Terry Langham

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28 August 2003 The Secretary Senate Community Affairs References Committee Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600

INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE

MY STORY (In brief) TERRY LANGHAM born 14 / 3 / 1954

I write this letter to the Senate to emphasise the need to make the Australia parliament more aware of the significant numbers of children that have been in care and that should be provided assistance in dealing with their past.

To a similar degree, the Australia parliament should ensure legislation (polices and procedures) are in place to minimise any child being placed in to any form of institutional care. Where this is the case that children are needed to be placed into some form of care where they can enjoy the privileges that are available to the rest of the community.

Institutional care places

I was placed in two Institutional care places in the late 1950s – early-mid 1960s sixties. The first place when was between the age of six or seven at Muingdi in north New South Wales. To this day I cannot find out the address of the place or the people who ran the place.

At the age of eight I was placed in the *Melrose* Childrens boys' home at Pendle Hill, Sydney NSW.

From around about the age of 11 on was placed in a 'care' family situation.

In the late 1966, aged 12, I was taken out of care and went to live with my father and 'stepmother'.

Institutional care experiences

The bad memories of being in care remain with me nearly forty years later. The experiences that in occurred at both places that I was a victim of, I believe were of a criminal nature in both physical and a mental capacity. They were a criminal nature at the time and remain so.

Long term effects of institutional care experiences

You carry with a survival mechanism, that you are force to self learn while in instititual care. It is one of keeping quite and not drawing attention to you. The consequences for me were having a les ability to adapt to learning mechanism of school and social skills. As a result you become inhibited and you develop a loner mentally. There is often a compound effect in how you live your life. As adults you automatically adopt a defence mechanism of social withdrawal to survive difficult situations.

I have survived and have two children and a spouse. As an ex care leaver it places greater pressure on how you bring up your children. You are often conscious of where you are at the same ages of your children. The memories - issues do not go away. It like there in a box and the box is open again. And you have to deal with the contents again.

I have to some degree attempted to deal with the past. In 1997 *Melrose* Children's boys' home at Pendle Hill, Sydney NSW was on the ABC as part of reporting of institutional care. As much as I tried to deal with past methodical, success was only on a limited basis. I have always considered that I never had a childhood. Thousands of children unfortunately would have been similar. I cannot stress enough that children deserve a childhood without adopting childhood in a survival mode.

Yours Sincerely Terry Langham