

Mrs. Anne Taylor

11/11/54

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The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee
Suite S1 59
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT 2600

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE. INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE

I am writing to you to let you know my story. I was one of the Child Migrants who were brought to Australia.

My maiden name was Annie Watt, (I prefer Anne) I came to Australia on the ship the Orantes in 1954. Our ship docked in Victoria on the 19/6/54. I came out under the Mannix scheme and was sponsored by the Sisters of Nazareth. In a sense I was just transferred from Nazareth House Kilmarnock Scotland, to Nazareth House Camberwell Australia . The Institution in Australia was a Convent, an Aged Home and Orphanage. It was a beautiful building and was virtually self sufficient.

When my Mother died on the 1/6/53 from a Heart Attack, my Father was left with four children, my eldest brother was married, and in the armed forces. That left four of us under 13yrs. My sister looked after us before and after school. She also kept house. We never went hungry and my Father even though he was fond of his friend 'the Bottle' he never was mean or aggressive to us.

My Father came from a large Family who all had families of their own and after the War things were very difficult for most people, so therefore they couldn't help much physically nor financially.

We were Catholics and went to the Church and School, at St. Peters in Chains in Ardrossan.

My Father had a problem with me, I was very ill as an infant, and was admitted to Ayrshire Central Hospital, in 1947, at first they thought I had Meningitis, but which was later diagnosed as Infantile Paralysis, later known as Polio. I was in an iron lung for about a year, but in and out of hospital until I was 6yrs old. I wore boots and had full-length calipers, as well as a night restrainer, which stopped me from moving my legs at night in bed.

Someone reported our family to the St Vincent De Paul Society at our Church. They obviously said we were not being looked after properly. So a little after a month, after my Mother died two big black cars pulled up outside our place after school, my sister took my younger brother Tommy and scampered off she knew who these people were. They then took me in one car with a Lady and a Man and my brother William who was

If you spoke out you were caned,

If you let you hair grow and a Nun didn't like it, she would make you have it cut like a boy, as well as cane you. No one had long hair.

In fact I think one Nun especially enjoyed canning so much she made up reasons to do so.

I remember once my good leg was so sore I could hardly walk, on the way to Rosary I fainted in line. When I came to the Nun was hitting me with the cricket stump. She told me to get up I tried but my bad leg wouldn't take my weight, I collapsed again, Sister was getting furious as I was holding up the line she hit me again I tried to tell her what was wrong but she didn't want to listen. Finally they had to get two seniors to carry me to the sick bay. I was pretty sick that night.

They got Doctor Crotty the next day and he told them I had a deep seated infection in my good leg and needed a course of penicillin and wouldn't be able to walk for a fortnight.

One could write a book especially concerning the harsh treatment we girls received.

After two operations in different years I was in hospital for periods of up to eight weeks each, and had no visitors except one time when the Salvation Army people who had a girl my age in the same ward.

When I came home from hospital I was not allowed to use the lift I had to walk up and down all the flights of stairs with my crutches. If I was late for a meal I had to go without, as well as get caned.

I guess I was one of the lucky ones as I went out to school when I was 14 years old, to St. Benedict College Burwood.

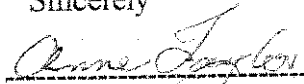
I really don't know how far it was from Camberwell, but I don't think I am exaggerating when I say about 4 or 5 miles, each way and I had to walk it every school day for six months until I had to have another operation. I missed three months and, I wasn't allowed to go back to school and that ended my school days.

At the beginning I said I don't remember ever being a child, I am saddened that most of the memories of my youth are pretty grim. I still consider myself blessed for coming to Australia, although I miss my Family. God willing we will meet again.

I believe strongly that the treatment handed out to us was indeed inhumane. For the reason I have presented a brief part of my story because I sincerely hope this will **Never** ever happen to children again. Scars from childhood last a lifetime.

I trust I will not have to provide further information but could if it was necessary.

Sincerely



23rd July 2003