

23/03/2011

Department of the Senate
PO BOX 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Name: Janet McHugh (Ms)

Dear Senators,

Re: Commonwealth of Australia Inquiry into Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices

I am writing this submission in the hope that what happened to me will never again happen to an Australian woman or child. I would like the Government to rectify the current Adoption legislation and protect all its citizens from the people who procure Adoptions under false pretences.

At age 17 I became pregnant to my boyfriend, he did not wish to marry me or assist me in bringing up the baby, so my parents arranged for me to travel from Canberra to Sydney to stay at the Salvation Army home for unmarried mothers in Marrickville. This was in 1971.

I stayed there until, 1 month prior to the confinement when I was transferred to Bethesda Hospital in Marrickville. At the time I was studying for my Higher School Certificate but was not allowed to study whilst at the hospital, we were all made the work in the kitchens of the hospital.

During this time I developed toxemia. When the doctor who usually saw us for check-ups found out, he was furious that I had been working for 2 weeks in this condition; unable to control my bladder and constantly wetting my underwear. He asked me to sit outside the Matrons office, he went inside and I could hear him shouting at her. I was immediately transferred to a hospital ward and given treatment for the toxemia. I subsequently found out that toxemia can kill the mother and the baby if not treated.

They induced the birth but forgot to tell me not to walk around after my waters had been

broken, I was left alone in the room and I got off the bed and wandered around as I could not stand the pain, I received no pain killing drugs. When my son was born I haemorrhaged and the blood spurted all over the walls of the room, I had severe blood loss and the baby had the cord around his neck. They took him away immediately and I was only allowed to hold him on 3 occasions for 30 minutes at a time, with a person guarding me in case I decided to run away with him. He was taken from my arms and I was told I would never see him again.

My son was born on a Saturday, but they did not call the Red Cross for a blood transfusion until the Monday so that they would not have to pay for weekend rates. I was given a transfusion of 2 pints of blood. On the second day I went to have a shower and collapsed in the showers. I was so weak from blood loss I could barely walk, I had been a fit 17 year old who regularly played sport and if I had not been in good physical condition I am sure I would have died in childbirth.

I was in a ward with 5 other girls and those that wanted to keep their babies were subjected to daily harassment by the Salvation Army officers who tried to convince them it was in the best interests of the baby to have them adopted. Some were drugged as they seemed to be constantly asleep.

I have copies of my medical records which indicate that I was also drugged with barbiturates.

I requested to feed my baby and was denied this right to feed him, this is also documented on the records.

My boyfriend came to the hospital to see me and was denied access; he was also denied his right to see the baby.

When I left the hospital a very tall Salvation Army officer stood in the doorway of the hospital, obviously to bar my access in case I decided to run back and try to take my child.

I consider that this Adoption was illegal as I was not in a fit physical or mental state when I signed the papers.

When I signed the adoption papers I was under the influence of the barbiturates the nurses had given me and weak from blood loss.

I was not offered any legal representation, nor advised of my legal rights.

I was not advised of any financial assistance available to me, and had no family support and they did not contact my mother when I suffered the medical complications of the birth.

I was not advised that I had 30 days in which to go back and get my baby.

I learnt of this fact when I attended the NSW Government Inquiry into Past Adoption Practices, and remember the moment well, my heart sank through the floor, and I could not believe the lengths these people had gone to, to lie and deceive me and steal my son.

The agenda of the Salvation Army was quite clear to steal the babies of unmarried mothers who they considered to be unsuitable and unfit to be mothers and give them to their friends and colleagues who were childless.

In a subsequent interview I had with Major _____ of the Salvation Army she admitted to me that Quote
“These people were friends of hers and a suitable couple”, she had seen my son grow up and was now informing me that he had placed a Contact Veto. She was obviously still controlling the situation some 20 years later.

During the NSW Inquiry I spoke during a tea break, to a woman from Newcastle an adoptive parent, who had adopted a son from Bethesda hospital in 1971, and she confirmed that she had not been told about the 30 days that mothers had to come back a get their children. She was informed that the mother would not come back for him that he was hers to keep. It confirms that they were consistent in their lies, to both mothers of the babies and the adoptive parents.

I consider that they have committed a crime against me by taking my child illegally. They violated my human rights and legal rights as a mother. The Salvation Army took advantage of the vulnerable and naïve young women in their care.

The Government gives them a Tax Free status which they do not deserve, they use taxpayers money to facilitate their hidden agendas, there is no Government control on any religious bodies, they are not held accountable for any of their actions. They should not be able to inflict their social mores and beliefs on other sectors of society.

As a consequence of the inhumane treatment I have received, I have suffered a lifetime of grief and pain, crying every day for my son, and the loss of him. I married briefly but was unable to maintain this relationship due to the psychological damage and trauma caused by this event. I was told to go away and carry on with my life but have been unable to do so, I never remarried nor had any other children.

The Government gave control of the Adoption processes over to these people to do as they wish, they now need to rectify this situation and I would make the following suggestions.

Remove the tax free status of all religious groups...this money could be better spent on rebuilding Australia after all the natural disasters.

All religious groups should be monitored and I would suggest that the Australian Federal Police start with checking the offices of all religious groups, if they have nothing to hide they won't mind being inspected will they?

No more Adoptions, it is against God and nature to remove a child from its mother.

All Australian women deserve the right to bring up and raise their own children and

should be given appropriate financial and social support.

All staff in Government Departments should be screened to see if they have any views regarding Adoptions, as I was prevented from receiving non identifying information, by a person who thought they had the right to pass a moral judgement on me. I subsequently received this information only due to my persistence.

The men of Australia take responsibility for ensuring that these inhumane actions never again happen to Australian women or their children.

Adoption affects the mother , the child and the adoptive parents as well.

As a citizen of this country I have been denied my Legal and Human Rights and would ask the Commonwealth Government, to investigate these matters thoroughly and amend the laws so that this does not happen again.

I thank you for this opportunity to make my submission, please accept this submission and register my name as a participant in this Inquiry. Please add my name and address to your mailing list so that I can receive any future correspondence and documents on the progress of this Inquiry.

Yours faithfully,

Janet McHugh