

Valerie Linow (Nee Wenberg)
(...)

NSW 2165

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

Dear Committee

Please accept my submission into the above Inquiry I am able to give evidence if needed

Yours Sincerely

Valerie Linow

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

I ... Valerie Linow am Indigenous Australian and a member of the Stolen Generation I was removed from my mother at the age of two and placed into various institutions I am also a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia resident in the stat of 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

This is my submission

(1)

My maiden name was Valerie Wenberg I AM Aboriginal Women, In the 1962 I WAS pregnant, and going back to Crown st hospital in Sydney N.S.W, to the Doctors to BE EXAMINE, ABOUT seven mths the social welfare of the hospital informed me that the DR said Valerie would Be Better staying close to the hospital. Well I WAS put in a place where other women were in a part of the Crown st Hospital, It WAS A dark place, I WAS very frighten, and I can see in the other girls they were frighten, I hardly talk to anyone, Before going into that place under the Crown st hospital, I WAS quiet happy staying with the father Relation, and they were happy for me to stay ~~there~~ there. At sometimes while I WAS staying with the father family the welfare from Liverpool. Keep coming to the place. It WAS during the night while I WAS staying in waiting at Crown st Hospital I come into labour. they gave me needle and drug me up in the labour ward, than next minute I didn't know where I were, I woke up at a place which WAS for ~~under~~ unmarried women at Lady Wakehurst, while I WAS coming through I can see one women crying and a sister come and gave me some more drug and told me I have given Birth to a still-Born. I WAS so drug up I couldn't remember Having a Baby I stay at Lady Wakehurst a week and sister told me I had to sign

(2)

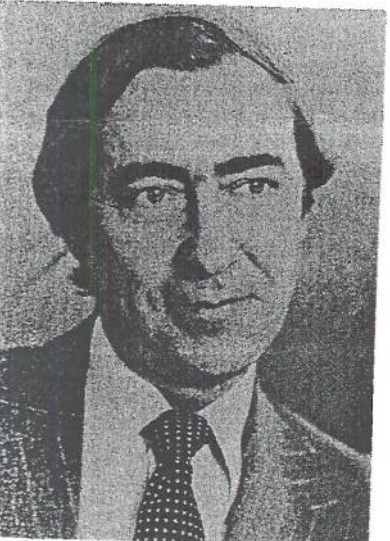
This Form to BE discharge, which I sign
I went home to Father Family place and
told them I had a still-Born Baby, I Remember
the date it WAS the 5-3-62 Before I Left
Lady WAKETHUIST the sister in charge had told
me it WAS a Baby Boy. the Father WAS in
jail. years later this Boy who was a man
age 29 years of age knock on my door, HE
ASK me WAS my name Valerie Wenberg
I said yes, Well he told me I had a baby
at Crown st Hospital that He WAS my son
My heart just started going faster, and my
knee were shaking, I try to tell Him my
Baby die at still Born, HE told me HE was
Adopted out, I just couldn't work it out
until later when I Remember the social
welfare were asking me all kind question
about the father, But at that time I thought
she was helping me, year later Before I
knew about my son, I adopted a Baby
Boy age nine mths, WAS the welfare
trying to cover up about my son to
replace another baby, Well to-day
when I go into surgery, my mind flash's
Back and I wake up thinking I just
had a Baby, AS I say what did I had
the sister in the Recovering Room WAS
wondering what I WAS saying

Sign Valerie Wenberg
Valerie Linn

Crown Street concludes - it was all worthwhile

I thought about the problems and projects to which all sections and departments of the Hospital gave so much time and energy. About how the waiting patients area became an adoption nursery and then a birth centre. About the planning for the Albion Street wing which never materialised, and the lift tower which never got the second lift for which it was planned. About the buying of the houses on the Albion Street corner and the planning and construction of this University Building. About the transformation of the basement of Founders Block, when the Pathology Department move out and the interpreter service moved in. About the factory which became Chesterman House to accommodate Pathology and the Ida Love School of Nursing. About turning the old lecture theatre into private obstetric rooms. About the renovation of the third and fourth floors of Founders Block; about turning the laundry into a kitchen and abolishing the smell of cabbage from the front hall. About the development of parent education classes; about the improvements to labour wards and the new foyers. About the planning done for a new outpatients' department. About the air conditioning of the nurseries, and the creation of the Sam Stening intensive care nursery, and its recent move to larger and brighter area.

About how proud we were to be hosts to the Children's Medical Research Foundation and later to Foundation 41. About the changing uses of the Lady Wakehurst Annexe and all the negotiations which they involved. About our excitement when medical breakthroughs led to the establishment of new clinics. About Canonbury, and the hours spent trying to come to terms with the National Trust, the Local Council and the Department of Planning. About a multitude of other causes and issues and projects, arising and happening and, perhaps, before our time, but urgent and important and time-consuming to those who were involved with them.



President Mr George Weaver
Photo courtesy Crown Street Collection

And the question came back - was it all worthwhile?

The answer must be - **yes it was.**

It was worthwhile because it meant that for ninety years Sydney had a hospital for women which was unequalled in the world. Even while all the defensive activities has been going on over the last years some 4,000 mothers have had safe and comfortable deliveries with the benefit of the discoveries of the past, and with the benefit of the best that the present can offer in the way of skill and care. While we worked in the calmer atmosphere of the previous ten years, forty thousand mothers had these benefits which they would not otherwise have enjoyed in the same measure.

A few days ago at the annual meeting of the Crown Street committee I wondered how its members must feel after working for the hospital for seventeen years, and then having to attend a Christmas meeting with the prospect of no Crown Street Christmas to follow.

Since that committee began its work, nearly 100,000 babies have been born in this hospital. If that committee had been attached to, say, a country hospital, it could have taken 500 years to benefit the same number of babies. Who can possibly say that their work has not been worthwhile? A tremendous amount of good has been achieved, and we must never lose sight of that fact, even if our opportunity for further service has now been curtailed in circumstances which we all know too well.

Today is, I think, a day when some retrospection is permissible, when the deepest of thanks and the sincerest appreciation should be placed on record before the book of records is closed. Some may be thinking about new avenues of service, while others may feel that their debt has been paid. But whatever demography and politics have now done to our hospital we must not lose sight of the good that has been done, the good that would have gone undone if the Crown Street family had not come together and worked, without thought of reward, to provide the best in care, in body and in spirit, for so many. For the happy mothers, the unhappy and troubled mothers, for those who wanted to be mothers and could not, and for those to whom the prospect of motherhood was far from welcome.

The names of those who have worked and made sacrifices for this hospital are legion and there is no way today in which they can all be mentioned. There are the visiting medical officers - until a few years ago completely unrewarded for

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THE ANNEXES - LADY WAKEHURST

Sister B Hines	1952 - 1954
Miss Rene Wilson	
Miss Marie Newton	1978

High on the cliffs of Waverley at the eastern end of Birrell Street where the cool breezes waft over from the Pacific Ocean can be found the buildings making up the annexe known as *Lady Wakehurst*. In January 1952, when in need of post-operative accommodation, The Women's Hospital leased the buildings from the Australian Red Cross, and began to provide services under the management of Sister Hines.

During 1963, the Red Cross expressed the wish to dispose of the *Lady Wakehurst* property. After negotiations between the Hospital Commission and the Society, the Commission provided the sum of £50,000 to permit the Board to purchase the property in 1964, and the freehold was vested in The Women's Hospital, subject to an understanding between the Board and the Commission as to its disposal if/when it becomes surplus to this Hospital's requirements.¹⁴⁰

Accommodation was available for post surgical gynaecological patients, prenatal women (mostly unmarried) awaiting employment, confinement, or recovering from confinement and 2 or 3 beds for women undergoing Deep Ray Therapy at Prince of Wales Hospital and 1 bed for a long term terminal patient. Mothers who returned there following confinement were without their babies who had either been either stillborn or placed for adoption.

In 1968 the annual numbers were recorded as 120 post-surgical and 966 pre-natal and post-natal.¹⁴¹

Medical residents visited the annexe daily but the nursing staff who worked there were required to be

more self reliant than usual as they were left alone. This isolation brought increased job satisfaction to some but also a sense of detachment from the main hospital to others. Staff turnover at times led to concern and Sister Marie Newton, the Sub-Matron set up education programmes for the nursing aides.

Not all care was nursing care however as in 1972 Sister Newton and her staff won praise from the Waverley Council for the wonderful results obtained in the Garden Competition conducted by the Council. The staff's enthusiasm and their interest and pride in the care and appearance of the grounds brought all round enjoyment to staff, patients and neighbours alike.¹⁴²

In 1974, following the resignation of Miss Yorke as Sub-Matron of *Canonbury*, Sister Newton was appointed Sub-Matron of both *Lady Wakehurst* and *Canonbury* annexes. Sister Newton's ability as manager of the two establishments was praised for the way she coped with the difficult problems associated with continuity of staff and limited finances.¹⁴³

By December 1975 owing to changes in social welfare and attitudes the same amount of accommodation for 'unmarried mothers' was no longer needed. The Board began to negotiate with the Health Commission in an endeavour to find the most satisfactory use for this annexe.¹⁴⁴ In 1978 Sister Newton, whose association with *Crown Street* went back to 1947, retired.¹⁴⁵

The 1980 announcement by the Health Commission that funds had been allocated for the re-development of the *Lady Wakehurst* Annexe as a Hospital and Re-training Unit for intellectually retarded young adults was well received.¹⁴⁶ The buildings had been unoccupied since November, 1975 and it was anticipated that the necessary renovations would be finalised to enable occupancy by July, 1982.

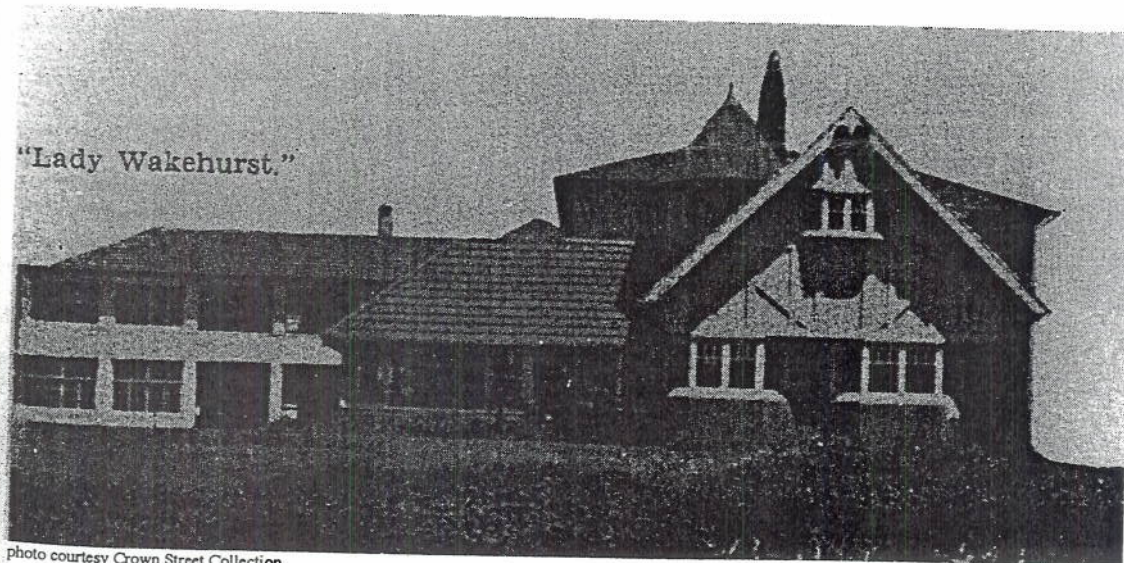


Photo courtesy Crown Street Collection

DEPARTMENT OF NEONATOLOGY (THE NURSERIES)

I did my Obstets at Crown Street and loved every minute of it. The process of pregnancy and childbirth fascinated me.

One evening, I was the only nurse in the Adoption Nursery, with 42 babies to attend to. It was on the ground floor of the Founder's Block and no-one ever called. Having heard of the screaming bedlam which usually greeted the night nurse when she came on duty, I planned a course of action. Growing up during WW2 may have given me ideas. At 8pm I started changing the babies for their 9pm feed, raising the top of each cot and turning each babe on her side. I had the 42 bottles poured and named and warmed, so, starting at one end, I went around the room giving each his bottle. This would have been absolutely banned, as we were supposed to hold each babe while feeding, then burp and talk to her as we tried to get a smile.

As the 42 babies drank their milk I moved about the room, keeping an eye on the door. Silence reigned, apart from the sound of 42 healthy babies sucking. I had planned that, as each one finished, I would gently removed the bottle and later put down the cot.

Footsteps on the path outside caused me to go rigid. I was staring at the door as the evening sister walked in. She glanced at the nursery but hurriedly turned her attention to the feeding list on the sink. She left soon after.

I don't remember who she was but I was grateful to her for turning a blind eye. Perhaps she had done her training there and had worked evening duty in 'Adoption'.

N F (née Wilkinson) Taylor

Conversion of the old wards on the 1st and 2nd floors of the North Wing in March 1962 resulted in the hospital having vastly improved nursery accommodation. Completion of the nursery re-accommodation scheme considerably facilitated the work of the Unit for Research in the Newborn, established at Crown Street during 1961 by the Children's Medical Research Foundation.¹⁰²

The Adoption Nursery had been moved from the closed verandah near OB2, in 1954 to Founders Block. With the redevelopments of the Founders Block and the remodelling in the main nurseries, the adoption babies were once again moved to the main block into Nursery 5 on the first floor.

Three years later (1965) the demands on nursery accommodation for *adoption babies* (a term which came to be used for all babies awaiting adoption, foster care or other arrangement by the Child Welfare Department exceeded the normal capacity of No 5 Nursery, causing serious management problems.

With insufficient Child Welfare accommodation to relieve the Hospital of this increasing burden, it became necessary to make strong representations to the government.¹⁰³

There was no satisfactory alternative but for the provision of a more commodious *Adoption Nursery*, preferably remote from the other "special-care" nurseries, but in the precincts of the main hospital.¹⁰⁴

Remodelling of the former Waiting Patients building (Nursery 8) was the answer to the problem of space. Three large nursery areas housing 30-odd cots could be provided in there as well as a large room where the family could meet with, in privacy, and handle the baby they were being offered for adoption.

The workload of the nursing staff, in addition, was greatly assisted with the help of volunteer 'Pink Ladies' who responded to media appeals, undertaking the changing, feeding, and *loving* of the little ones.



The volunteer 'pink ladies' who generously gave of their time to 'mothering' the adoption babies
photo courtesy Crown Street Collection