

I Neil Andrew Richards (…) of **(…)**
, Victoria, (…) address this submission to "The Community Affairs References
Committee" in regards to "Commonwealth Contributions to Former Forced
Adoption Policies and Practices" enquiry.

**My name is Neil Andrew Richards and I was adopted in 1957. My original birth
certificate names me as (…)** ; the child of **(…)** and
(…) .

**All my documents; which I have obtained; have varying dates as to when I was
actually adopted and given a new name. I will supply those documents on request.**

I address the Senate on part two of the terms of reference.

**Very little if any support is given in the State of Victoria to either the parent or
parents of a child or the child that was relinquished for adoption and their siblings
and again children of the person who was relinquished.**

**After going through the initial legalities in asking the Department of Human
Services Victoria; I was requested to visit their adoption unit in Bourke Street in
Melbourne. Yes I received a number of documents that identified my true family.**

**When I asked the social worker why I had been adopted; I received a very abrupt
response. The response was "your mother was poor and you needed to be
somewhere else". I was devastated. I asked where I could go and receive support
and I was given a paper copy of those that could offer me support. At that moment
the meeting was terminated and I was left to my own devices. I had to cope
travelling home to regional Victoria and all the while trying to absorb legal
documents that were both confusing and quite impersonal.**

**Some months after this I had a nervous breakdown; my GP referred me to a
psychologist who was able to support me through a difficult 24 months. As a
relinquished child and my trauma being caused by that relinquishment I could not
claim any Medicare rebate. I was in the lucky position to be able to pay for this
counselling. Many in my position cannot afford decent targeted help. Over the
period of 24 months, I had expended approximately \$4500 for psychological
counselling**

**Furthermore and most importantly; there are consequences for both the
relinquishing parent/parents and siblings of the relinquished child. Many siblings
are unaware that they have either a brother or a sister until contact is made. I
luckily was able to find my true family. I suddenly found three sisters and three**

brothers that I had never known and they had never known about me. Sadly one of those siblings; my sister (...); took her own life in 2009. The causation of her taking her life was that she felt that she had been lied too. My mother; her mother had never been enabled to enable the truth; society had visited shame on my mother. The consequences continue; one of my true brothers is now under psychological care. He is also a victim of a practice that was considered ethically correct, but in law was illegal.

My own children are also traumatized by these events and their future in dealing with these matters needs to be addressed.

I would ask the Senate that a full enquiry is called in regard to these matters and that the States be given clear guidelines on how to ethically and morally respond.

I would also ask of the Senate that a recommendation for a free call number is established Australia wide so both parents and children, their siblings and their own children and grand children can seek guidance when they are feeling alone and confused. I would also ask that this phone service be staffed by those like myself and the parents who have suffered so much and can give kind and considered directed advice.

I would also ask of the Senate that a National Database be established where all State and Territory Records are kept along with the records of NGO's.

I give my consent to the Senate to ask for my confidential medical records from both my General Practitioner and my psychologist. Both of whom I wish not to identify on the Public Record.

In finalizing my submission; I ask of the Senate and Officers of the Commonwealth to hear my case with objectivity. As an Australian citizen I plea that I am treated like all as an equal.

Neil A. Richards.

I give my consent for the Senate to publish my submission.