



25 August 2003

Mr William Howes

Submission Number: ECOC 008

Dear Mr Howes

I understand from the Care Leavers Network Australia (CLAN) that there are a number of its members who wish to make a submission to the current Senate Community Affairs References Committee inquiry into children in institutional care.

CLAN also advised me that the members concerned may not have access to the information they gave to the Committee on Children and Young People's inquiry and that, as a result, it would be difficult for them to make a submission to the current Senate inquiry. CLAN asked for copies of the submissions of its members to help them.

Consequently, I have enclosed a copy of the submission you made to the Committee on Children and Young People's inquiry into the education of children in out-of-home care. The copy has been given to you to assist you in making a submission to the Senate inquiry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Barbara Perry".

Barbara Perry
Chair

William Ronald Howes

This is the story of William Ronald Howes as a young lad & a young man.

I was born on the 19-8-30 at Granville N.S.W. My mothers name was Anna-Bella Howes. My fathers name was Harry Yorston Howes. My father deserted the family and I became a ward of state on 9-3-31. I was fostered to Mrs Doris Millar of 49/51 Station Road Auburn N.S.W. I grew up believing those I lived with were my family. There were other kids there as well.

Doris Millar was the mother of the house & I believed Mr Ern Spowart was my father & all the others my brothers & sisters. There was Mr Spowar's daughter Dawn & son Ron & foster children Peter, Arthur (nickname Mick) Maureen & Jerry. Jerry I found out was my blood brother.

I attended Auburn Catholic School, Auburn North Public School, and Auburn South Public School. I went to these schools sometimes using the name of Millar or Spowart. I don't remember wearing shoes to school or anywhere else for that matter.

I lived at Thirroul for 6 months 16-8-35 - 10-2-36. I remember the House was on the northern end of the beach & the Xmas king tide would come up to the back door. Dad had a sister living at Thirroul. His mother and father lived at Sutherland.

We had a house cow at Auburn so we could have porridge or bread & milk for breakfast. As a treat, dad would bring a large devon sausage home from work & we would race from the back fence to the back of the house but we all took turns for the biggest slice. We were all one big happy family.

In December 1941 Mrs Millar died. I heard Dad talking to his daughter Dawn. He said he could not look after all of us as he had to work. Dawn was working. Ron was going into the army. The war had started Japan had bombed Pearl Harbour. Mick would go to Patsy who Mick found out was his mother & Mrs Millar was his Grandmother. Patsy was waiting for a divorce from her husband & the Welfare would not allow her to have Mick because according to them she was living in sin with Bart so Patsy had to hide Mick away or they would have put him into a state home. Peter and Maureen would go to Auntie Cummins at Redfern. Billy & Jerry would have to go to Roylestone. We would all meet again in later years.

I certainly tried hard enough to get back to the man I thought was my father. Jerry my brother & I finished up at Roylestone. I remember being greeted by a very unfriendly voice saying I remember you, get in there pointing inside to Roylestone. Miss Hathaway's welcome started me off on the wrong foot. To start with I could not remember ever being there before so how could she remember me? This bully Miss Hathaway. I was asked by another ex-inmate of Roylestone if Miss Hathaway was still alive & I replied, I doubt it they used to burn witches at the stake in those days. We got out the front gate on occasions, we were marched down the street with an escort of big chaps. They must have been proud. We were marched to the

barbers up the road where a basin was put on our heads and that was a haircut. On other occasions we might get marched to the pictures to see a movie.

The back yard of Roylestone was reasonably big with a large fence topped with barbed wire to stop undesirables getting in I suppose. ~~For punishment we had to clean the stairway with a basin & toothbrush.~~ This stairwell was all tiles if you did not finish it today there was always tomorrow. I had to have my adenoids & tonsils out at Camperdown Children's hospital. It came time for Jerry & I to be fostered out. We went to Earlwood together. They were very nice people. I went to De La Salles College at Marrickville. Had to wear straw hats with uniform. There must have been something about the hats other boys from other schools did not like them so arguments started, a fight followed, the hat got knocked about so tomorrow at school the Brother would argue about the hat. He used to throw a pencil on the floor & Bill was told to pick it up. The brother had a leather strap 3 to 4 inches wide & about 3 foot long. I would pick up the pencil & would get the belt across the backside and so does anyone else who got into strife with brother Michael. So I was quickly falling out with Brother Michael, he only had one arm too.

So my stay at Earlwood was drawing to a close. I always wanted to get back to the man I believed was my father so I took it on the toe. Jerry liked it there & stayed. The people left the house to him when they passed away.

But alas the Welfare caught me and sent me back to Roylestone. I was next fostered out to Roseberry it was near the Wiggly chewing gum factory also not far from the Gardiners Road School. I attended there for 5 weeks. My work at this foster home was assisting a young lad setting the table for meals, cleaning up after meals & waiting on the table & washing up. I was paid one penny for this work. I did not receive the money, the lady of the house would put it on top of a high cupboard. She said she would put it there for safekeeping. I could not reach the high cupboard so I moved the table & put chairs on the table & climbed onto the chair. I eventually got my wages, a whole 5 pennies. So once again I headed for Auburn, this time I slept under Dad's house for several days eating a little food out of the fridge when everyone was at work. But they came looking for me again & got me & back to Roylestone. They must have realised I was not happy away from Auburn.

Patsy who I thought of as my sister had married Bart by this time and had Mickey with her. So she said she would foster me, as I was much happier with her, Mick and Bart. I was allowed to visit Dad while I was at Leichhardt with Patsy. During my stay at Leichhardt I attended Leichhardt school & Leichhardt junior tech. I went to Leichhardt police boys club where I learned self-defence & used it for my safety over the following years in & out of the boxing ring. I was 14½ years of age when I left school. I was employed at a shoe factory for 15 shillings a week. Then at Leichhardt Post Office as a telegram boy. The war was just finished I used to deliver telegrams to families who were told their loved ones were coming home. During my few years at Leichhardt I made some good & bad friends at the Police Boys Club. One night Mick & I were coming home when I was assaulted by this chap & some of his friends. Mick was not involved. The fight was broken up by police & the chap was taken away in the police van. I was to meet this chap soon after when I was working at Maritime Service Board at Circular Quay as a messenger boy. He turned up for work there, another fight started

& he finished up down a flight of stairs. I was told to resign or get sacked by Mr Faulks the president.

I started an apprenticeship as a Ship Wright. I returned to live in Auburn in 1946 Dad had my indentures cancelled & I joined the railway. Patsy was very upset because I wanted to go back to Dad. I worked my way up from junior porter to guard, working in all Sydney metropolitan & country areas. Since coming home to Auburn in 1946 Peter followed then Maureen. Ron of course came home from the war. Dawn got married in 1949. Peter got married 1950. I met my wife to be in 1948. Robert Howes who I thought was my cousin used to go roller-skating, he introduced me to a mate as his brother. It was a shock. I can assure you I was shocked. I was taking my girlfriend Ray to introduce her to my aunty but on the way I had to tell her it was my mother & not my aunty. So I found out that those I thought were my cousins were my brothers & sisters. They were Margaret, Elsie, Lillian, Robert, Harry, Nola & of course Jerry who had been brought up with me at Auburn.

My mother Anna-Bella Howes passed away before we were married. I found I was a lot closer to my foster family than my real brothers & sisters. Lillian lived somewhere in Queensland, we don't know where Nola is. Margaret, Elsie & Bobby have all died but Harry is living at Umina. We have made contact with him twice in 50 years but he does not seem interested in me or my family as I have not heard from him. He never makes the first move. Jerry sends a card every Xmas but we do not know how he is healthwise.

Patsy my foster sister who later fostered me & I lived with for 3 ½ years passed away about 22 years ago. We were very close visiting each other all the time. Mickey her son, found out a lot from the library in Sydney, he found that Mrs Millar was his grandmother. Peter was fine. He married Lyn & moved to Barellan near Griffith & we kept in close contact. He died about 6 years ago. Dawn, Dad's daughter, married & went to Cessnock to live. She died about the same time as Patsy, Maureen married & is living at Narooma, not knowing who her mother was. Messed her up a lot but when she was able to find out, her mother died. But she sees the rest of her mother's family a lot which is good for her.

Jerry tried so hard in his teen years to find out everything but in those days, those who knew about the family would not tell. It hit him hard & he became an alcoholic. Ron stayed with Dad to look after him & he only died last year.

Ray & I were married in 1952. We moved to Muswellbrook with my work & Robert our son was born there in 1955. We stayed in Muswellbrook until Robert was 2 years old & came to Warrawong near Wollongong. We bought a house overlooking the lake. Grant our second son was born 1958 & our daughter in 1961. We had a pretty good life, our ups & downs like anybody. We lost Grant to a car accident in 1980. It's very hard to lose one of your children.

1980 I got skin cancer of the right eye and doctors took it off it saved my life, a good doctor. We did a lot of fishing over the years a very enjoyable past time. Our daughter has 3 beautiful daughters they are the love of our life. Our son lives in his house at Alpark Rail. He never married - maybe one day. We see him every week.

My life with blood brothers & sisters was a maximum of about 4 years & when I tracked Harry down there was only Nola of which Harry knew nothing. He also knew nothing of Lillian. They have not made any contact with me but I will inquire at Burnside what years my brothers & sisters were there & if Lillian returns for any reunions. I would like to know why some went to Burnside, Nola to Clyde & Jerry & I to Station Rd. if my father deserted are Jerry & Nola full brother & sister as I became a state ward on 9-3 31. Jerry was born May 1932, Nola born? 1932. As Jerry sends a card he will not bother to chase Nola. Will inquire about Lillian.

In closing, this short letter I must say that I believe I started school at 6 years of age. I attended 9 different schools & left school at 14 ½ years of age so you can see by my time at school I did not receive a great deal of schooling so most of my education & knowledge has been self taught.

Thank you for reading my life story.

Regards Bill Howes

P.S some information regarding dates I got from DoCS correspondence April 1996.