

Senate Inquiry into “Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices.”

I am a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia resident in New South Wales

As a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia I have an inalienable right to protection under the Australian Constitution and the Common Law of this country

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

My Submission

I was born 1957 at Coffs Harbour, my mother was a devout Catholic, and I was raised a strict Catholic. I attended Catholic primary school and attended church every Sunday and all other required days. I was taught by the nuns to "honour thy father and thy mother". My parents taught me to trust, believe and obey the nuns as they were there to teach us to be good god's children. I attended a Catholic boarding school the last year (1973) of high school, run by the Sisters of Mercy. The teachings of the church were reaffirmed, and a good catholic girl gets married before having babies. The brain washing had already begun.

January 1974 my parents moved to Tamworth, 6 months later I found out I was pregnant. Fearing the reactions of my parents I asked my older sister to come and be with me for support when I told my parents. I was four months pregnant by this time. My sister (who was a trainee Nurse) first suggested that I have an abortion, but I was too pregnant for her option to be fulfilled. My sister came home at her first opportunity and unknown to me, my sister told my father first. What discussion went on between them I don't know. Terrified of my father's reaction I tried to postpone telling my parents the first night, as I went to leave the lounge room to retire to bed, my father called me back and announced to Mum that I had something to tell her. I knew immediately that he knew, the panic set in and I couldn't find the courage to say anything. My father announced to Mum that I was pregnant and that I would be going away and having the baby adopted out. As far as he was concerned the decision was already made. My mother screamed in hysterics saying that "no one was giving her grandchild away". But my mother's wishes, like mine fell on death ears. I was then sent to bed and their discussion continued without me.

Within days my parents took me to find my sons father and took us both to the local church to see the priest. My son's father said that he would marry me so we could raise our baby together. As I was just 17yrs old I need my parents consent, which my father wouldn't consent too. And that was that. My son's father was then sent away, and the priest said he would make enquires about some homes to send me to.

Why was I not old enough to sign a marriage contract but was old enough to sign adoption consent?. If the marriage hadn't worked out than we would have gotten divorce, so a marriage contract isn't final for life. But my son would have been able to have his Mother

and Father in his life. But a adoption order at that time was for life, and our son hasn't had his Mother and Father in his life.

I wasn't able to see my son's father again, he didn't have a phone so I was unable to contact him and his phone calls to me were blocked by my father. I was pulled out of my studies at Tafe and wasn't allowed to contact anyone or allowed out of the house till I was sent away. Years later I found out from my son's father that he had tried to find where I was but my father refused to let him know.

My parents took me to Newcastle where we visited 2 or 3 unmarried mothers homes. The decision was made to send me to "Villa Maria" at East Maitland, this being a home run by the Sisters of Mercy. I felt so alone and abandoned during my time in the home. We were weighed every morning and our food was closely controlled. I was brought up having honey, as my father always had bees as a hobby, but I was not allowed to have honey while there as Sister _____ said that honey was fattening. My diet was strictly controlled while in the home and we were weighed every day to monitor our weight. I tried to continue my Secretarial Studies by correspondence while there and used a room upstairs to study, I also retreated to the room a lot to do my oil paintings. We did crafts with Sister _____ and remember making lots of coat-hanger covers, I think she sold these, probably at church fetes.

One of the girls at the home delivered her baby during the night and Sister _____ didn't know until us other girls got her to check on the girl when she hadn't come out for breakfast; her baby was deceased by time Sister _____ attended to her. She was taken to hospital and we didn't see her again, I don't know what happen to her as we weren't told.

I'd lay in bed every night with my arms wrapped around my baby inside of me knowing that I would never hold him after birth. I'd feel his feet and hands through my own stomach as he moved around, knowing that I wasn't ever going to feel them after he was born. I'd talk to him and tell him that I would find him again one day and that I and his father loved him and always would. I'd pray to God every night for him to send some to get me out of there and show me a way to keep my baby, but no one did. I'd think of running away, but where would I run to, who would I run to. It was clear to me that no one in my family was going to help me.

I attended the Mater Hospital at Waratah for my first visit on 27.9.1974 and was 24 weeks pregnant. Each visit to the Drs at the Mater was followed by a visit to the Social Worker – Sister _____. She was to counsel me through out my pregnancy on the pre tense to help me decide the future for myself and my baby. At the time I thought that she was genuinely concerned about my "situation" as she referred to my pregnancy.

During these session Sr _____ wore me down emotional and made me feel inadequate in my ability to be a good mother and give my baby a good and proper home and life, that in fact if I didn't give my baby up for adoption that I would be a deeming my baby to a life of misery, poverty and abuse. Adoption was the only option that was offered to me. I feel I had no choice, for to have a choice the needs to be more than one option. There wasn't a second option ever talked of.

Sr _____ told me:

I would be completely dependant on my father to support myself and my baby. My father was employed part time and had already made it clear that I wasn't to come home with my

baby so that support wasn't going to be there.

I wouldn't be able to get a job as a single mother.

I wouldn't have friends and there would be no chance in the future of any man wanting to marry me and be a father to my baby.

I would take my anger towards my baby's father out on my baby. I had no anger towards my baby's father, and there was no reason why I would. He wanted to be with me and our baby. It was my father who kept him out of my life.

Sr never mentioned the availability of a pension, assistance from housing, or any form of assistance available.

She kept telling me I had to think of what was in my baby's best interest, and that if I wanted to be a good mother I would give my baby for adoption to a married couple that couldn't have a child but could love and care and provide for my baby in ways I couldn't. Every baby deserves a real family with both parents. No man will marry you with a child, and my baby would grow up fatherless and would be victimised at school for being born out of wedlock. That we would be a burden to my father to support.

By the time I arrived at villa Maria I was already brain washed by the Catholic Church upbringing. I trusted Sr and that they were acting in my best interest as I had been brought up to believe that Nuns knew what was best for us. But how could these 2 nuns know what was best for me neither of them knew me or what I was capable of doing . They were a big party to the system that broke the commandment – Thou shall not Steal. They stole my baby by means of the lies and omission of facts they knew. They knew the damage that were doing to us and didn't care, to them we were just a producer of a commodity they were trading in. How come we as single mothers were deemed by them to be unfit to raise our own flesh and blood. The church had taught us to look up to Mary and had put her on a pedestal for us to adore. We were single mothers, Mary was a single mother. Why did they think we couldn't be good mothers for our babies. Why couldn't our babies be like Jesus and be raised by their single mothers too?

Sr and the church had decided that I was unfit to keep my baby just because I wasn't married, the fact that my Son's father did want to marry me didn't come into consideration. How could the church and it's representatives have discriminated against my son and I on the grounds that I wasn't married. After all Mary was not married when she fell pregnant with Jesus, yet she is praised by the church. Jesus was illegitimate, so what was wrong with my baby being illegitimate.

A quote for Rev Thomas F Brosnan, and adoptee.

Strengthening Families

Keynote address, 5/25/96

By Rev. Thomas F. Brosnan

Catholic Charities USA

1996 National Maternity and Adoption Conference

San Antonio, Texas

April 24-27, 1996

<http://www.openadoption.org/brosnan.htm>

I can't fail to mention Jesus himself in this regard, because I believe Jesus knew the mark of illegitimacy. I think there is ample proof in the gospel texts to suggest that many believed Jesus to be a bastard, as is asserted in later Jewish apologetic works written to refute Christianity. For those of you who are Christian and have a hard time accepting the Virginal Conception, that is, the belief that Jesus' father was God Himself, and so settle for accepting Joseph as Jesus' real father, I would submit you are on shaky ground, because the gospels suggest, for some unmentioned reason, that it was obvious Joseph could not have been Jesus' father. This poses a dilemma for the struggling believer: either Jesus was Son of God, or he was the bastard son of a Roman soldier as the later Jewish texts assert. In any event Jesus would have known what it felt like to bear the mark of illegitimacy.

There was no talk of what to expect in labour, so I was terrified of what laid ahead of me. I didn't know what to expect. As I laid there with my legs secured in stirrups so I couldn't move, I felt powerless.

I recently obtained my medical records from the Mater Hospital at Waratah, the labour sheet was marked BFA. My baby was removed from the Labour ward as soon as he entered this world. I heard his cry but I didn't see him.

My son was born at 12.32am January 1975. I was moved to a ward about 3 hrs after giving birth. It was a large ward and I was there alone. I cried a lot that night, but no one seemed to hear. I had lost my baby.

I was very weak emotionally and physically, a walk to the toilet and shower was difficult. So a search mission of the hospital to find the nursery where my son may be was an impossible task. I'd ask some nurses where the nursery was but was told it best I not know and go there. I felt so alone and so empty and I was mentally in an extremely depressed state. Sister had told me many times that it would "be best not to see your baby as it would make it harder for you to let go and put it all behind you and move one." I asked her many times to let me see my son, but the response from her was always the same.

My mother was staying in our caravan at Stockton Caravan Park for a couple of weeks before the birth, as my due date was the 10th January 1975. She spent as much time as allowed with me whilst I was in hospital. I know she had contact with Sister, but I do not know what was discussed.. I do know that my mother had complete blind trust of Sister and believed that she was acting in my best interest.

On the morning of 30th January 1975, I was taken down to see Sister in her office, as I was told it was time for me to sign consent forms. I was physically assisted as I was still physically and emotionally very weak. I was told to sign papers detailing family and medical history and consent forms for the adoption of my baby. I didn't want to sign them but I had been coerced to believe that it was the best thing and only thing to do for my baby. I was immediately taken back to the ward and left alone. I was so devastated at having to sign my baby for adoption I cried uncontrollably and was given Valium. I begged

them again to let me see my son, which Sr [redacted] finally agreed to. I thought her change of mind was because I was so devastated, but now I realise it was because I had signed the papers she had requested me to.

When I gave birth it felt like the death of my baby, for he was no longer with me. When I sign the papers it felt like a burial, for he was gone for good. I sobbed uncontrollably, for I felt I had failed to find a way to save my son.

I saw my son through the nursery window for only a few minutes, but those few minutes have been embedded in my mind. My son was wrapped in a blanket with one arm outreached towards me and was crying. I'm sure he knew who I was and didn't want me to leave him. For 35yrs this is the only image I have of my son.

On the 31st January I was discharged from hospital. My mother took me to Stockton Caravan Park for the next week or so to give me more time to recover physically before we went home to Tamworth. When it was time to return to Tamworth I broke down crying inconsolable at the thought of going home without my son. My mother asked me if I wanted to go back to the hospital and get my son and take him home with us. This was the first time anyone asked me if I wanted to keep my baby and raise him myself. She said that she would help me find a way to keep him with me. When my father arrived to take us home Mum told him that we were going to take my baby home. I'm not sure what mum said to him but he reluctantly went along with our plans. Dad hitched up the caravan and drove us to the hospital in silence.

My mother and I went and seen Sr [redacted] and told her that we wanted to revoke my consent for the adoption. She said she was sorry but I was too late as my son had already been placed with a lovely couple who already had an adopted son and daughter and were promised another daughter. And that it would be too hard on them to have to bring my son back to me even if it was possible. She said that I would be able to know non-identifying information about them and my son from time to time so I 'would be able to put my mind at ease'.

I remember mum saying to Sr [redacted] that I had 30 days to revoke the consent. Sister [redacted] pointed out that the consent said 'before the day on which an adoption is made or before the expiration of thirty days from the day on which I sign the consent, whichever day is the earlier' I was totally devastated that I didn't get the 30 days.

Again I had to leave the hospital without my son. My son didn't leave the hospital until the 3rd March 1975. Which means that Sr [redacted] had lied again.

I cried myself to sleep every night, counting the days since I had lost my son. Fantasising of ways my son my be returned to me, my way of trying to keep my sanity, I just couldn't believe he was gone from me forever.

In 1980 I went back to the Mater Hospital at Waratah to see Sr [redacted] to obtain the non-identifying information she had told me I could have. She contacted [redacted] at Department of Youth and Community Services, adoption branch, who wrote to me and said that my son "was placed with his adopting parents early March 1975. He was their first and long awaited child. The notes that I recorded at the time of (my son's) placement indicate that they were a very attractive couple in their mid to late twenties who were a very well suited responsible and sincere couple who were both extremely excited about (my son's) arrival. They were very grateful to have so much non-identifying information on

(my son's) family background so that they could share this with him while he was growing up and in later years." She also said in the letter "A few weeks after (my son's) placement the adopting parents wrote to this department commenting : 'that (my son) has made us the proudest parents possible and that he is a beautiful baby'. They also felt that they had a lot in common with you and your family." Upon reading this letter I was totally devastated that the last 5 yrs and 10 months of utter heartache was caused to me by a multitude of lies from a representative of the Catholic Church with total disregard for my son and my right to have been able to be together, which is how it should have been if she hadn't lied and deceived me to believe that I had been too late in revoking my consent. I went back to see Sister [redacted] again at the Mater Hospital and gave her a huge dose of my mind and told her what I thought of her and her deception, and that one day she will have to face her maker for what she has done to me and my son.

In 1986 I again contacted the department for more non-identifying information in particular my son's christian names. To have them pass on medical information, particularly my son's father suffered with Epilepsy and that my mother had tuberculosis in her early 20's. This information was provided to Sister [redacted] before my son was born but not included the document titled "Social and Medical History of a child surrendered for Adoption". My mother hadn't told us about her tuberculosis prior to then, obviously she knew how important this medical information was to be passed on for my son's future medical needs.

In 1993 I obtained my son's birth certificate, after having to agree to the conditions of the contact veto he had put into place. At the time I spoke with a lady at Birth Deaths and Marriages by telephone as I was living in Queensland at the time, she informed me that she had taken the veto herself and that he informed her that he wanted to wait till after he had finished his higher school certificate as he needed to focus on his studies. Over the last 18yrs I had heard so many times that boys are less likely than girls to seek out contact with their mother. So for the first time I had finally a reason to be hopeful that my son would want to make contact with me. I wrote a letter for my son and enclosed some photos of his father, myself and 3 siblings on my side and one sibling on his father's side for them to pass on to my son. These photos were not forwarded with my letter, but returned to me in 2004.

The end of 1993 I moved back to Coffs Harbour for a bit over 12 months. I contacted the Department of Community Services to advise them of my new address. I moved to my current address in February 1995 and from then to 2004 I had been in contact with [redacted], or her office, on numerous occasions.

In March 1998 a letter was sent to me by [redacted], Family Mediation Counsellor, Family Information Service. The letter was informing me that My son had requested my letter and was forwarded to him on 5th March 1998. She had sent it to my old address at Toormina, a suburb at Coffs Harbour, and the letter was returned to her. My son wrote me a letter in June 1998 and was put in my file. I often contacted [redacted] personal or whoever was available at the time to enquire if my son had lifted the veto.

It wasn't until I called in June 2004 while I was talking to [redacted] and she was looking through my file that she came across my son's letter at the back of my file, she claimed. On 1st July [redacted] sent my son's letter and with a note attached. "Enclosed is the letter from (my son). I did request an electoral roll search in July 1998 but there was no address for you in NSW. I am sorry that I did not notice the letter from (my son). I was on the electoral roll as a silent voter since fleeing a domestic violent

relationship with my last partner in Queensland, I'd also at that time had to change my name and my children's name with the assistance of the department of community services, Centrelink and the police who had my address suppressed from my licence and registration so that my ex wouldn't be able to find us. This is why I made sure that I advised the department myself with my new name and contact details each time I moved so that they could let me know when my son wanted contact. All she had to do was read my file.

On the 13th April 2006 I received a letter from _____ informing me that my son had "been removed from the Register held by this Department and from the records held at the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. This means that you are no longer bound by the conditions and legal obligations placed on you by the signing of the 'Undertaking Not To Make Contact' "

I received a phone call from _____ informing me of my son's Name, home address and an email address and she wished me luck in my future contact. My son was now 31 yrs of age, a man I didn't know. I didn't know what he had been told about his adoption or about me. I wrote to him but as yet I haven't had a letter back.

There was so much "so called counselling" when they wanted to take my baby, but no help or support of any kind for us to be united again.

HOW I HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE FORCED ADOPTION OF MY SON

We were told to go home and put it all behind us and give ourselves a new start in life. How could I do that when every day I saw the stretch marks on my stomach as a permanent reminder of the baby I had and had lost. No form of grief process was allowed. Almost 35 yr on and nothing has changed. I can't move on when society is still treating like a *mushroom* and still believe we volunteered to give our babies away. Maybe when society know the truth, things might change, but society needs the church, hospitals and the people who are still alive that were involved in the past practices to tell the truth. Not having our leaders give an apology that most people weren't aware of, but the truth through headlines in newspapers, woman's magazine – special the Woman's Weekly that wrote so many articles promoting adoption - radio TV segments on TV shows such as 'sunrise' '9am' etc. We need an apology from those who caused us this harm, not a politician that probably doesn't know the full extent of what was done to us cause that person wasn't involved with the practices of the past.

IN THE WORDS OF ELVIS PRESLEY'S SONG - ***I FORGOT TO REMEMBER TO FORGET***

For the last 28yrs of my father's life I was unable to be with him and be part of his birthday as it was the same day as my son's birthday. Most years I found it extremely painful to even ring him and wish him 'Happy Birthday'. I couldn't join the rest of the family when they put on a big day for his 80th birthday.

At my mothers funeral I met my aunty (mum's sister) for the first time since I had my baby. Feeling that she wouldn't know who I was I approached her to and introduced myself. Her instant response was 'where have they been hiding you'. That statement blew my mind,

the realisation the extent that I was the shame of the family and kept away from everyone. What I always thought was that my shame had been a secret all these years, but when my brother's son (who I hadn't seen for 14 yrs) came to me and said that 'dad said you had 4 kids but he didn't know what the first one was'. It was then that I realised my shameful secret had not been a secret all those years, who knew what and what they thought I don't know as no one has discussed any aspects of my child or the adoption with me. I was judged and condemned without a chance to stand up for myself. Until my mother's death the only family contact I had was with my parents some of my siblings, one aunt on my dad's side. Although I had tried to initiate contact with several relatives the interest was never returned.

At Villa Maria we were treated like *mushrooms* (mushrooms are grown in the dark and fed on cow manure, that's the polite way to put it) I've been treated like that every since, by family, by partners.

Australia Day is a day when the whole country celebrates the birth of this country. But I haven't been able to join in any of the celebrations and neither were my children. Cause all I could think of all day was my son and what he might or might not be doing on the day. How could I celebrate the birth of our country when I wasn't able to celebrate my son's birth, when my heart was sobbing within all day.

I was brought up strict Catholic and attend mass every Sunday and other compulsory days. When I married and had my 2nd and 3rd child I took them to church every Sunday as my husband wasn't catholic and he worked shift work at BHP so most Sundays he wasn't able to mind one or both of them so I took them to church on my own. I was brought up to obey the Ten Commandments and always tell the truth. Was taught to respect Priest and Nuns and that they were there for us to turn to in times of trouble for help and Guidance. I grew up hearing stories from mum about the wonderful help her family got from nuns during the depression and war times, and when during the war she had tuberculosis and spent a long time at the sanatorium at Waterfall.

I attended Catholic boarding school and had a close and trusting relationship with a number of Nuns, two of the Nuns there were cousins of my father. I believed that all Nuns also lived by what they preached to us. When I found out the truth that had lied to us so much that there was barely a truthful statement that came out of her mouth. My faith in the church and its teachers died I haven't attended a Sunday mass since. Only been to church for christenings, weddings and funerals (but not of my family as I was always exclude, was only informed of relatives deaths weeks afterwards, so meant I hadn't attended a family funeral until my mother's funeral), and would feel sick in the stomach for just being inside a church again. But I had to attend to keep up the pretence of being normal, after all I thought no one knew what I had been through so how could I have explained to anyone why I couldn't walk into a church and be happy to be there.

Lost my faith in the church, its teachings and its representatives.

I have had enormous difficulties being able to trust and believe in people, particular when they are claiming that they care about me and trying to help. Always trying to find what their ulterior motive was.

Detached emotions: unable to have a full maternal relationship with my children, cause of the fear of them being taken away from me. When trauma events happen I just seemed to

drift through like I was on the outside looking in. Was like I had felt the worst pain in life and couldn't feel emotional pain any more, if I let myself feel I wouldn't have been able to survive and keep some level of sanity.

Sleep problems: insomniac: started at Villa Marie where some nights I didn't sleep at all, most nights about 4 or 5 hrs sleep on a good night. I'd lay there with my arms cradling by unborn child so I could feel any movements. Talking to him telling how much I loved him and wanted to take me home with me, if only someone would help me find a way to care for us. Praying to God to let someone come and take me out of there, but my prayers were unanswered. Years later I found out my baby's father had been trying to find me, he wanted us to marry and raise our child together. But no one would help him find me. He suffered so much too at the loss of our child.

Eating problems: On days when my depression is bad I can't eat at all, sometimes I have gone days without being able to eat. I have been labelled as anorexic by doctors at varies times since 1975.

Suicidal: I had been hospitalised in December 1978 for an overdose. I struggle a lot with depression and some days feel I can't take it any-more, but I know I have to keep going and hope for a reunion one day. I also have 3 other children that have given me the strength to fight my depression and stay in this world for all 4 of my children. In a lot of ways I feel a large part of me is already dead inside, just the body still alive.

Feel I'm always judged: Have had to sit in silence when people would bring up about adoption. The hardest comment to handle was a common one I'd hear. 'How could anyone give away their baby'? How much I would want to yell back at them with the truth of how the babies were taken from us and we were forced to sign legal documents. How we were drugged and lied to, so that we felt we had no choice. The punishment the church gave us for having had sex outside of marriage.

Health Issues

Developed a heart murmur during the pregnancy from the heartache and stress I was subjected to. Depression and suicide attempts, one I was admitted to the mater but again no help was given as the hospital didn't want to face the truth of the impact of their actions. breast cancer: Due to the binding of my breast to stop the milk coming in, and the emotional trauma. There is no family history of breast cancer on my mothers side, there is a much higher rate of breast cancer with mothers who were forced to adopt their babies than the national statics portray.

Unemployable: Am on disability pension due to my depression.

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On 1st March 2010 I attended a pastoral meeting at the Congregational Offices of the Singleton Sisters of Mercy at 20 Union Street, Tighes Hill. The meeting was conducted by Michael Salmon, and attended by Sister Singleton and
Sister now known as Sister

Sister was the Nun who ran a home for unwed mothers at East Maitland known

as "Villa Maria". I was a resident of this home for approximately 4 months prior to my sons birth on 26th January, 1975 at the Mater Hospital, Waratah. Sister [redacted] lived at the premises with us and took us to the hospital on Fridays for pre natal checks and counselling sessions with Sister [redacted] the hospital social worker.

I initially contacted Sister [redacted] a couple of years ago requesting to make contact with Sister [redacted] to discuss with her some issues regarding my time there and the method of counselling we received from Sister [redacted]. Sister [redacted] quizzed me for details of my connections to Sister [redacted] and why I wanted to contact her. Said she couldn't tell me where she was because of Sister [redacted] right to privacy. Sister [redacted] said she didn't know about what went on at "Villa Maria" and the Mater Hospital, she claimed to be at that time unaware of the past adoption practise or of the enquiry into the adoption practice. I felt that Sister [redacted] tried strongly to deter me from continuing my quest to met with Sister [redacted], by insinuating that I was confused to what happened and that Sister [redacted] wouldn't have done to me what she had, and that Sister [redacted] would have been acting in my best interest, and wouldn't have done anything dishonest.

I grew up in a strict catholic family, having been taught through primary school by Nuns of The Samaritan Order at Coffs Harbour. I also attended St Mary's Boarding School Grafton for last year of high school. I was taught to respect and trust all Nuns as they had dedicated they lives to the Church and God, and to caring for those in need. I always thought they practise what they preached. So when I was at Villa Maria I trust them, I thought they knew more about life than I did. It never dawned on me to question Sister [redacted] honesty. In early 1980's I contacted Sister [redacted] to obtain off her the non-identifying information about my son and his adopted family that she said I would be able to have. I received a letter which was contradicting the information she gave me at the time. It was when I received that letter I realised that she had lied to me. Over the years the angry I felt at her betrayal of my trust consumed my emotions daily. That was when I lost my ability to trust anyone who claimed to care about me and I started to question why it was decided my baby would be better off with anyone but me. How she could go against everything I had been taught about the church and its representatives.

Late last year I contacted Sister [redacted] again only to receive similar response and she referred me to [redacted], Director of Professional Standards Office, and Sydney. He contact Sister [redacted] regarding a meeting with Sister [redacted] if she would agree. He asked me to write a list a questions I wanted put forward at the meeting and how I was affected by the adoption of my son.

On arriving for the meeting I was initially greeted by [redacted] with a hand shake. He than introduced me to Sister [redacted] and Sister [redacted]. Sister [redacted] than stepped towards me as if to greet me with a hand shake or worse a hug but I immediately stepped back as I couldn't handle her being so physically close to me.

[redacted] asked Sister [redacted] if she now could remember me and she quizzed me if I was the girl her used to go to the attic room doing correspondent studies. Seems through the meeting that this was the only fact of me she could remember. They asked me about my life now if I had other children as if that should have made up for the loss of my first born.

I asked why contact with our family and friends were restricted. Sister [redacted] claims that there were no restrictions in place, but I know of one time my brother came to visit and she didn't allow him to see me as he had recently had a visit. Which she basically said wouldn't have happen that way.

I asked why we weren't told of available support for us if we wanted to keep our babies. She claim to not have known of anything that took place between us girls and the hospital or with Sister _____ as it was all confidential. All she claimed to have known was that it was the mother's choice to keep her baby or surrender for adoption. And as Sister _____ is deceased to give any information regarding her practices. But assured me that she would have told us about our other options. After some pointless debate on the issue I declared that we would have to agree to disagree on that issue.

I asked why she took photos of another girl and myself and what the photos were used for. She flat out denied that she took photos, as she claimed in those days she didn't own a camera so there forth could not have taken any photos. She said with a smug smile on her face and a soft little giggle. Sister _____ backed her up that she wouldn't have had a camera. Just because she didn't own a camera, doesn't mean she didn't have access to one, perhaps Mrs _____ lent her a camera.

I asked if she ever thought of how humiliating it was for us all to go to church at the end of the street every Sunday. Sister _____ claims that we weren't made to go to mass at the church and that the priest would come down on Monday's to Villa Marie to do mass just for us. We had to go to mass on the Sabbath (Sunday) as it was a rule of the church and a sin for us if we didn't. As far as the priest coming down on Monday's shows that the priest didn't think that we were important enough to give us mass on the Sunday. But I don't remember the priest coming to us, but I do remember several of us girls sitting together at church every week.

I asked why we were never given any receipts for our board, as I am sure they would have to keep financial records. Sister _____ declared that all board payments were lodged in one weekly entry in the records. To me that sounded like a lame explanation. She also mentioned that our parents also made a contribution to the home of what they could have afforded to pay. This was news to me, but maybe it is true. I can't ask my parents as they are both now deceased. Sister _____ and Sister _____ both seem to be of the same opinion that the home was run at a lost and was subsidised by the Pre School that was next door to Villa Marie.

I asked why we were told not to discuss with each other our "situations" supposing this was for our own privacy of how we came to be in the home. Sister _____ again denied any knowledge and claimed that they had no way of controlling what we discussed amongst ourselves. They also brought up again how Sister _____ was not alive to answer this either.

I asked why another girl there was treated a lot different to the rest of us. She was allowed visits from her baby's father and her mother who on at least one occasion stay overnight at the home. Sister _____ denied any memory of the girl, so therefore couldn't give any explanation. It was during this discussion that I was going to cease the meeting as Sister _____ continues grins and little chuckles of laughter with her responses got to me. I packed up my bag and left the room. _____ followed me out and suggested I not leave, but take a break as he thought it would be a shame to leave at this stage. I agreed to go back if Sister _____ would take me seriously as I didn't think it was appropriate for her continuous grins and chuckles.

When we did try to talk to her about our concerns for our future she would tell us to talk to Sister _____, sometimes offering to take us in on our off weeks if we weren't on weekly

check ups at the hospital. She again had a failure of memory. But she always encouraged us to believe in Sister [redacted] was acting in our best interest and our babies best interest.

I asked her why we had to make our own pads from sheets of cotton wool and cotton material to use after the birth instead of just buy pads from the chemist or them being provided to us by the hospital. She had no memory of this either, and basically denied that it happen.

I asked Sister [redacted] who Mrs [redacted] was that would come to the home a lot. She informed me that she was a nurse that came to check on us in-between Drs visits. I don't remember knowing that at the time. I asked Sister [redacted] why we went to her house with her. She denied that we went to her house, even though I remembered that she lived at Tenambit and described the house to her.

I asked why on my Son's birth certificate that his fathers name was put down as 'father unknown'. She quizzed me as to who lodged the birth certificate and proceed to claim that she thought we did that ourselves.

I asked them all how than were we supposed to explain to our children why they were adopted when for so long they would have thought that it was because we didn't want them and that were didn't even know who their fathers were. [redacted] said that he would be happy at any time to explain to my son why he was adopted. To explain how things were for unmarried mothers at the time. I again question why we weren't told of other options so we had a choice, he preceede to go on about how the times of the day didn't always give us much choice in things in out life. He than went on about he won the only lotto draw in his live and that was to go to Vietnam and about how he didn't have a choice in it. He was saved from going because there was a change in Govt. What this had to do with our discussion is beyond me to be able to understand the comparison.

When [redacted] wanted to wind up the meeting her prompted Sister [redacted] if the was anything she want to say to me. He pointed out to her that she didn't have to but only if she wanted to. She proceeded to say that she is sorry that my life has been so stressful. No acknowledgement that her or Sister [redacted], the Mater hospital or the church had contributed to that stress at all.

I finished off by telling Sister [redacted] that she should think of all the girls that she knew that went to Villa Marie and their babies and all the pain and suffering they cause us all. That she should live with knowing what they did to us.

If I had known before hand how bad her memory was or that [redacted] had himself worked for the Department in the adoption branch in 1977 than I would have reconsidered even going to the meeting. Like a typical Docs meeting the 3 of them would have had their own meeting to devise a strategy for the discussions. That's why they wanted to know ahead of time some of the questions I had for Sister [redacted], and information as to the effect of the loss of my son and my son's adoption had on me. This was obvious by the questions regarding my family and their part in my being in the home and them not helping me find a way to keep my child. The meeting was suppose to be about their involvement and lack of care to me, and they deliberate defiance of the adoption rules of the time.

The idea that there were no records other than a sum total of our board for the week itself tells me they didn't want the goings on of the place recorded. Why if they were doing no wrong.

The System of the church, hospitals and government failed to help us mothers and babies to stay together as a family, and did everything to destroy our spirit, minds and hearts. Today the system is still determined to separate mother and child, now they term it as 'placing the child into the care of the minister'. The minister's care of these children is extremely inadequate, as he fails to reunite them back with their families. The minister needs to do more to keep families together instead of tearing them apart, generation after generation.