have been present. I had no one there to *protect my wishes and interests* and ensure that a free informed decision was made by me; that (...) upheld my legal rights. Who could have or was present to say otherwise?

Once again as with (...) 's adoption (...) acted in the capacity of Justice of the Peace witnessing (...) 's signing of her Affidavit for (...) 's adoption - a month after the consent was taken. Again, absent from this document was the fact that (...) was Sister (...) in senior positions at St Joseph's for at least 31 years. The Justice of the Peace was meant to be completely independent -but not a shred of independence existed. After her stay in hospital my baby was then placed in the care of the nuns in St Josephs Foundling Home on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January before my consent was taken. I did not give my permission for her to be sent there

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(...)

My consent was according to records signed in St Anthony's (After the birth when I was standing in St Anthony's garden waiting to go home, I did not realize that I had signed a consent, I did not know that it was *called* a consent or its legal implications or what would happen to my child. And little did I know that by signing a consent I'd also be giving the CFWB authority to *arrange* the adoption, **acting on behalf of my child and the adopters**. The CFWB and St Josephs did the lot! And these officials were an incestuous lot. Not only did the same agency carry out all aspects of the adoption the same worker carried out multiple functions. For instance, the consent taker and guardian.

#### GUARDIAN

Upon the signed consent (...) acting for the CFWB also became (...) 's legal guardian, which I knew nothing about when it could have been a conflict of interest, a breach of professional ethics, to act in both capacities obtaining my consent, assuming guardianship and writing the Court report for the adopting parents and my child. The same agency and the same person working for that agency carried out two roles. (find)From what I can gather taking my legal consent to adoption precluded her from acting as guardian of my child because she was already acting *legally* for everyone who was party to the adoption. We were *all* with the same agency. And the Adoption of Children

(...)



Rules 1965 states that “it shall be the duty of the guardian to *investigate* ...all circumstances of the child ... and applicants (adopting couple) ...with a view to safeguarding the interests of the child. (...)’s duty was to *investigate* all parties to the adoption and ensure that I did freely choose, she had to verify this, that the consent had “been obtained and the affidavit of the authorized witness verifying that instrument of consent.” In effect she was investigating herself. Her job was to *investigate* “the giving of consent ... the signing of an instrument of consent the adoption of the child” surely not to carry out the actual taking of my consent. If the mother was indecisive for example, the guardian was to step back and let another take over until a decision was reached (Rowe 1966; 266. Parents, Children and Adoption: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd London) The guardian is meant to act with “complete impartiality” in the child’s interests yet she acted on behalf of the CFWB for all three, the couple adopting, my self and my child. Once again, no division of roles existed. This conflict of interest – the same agency carrying out all aspects of the one adoption - was alluded to in the Adoption Legislation Review Committee – Victoria Report March 1983 but the same person carrying out multiple functions, acting for all three parties was referred to only in a veiled way. But it had always been known.

Adoption wasn’t in my best interests and wasn’t necessarily in the “best interests of my child.” My daughter (...) has never recovered from a profound

(...)

sense of abandonment, an issue that authorities were well aware of. In practice there was an assumption that the child's needs were synonymous with the couples need for a child. Firstly, the initial separation itself was known to be traumatic for the baby. Secondly (...) authorized for my child to spend the first month of her life in St Josephs Foundling Home being handled by trainee nurses during my legal revocation period, before the child was placed in the adopting parents care. Thirdly how could being placed with strangers, replacement parents have been less harmful for the child than remaining with his or her mother? Yet in practice adoption was unlawfully promoted to mothers – “institutional pressure” – as the ideal. (Adoption Legislation Review Committee – Victoria Report 1983;153) The practice of “idealizing adoptive families as necessary and desirable over and above the child remaining with his or her mother was illegal... The “repetitive use of such images in promoting adoption to the potential provider of the baby” was duress and promising that which can never be guaranteed, an ideal life for my child. ( Dr A Rickarby The NSW's Parliament Standing Committee on Social Issues. Inquiry into Adoption Practices. Origins Website 2000)

Father (...) did this with the first adoption during his “pastoral sessions” and during my legal revocation period. And in St Anthony's I was subjected to daily ‘conversations’ intimating the same, that I would never be capable of raising my child better than strangers could. Fourthly the successful

placement of a child couldn't be guaranteed. Whether the adoption would work out, whether the couple suited the child, or were going to be "fit" parents was inherently unpredictable and in 1967 as others have quoted (...) my consent taker admitted that "scientific matching " was no more than mere "chance" as though this were a ground breaking discovery. (O'Collins M. Australian Journal of Social Work. "Some Aspects in the Field of Adoption" Vol.19, No1. Feb 1966) Social worker Esther Philips called selection a "haphazard arrangement" (Philips. E. November 1965;8. Australian Journal of Social Work. "The Victorian Adoption of Children Act 1964")

Dr Rickarby said some parents on lists and many demanding to be placed on waiting lists in NSW's had "mental illness." Sometimes one adoptive parent wanted a child but the other only went along with the adoption to please. (NSW's Parliament. Standing Committee on social Issues. Inquiry inot Past Adoption Practices Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1998.) Many adopting couples ended up single parents themselves. **And as Dianne Welfare said, a mother who lost her son to adoption in the sixties, " Except in cases of abandonment no law has ever alluded to adoption being in a child's best interests, over remaining with its own mother."** (Welfare. D. 1997; 366 Separation, Reunion, Reconciliation 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Conference Queensland 13 -15 June. Proceedings from the Sixth Australian Conference on Adoption Brisbane 1997. Published by Janice Benson.)

(...)

The CFWB was an adoption agency it was their job to provide babies for couples whom they had identified with. Their sympathies lay entirely with the couple. In turn adopting couples related to the agency" with a strong public display of praise and gratitude, and the agency would have photographs of happy adoptive families with cards..." (Dr Rickarby. A. NSW's Parliamentary Inquiry into Adoption Practice Origins Website 2000) Adoption was in practice "applicant centered ...to alleviate the grief of a bereaved (married mother) whose baby had died. To cement a shaky marriage to provide company for a lonely child." (Philips.E. Australian Journal of Social Work. "The Victorian Adoption of Children Act 1964." Vol.18, No3. Nov 1965; 6.) Although adoption was meant for 'children in need' for those who would not otherwise have a parent, would be institutionalized, in practice it was to service childless couples who could not conceive. Although the 1964 Act was supposed to have changed this "applicant centered" (couples centered) orientation to the paramountcy of the child's interests - in law - adoption eligibility criteria had changed little and selection of couples for a baby was in effect based on physical appearance, financial status and birth certificates. Adopting parents were not warned or informed of the probable harmful effects for the child such as "gross identity disorders." (Rickarby A. Inquiry into Adoption Practices Wednesday, 2 September 1998;70) They were not warned of the inherent difficulties in raising another's child. In fact they were told that raising the

(...)

adopted child would be just like raising their own as though the baby were conceived by them. Promoting adoption (...) one of the speakers at a Child Care Conference organized by the Childrens Welfare Association of Victoria (CWAV) said the fostered or adopted child “could be reared without any psychological drawbacks” (Herald Sun 20<sup>th</sup> September 1954 )

Also Doctor Rickarby said that in the 70’s the many adoptive parents that he had counseled in NSW’s who were having serious difficulties, the “long line of mentally ill, substance addicted, martially divided couples (over both adoption and other issues) who hadn’t grieved” for the child which they could never conceive – their own infertility and “who didn’t have the resources or will” to help the child they’d adopted through their own adoption issues. This disillusioned him very quickly to any notion of the ideal couple or to adoption being best for babies. (Dr Rickarby A. Standing committee on Social Issues Inquiry into Past Adoption Practices. Origins Website 2000)

Unlike the first adoption when I was not issued with a copy of the Consent to Adoption form - a legal requirement - which also explained HOW to revoke (...) could have supplied me a copy. This is plausible because of the piece of paper in my hand while waiting for the cab to take me home in St Anthony’s garden. She either gave me a copy of the Consent to Adoption form or

(...)

written information regarding my revocation rights. The 1964 Act required both be given to me. I couldn't even read it. Just like the first adoption I have no memory of signing the consent "torn into tiny pieces" The tearing of this document was the result of overwhelming outrage – a sense of annihilation – which I had no insight into at the time. They packed me off home in this state after taking my baby. The actions and integrity of these Christian Officials went entirely unquestioned." There was no accountability. "No machinery (was in place) to monitor and regularly review the performance of adoption agencies or to monitor standards and practices (Adoption Legislation Review Committee – Victoria Report March 1983 126; 8.0.1) Adoption agencies were funded by the Commonwealth – Hospitals and Charities Commission – which should have been protecting our human and legal rights. But these institutions were a law unto themselves – literally. And as Donnella Jaggs said historically voluntary organizations were utterly incapable of critical self examination and she as a Child Welfare academic and past member of the (CWAV) should know, criticism by professionals in CWAV against this organization - its members and their related institutions - was a rarity. (Jaggs 1986 *Neglected and Criminal: Foundations of Child Welfare Legislation in Victoria*. Philip Institute of Technology Centre for Youth and Community Studies.)

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(...)

I feel that Judges simply rubber stamped adoption documents and the question of “Regulatory Capture” where adoption judges were constantly only exposed to the view of pro adoption workers. The whole process was one sided Judges were not given another point of view, the mothers. Judge Chisholm said that “the Supreme court judge who does the adoptions ... would have taken very seriously the wisdom of the social workers and people who write the court reports ...that come to him case after case ... There were no competing sides.” (Chisholm Report on Adoption Practice Second Interim Report Transcripts of Evidence 16 June 1999 – 25 October 1999; 11- 12 )

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I tried not to think of what happened after the second adoption as those years were characterized by chaos, lurching from one crisis to another in quick succession, though on the surface I appeared to be living the ‘high life.’

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### *Aftermath of Second Adoption*

After arriving home from St Anthony’s my parents encouraged me to find a job. I lasted round 6 months. In retrospect I was suffering extreme anxiety about whether I was doing the right thing at work, and felt I was always doing the wrong thing. Overall I see now that I was preoccupied.

My next memory is (...) taking me to a hotel in Swan Street Richmond. She’s in love with (...), and is dying for me to meet him. I feel out of my depth,

(...)

introduced to so **many** people I've never known before; they throw hundreds of dollars round as if there's no tomorrow or like its scrapes of newspaper. I'm stunned, intrigued, impressed. (...) and I have sun baked all day at Black Rock beach and my face is glowing, red. One of the blokes looks down at my shoes and says "there awful" I'm humiliated. He introduces me to one of his friends who politely, firmly shakes my hand. Ten minutes later he appears again, bulging with smiles and my watch dangling between his fingers, "is this yours ?" Glancing down at my wrist, the watch was gone.

It took me years to extricate myself from these criminals. As time went on I became more and more enmeshed. I had a two and a half year relationship with one of them, (...) which resulted in the birth of my third child (...). (the names are fictitious to protect their identity.) At the time we were living a straight life away from all his associates in another State. (...) 's birth sparked an unconscious terror which I had no insight into at the time. Yet I was so looking forward to his birth.

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Before the pregnancy when mixing with his friends I was drinking heavily, but there was no drugs in that world in Australia at that time except for prescription amphetamines and barbiturates which I rarely took at that stage. I would more often than not have serious black outs, not remembering the night

(...)



before or where I was. (...) 's father and I fled to England after (...) was born as (...) was wanted in Australia for a serious crime. When I arrived back from England separated from (...) and with a baby in my arms I was having visual hallucinations and panic attacks from an acid trip gone wrong, the first drug other than alcohol I had since post first adoption. I stayed with my mother and father in their flat attached to the patients quarters in Denham Street Hawthorn. My mother was Matron of a hostel for chronic, psychiatrically effected people. I was in such a distressed state that I told my mother some of what had occurred in London and my discovery of L.S.D. which I had only had once. My mother and father helped me with the care of (...) for I was incapable – terrified and out of my depth - while alone with him, a result of bonding difficulties and unresolved trauma, losing my first two to adoption. It was when I arrived back from England that I discovered opiates which dissipated the distressing effects of the L.S.D. My parents were caring for (...) almost full time by this stage. But one night after using morphine from a syringe which others had also used I contracted septicemia and was in hospital for 6 weeks, the doctors told my parents I may not live. When (...) was around 10 months old his paternal grandparents took him to live with them and they showed nothing but kindness and understanding about my anguished state of mind, my inability to care for (...) particularly with my new found opiate addiction.

(...)

During these years my parents were beside themselves with worry about my unpredictable and erratic behavior prior to my third child's birth and later. During these years my mother had been seconded to work for a time in the capacity of a social worker at the Children's Court Clinic where she met (...) (...) a psychologist who befriended her and later me.

At one point throughout that year I'd go to Pats' house once a week where she gives me intelligence tests and chats, is really interested and says affirming things to me. A pattern emerges where I turn to her whenever there's a crisis and there were many. I confide in her as much as I'm consciously capable of doing. I was honest about my new found life but never speak about the adoptions. I'm angry, angry at the system but don't know I am and don't know why? Don't even know it is a system. It clings to me. "They steal of us," I say in defense of my behavior "look how much they charge!" She knows I'm having sex with (...) and is very worried about pregnancy. I was oblivious. I still hadn't heard of the pill and don't recall if it was discussed. While the sexual revolution is in full swing it doesn't touch my galaxy. I divulge what occurred post adoptions to illustrate the serious psychosocial ramifications the adoptions caused. They very nearly destroyed me. In fact they did - as my personality has been rebuilt - an excruciating process during which I overdosed on sleeping tablets and was

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unconscious for three days. The emotional pain was intolerable. During the eschewing years I was on methadone but when I'd reduce the dose I'd relapse again into heroin use. But methadone eventually worked for me in fact it saved my life.

Over past years I've had a number of admissions to psychiatric hospitals due to the adoptions which few clinicians really understand. I believe that more research and education as to the probable dire consequences of adoption for mothers and their adopted children is vital but won't be achieved by the publication of official books and accounts such as those spoken about here, Janet MaCalman's who wrote an up dated version of the history of the Womens hospital 1999 and Margaret McDonald's for instance.

(...)

**Part Two.****Post New South Wales Parliamentary Inquiry into Adoption Practice 1998 – 2000.**

I feel that explaining what the voluntary sector and the State did as a result of the NSW's Inquiry is important as I feel that infant adoption is very much still on the agenda even though these professionals now know the harm adoption separation causes to all concerned. I also feel that they have once again misrepresented, stigmatized us and are brazenly promoting the institution of adoption. They are far from sorry.

Here I speak only of mothers whose memories adoption corresponds with mine. It is against this specific contemporary historical backdrop – the Inquiry - that a flurry of publications by and for adoption organisations and their 'experts' directly implicated appeared - the official dominant view.

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**Harm to Mothers**

I read with growing horror social historian Janet MaCalmans, up dated version of a history of the Womens Hospital - written in 1998 the year of the Inquiry. Mother after mother testified to the life time trauma or post traumatic stress condition through having their babies 'whipped away' at birth. Yet she

(...)

callously described the separation of mother and child - a loss for both - as a "maturing" experience. And that many were "happily adjusted." (McCalman, J. 1998; 273. *Sex and Suffering*. Melbourne University Press. Victoria. ) Why did it take a life time for mothers to remember probably the most critical life changing event of their lives? Countless many fell into psychological dissociative states like myself repressing the grief and trauma to cause serious behavioural problems such as self medicating. Some mothers testifying in the N.S.W's Parlimentary Inquiry attempted suicide post birth. (M. O'Neil Legislative Council Inquiry into Adoption Practice. Report 21, June 2000;139) I feel certain that countless mothers still remain unconscious of the details of their actual adoption experience. Dr Rickarby said mothers were left with major depression which came along with post traumatic condition and pathological grief which breaks down into major depression very easily. ( Rickarby G. NSW's Parliamentry Inquiry into Adoption Practices 1998 – 2001. Wednesday 2, September 1998; 68. ) I suffered the loss of my first two children to adoption and a third from unresolved repressed trauma. Academics have a moral obligation not cause harm to sections of the community or society in their representations - our stories reflected clearly our suffering and that of our children. **Consultant Child psychiatrist Dr G.Arnold Rickarby testified in the Inquiry on behalf of mothers.** His studies revealed around 45% of mothers who

(...)

lost their child to adoption never had another while the rest had baby after baby unconsciously trying to recapture the one they'd lost which can never be done (FIND )as I did. I was to have six children the first three of whom I would never raise. I was re traumatized after reading McCalman's social history.

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One very distressing social aspect for me, and there were many, was when a stranger asked everyday ordinary questions like "how many children do you have?" Until recent years I was totally unaware of why I felt panic stricken when this innocent question was raised. Id go blank, stutter and say a different number each time.

Dr G.Arnold Rickarby also said "major depression" and psychological dissociation where some women would "block out great blocks of experience or part of their lives, (was ) another serious psychiatric sequel of their experience." Also panic disorders. (NSW's Inquiry 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1998;68) Although Id seen countless counsellors over the years not one detected the source of my anguish as stemming from adoption and neither did I. This was due in part to repression – and disassociation - my inability to consciously remember or articulate the details of the adoptions experience. In those rare times when the first adoption was mentioned by me and I NEVER discussed the second till recent years, I would parrot learnt phrases, "I had an adoption... it was better for the baby..."

(...)

thanks to (...) 's "pastoral sessions." But also because little was known by non adoption professionals about the ramifications of the loss of a child in this way. A disgraceful paucity exists as to the psychosocial consequences for both natural mothers and their child. And as previously said, the general belief was that mothers *freely* chose adoption.

A complete silence exists about the Parliamentary Inquiry taking place as she wrote her apologist social history. Her chapter misrepresents and is shockingly stigmatising, not only for mothers but for their lost children. Much more could be said in this regard. In light of what transpired in the NSW's Inquiry regarding psychosocial consequences, still these are rarely raised, discussed or analysed by adoption 'experts,' now in official publications. Management of Hospitals, voluntary and State institutions that carried out adoptions and were under scrutiny in the Inquiry heard in fine detail mothers stories and their sufferings. Yet again in 1998 Janet McCalman described the child, separated from his or her mother at birth forever as "a large lump that had to be removed..." (McCalman J. 1998;274 *Sex and Suffering* Melbourne University Press)

This cynical, shocking and contemptuous euphemism would have the general public believe that "adoption" is painless. Her description here gives the impression of **an abortion**. "Relinquishing mother" Diane Welfare who was one of the leading figures initiating the NSW's Inquiry into Adoption Practices

(...)

described officials treatment of her baby and herself as" like having an abortion " on ABC's Jennifer Burns Late Line 10.30. "Birth Rights" 21/10/97. ) Every angle broached by mothers claiming unethical and unlawful abuse by authorities preceding and after the Inquiry was covered- misrepresented in McCalmans social history. No wonder her " unethical objectification of us – to say the least – her chapter on adoption entitled "A Mothers" was left unrecorded in the books table of contents. I wonder now how adopted people would feel about being described - separated from their mothers - in this dehumanizing way. I encourage anyone who may be interested to read her 'spin,' she covered every base. Her misrepresentation of mothers is stigmatizing and slanderous and her research methods highly questionable –unethical –Her work is also riddled with contradictions, an informed reader can judge for themselves.

### *Practices.*

MaCalman's chapter entitled "A Mothers" misleads readers into assuming that "A" simply signified A for adoption – 'everyone knew' - when in fact no one knew and few know now that "A" was an 'in house' code marked only on single mothers records indicating to pertinent staff that our treatment regimes would radically differ from married mothers - or the deserving over the undeserving. In New South Wales the in house code was "BFA" which Dr Rickarby described as "quiet deceitful" as it could appear to the untrained eye as

(...)



a blood grouping. This code indicated to medical social workers, doctors and nurses that:

1. Single mothers babies would be taken upon delivery - immediately.

Mothers were not allowed to see their babies or have physical contact with them

– Unless a nurse took pity and “ broke the rules” (Dr P.Farrar 1997;123 )

2. That their drug regimes would differ from married mothers. 3. That single mothers would be separated and isolated – removed from the rest of the hospital population – usually in back ward verandas away from married mothers whose babies were beside their beds while mothers learnt to breastfeed.

4. After separating mother and child, some mothers were taken to other facilities with no prior warning.

Ms O’Neil who testified in the Inquiry said: “I was taken from the hospital during the night . My memory of this is vague. I recall being taken somewhere in a taxi, walking up a flight of stairs. I think I can remember being told to sign a piece of paper but I can’t be sure. I was shown the signed form the next day and told that I had surrendered my daughter. I do remember looking at the signature and recognising it as my own” ( Report 21 June 2000; 139. Legislative Council Inquiry into Adoption Practice)

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(...)

Dr P Farrar quotes a New South Wales midwife saying that unbeknownst to the mother "UB +indicated (on unmarried mothers charts meant) keeping her baby and UB - meant unmarried mother *not* keeping her baby ..." "Lest the mother be distressed by the word adoption" (Dr P Farrar, 1997;121) But in reality this distinction meant little. After obtaining her records Dianne Welfare who had her baby at the notorious Royal Womens Crown Street Hospital Sydney said on Jennifer Burns ABC Late Line. ("Birth Rights" Tuesday 21/10/97 )" my records clearly state that I was keeping my baby! They took him anyway! " Another said I asked to see my baby and was told "no it's not our policy" (Farar. P. 1997;125 Separation Reunion Reconciliation 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Conference on Adoption Queensland 13<sup>th</sup> – 15 June 1997 ; "What Did We Do to Those Poor Girls! ..." )

Sister Antoinette Mary Balwyn, a nun midwife - standing proxy for her Sisters in the NSW's Inquiry, testified that no discrimination existed in treatment regimes between married or unmarried mothers... All babies were "whipped away to sterile nurseries." But were **all** mothers denied access to their babies - forever? Later she said in her unchecked, contradictory fashion – only those on "cot rest." (143) (Some financially strapped married mothers also lost their babies to adoption – if godlike officials could manage it – choosing the worthy over the unworthy. ) Dr Arthur Chesterfield Evens said in 2002 that: "Attending

(...)

my first delivery as a medical student I was moved and shocked when a young unmarried mother ... was not allowed to see her baby at delivery. She kept looking around wondering when she would see her baby" (1<sup>st</sup> National Conference on Mental Health Aspects of Persons Affected by Family Separation held in Sydney - October 2002. Published by Origins 2004 )Dr Patricia Farrar reports another mother saying "there was no discussion as to why it was better to not see the baby I didn't inquire about my rights because I didn't know there was anything to inquire about" (Farar. P. Separation Reunion Reconciliation 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Conference on Adoption Queensland 13<sup>th</sup> – 15 June 1997 ; 124 "What Did We Do to Those Poor Girls! ..." )

### **Drug Regimes:**

Dr Arnold Rickarby said that single mother's treatment and drug regimes differed from married mothers. Regarding the administration of "lactation suppressants" at delivery before any legal consent to adoption could be taken was a violation of my parental rights. It was my right to choose how my son would be fed. When told in the Inquiry that representatives of the New South Wales's Department of Health said there was no evidence of discrimination in drug regimes Dr Rickarby replied:

" So? What? They are claiming they gave them all (married and unmarried mothers) a big shot of Stilbestrol (lactation suppressant) in the labour ward, were they?" (NSW's Inquiry. Rickarby Wed 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1998; 65)

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(...)

In New South Wales the commonly used drug for single mothers administered after birth was phenobarbitone, (check spelling)“a knock out kind of drug of heavy sedative lasting days.” Phenobarbitone was used for ‘deep sleep therapy’ by Chelmsford psychiatrists – the same ones worked at Crown Street hospital. At the Royal Womens Hospital Victoria it was usually a combination of heroin and other mind altering drugs such as Chloral hydrate as I was given. In 1998 social historian Janet McCalman specifically refers to their “overstocks” of heroin at the Womens Hospital. I feel this admission was because they were aware that contraventions of International treaties took place by its administration, though this is not mentioned. McCalman admits in a separate section that heroin was used for single mothers. According to McCalman its use for single mothers was justified on the basis that they – unmarried mothers - had particularly long and painful labours because they knew at delivery they “had to give up the baby” and wanted to hold on to the baby as long as possible.

(M’Calman 1998;275)

Firstly, many mothers testifying and mothers that I have spoken with *didn’t consciously experience labour* as they were heavily sedated, as I was. \*\*\* One mother informed me that shortly after she lost her child she actually felt as though she were still in labour trying to give birth – she was administered Nitro Oxide while in labour and didn’t experience the birth at all. When she woke the

(...)

baby was gone – against her will – “It’s a girl that’s all they said” ( ...)

(...)

Oral history recorded by me) Some weren’t even told the sex of their child or were told their child had died.

**(Expand later:** In instances where this occurred this practice was called “rapid adoption” and was of course highly unlawful. If a married mother was suspected or unexpectedly had a still born birth the unmarried mother was told that her baby had died and her child was then given to the married mother.

Some unmarried mothers were then presented with what they thought was a death certificate to sign when indeed it was a Consent to Adoption form. (Dianne Welfare 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Conference on Adoption From separation to Reunion and Reconciliation Brisbane 13 – 15 th June 1997 “Civil rights and Crimes in Adoption...”)

Secondly, long and painful labours are typical for most mothers delivering their first baby. Thirdly, I feel certain that the use of heroin for single mothers was because of its heavier sedating effects, more so than other more commonly used opiates, although I am in favour of its use in obstetrics generally as it does have less side effects for babies. Fourthly, their admission here was due to the fact that so many “relinquishing” mothers were accessing their medical records in the 1990’s and official fears existed at that time about the prospect of a Victorian or National Parliamentary Inquiry taking place. The other crucial point

(...)

is that mothers didn't *have* to "give up the baby." Even for arguments sake if a mother adamantly decided during the early stages of the pregnancy that adoption was best for her baby as officials said, she had every right and prerogative to change her mind regardless of any prior thoughts or decision. It was her human and legal right to see and have physical contact with her child and "change her mind". In terms of mothers being in a "fit and proper state ... to understand the import" of consent to adoption, Dr Rickarby said practices of inappropriate drugging would "totally compromise" (mothers) ability to consent freely. According to Dr Rickarby "They kept the drugs running through until the fifth day" and mothers were denied access to their baby to prevent bonding. (Rickarby. NSW's Inquiry into Past Adoption Practice Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1998; 66) It is plausible that I was given drugs every day after the birth as I was given Morphia directly after the birth with (...)

Ms Cameron who gave birth at the Mater Hospital NSW says:

"...The ten days until I signed the papers on the veranda were a blur ... my medical records showing huge amounts of pentobarbitone administered three times daily... Notations made each day on my medical chart say "Adoption Papers still not signed"(NSW's Inquiry, Report 21 June 2000;143)

### **Isolation and Separation of Mothers from their Babies.**

McCalman quotes Miss (...) Matron at the Womens when

I gave birth. "There was a phenomenon we didn't realize for a long time . We got into the habit of putting the single girls out on a balcony because it was thought it was nice for them, but it came to be assumed by them that they were out there for punishment...it was to protect them from closer contact with ward babies"

(McCalman. J. 1998;275 -276) Who were these mothers who assumed we were "out there for punishment?" That mothers were kept in back ward verandas after delivery had nothing to do with punishment and it wasn't a naturally ordained "phenomenon." It was a highly calculated hospital practice designed to keep us under intense surveillance and out of sight. Designed also to keep us separated from *our* babies, not "ward babies." As said earlier I tried to leave the veranda to find my baby "but there was no way I could get past the nurses station unnoticed – and I tried - positioned at the top to the room. "Believe me once my child was born" in my conscious, remembered times "I was on full alert ...like Id woken from the dead" At the time I had no idea where I was in the hospital complex and was incapable of thinking about anything except my son. In terms of Miss

(...) from 1955 - 1977 - when I had my baby in 1966 -"not

realizing" – this is blatantly untrue. The isolation and separation of mothers from the rest of the hospital and their babies after birth was practiced nationally

Ms O'Neill who gave birth at the Mater Hospital NSW testified in the Inquiry:

“...Everyone knew that I intended to keep my baby ... after the birth I was sedated and kept a prisoner ... ” She was discovered “sneaking out ... After this my sedation was altered and a nun was put outside my room to guard me.”

(Inquiry into Adoption Practice. Report 21. June 2000; 138)

Ms Cameron who gave birth at the Royal Womens Hospital Crown Street Sydney in 1966 says:

“I was mistakenly put in the ward with married mothers... unmarried mothers were sent out to the veranda ... next morning I almost had my daughter given to me until one of the staff called out, “Stop she cannot have that baby she is being transferred out to the veranda...” (Standing Committee on Social Issues. NSW’s Inquiry into Adoption Practice. Report 21. June 2000;143)

### ***THE UNEXPECTED***

But so contemptuous of mother’s rights were officials, so sure of themselves that they can admit to contraventions of laws with impunity. In 2001 in response to distressed mothers letters some approached officials directly - Father Dowling patronizingly said “due to adoption laws and prevailing social attitudes many felt **pressured** into giving up their precious child ... **never**

(...)



**expecting to see them again.”** (Kairos. 13 – 20 May 2001) Firstly, Father (...) forgets himself. The Adoption Act says “there must be no **duress.**” Mothers were the sole guardian of their child and could not in law be denied contact with them and could not be “pressured.” The law does not state the source of duress just that “there must be no duress” – In law not even parents couldn’t force their daughters to “relinquish” her child. But of course parents weren’t availed of knowledge of legalities nor their daughter’s legal rights and entitlements, or the specific procedures and practices actually involved once in official hands of this class of professionals, adoption according to *their* ‘rules’. In response to (...) statement – “**never expecting to see them again**” Many rightly say – they didn’t see their babies in the first place. They were in extreme shock from the **unexpected** taking of their child at delivery. One mother says “ I was separated from my baby (at birth) which I didn’t expect” Another said I asked to see my baby and was told “no its not our policy.” (Farar. P. 124 – 125; 1997. Separation, Reunion, Reconciliation. 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Conference on Adoption Queensland 13 – 15 June 1997. Published by Janice Benson for the Confernece of the 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Confernece on Adoption.) At the Queen Victoria hospital 1963 one mother said “ they wouldn’t let me see my baby, I told them it was mine, screamed ....” (Hansard 23 Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> November 1997) The unexpected was calculated, seen as necessary by officials. For while pregnancies may have been unwanted or untimely - and many confined in

(...)

'Homes' had every intention of keeping their child - once the pregnancy goes full term and baby is born - the baby is very much wanted - the reality of your very own child impacts at birth - becomes real. Delivery is the moment of truth, when 'all hell' broke loose, as far as officials were concerned when mothers attempted to see and embrace their new born. This was the crucial stage, adoption proceedings could be jeopardized by audacious mothers "changing their minds" - as officials put it - at birth. This was the time when mothers could be "overwhelmed ... surprised by the spontaneous love they feel for their baby. "

(J. Rowe. 1966;59. Parents, Children and Adoption: Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.)

'Whipping' the child away at delivery – forever - before mothers realized what was happening, had nothing to do with kindness to us as McCalman implied in her Womens Hospital social history. As previously said in the early 60's this practice was described by senior social worker for CFWB as "harmful ... **many Agencies in this country have punitive illegal and harmful rules regarding the unmarried mothers inalienable right to physical contact with her child when she has decided upon adoption.** (1965;112 Australian Association of social Workers. Ninth

National Conference Proceedings. "People are Different" (Social Work and Social Norms A Biennial Conference of the Australian Association of Social Workers. Adelaide August 1965;112)

Dr Rickarby also said "I consider the cruel and unnatural treatment of these women by their fellows to be of such extent and seriousness that it has only been

(...)

surpassed by the treatment received by our indigenous people.” ( Rickarby G. NSW’s Parliamentary Inquiry into Adoption Practices 1998 – 2001. Wednesday 2, September 1998; 62. ) Also Sister Borromeo said “The natural mothers right to see, handle and nurture her child, if she so desires, often requires protecting” Borromeo. M 1967;13. Australian Journal of Social Work Vol 20. No1 ) Senior social worker (...)

(...) calls the practice of preventing mothers from holding or seeing their babies as “unethical” but in fact it was highly unlawful if the mother wished to do so. Also if adoption workers didn’t know the harm caused back then they certainly do now yet they continue to promote it. (...)

(...)

(...)

(...) wrote the Many Sided Triangle 2001 Melbourne University Press. Victoria.) while the Parliamentary Inquiry was in process.)The practice of denying mothers any contact with their child was simply less of a headache for *them*. It made for the smooth running of adoption complication free. Officials were so acutely aware of “mothers changing their minds”(Rowe 1966) at birth, as they put it - that some mothers were blindfolded and archival footage shown in the New South Wales’s Inquiry reveals some mother’s hands were tied to delivery beds so that they could not reach out to see or hold their new born baby. Others had pillows placed in their unsuspecting faces. (Farar. P. 1997;124 ) Seperation,

(...)

Reunion, Reconciliation. 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Conference on Adoption Queensland 13 – 15 June 1997.

Published by Janice Benson for the Conference of the 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Conference on Adoption.) If

mothers so freely consented to the adoption of their child why were these violent, barbaric **practices** needed?

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### *MORES*

The primary official justification for adoption and its practice is that they were a reflection of the times – “ the prevailing social attitudes” — as Father (...) said. But who set those times and did they involve contravention of their own legislation and treating mothers for whom they had a duty of care as automatons? As far as societal norms go motherhood was glorified in the general community particularly for average working class young women whose options in life were much narrower than educated women. “How could you give up your own baby” was a comment I once overheard, throwing me into utter chaos. To the average person in the general community ‘giving up’ of your own baby to strangers was almost incomprehensible. Dianne Welfare another mother, founder of NSW’s Origins said that the social stigma - of ‘giving away your own child ‘ was “ far greater than becoming a sole parent could have ever been.”

(Welfare D. Origins NSW. Civil Rights Crimes in Adoption ... 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Conference on Adoption from separation to reunion and reconciliation Brisbane 13 – 15 June 1997 ) Its

(...)

psychosocial effects, for mothers, for instance the profound shame, reinforced any psychological suppression and repression.

### **SOCIETAL ATTITUTES – ‘THE TIMES’**

In 2002 when mothers like me trustingly handed their stories and records to the Public Interest Law Clearing House who referred our stories to an expert Barrister Ms (...) for her appraisal she said:

“ It is now clear that the communities wholesale acceptance and support of adoption of children born to single mothers reflected a lack of understanding of the effects of such practices and in particular the psychological harm which resulted for both children and their parents.” (Copy in author’s possession)

**Firstly**, the general public believed “wholesale” that mothers freely chose with informed consent to ‘give up the baby’ – the “unwanted” (McDonald M. 20;2001. Melbourne University Press ) baby who would otherwise be institutionalized. The law is supposed to express and reflect our deepest social codes and the giving over of your baby to another in adoption was never meant to be compulsory. To say that adoption reflected the times, its *practice*, is tantamount to saying it was socially acceptable to violate common law parental rights or defraud mothers of their children to say the very least. The social codes of the times were reflected in a United Nations statement given at the

**- World Health Organization Conference on Mental Health Aspects of Adoption 1956.**

(...)

“A mother giving consent must do so freely and must be emotionally and mentally able to appreciate all the import of such consent. A Consent should not be taken if there is any sign of indecisiveness or if she has not given sufficient consideration to the matter ... there must be no sign of vacillation” in the mother. The Adoption Act reflected this. The law did reflect and respect our deepest social codes but adoption officials didn't. (McLean. D. 1956 Chapter IV. WHO of United Nations. “A Meeting of Experts on Mental Health Aspects of Adoption” held in 1953. Government Printers A.H. Pettifer available from the Social Work Section of the Fisher Library – Sydney University.)

**Secondly**, the general community were unaware of adoption *practices* themselves because, as mentioned previously, these were covert. Relying as they did on coercion, practices were morally repugnant and unlawful. The community was not cognizant of what actually occurred behind very closed doors but officials knowing full well the law did. Historically it was major adoption hospitals like the Queen Victoria and Royal Melbourne hospital, Royal Womens Hospital, funded by the (State - Commonwealth – Hospitals and Charities Commission) a leading teacher in the field of “sterility” and the voluntary sector who in effect determined adoption laws. They were the “ main source of expertise for legislators.” (Jaggs. D 1986 Philip Institute of Technology Centre for (...)

Youth and Community Studies) Management of Church run Homes like St Joseph's and the CFWB played a direct role in policy and law formation officially since the 1954 Act which they insisted upon through the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria and its Advisory Council (CWAC)

With every passing change to the Adoption Act parents chances of keeping their child were whittled away thanks to these experts. It was the voluntary sector both here and in the UK who lobbied long and hard pioneering the first Adoption Act in 1928 – when adoption became official – a time of great poverty for ordinary folk. And poverty was the main reason why children were made State Wards losing their families – “ not misbehavior on the part of their parents.” (Jaggs D. 1986 *Neglected and Criminal: Foundations of Child Welfare Legislation in Victoria*. Centre for Youth and Community Studies Philip Insitute of Technology Melbourne. )

Why weren't the voluntary sector monitored and standards devised by the State who left children in care and the running of adoptions totally unaccountable?

The Commonwealth had a duty to ensure that States followed certain procedures and laws to protect our interests, all concerned as Foundling Homes couldn't have survived without Commonwealth funding.

Promoting adoption Social worker Margaret **McDonald** in 2001 quotes childless couples as the “ultimate victims” (2001;106 Marshall& McDonald) when adoption declined. Yet as others have said adoption was meant for the truly

(...)

orphaned child who would never otherwise have a home, or be institutionalized not as a solution to another's medical problems or childlessness. In terms of the psychological and emotional impact on the newly born child, their need to connect in a nurturing way with the person who has been with them from the very beginning of their journey, who initiated that journey – their life, its hard to imagine a more intimate or interdependent bond than this. Why would anyone feel “victimized” or be happy about denying mother and child this birth right – the right to life!

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Once again as others have said it's not the responsibility of mothers without a ring to provide babies for childless couples – like battery hens. But the patriarchal Church and State led childless couples to believe that they had a god given **right** to our babies as they could never otherwise have one. At the time the officials line was “families should have as many children as possible” not to be “selfish.” For “no family is complete without children...not a proper family” (Father Perkins - Forum “Moral Problems in birth control 1957 )Mother without Man was prohibited too, not a real family either. Childless couples adopting babies was supposed to “cement a shaky marriage” prevent divorce - shore up the national birth rate, the threatened nuclear family which was more compulsory than we

(...)



could have ever imagined. (Adoption was social engineering mission “a very zealous one that took on a life of their own and an “instrument of class warfare” usually the poorer going to the wealthier. (Farrar P. find ) Also the Nuclear Family is the corner stone of Capitalist society and that’s the way they wanted it to remain. Single mothers had to be eliminated.

### WOMENS HOSPITAL

As for Adoption hospitals like the Royal Womens, St Josephs was attached to the Womens internationally renowned for its expertise in adoption and their sterility” Clinic established by Dr Hoppy Johnson which gave the hospital great prestige and political clout. In 1966 the year my son was born they alone arranged 200 adoptions and by 1967 boasted 40% of ex nuptial confinements in Victoria. Far from “carrying the burden of single mothers” as Janet McCalman phrased it the Womens was an adoption agency in its own right - they too needed new born’s to meet bulging waiting lists of childless couples. Senior doctors were acutely aware of a mother’s common law and human rights to their child for they along with other adoption hospitals were highly instrumental in determining laws

For instance the 5 day time frame after birth when a legal consent could be taken from a mother. Some like Minister Fulton expressed serious misgivings about this time frame - “ I do not think a mother would be capable ...”Bradbury said “ she would be *very distressed*” (14<sup>th</sup> April 1964; 3645) But five days was already

(...)

decided after consultation with leading adoption doctors. Hammer said, based on their opinion this period "has been agreed upon ... after consultation (with) almoners, experts at the main hospitals as the period when the state of uncertainty in the mind of the mother usually can be expected to disappear."

(Hansard 3647; 14<sup>th</sup> April 1964 )

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 But while debating the 1964 changes a male progressive politician Fulton said "from my experience and from information I have received from authorities on this matter throughout the world I think that the mother may grow to love the child and not want to part from her I think its natural" (Hansard 22 April 1964;3827 )

(One politician suggested that public housing be improved. (Single mothers already had Priority Housing status.)

## *GRIEF*

In my case social workers Father (...) and (...) had a legal duty of care to warn my parents and I, make clear to us the harmful effects of 'adoption' for the "relinquished" child (discussed later) and for myself. The life time psychosocial ramifications of losing a child – not even the **acute grief** was mentioned or acknowledged yet it was said in the 1960's by social workers that our babies were taken to "**alleviate the grief of a bereaved (married) mother**

(...)

**whose baby had died...(or to cement a shaky marriage)”** (Philips E. November 1965; 6. Australian Journal of Social Work. Vol. 18 No3. ) This understanding was not extended to us in any way. It couldn't be. Follow up care was recommended in **the Survey of Child Care in Victoria 1962 -1964** and social worker Journals but in practice we were packed off hollow, shocked, empty handed shortly after birth and callously told we'd forget and get on with our lives. One nun testifying in the Inquiry said in terms of officials being cognizant of grief or need for counseling and harm to mothers – “ you may as well be talking about another world. “ **But even the man in the street knew the pain, sorrow, grief when a mother loses a child.** In 1966 social worker Rowe states that “ there is a period of mourning” (Rowe. J. 1966; 61 Parents Children and Adoption:...) While debating the 1964 Adoption Act males politicians described our emotional state after delivery itself as “painful and distressing.” (14<sup>th</sup> April 1964; 3645) this was obvious to anyone other than adoption experts. Separation of child from parents was quoted, described as an “amputation” by Child Welfare academic L.Teriney in 1963.) It must be said that many obvious distinctions exist between the trauma of the actual death of a baby and a loss of a baby to adoption against the mothers will or informed consent. For instance in adoption that child is still alive, and there's often no beginning - no chance to say hello let alone goodbye – no ending

(...)

- always an unspoken unconscious or otherwise – wondering - but parallels can be made in general terms of a grief factor and shock.

Dr Rickarby's response to the nuns denial of knowledge of our even our grief was " I cannot accept that they would be that abysmally blind to what a mother suffers even the general community knew the stress the grief at the loss of a child " (FIND) But they were and still are. In order to do what they did to us they had to see and portray us as less than human or they wouldn't have been able to do what they did to us. For another reason among others if they were unaware of the feelings of mothers 'back then' - harm caused to mother and child through 'adoption' - they are not culpable of causing that harm now. Also religious organizations are still as committed to their beloved institution of adoption as ever, particularly as the Welfare State crumbles. Under the Howard government the supporting parents benefit discontinues when their child turns 7 years old. What has the voluntary organizations to say of this? Does mother and child stop being valuable at 7 years old. In the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutions the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria CWAV attempted to undermine the Welfare System, a parents right to a social wage – the right raise their own children. In terms of being aware of our detrimental psychological state I believe they did know senior social worker for Catholic agencies Pamela Roberts said "I am convinced she needs a tremendous amount of help after

(...)

delivery and on leaving the hospital. Those who have their babies adopted ...need continuing help over *mourning* and adjusting to the loss of their child particularly during the period when they are reintegrating themselves back into society – But no follow up care happened, no acknowledgement of our suffering as Pamela Roberts and others have said that there should have been. (P.Roberts. 1969; 54 Australian Association of Social Workers Eleventh National Conference Proceedings “Social Issues of Today” Hobart, May 1969)

In 2001 the denial and misrepresentation of our suffering continues in current publications. Adoptions downside is unethically trivialised, denied while adoption continues to be promoted. **Margaret McDonald** now says “there is widespread community support for the continuation of adoption. Adoption is a well understood and familiar legal concept in Australia and other countries” (Marshall & McDonald 2001;16. The Many Sided Triangle) Where is the evidence to say that “widespread community support for adoption” exists? As demonstrated earlier the general community did and do not understand what adoption involves nor do they understand its legalities or how separation of child from mother actually occurs. Mothers themselves didn’t know until it happened! The truth is that there is no way to take the baby without causing very probable harm

(...)

to either child or mother or both. But adoption officials unethically continue to remain silent about this and misrepresent.

In 2001 (...) still claims ignorance of the effects of “relinquishment” for mothers saying that “until the early 70s little was known about what the relinquishing mother had experienced.” But they did know, they knew what would be obvious to any person. In 1966 Rowes textbook for trainee social workers recommended by (...) - my consent taker - for Victorian students it states 1966 “there can be few or more painful, frightening predicaments ... and utter anguish” (35,61) (...) - and other adoption practitioners witnessed our trauma in fact were the cause. While she gives recognition to our grief - a couple of lines in 2001 – she leaves the psychosocial ramifications completely unexplored, the traumatic aspects, including its effects on a “relinquishing mothers subsequent children which is now well known by them or should be. Yet some past and contemporary studies on this issue do exist such Shirley Swain’s look at the natural mothers health and Dr Patricia Farrar’s “Relinquishment and Abjection: A Semanalysis of the meaning of losing a baby to adoption” 1999. A past nurse/ mother who lost her first two children to adoption. And others such as Dr Arnold Rickarby whose testimonies were on the web under “Origins” and in Inquiry transcripts. As an adoption social worker writing a book on Adoption with the input of adoption agencies such as

(...)

Centacare and the Josephite nuns (...) (agencies are State funded)

publication will no doubt be on university reading lists for student social workers, as will McCalmans. In light of contemporary understanding of the psychological impact of adoption on mothers and their children these organizations and their academic social workers have a duty of care to not cause harm, to enlighten, spell out, and warn the community and students of the downside of adoption; including its possible lasting harm not only for mothers but their adopted children, their natural families also adopting parents.

#### COUNCELLING?

In regards to the counseling of single mothers which the 1964 Act assumed – this did not occur with ANY mother I have ever spoken with. When attempting to access my records I spoke with Helen Kain senior social worker with the CFWB now Centacare for a life time. When inquiring about counseling, saying it didn't occur for me - her contemptuous reply was -“it was the 60's – remember?” Yet the 1964 Act assumed that mothers would undergo counseling not just in theory as Janet McCalmans social history 1998 says but in practice – The Children's Regulations demand the counseling of single mothers. Donella Jaggs senior social worker for the Social Welfare Department also a member of the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria the peak representative body for

(...)

child welfare organizations or orphanages – believed and said based on a Statutory and Voluntary Joint Survey preceding changes to the 1964 Act:

“...reflecting social workers concerns for informed decision making ...recognition of the implications of the decision for the mothers subsequent mental health – adequate counseling and advice ...should be provided before a mother signed consent for her child’s adoption.” (Donella Jaggs. Neglected and Criminal... 1986;131) In 1964 in response to the 1964 Adoption Act social worker E. Philips said “The approved agency is required to provide staff and facilities for the counseling of parents of children under consideration for adoption”. (Journal of Social Work. “The Victorian Adoption of Children Act 1964” Vol. 18, No.3. Nov 1965;7) It is obvious that others at the time felt we did need counseling and that we were receiving it.

But all and any contact with nuns or any other official revolved around getting my signature on that Consent to Adoption form, nothing else. The law and its underpinning social mores also demanded we understood “the nature of such consent” But the reality is “I was kept in a state of mystery at St Josephs, was capable only of existing, surviving moment by moment.” In regards to St Anthony’s as said previously I had no idea it was an orphanage. I was simply given orders by Matron and Sister, had no one to speak with and was

(...)



psychologically disassociated from the first adoption experience. No one explained anything.

### ISOLATION

In 1983 Senior Josephite Sisters explained at the time the reason for their “distant relationship” with expectant mothers confined in their institutions such as St Josephs. According to them the nuns were “...innocent and naïve ... shocked... to see up to fifty pregnant girls emerging from the wood work ... they understandably felt disturbed and uncomfortable in the presence of single mothers who in turn were not totally at ease with the sisters.” (Moore. H. 1982;39 “Better For Babies” An Interpretive Oral History of the De – Institutionalization Of Infant Care at St Josephs Babies Home. Social Work Enquiry & Social Work. Professional Project Melbourne University.) **Firstly**, most of us were Catholic and were very familiar with nuns. Each denomination had their own institutions – and that’s the way the voluntary sector wanted it. Catholic babies went to Catholic families to keep the faith going. **Secondly** I experienced real affection and compassion - very much welcomed- from various sisters who’d taught me at school. And extraordinary generosity from a very dear long standing friend, also a Sister. Understanding and communication was not unreasonable expectations from us. After all the nuns “sacrificed” their lives for souls like me, and our babies. Secondly, Mary MacKillop’s vision, founder of the Josephite Order, was to assist these mothers,

(...)

often stigmatized by them as prostitutes, how could nuns not have known? Where did they think the new born babies came from and many nuns undertook their midwife training at St Jo's. Added to this in 2001 Father (...) in his condescending message of "Healing" said " Blessed Mary of the Cross (their founder) was motivated by love of expectant single mothers who desperately needed a place to call home..." (Karios, 2001; 13 – 20 May) Again how could the sisters not have expected single mothers to be at St Josephs? This was blatantly untrue. Even the nurses were not allowed to communicate with us.

### Stigmatization

Father (...) like the Josephites also misrepresents single mothers in their care as "desperately needing a place to call home" implying that all expectant mothers in their institutions were all homeless without family support – our parents didn't care. This is a central theme running through official representations of mother's families, the justification for taking our babies. In the 1980's the Sisters also described us as -"outcasts" which is stigmatizing not only for us but our parents who go largely unrepresented. (Moore H. 1982;39)

Worsening relationship conflicts between parents and their daughters yet again in 2001 the grandparents are still blamed as a justification for mothers losing their children to adoption. According to Margaret McDonald it is parents

(...)

not the social work or medical profession and religious counterparts who “cast around for someone to blame.” (M. McDonald 2001;49) But while Secrecy surrounding adoption relied on the stigma” of “illegitimacy” it also relied on stigmatizing the expectant mothers families. If it wasn’t enough to stigmatize mothers, as “prostitutes” their distressed parents were also stigmatized, mothers in particular as either “sexually deviant” or “repressed” (said above check) The “analysis” never goes beyond “the shame of illegitimacy” or this- “the parents of the young unmarried women were often the driving force ... This was ...*due to shame and disgrace they brought to their families*” (Marshall & M.McDonald “The Many Sided Triangle 2001; 5) My family showed me nothing but kindness and understanding which was a very different story once in the hands of social workers state and religious organizations. All my family knew of my predicament including my brothers partners family and my next door neighbor. I felt very supported by their warmth and understanding. My family assumed this emotional support would continue once confined in St Josephs. That my father wasn’t ashamed of me is evident in the fact that “my father surprised me, turning up at St Josephs one day to take me to the Melbourne Cup when I was heavily pregnant, I loved him so much for that. My parents were suffering *for* me not ashamed of me. Again, my mother knew my time for delivery was near and wanted to be close to me. She brought me out for the day to visit my Aunt

(...)

(...) Strangely enough labor pains began that very day. Aunt (...) was as loving as ever. It wasn't the "community" who looked down on me or saw me as a second class citizen but adoption workers, including adoption hospitals and their religious counterparts. The truth is from the moment parents or their distressed daughters turned to a parish priest for solace they were automatically channeled to these places. If not for Father (...), my folks never would have known that St Josephs existed. St Joseph's was presented to them as a Home where expectant mothers in my position would be nurtured and cared for.

### *Anonymity*

Another reason given by the Sisters for our **isolation** - their lack of involvement with us was that they were protecting our *anonymity*. But we were there for all to see and so were our babies whose names – our names - were placed on their cots and medical records for nurses to see. As others have also pointed out - while **secrecy** surrounding adoption was always unofficial practice under the 1964 Victorian Adoption Act records became sealed. For the first time in Australia's history secrecy regarding the identity of the natural mother, her child and the adopting parents was enshrined in law. Each State has their own similar laws but legislative changes occurred nationally round the same time based on a model Act prepared by the Commonwealth Parliament. Mothers and babies were to be

(...)

irrevocably parted. Babies would become a child of the adopting couple as if “born to their marriage ... as far as possible,” as if conceived by them. This insane arrangement was also known as “total transplant.” Under the 1964 Act the anonymity of all concerned was viewed as “vital” (Hansard) But in fact the natural mothers identity was stated on Adoption records - the adopters knew who we were while their identity remained hidden.(find) One adopting mother said “the sooner I forget (the mothers name) the better” (**Archival footage**)

In all States natural mothers and their adopted children fought for the right of ‘open records’ and won. But secrecy remains in Victoria. Natural mothers are still denied access to their records unless their adopted child/adult initiates the search. Current practice means natural mother’s names are unreservedly released to searching children without our knowledge or consent – sometimes as to when, where and how a meeting between the two should take place. When (...) attempted contact with me a CFWB social worker rang (...) and informed *him* that he had a *sister* when she was actually searching for *me* not siblings. In shock (...) rang me with the news, not a Centacare social worker who should have. Once again I was denied *choice* - the opportunity to tell (...) he had another sister, *when* and *if* I felt it wise to do so. At the time our relationship was newly developing - getting to know each other and I hadn’t yet revealed to him the fact of a second adoption which I fully intended to do in my own time. Thank

(...)

god he was delighted to have a biological sister and was understanding but this may *not* have been the case. Discovering (...) the way in which he did may have jeopardized our relationship. To clarify any misunderstanding here mothers like myself are thrilled that our children can find us. The point is that officials didn't care one scrap about our identity – confidentiality was one way - and neither did the law though it purported to by introducing secrecy legislation ostensibly based on the stigma of 'illegitimacy.' It was social workers duty to ensure our anonymity and law makers duty to ensure accountability.

In Victoria unless the child/adult searches, inquiring mothers are only released non identifying information; a page that says nothing, is traumatizing in its superficiality, yet reverberates in a mothers soul confirming a bond, a link that was never meant to exist.

### *Reunions*

The other issue is that when children and/ or mothers search for each other they are forced back to the same organizations who initiated their suffering in the first place, as it is these organizations which hold our records. This includes the MacKillop Foundation, set up in the late 1990's by the Marist Brothers, the Josephites and the Mercy nuns, some say to protect their own records, also Centacare and other government departments. Once again when children search for their origins their experience of 'adoption' is framed in

(...)

official terms. Mothers become “birth mothers” a dehumanizing label that mothers have repeatedly asked State and religious officials not to use. In law we are referred to as natural mothers – in fact adopted people have two mothers a reality that no “double speak” on the part of ‘experts’ can deny or extinguish. As one adoptee phrased it – adoption is riddled with difficulties and contradictions how could it be otherwise? (McNeilage. T. “The Voice of the Adoptee: Authorization, Exclusion and the Power to Name. School of Studies in Creative Arts, Victorian College of the Arts, Creative Writing Honours Research Project 2000) And misconceptions in the minds of adoptees abound. One adoptee I spoke with said the social worker counseling her – one session is compulsory before information is released - discouraged her from hugging her mother when first meeting saying - “she may not like it.” (McNeilage. T. 2000 - an honors year thesis in my possession. Terry McNeilage told me this)

### **“UNWANTED”**

Officials cause further stigmatizing misconceptions in the minds of adoptees . In contradictory fashion (...) under the heading of ‘Mothers’ says that our babies weren’t abandoned by us. Then in her chapter entitled “Adoption Legislation: in Whose Interests” she not only denies our grief but - recasts our children as “unwanted” - which is profoundly harmful for them

(...)

- a major lynchpin in the 'selling' of adoption to the community in the decades from the 50's – 70's when adoption was promoted by them as a "community good." Speaking for us – a propensity social workers have - she quotes "mothers appear to be glade to be rid of the problem ..." Yet she heard mother after mother tell of the lasting devastating impact that losing their child caused, not only for them but their family relationships.

Officials such as (...) and (...) trot out the same hackneyed stigmatizing depictions of mothers and babies placed in Victorian times, "medieval" - or "another world" - or a "period of un enlightenment" - static in time and space. The same overall framework where mothers are stereotypically represented in the **perpetual** framework of the "Fallen Women." This stereotype is never challenged or analyzed. Still - in the 1980's – the Josephite Sisters continued to stigmatize us implying in manipulated language that "most people thought that the **single mothers were prostitutes** – not girls from all walks of ordinary life." (Moore. H. 1982;39. "Better for Babies...") No evidence ever existed of this and even if true wouldn't that be all the more reason for compassion? Perhaps they were in the wrong job. Is this their justification for treating us as lepers or more a reflection of the churches fear of sexuality, their own need to control women and society, building their fortresses - stereotyping of us as "the other" – not virgin – not nuclear family - a justification for taking

(...)



our babies. Dr Rickarby said one of the truly shameful things was that ordinary young women were cast as promiscuous and irresponsible. He said that after seeing large numbers of relinquishing mothers by the nineties "many pregnancies were the result of rape or seminal spills in the vulva and most common were those who were in their first time relationship and had a profound ignorance about sex and contraception" as I did. (N.S.W's Parliamentary Inquiry)

### *Feminism*

It would be fair to say that women who found themselves 'in trouble' during these decades were the 'fall out' from the 1960's sexual revolution. When women were demanding equal right to enjoy sex as men had historically done without stigmatization. In 1966 adoption social worker R. Roberts commented that male sex outside of marriage was socially accepted and female sexual activity was accepted as long as the fatal sin of getting pregnant didn't occur. The social relaxation of the stigma of sex outside marriage during these decades is also evident in 1966 "To say that a girl is in some respects an inevitable casualty of social change (as opposed to paththologizing her ) would almost make it appear that we approved of her sexual activity. We are uncertain as to what stand we should take toward extramarital sex experience or if we should take a stand at all ... we cannot adequately deal with the problem of the

unmarried mother unless we see it within the framework of our **conflicting mores**" (Robert Roberts. 1966; 107 -109 Harper and Rowe New York)

The less sophisticated 'religious' were the 'good girls' because the "bad girls' knew what to do, and we were rewarded by having our babies taken from us against our will. I speak here only of mothers whose memories of adoption correspond with mine. For Catholics our form of contraception was confession and adoption – Catholics were prolific breeders. The existence of the Pill was deliberately suppressed and wasn't on the National Health list until 1974. Usually the more sophisticated educated young women "knew what to do" but often suffered from botched abortions leaving them infertile. It isn't beyond the bounds of probabilities that many of these later adopted our babies. Abortion was legalized firstly in South Australia in 1968. Other States followed. But while secrecy surrounding adoption and adoption itself relied on the stigma of "illegitimacy" it also relied on shaming mothers into submission and stigmatizing young vulnerable ordinary men and women, expectant mothers – who I hesitate to say – they preyed upon. Describing us as prostitutes was a very handy label indeed as historically religious authorities had the legal powers to then apprehend young women and their babies who they called sex workers – and not a scrap of evidence ever existed of this claim.

When mothers had their hands restrained round delivery bed posts and pillows shoved in their unexpected faces in delivery suites so that they couldn't see their new born child it was the time of 1960's and 1970's cultural sexual revolution not "medieval" times. (Marshall & M. McDonald 2001) It was also a time when educated women snubbed the suburban stereotype of marriage and motherhood. A time when women entered the workforce in ever greater numbers – broadening their horizons, becoming financially independent, forming new expectations, goals and attempting to redefine themselves and their relationships. This was the era of the magnificent 2<sup>nd</sup> wave Womens and civil rights movements in America, opposition to the Vietnam war here. This kind of political social and cultural dissent - 'freeing' - was repeated in its varying forms throughout the Western world. It was also an era when the Australian indigenous finally won the right to vote and be counted in the census - 1967. Women were also calling for the right to contraception and abortion and the right to say "yes" to sexual enjoyment," where sexual activity was a source of "pride" **not** "shame" (Wallace.C 1997. Greer The Untamed Shrew Macmillan Australia Pty Limited Sydney.) or "the shame of illegitimacy" words used repeatedly - add nauseum - by M. McDonald, McCalman and others. We weren't living in a mono culture.

Even in the times – the cultural revolution - conflicting with the entrenched conservative mores – Adoption social worker Robert Roberts said in 1966 “our society has been undergoing a change in its sexual behavior. The relaxation of taboos which usually accompanies the upheavals of war has been accelerated in the last two generations ...Permissiveness, self expression; sexual adjustment and freedom from inhibitions have become in some quarters the marks of the well adjusted American. The idea of extramarital sex experiences is accepted among many college students; among some groups its practices is almost a social sine qua non.” (Robert Roberts. Harper and Rowe New York 1966; 107 -109)

The number of people rejecting marriage and choosing to live together rose through these decades, feeling they didn't need their relationship or their children to be sanctioned by State and Church as it already sanctioned by the couple and their social circles.

Progressive politicians debating the 1964 Bill expressed the changing social values and reacted strongly to the use of the stigmatizing label of “illegitimacy” the Hon AK Bradbury and Minister Fulton described this label as “a form of mental cruelty far greater than any physical cruelty which is deplored ...what is the difference between the status of children who are born out of wedlock and adopted and those born of wedlock and not adopted?... I am hopeful that no child will, at its birth will be branded to its detriment” (Hansard

(...)

14<sup>th</sup> April 1964;3654) Unfortunately its use is still reinscribed by women at that, in the year 2001. Yet in New Zealand's Status of Children's Act 1969 the word "illegitimate" was deliberately avoided in recognition of its stigmatization of children. By 1974 the term *ex nuptial* was adopted in the Australian Family Law Bill (Printwrite Canberra for the Social Welfare commission published by the commission as an Occasional Paper 1975;73) McDonald and McCalman use "illegitimacy" and "ex nuptial" interchangeably. However while the Women's Movement was rejecting motherhood we were solitary individuals silently denied the right to our own child.

### *TEEN PREGNANCIES*

In regards to "teen pregnancies" historically "relinquishing" mothers are invariably described as "girls" in current official literature. Yet in the 1950's particularly 1960's teenage or young adult marriages with babies conceived shortly after or before weddings - some couples lived together, some later married - were the norm. Women had babies at a very young age. Babies conceived *ex nuptially* were far more accepted in working class families. And even those "relinquishing mothers" in committed relationships if he was not their husband he was - "kept out" -very much at arms length (Dr Rickarby NSW's Inquiry Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1998;63)discussed later. Fathers wanting to keep their babies wasn't on the agenda. And many did. "Gone to a

(...)

“Good Home” a documentary recently screened was one such example – the story of Lily Arther of Origins and her partner in NSW losing their child. Rowen McEnor wrote “Rebecca’s Law:...” dedicated to his adopted daughter and their relationship. (Fuzcapp Publishing Gosford 1999.) Historically virtually no research into Fathers experience has been conducted. We were never informed of the Maintenance option And I had no idea.

### APOLOGY

I’m sure many individual Religious Sisters were and are very kindly but why continue desensitization of finer sensibilities reinforcing mothers trauma further by denying and refusing to openly and sincerely acknowledge, their specific ‘mistakes’ *then* apologize instead of stigmatizing us and continuing to promote adoption. Senior Josephite Sister (...)’s letter of ‘apology’- many years ago - her reply to mothers request for one was that mothers “now bitterly regret and grieve over their decision.” (letter sent to (...) ) The point is - for mothers like myself- there was NO decision – this is what we are claiming- a point that she knows full well we are attempting to make. This is a callous way of describing our ‘grief’ reducing us down to “bitterly” regretful women - rubbing salt in wounds. In her chapter on “The Mothers” Margaret McDonald the very professional who stood accused herself of unethical and

(...)

unlawful adoption practices also repetitively uses the word "bitter" and "great bitterness" in her representation of us. (Marshall & McDonald. M. 2001;60 )

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#### *RELASHIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE.*

Sisters say that they too were dehumanized too by institutionalization and I believe this is true but I also believe that this came about by brutal practices which they designed and carried out along with other related "experts." The Children's Welfare Association of Victoria, the peak representative body for church welfare Agencies – orphanages – never stopped boasting about their role in influencing child welfare policies and adoption laws through its Children's Welfare Association Council and of course CFWB and its residential organizations like St Josephs were key players. (Hansard) they were a law unto themselves. The State did not set any standards for children in their care. Accountability was non existent and the Social Welfare Department was reliant on places like St Josephs to take the bulk of their state wards under three years old. According to Donnella Jaggs voluntary organizations were like public utilities. St Josephs in turn was state subsidized and was "glade of a reliable sum for each ward taken into its care," including mothers Child Endowment payments. (1952 – 1953 CWAV Annual Report ) not to mention capital works grants

(...)

and tax exemptions. CFWB also received a sum of money from the State for each adoption they arranged. The CFWB said they could not have survived without State and Commonwealth grants from the Hospitals and Charities Commission.

(CFWB Annual Report 1979 -1980;4 ) Some adopting parents also gave huge donations.

(...)

s adopting parents gave significant sums until their youngest adopted child turned 10 years old.

The relationship between State and Church was one of mutual dependence described as a "happy relationship" in the CWAV Annual reports. As the Josephites have said in their own Oral History "the Social Welfare Department was happy to off load babies ... and St Josephs and the organizational machinery was happy to take young babies into their program" even though it meant sticking them in prams in the busy 1960's. (Moore. H. 1982 "Better for Babies ..." )The median youngest age of babies channeled to voluntary organizations by the State was around 10 months old and these as said earlier were described as "a rather sad group" once they had "outgrown their usefulness for the Mother Craft Nursing School " (Moore. H. 1982;37. "Better for Babies...") and were generally not offered for adoption as were single mothers babies whose adoption failed. At three years old wards were sent on to other orphanages such as St Anthony's Kew.

(...)



The Church will always have the powerful to defend them including the State which is currently dismantling the Welfare State and as the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau now Centacare explained in the 70's- "once a child is adopted it is no longer a charge on the public purse." ( CFWB Annual Report 1979 – 1980; 4)

Adoption was seen as much more expedient, more cost effective way rather than paying social welfare benefit to mothers. Yet at one point in the 1930's unmarried mothers were paid a social wage for caring for their children at home, instead of paying foster care fees. (Jaggs D. 1986) Saving the States Welfare Bill was the agenda. Rather than the 'best interests of the child' or anyone's officials had economics more in mind, the shoring up national birth rates, the failing nuclear family. Adoption was good economics.

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*Best Interests of the Child* In terms of "the best interests of the child – a legal since when has it been good for anyone to be depicted or to perceive themselves as "unwanted" and "despicable... a waste" (Marshall & McDonald 2001;21) How would adopted people feel reading this. As Dr Rickarby said "Tell this to an angry adoptee in therapy - black humor indeed" People can come to 'fit the authoritative label.' Adoptee's can be just as well adjusted as people raised by

(...)

adopting couples but they can have extraordinarily complex and painful issues peculiar to their circumstances which can last a life time. A possible, very logical sense of primal rejection for the child was long known to cause enormous harm for some possibly permeating all relationships consciously or otherwise, regardless of how much they are loved by their adopting parents. For one day the very logical and healthy question can form in the tiny mind as one adoptee put it "the eternal question WHY? "Why didn't she keep me" it stands to reason (Woolmington Nicola. Searching: a telefeature about adoption. Film Australia Eton Road Lindfield NSW 2070, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1990; 1) Possible answers to questions such as these can very easily lead to self blame and or a sense of misdirected outrage towards society, and/or the mother who "abandoned" them – regardless of whether or not reunions occur. A preexisting sense of betrayal can act to undermine a newly forming relationship before it begins. (When I met my daughter roughly 18 years ago she was outraged towards *me*. It took many years to build a relationship of trust. Rachael an adoptee interviewed by Nicola Woolmington, an adoptee herself, for her superb documentary "Searching" aired on ABC said she used to pray about her mother. "Please let me find her soon and if I do I will be very good. I promise, if you'll just let my mum come and get me"(1990;8) But as the reunion was about to happen, the moment shed spent her life waiting for, " a voice in the back of my head was telling me at the same time that she didn't want

(...)

me and that shed given me away because she never loved me " (1990;9) When I united with my daughter it was inconceivable to her that I did in fact want her that I didn't reject her that I didn't get the chance, there was no decision – it was made for me.

But depicting adopted children as "unwanted" by their mothers is a clear demonstration of how pragmatic officials can be when it comes to the "best interests of the child" - absolving themselves their organizations from any wrong doing. For those who feel they did choose freely with informed consent these were often led to believe that they couldn't mother that child better than affluent idealized couples and believed official perceptions, also filtered through the media.

Together with this other factors such as "genealogical bewilderment" - serious issues of identity - "from whence I came" can cause enormous emotional and psychological problems for adopted people and "the difficulty experienced by adopted families in coping with identity disorders". (N.S.W's Parliamentary Inquiry Wednesday, 2 September 1998; 70) In the Inquiry Josephite nun midwife who stood proxy for her Order used the term "one sided bonding" to describe the mothers attachment and loss as though the child felt nothing, no connection at all to their mothers. Rachael an adoptee interviewed by Nicola Woolmington said "I

(...)

knew that my real mother had gone to the hospital and when I saw the hospital every women that passed us on the street I wondered if that was her! This never left me. I always looked at women on buses and trains ... I spent my youth imagining my mother..." (Woolmington 1990:8) Countless many live in a state of unknowing, including children who were conceived through invitro fertilization programs and are cut off from ever knowing their biological history. I do not mean here those whose sperm and ova come from the couple themselves – the simple case.

The fact that so many seek out their origins usually their mother first if not solely is a testament to the fact that a bond "interrupted" though it may be does exist in spite of how much officials wished it didn't. It was adoptee's themselves who lobbied for changes in secrecy legislation – for open records – the right to know their origins. Needing to know where you came from and your genetic heritage is not pathological or a display of disloyalty to adoptive parents but healthy need to know where you fit in the world – who you are. Many spend their entire lives wondering who their mother was, grieving and longing to know her like my daughter did. Some have a need to know by searching for their natural parents while others don't or find a sense of belonging and continuity just with their adoptive parents and social fabric and this is just as healthy for

(...)

them. Many feel too guilty to search in fear of hurting or losing their adoptive parents.

But as to identity and the who's, how's and "whys" of their separation from their natural mothers or parents this raises profound questions - existential questions – which are not, I repeat, a reflection of a pathological mind. Some adoptees grew up believing very harmful myths about themselves and without a sense of connectedness or history, this has been well documented. One adoptee with very loving adoptive parents says "Why isn't the adoptee most people? Why does adoption seem to place (her) in liminal space where belonging is forever denied them. " (McNeilage. T. 2000. *The Voice of the Adoptee: Authorization, Exclusion and the Power to Name*. School of Studies in Creative Arts, Victorian College of the Arts, Creative Writing Honours Research Project.) Some adoptees acted out their deep sense of outrage and bewilderment often landing them in jails or mental health facilities where they have been historically over represented. ( but no reliable statistics exist as to incarceration numbers of adopted people.) My third child has a serious drug problem and my son (...) has been in jail twice due to drug related crime and had serious amphetamine problem – self medicating – which he has since overcome. He suffers from not being able to fit in properly and severe identity issues. When my son thought his father was German he naively wore a ring with the Nazi emblem on it. When he found out his father was indeed

(...)

Yugoslavian he took the ring off – thank god. In 1966 (...) my consent taker admitted rather ruefully that identity was always going to be the real sticking point in adoption. “Our task (is that) of clarifying and strengthening the reality of parenthood while at the same time not withholding or denying the fact of the child’s biological origins will always remain the crucial difficulty in adoption.” ( O’Collins Maev. Feb1966,6 Australian Journal of social Work “Some Aspects of Research in the Field of Adoption” Vol.19. No 1.)

**I would like to finish with saying that as far as adoption agencies such as Centacare go infant adoptions are very much still on their agenda.** During the Senate Inquiry into Children in institutions 2003, Centacare placed undated adoption promotion leaflets in their Footscray counseling waiting rooms which typically mentioned nothing of adoptions possible and I say again probable harmful consequences, not even the separation grief for the mother. Nor do they mention the psychosocial effects of adoption for the child. Any young naive women reading these brochures would assume, “oh well good loving professionals and priests must be right” That these “experts” have nothing but their best interest at heart would go entirely unquestioned, like I assumed. I believe that it would be highly improbable for a women to give over her baby to

(...)

strangers at birth without some form of coercion. Enclosed are copies of their pamphlets directed to childless couples and young pregnant women.



(...)

Counselling  
to assist in  
making  
decisions for  
you and your  
child

For further  
information,  
contact:

EAST MELBOURNE  
OFFICE  
576 Victoria Parade  
Cnr. Hoddle Street  
319 Victoria Parade  
East Melbourne  
Victoria 3002  
Tel 03 9419 5633

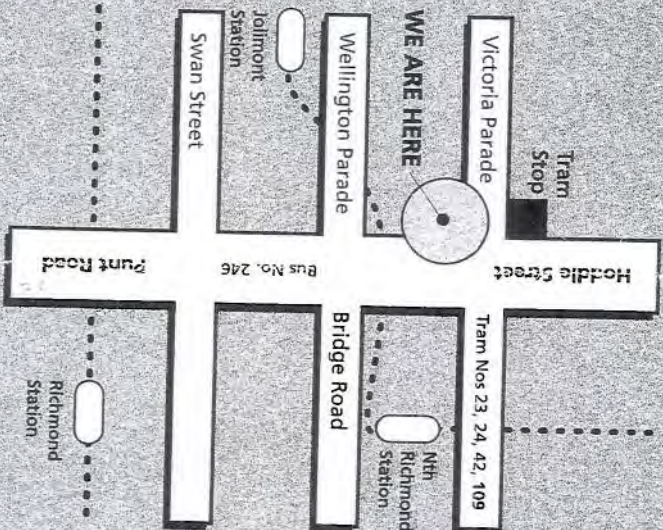


CENITACARE  
Catholic Family  
Services  
Building Better Futures Together

EAST MELBOURNE  
OFFICE  
576 Victoria Parade  
Cnr. Hoddle Street  
and Victoria Parade  
East Melbourne  
Victoria 3002  
Tel 03 9419 5633



WHERE TO FIND US



Pregnancy  
COUNSELLING



CENITACARE  
Catholic Family  
Services



## I'M HAVING A BABY ...

How will I tell my family and/or the father?

How will I deal with their reactions?

How will I cope with giving birth?

How will this affect my future, work, study?

How will I manage?

How do I find out about adoption?

## PREGNANCY

### COUNSELLING OFFERS:

- professional and confidential advice that aims to help you work out future care of your child.
- counselling that can include your family and the father of the baby.
- a service available to all, irrespective of race or religion.

## YOUR PREGNANCY

### COUNSELLOR CAN HELP YOU

#### TALK ABOUT:

- pregnancy
- community support services
- options for care of the child outside your family
- adoption
- legal issues
- social security
- baby clothing and equipment and where to obtain it

## WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

- Write to Centacare Catholic Family Services expressing interest in adoption
- Attend a two-day workshop
- Make a formal application
- Undergo a series of interviews with a social worker to assess your ability to parent an adopted child

Couples then wait in the pool of accepted applicants until an appropriate 'match' is made.

For further information, contact:

**ADOPTION AND PERMANENT CARE**

576 Victoria Parade  
(Cnr. Hoddle Street  
and Victoria Parade)  
East Melbourne  
Victoria 3002

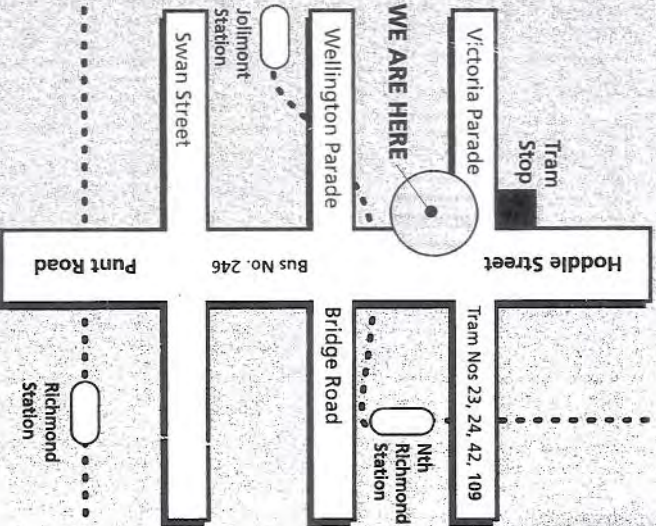
**Tel 03 9419 5633**



**CENTACARE**  
**Catholic Family**  
**Services**  
*Building Better Futures Together*

**ADOPTION AND PERMANENT CARE**  
576 Victoria Parade  
(Cnr. Hoddle Street  
and Victoria Parade)  
East Melbourne  
Victoria 3002  
**Tel 03 9419 5633**

## WHERE TO FIND US



# Infant ADOPTIONS



**CENTACARE**  
**Catholic Family**  
**Services**  
*Building Better Futures Together*

**OPEN ADOPTION**

## ADOPTION 1990s

Adoption provides families for children whose birth families are unable to provide for their care.

The Adoption Act of 1984 changed the basis of all adoptions in Victoria.

Every adoption now has the potential for meetings and exchanging letters and photos between the adoptive family and the birth family. Contact assists the child in developing a positive identity and provides answers to his/her questions.

## THE CHILDREN

A small but significant number of babies becomes eligible for adoption each year.

Children come from all walks of life and family backgrounds. They are generally between the ages of two months and one year.

Some babies have minor medical problems or come from social or hereditary backgrounds that place them at risk of developing problems. Most babies available for adoption are healthy infants in need of a family.

## BIRTH MOTHERS AND FATHERS

Birth parents are ordinary people making hard decisions about the care of their children.

They make a voluntary decision to place a child for adoption and sign adoption consents.

They may request regular meetings with their child and his/her adoptive family and they may ask for information to be exchanged regularly.

When signing consent they may request they take part in selecting a family for their child and may ask that their child is placed with a family of specific religion, lifestyle or ethnic background. Wherever possible, their requests are met.

The birth parents have made an active and positive decision for the care of their children. It is expected that they may wish to express their continuing interest in their child through meetings up to three to four times a year and with letters and photos.

## ELIGIBILITY

### Marriage

The Adoption Act of 1984 requires that a couple applying to adopt a child have been married or been in a de facto relationship for at least two years.

### Health

Applicants must be in good health and be able to be active with a child until he/she is 18 years old. Age is considered in assessing each couple's suitability to care for a child until 18.

### Finance

Couples must demonstrate their ability to support a child. This refers to financial management, not income and wealth.

Found Nov 2009 wine to Canada program was in process. Centcare Footscray.

No independence  
No warning of the Professor  
No qualifications - not even  
the girl - in pregnancy  
Couples  
Partner