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

Preamble to Submission

I, Janette Lord am a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia resident in Queensland

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

This is my story

At the age of 15 years I found myself in the family way. It was a great shock to me and my family. As we were Salvation Army, my parents asked the advice of the Salvation Army officers at that time. They suggested that they send me to Boothville Single Mothers Hospital in Brisbane so we would all have time to think about our options.

I went to Boothville and I found it very hard to cope with the manual labour I was required to do, my father had a meeting with the matron to find a solution to the problem. It was decided that my father would pay for a private room for me and that meant I only had to do light duties that I was capable of doing and that I could crochet items and do craft work to sell at their fetes.

I was as content as anyone could be under the circumstances. As time passed I grew to love my baby more and more with each passing day. After much discussion with my parents, they agreed to support my decision not put my child up for adoption. Nothing more was said about the subject.

On the Thursday, 3rd of October, 1968 my son was born, as I was keeping him, he was placed in my arms. I bottle fed him (as I was not allowed to breast feed him) bathed him, kissed and cuddled him and spoke to him about our lives together and was counting the days when we could go home.

On the Monday a woman from Department of Children Services came in to see another girl in the ward, she noticed me, went outside and came back a little while later and spoke to me about adoption, I told her, "my son is not up for adoption" she said, "well, we will see about that, and that she was going to ring my mother", I told her, "my mother supports my decision", she then left.

On Wednesday, 9th October she returned and took me into a room and badgered me for hours, telling me I was selfish for wanting to keep my child, that a boy need a father, how was I going to support him as I had never had a job, if I got a job who would look after him and that he would go to a doctor or a lawyer who would give him a good education and could I offer him the same, I said, "I would find a way and that I could not give my child to strangers", she went on and on and got very angry with me as I would not sign. She told me my mother was downstairs and that my mother agreed with her that adoption would be the best thing, I said, "I do not believe you, I know my mother supports my decision" and I asked to see her, but she would not let me see her. Finally she told me that I could not take my child home with me as I could not prove to the department that I could support him and that if I signed I would have 30 days to find a job, then I could then take him home, I then signed. (to this day I cannot picture this woman's face, only a demon like creature torturing me with her words. She left scars on my heart that have never healed).

As I was upsetting the other patients with my uncontrollable crying she asked my mother to take me out to the car as they were going to remove the baby from the hospital as they were scared that I would just take him and leave, (I only found this out many years later) which I will cover in a later chapter. I never spoke to my mother in the car as I thought she had betrayed me and I could not understand why she had changed her mind and that I would just have to find a way on my own. I returned to the ward and asked for my baby but they gave me a sedative instead, I don't remember the next two days and I don't remember the bus trip home.

After a few days at home I got myself together as I had to find a job to be able to get my baby back. A few weeks later I found a job on a property as a nanny and they were quite happy for me to have my baby there and supplied me with a room with a sleep out to act as a nursery. Now all was set, I had met all the requirements, and I was well within the 30 days. I rang the hospital and told them I was coming to get my son and if they could make the necessary arrangements for his return. I was informed that I had misunderstood that I only had 30 days if they had not found suitable adoptive parents and that I was too late.

The next two years were filled with nightmares. Every night I found myself knocking on an endless line of doors asking if they had gotten a baby boy from (...) they always said, "no" but after 2 years I knocked on this door and they said, "Yes" I said, "he is my son and I would like to see him" they brought him to me and I said, "Come to Mummy" he screamed, "you are not my mummy, you are not my mummy" I then realised it was too late. The pain was so great I married the first person who came along as I wanted another baby so bad, (if I was married they could not take this baby from me) I thought that if I had another child this would ease the pain. This is not the case another child does not make up for the one you lost.

Years went by and in 1983 I saw a Boy's Town programme, and a lot of the boy's were from adoptions, I went into panic mode, I then wrote to the department to inform them of my name and address so that his adoptive parents could contact me. I was not aware that they did not know my name, I thought that I was the only one that could not know their names. The department sent me non identifying information and informed me that neither party could know each other's identity. I then started searching birth notices and the electoral roles matching the names up with the occupation supplied to me from the department, but to no avail.

I then spoke to my mother about it for the first time since 1968 and I was shocked at what she told me. She said, "she had a call from a woman from the department and she had told her that as much as I wanted to keep my baby, it was not possible, because I was not 16 it was illegal for me to keep my baby and that she had to come down to the hospital on the Wednesday to sign, because I was only 15, they required her signature as well. She could not understand why she didn't sign anything and why they let her sit in the waiting room downstairs for hours. After a few hours they came down and asked her if she could take me out to the car as I was upsetting all the other patients and that they were removing the baby from the hospital as they were scared that I would take the baby and leave and that I would be in a lot of trouble if I did that. I said to mum, "that 's not true, that's a lie mum, she told you lies", I then proceeded to tell her what had happened on that day, and what the woman had said to me. Mum was so shocked and cried and said, "I am so sorry I didn't know, I had no reason to doubt what the woman had said, as she was from the Government". My mother went to her grave saying how sorry she was that I had to go through all that pain and suffering over the years, and if she had been told the truth, she would have supported me.

I started to search again when my son turned 18. I had his first name so I started searching the electoral rolls for all the (...) who had turned 18. There were hundreds and hundreds, so I gave up. I thought I would just have to wait until there was a change of law. I put my name down when the department opened a contact register, then in January, 1991 I was advised that there was going to be a change of law and the Department sent me a booklet along with a letter saying, that in March 1991, I would get all of my information about my son(see attached), I payed the fee required

and waited for the information (see attached). I then received a letter from them stating that I could not receive the information as my son had lodged an objection to contact and information being given out. I was devastated!!!!!! I threw the letter on the floor, then sat on the floor and cried and cried, I had waited all those years and lived for this day and I was no further ahead. I thought that life could not be this cruel! Why did the department tell me I could have the information then tell me I could not? I was informed through the group, Jigsaw that a group called the APPG had lobbied government and got amendments made to the legislation that had been passed by a unanimous vote by all three parties and had received Royal Assent on the 25/5/90 due to become effective 1/3/91. They changed a legislation that had taken years of lobbying in a matter of weeks. The changes had been kept very low key.

In 1996 I watched a programme on adoption, Dian Welfare was telling the story of crimes committed against the mother and her child. I contacted her, she put me in contact with other mothers and in time I found out thousands of mothers told the same stories of lies, deceit and conspiracy, regardless of the state where the adoption took place. I was not alone! It became very clear to me that this was systematic throughout Australia. I then applied for all my records and then read the Adoption of Children's Act 1964. I cannot explain how I felt after reading these words that clearly stated (in part) under "Defective consents" that a consent was defective if it was obtained by duress, or improper means. Under "Presenting forged Documents" (in Part) a person shall not present to the Director a document purporting to be signed by a particular person, which document might affect any application or matter under this Act; knowing that the signature to the document is obtained by duress. Under "Undue influence" (in part) A person who causes any detriment of any kind to the parent with a view, to induce that parent to offer the child for adoption commits an offence against the Act.

After receiving all my information I also discovered that the consent was signed on the 9/10/1968 and the form required by law (that all hospitals must notify the Director forthwith of the birth/death of an illegitimate child) was only received by the Department on the 14/10/1968. Another breach of law! The representative from the department under law had no right to approach me, as the department had not been notified of the birth (see attached). I also found out that the representative had no authority to tell me that I could not take my child home as I did not have the means to support him and that the 30 days was a full 30 days or until the adoption order was made. The adoption order was made on the 11th November 1968. When I contacted the hospital I was well within the law to take my child home. I also discovered that I was entitled to, as a single mother, financial assistance equivalent to a class "A" Widows Pension, Child Endowment and many other benefits. (See attached)

In conclusion:

I blame the Federal Government of the day of negligence for allowing it's States to break all their laws, not informing mothers of their rights, not advising them of the benefits available, for being fully aware of the mental health issues surrounding relinquishment and allowing it to continue, for causing suffering and lifelong grief to innocent young single girls (whose only crime was to fall pregnant) and their extended family. We didn't break the law, the government did! But we have been the ones to pay the price for crimes we never committed. We have been wrongly accused, I have been sentenced to an all of life term. All I can say is " SHAME... AUSTRALIA ...SHAME!!!"

Recommendations:

You now have the opportunity to right the wrongs of the past, **SO PLEASE, DO THE RIGHT THING**, set the record straight, admit the government's guilt, no more cover ups, no glossing it over with comments like; it was the attitude of the day (there is no excuse for breaking the law), after all the pain, suffering and degradation we have to endure because of the government's action, we deserve for the truth to be told, our names to be finally cleared, for our children and the world to know what really happened! Then and only then may I find peace in this life!

30 years ago, you were taken for adoption,
It wasn't my choice, I was given no option.
Even though they tore us apart,
They can never separate you from my heart.
I hope that your parents are loving and kind,
If only I knew, it would sure ease my mind.

As I said to the woman who insisted I sign,
"Give him to strangers, are you out of your mind!"
"To a doctor or lawyer," she said you would go,
That was a lie, as I now well know.
30 days she gave me to get you back,
If I could prove to the department, that I didn't lack.

Home I did go and got a good job,
On a property away from the narrow minded mob.
The people were lovely, they said, "you could stay",
With their young children, you would be able to play.
You had your own nursery, and money to spare,
Now all was set, for our lives now to share.

As I rang the hospital on that particular day,
I was not expecting the words they would say.
"Give you your baby, I would if I could,
But I'm sorry my dear, you have misunderstood.
30 days or new parents, and you are to late,
I guess you will just have to live with your fate!"

30 years of your life I have been unable to share,
But I love you as much as the day I was there!

Love always,
Janette