

**Mrs Margaret Bickley**  
(...)



Re Senate Inquiry into  
"Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices"

Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee

I would like to present a verbal submission to the above Inquiry and a copy of the evidence I gave at the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry in 1999 I would like to state that the consent to the adoption of my child was given without information of my legal rights

I gave birth to my child at St Margaret's Hospital

- I was /not allowed to see my child after birth
- I was/ not given information in regard to foster care for my child
- I was/ not informed of any life long future regret if I surrendered my child for adoption
- I was not given information on financial assistance that would enable me to keep my child

Finally I would like to say that:

As citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia resident in New South Wales  
I had 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

Please accept this as my submission

Yours Sincerely

Margaret Rose Bickley



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES

# Report on Adoption Practices

## Second Interim Report

Transcripts of Evidence  
16 June 1999 – 25 October 1999



Report 21

June 2000



Ms BICKLEY: Today I am sixty-two and a half years old. The past year has been the most wonderful and fulfilling year of my life. I met my son for the first time in September 1998. He was 46 years old. The first time we met he said, "Hi, mum. At last I feel as though I'm home" and "When I first saw you it looked like I was walking into a mirror". I am here to support the inquiry and to give my personal account of the impact that living without my son had upon my life. My story is very much the same as many of the other mothers.

In November 1951, when I was 15, I was sent to St Margaret's Hospital at Annandale, newly built quarters for unmarried pregnant girls. The rooms were like cells. We did domestic duties, which were performed right throughout the hospital, all unpaid. Throughout that time I was consistently bombarded by the nurses, matrons and doctors that I would be doing the right thing to give my child to a married couple to live with. The legal implications of adoption were never explained to me. My naivety, innocence and being totally illiterate were exploited to the hilt to the point that, at that stage, I always thought that I would be able to have my son and he would be raised within my family unit. The legality about the total separation was a very foreign concept to me. Children always had their mothers. It was very confusing.

The court case was published in the media, *Murray v Mace*. That occurred between 1953 to 1957 and had a great impact on me at the time. It was then that I started to realise the immensity of the thing that I had done. I realised that I would never be able to mount the resources for such a campaign to get my child back and remember thinking that I could never do that. I was made out to be a criminal, even thinking that I would want to have my child back. It became apparent that it was a totally hopeless situation. I started to grieve, I cried and pined, tears shed very often in the silence of my bed. I was silenced in guilt and enormous shame. I was never the same again. (That was a quote from Merrily Biggs.)

Living day to day with heavy burdens I did get on with my life. I started to strive and work hard to achieve goals so that, if I ever did meet my son, he would be proud of me, and I got very angry at times with the establishment. Did they know what they did to me and did they care?

I was married in 1957 and we have three daughters and a son. My husband was in his own business at the time. In 1970 I established my first child care centre. I built and established three more child care centres and two after school care centres, all of which are now operating. I have been involved with local government and been on many committees for a long time and helped migrant families establish their homes in Sydney.

I am surrounded by a loving and extended loving family, but I did not have my son and he did not have his rightful family. This was always on my mind. I was unable to talk to anybody about it. I buried myself in work, keeping a slim hope alive that one day I would meet him. However, I always thought: Was he alive or dead? Was he that person I just walked past? Had I met him and did not know? Did he have a good family life? Was he loved the way that was promised to me? Did he have a better upbringing than I could have provided for him? These questions swelled in my head constantly. The burden of guilt of bringing him into the world and not being able to care for him played heavily on my mind. I never had a chance to explain to him what really happened, but it really was not my fault.

Could you imagine yourself in my position, always not knowing which way to go? Did these people who stole my baby really care about him or me? They told me to forget about him, but I could not.

I retired from work in 1992, at the age of 56, after 22 years of being self-employed. My life had started to deteriorate for I began to think that I would never meet him or have the chance to say sorry to him. It hurt my heart that we had never met, his family or our family, and he had never known his brother or sisters and that I was never able to support him in his life. The total lack of communication was dragging me down.

My second chance of life came when my son contacted me on mothers' day in 1998 after 46 years. I thought how brave he was to overcome his fear of rejection and the fear of what he might find, but he said that it was a drive that compelled him to do it.

In conclusion, we were both robbed of 46 years. His kidnappers should be made aware of the injustice that we endured on a daily basis so that this will never happen again. It should never be minimised, and that is why I am here.

I would like to thank the mothers of the Origins organisation for their support and their encouragement because for the first time in my life I have been able to ring and talk to understanding people and attend their meetings. I am hoping that the Government will give them a grant to carry on their good work. Thank you.

(The witness withdrew)

(...)

(...)

Margaret Rose Bickley  
9-2-2011