

13th May , 2011

(...)

Senate Standing Committee of Community Affairs,

P.O. Box 6100, Parliament House, ACT 2600

Dear sir/madam,

Re; single mothers to relinquish babies.

I wish to let you know that the relinquishing of babies in 1969 was not just reserved for unmarried mothers, it was to any who may be on their own.

I was married, and widowed – 6 months pregnant in 1969. My child was born in the Sept of 1969 in Wagga. I was admitted to hospital 10 days prior to his birth because the Doctor was concerned for my safety (I think mentally- emotionally more than health wise). I was induced.

From the time my baby was born, a boy I called(...) Hospital staff and others, Red cross, Salvation army, church ministers were intent on getting me to give him up. I was fed the lines every day, oh you won't be able to keep him, you will never earn enough money, where are you going to live, how are you going to manage, how are you going to feed him, you will never get a job?

Whilst I was allowed to nurse and feed him, the papers were left with me by the bed (relinquishing papers for adoption) and I was told even if when I left hospital I had 6 weeks to lodge them if I changed my mind.

It was the hospital staff, namely the senior ones, including the matron who were intent on getting you to relinquish your baby.

I was in a 4 bed ward and the lass next to me probably about the same age, (18) had a boy as well to an army boy, sadly she was persuaded to give him up. I still remember her and her sadness today. I wonder where that child is now and whether he was fortunate enough to find her.

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The other 2 in the ward were married and also had boys who they kept to our knowledge.

It was common practice in the Wagga Base for the unmarried mothers to be pressured by untruths or any means to relinquish. Some Wagga girls were sent to Sydney to church hospitals or places specifically to give up their babies. At this stage to keep up appearances at home, very prominent in Catholic families.

It was considered normal that if one fell pregnant and was not able to marry or have the family raise the child that the young mother would not keep her baby.

As I was only 18 the pressure on me was equal, if I had been an older widow at the time I am not sure what pressure would have been put on them.

It seemed that generally it was accepted that young mothers, maybe even in their 20's were unable to raise children on their own.

When I was widowed, 6 months pregnant there was no social security allowance that I met. One was created for me, and that led to changes to the act. Prior to that I was only eligible for unemployment benefits – I was not officially a widow until a death certificate was produced which took 3 months because of an inquest.

Yes an apology should be forthcoming. I had enough to deal with losing my beloved to an accident without having pressure to give up his son.

Yours faithfully,

Allison Nye