

AGE 5 – 10: 1972-1977

My memories of my childhood are patchy, at best. I remember the night my mother died, when I was taken to my next-door neighbours, and I remember burning my bottom on the hot water bottle in their bed. I also remember walking out to the kitchen, thinking I'm going to get in trouble for getting out of bed. I didn't though. I remember sitting on someone's knee as they were talking, about what I can't remember.

My next memory is living with Mrs. Barbara Lynch {Note 1}, and my life with her was not very good. I remember that I used eat out of garbage bins at school and I remember that one day she sat me down at the kitchen table and she had laid out all the food in the fridge and screamed at me to eat. After some while I took a grape and she went ballistic, calling me a fat pig, etc. At this time it was being made known to the Government by Mrs Lynch that she didn't want me and a social worker from Department of Youth and Community Services (DOCS) wrote a report on me, which is in my file {Note 2}, (this is how I found out), part of which that the reason I had problems was because I was a "rather repugnant child with a masculine looking face". I might have been age six then. The reason the Government took me from her was because "they feared for my safety".

My next memory is at a home where we were all lined up naked waiting to get into a bath and when I did the lady bathing me pinched me really hard on the bottom and said something nasty. I can't recall what she said but I do recall the tone in her voice. The next night I remember walking up to the other lady (there were two laundry tub like baths) and asking if I could get in her bath. I also remember being put to bed in a cot and thinking I was too old for a cot.

My next memory, at this stage I am likely living with the Gilchrist family and going to a Catholic school (what school I don't know). I didn't know what recess was. Our class timetable was on the sidewall and I looked up to see when little lunch and big lunch was. This was at the time I was being molested by a priest at the school. He would sit me on his knee and insert his fingers inside me and he would also masturbate me and ask me what colour panties I had on and he would also ask me if I liked what he was doing and when he would take his fingers out of me he would ask me to smell them. This used to happen every lunchtime and when I went to tell one of the teachers she got angry at me and told me not to tell such awful lies about such a wonderful man.

Whilst living at the Gilchrists my father died and I remember a District Officer (D.O.) telling me that he had died. She also told me that he had suicided but she would not tell me how. I remember feeling that I was being treated differently to the natural born children in the house. I also remember a lot of conflict between myself, Mrs. Gilchrist and her eldest daughter. I also remember one day running away and I ran to a house where I thought nice people lived in. I did just that, I walked in off the street and told them that my parents had died and I wanted to live with them.

After some time they convinced me to let them take me to the police and when I was being interviewed by the policeman in his office I told him the same story. He asked me did I know what happened to little girls who told lies. I said yes they go to homes. It was reported that Mrs. Gilchrist didn't have any feelings for me and she wanted me to leave (this is also in my file).

Minali (a remand centre at Lidcombe, where you were only allowed to stay there for a month or two months at absolute maximum), was my next stop, where I finally got to see my aunt again (she looked after me from the time mum died until I stayed with Barbara Lynch). My aunt tried to adopt me but DOCS decided she was too old and that the Government could give me a much more stable environment and the only reason she wanted me was because I was her sister's daughter (also a report on my file). At Minali I also remember throwing up all over my bed during the night because I was made eat spinach and I hated spinach. The next morning the vomit had become dry and the blankets were stiff and awful. I also remember the doctor at Minali who, whenever we went for a check-up used to strip us down to nothing. His surgery was always really cold and when I put my hands across myself because I was cold he would place them by my side and sit back and stare. After a while he would do his examination. I remember going there often for "checkups" and if I was sick. Also there is constant talk of my weight and I'm on and off diets and seeing nutritionalists.

While at Minali I regularly got to see my aunt, and about a month later I was in a different foster home, that of Mr. And Mrs. David and Kim Killey. They were very lovely people but upon asking them if I could ring my aunt Mrs Killey said I couldn't and that they were my family now and I wasn't to contact her. My next memory is leaving. It was an early morning and an escort picked me up in a taxi to start the journey back to Minali in Sydney (as we lived in Wollongong), where I ask that I don't want to be placed in any more foster homes. In Minali I also learn my real surname for the first time. It happens when one of the children -asks me and I say my last name is Killey and she says "is that your real name or your foster name?". I then went to the office and asked them what is my real last name.

Here is where I choose to go to Phillip House. The reason I chose to go there is because it is new and I get to wear my own clothes and not the issued ones because I don't like the issued clothes.

***PHILLIP HOUSE, GOSFORD: 1978 –1982,
AGE II***

I arrive in Phillip House and I am in fifth class. Mr. and Mrs. Ireland are the "House Parents". There are twenty-four children, twelve girls and twelve boys. The staff are rostered 6a.m. to 2p.m. and 2p.m. to 10p.m. and nothing seems to be out of the ordinary. As usual there are new plans for me to see a nutritionalist about my weight and a new diet. It's not long until Mr. and Mrs. Ireland leave and Mr. And Mrs. Dray become the new House Parents. During the changeover Mark Kingsley one of the youth workers, and his wife take some of us kids on a camp to Hillend and Grafton.

On this trip a shower is constructed in the bush. It only has three sides and some girls are "photographed" in the shower. Mark Kingsley would call their names whilst they were in the shower and they would turn around and he would take the photograph.

I, and some of the other girls, are pressured to go "skinny dipping" in the dam in front of everyone. I can't recall if I did, however I remember the water being extremely cold. Mr. Kingsley's wife also got upset at some of the girls because it is Mother's Day and they don't give her a card. So as punishment they are to stay in the tent for the afternoon and scrub all the pots, they are also not allowed to be included in activities at night. We also hear at night Mark's wife constantly asking him not to touch her, as we are all in the same tent.

Around the time of this trip Mr. Dray had arrived at Phillip House and daily life there became a nightmare and the term "OP" was a frequent part of my day. OP stands for Off Privileges. It meant you had to sit in a corner and read a book. A staff member would supervise you so that you didn't talk, look out the window or even fidget. A day of Off Privileges was just that, sitting in a corner all day from the time you had breakfast until you went to bed. Children who were on privileges went to bed at 8.30p.m.. Children who weren't On Privileges had to sit in the upstairs hall until Mr. Dray decided to send you to bed. In winter the hallways were so cold that we started to wear double layers of clothes. When Mr. Dray got word of this we were inspected to make sure we were wearing only one layer of clothing. For example, I was put off privileges for having my shoes untied or if Mr. Dray thought I was angry with him I was also put off privileges.

Breakfast time was nerve wracking. We'd be starting breakfast and you could hear him coming down the stairs because he had a bunch of keys hooked to his hip. He would hand a piece of paper to the staff member on duty, go to his office, which was off the dining room, and slam the door shut. The list was read after breakfast. It contained the names of the children whom, Mr Dray wanted to see after breakfast. He would make us line up outside the office, while he yelled and screamed at the kids in line before you, so you knew what was coming. It generally resulted in you being put off privileges.

When the girls started to mature and got their periods we had to ask the staff (males included) for one pad at a time and it was written in a book. His wife, Mrs. Dray, used to smuggle me a handful of tampons each month, because my periods were so heavy that my one pad for night one wasn't enough.

It was also common knowledge that girls were given physical lessons on how to use a tampon by a male staff member and while I was asked if I knew how to use a tampon I don't remember being given a physical lesson on "how" to use a tampon on myself.

Mr. Dray used enter the girl's dormitory whenever he wanted. Late at night he would creep up into the dorm and, if anyone were talking or not asleep, he would scream at the top of his voice "what are you doing", or something like that. So I would often wake up in the middle of the night to his screaming.

One night I had fallen out of bed and to wake me up he kicked the bottom of my feet. It hurt and I was too scared to move. When I didn't move he kicked me again harder, with his shoes against the soles of my feet. I eventually stirred and returned to my bed. The next day I overheard him telling and joking with the staff that he kicked me so hard that, when I didn't move, he thought I was dead.

Mr. Dray would summon you into his office for "talks", where he would tell you things. These talks could occur at any time, even being dragged out of bed, and were frequent, almost daily. He would threaten to rape you if you weren't good. I was in the toy room where I was getting a toy, the light went out and he was standing with the door mostly closed. He was watching my reaction because I couldn't get out without passing him. I froze and then he switched the light back on and left. The toy room was a small rectangular room, located off the recreation room (lounge room).

One night Mr. Dray summoned me into his office. He wanted to talk to me about my father. He asked me if I knew how my father died and I said I knew that he had suicided. He then told me that my father had hanged himself, which I didn't know. He then told me that my father's neck had not snapped and he also told me that my father's head had swollen to five times its normal size and that his head would also have been black, because that is what happens to you when you hang yourself and your neck does not snap. He then told me that my father died in a room above a pub and that I would turn out just like him, an alcoholic who killed himself. When I left his office I just cried and Aunty Norma (another Youth Worker) asked what was I crying about and I told her that I found out how my father died. She slapped me across the face and said "you've known your father's been dead for years and stop crying a cry-baby". {Note: 3}

I remember another time I was summoned into Mr Dray's office. He told me that my father had raped me at age three and had given me syphilis. He asked me did I remember it and, when I said no, he said that he could rape me and no one would ever know. When I told him I'd tell someone he said, "whom do you think they'd believe, me, an ex-air force sergeant, or you, just a state ward"? He also used to ask me about sex and he would go into detail about how he would have his wife on her hands and knees having sex with her. He also used to ask me how long did I think it would take for a man to ejaculate. These office talks happened all the time. He would tell me how my Aunt was disgusted in me and my behaviour.

I remember a social worker called Wendy Knight used to visit occasionally. One night she got the girls together and asked us how Phillip House could be improved. When we asked to be able to have our own packets of pads, if the heaters could be allowed on for more than a few minutes and to be treated like humans and not animals, she told us all we were saying would be in confidence. She then went and told Mr Dray and we were blasted by him and put off privileges and he also made some of us scrub the courtyard with a toothbrush.

One night I told Mrs. Dray that if I had a gun I would shoot myself, because I was stripped of all my pride, dignity and self esteem and when I thought of my future all I could see was black. She told Mr. Dray and he summoned me into his office. He screamed at me that I was a coward, just like my father, because only cowards suicide and he put me off privileges.

One morning I remember asking another Youth Worker, Aunty Jenny, that I didn't feel well and wanted the day off school (the only time you could have a day off was if you threw up). She told me I'd better not be just wanting a day off and said she'd make me an appointment for me to see the doctor. When it was time for me to go I got out of bed and hit the floor. I couldn't walk. One of the staff members rushed me to Gosford Hospital, but I was okay afterwards.

Around this time there are psychological reports on me about me having a sleep disorder and another where I don't trust adults and there is a need for me to trust adults again. Nothing was ever followed up. Again all of this is contained in my file.

While I was at Philip House there was a lot of talk amongst some staff members about how they could no longer hit us and that all some of us needed was a good clip around the ear hole. Their conversation also stated that we should be grateful for our three meals a day and weekends away with foster parents, because we got more than lots of other children in normal families. I remember screaming back that it didn't make up for not having parents and people who loved us. As usual I was brushed off with the response being it's not that bad and I was just being dramatic. I had also asked Wendy Knight to contact the Killeys, my previous foster family, because I wanted to go back and live with them. She told me that they would write me a letter (later I found out that they did and it was sent back "not at this address", and I was). This is also on my file.

Daily life at Phillip House was awful. I went to school to get away from Mr Dray. He used to make us have our towels corner to corner at the edge of our bed for daily inspection and, often frequently and unannounced, he would inspect our rooms. If they weren't we were put off privileges and, if our beds weren't made properly, he would strip them and we would have to make them ten times. If our cupboards weren't tidy he would pull out all our clothes out of our cupboards and drawers and we'd be put off privileges. He would go through your stuff whenever he felt like it. Some girls kept diaries and when he found them he would take them from them and they would get in trouble for whatever was in theirs. I never kept a diary.

I remember one breakfast when I heard his keys. I thought I was going to jump out of my skin. I now know I was having anxiety attacks and I was too scared to tell anyone. Mr Dray also encouraged the children to tell him what we were saying about him and, if we didn't like him, we were put off privileges as usual. One morning while getting my breakfast at the breakfast window he went to hit me across the face. I pulled my head back quick enough for him to miss. I was put off privileges because he said I didn't like him.

When Mr. Dray went on holidays Mr. and Mrs. Ross replaced him. Mr. Dray let us know of Mr Ross's reputation that whenever he looked after kids he always sent a bad one away. One night I had a run in with Mr. Ross. He and I argued because I was hanging around Terry Anne Jackson, another Ward at Phillip House. He said he didn't know why I was because "she was just an animal". I yelled at him and told him she wasn't and it wasn't her fault her mother had died and her father couldn't raise her.

He then threatened to send me to the remand centre at Mount Penang (Mount Penang was on the same property, it was a juvenile detention centre) and he could have me charged. I told him I didn't care, he could do whatever he liked, I wasn't afraid of him and I knew his reputation – he didn't have me charged.

I also remember asking Mr. Dray if we could all go to the pool at Mount Penang. He told me it was not his job to take us out all the time and he had much more important things to do.

In 1980 when I was in year seven at the age of 13 I was informed, possibly by Mrs. Dray, that Catholic girls should go to Catholic schools and I was sent to Saint Joseph's Girls' High School at East Gosford and I started to tell Sister Marie (the School Principal) what was going on at Phillip House. One day I came home from school and was summoned into Mr Dray's office and he yelled at me to stop telling the school counsellor what was going on in this home and that what goes on here stays between these four walls (I thought he was going to get violent with me, he was so mad). I yelled back we don't have a school counsellor (Sister Marie was the principal).

I was also invited to see Central Australia while I was at Saint Joseph's as a month long school excursion and Mr Dray said that if I was good he would see if I could go. A good six months before the trip this hung over my head and when the time came he told me that I couldn't go because if I looked at my behaviour I would know that I hadn't been good. Also he said that the Government couldn't afford it. (I later learned from my Geography teacher, Mr Shelley, that the ticket offered was for free). Mr Dray never intended for me to go, he just wanted to get my hopes up and destroy them – as usual. He used the trip as a weapon, threat, and he used it to build up my hopes. He would say to me if you keep being good you'll get to Central Australia, then he'd put me Off Privileges for something like my towel not being "square to square" at the end of my bed and then say that this sort of behaviour won't get you to Central Australia. The silly thing is that I actually thought if I was good enough I could go. He just used the trip as a weapon, he never intended for me to go.

I also remember incidents of when Mr Dray would put his arm around me and "accidentally" touch the side of my breast and when I said something it was brushed off as he didn't meant to or it was an accident. He also used to put children against each other and when they would fight he would make us stand "toe to toe" for however long he thought was an appropriate time. This was usually done alone in his office with him watching and when you would sway and try to get your balance he would make you stand there longer. There were also "incidents" of when the male staff members would stand behind you as they rubbed themselves against you.

During my time at Phillip House all they worried about was my weight. I was constantly on and off diets, and I was constantly being asked why was I so angry. I was also sent to a hypnotherapist to find out "why" I was such an aggressive child. These visits happened until Saint Catherine's, when they subsequently ceased. Here again my files shows no follow up never occurred, I went to about 10 sessions all up.

I had also had several "weekend" foster parents but it was hard. In one family I did the dishes and followed the mother around to see if there was anything I could do. Mr Dray informed me that the report from the foster parents was that I was a nuisance, so the next family I went to I stayed put on the lounge and this time Mr Dray informed me that the report came back that I was lazy.

I learned by trial and error. Mr Dray would say to me that the reason the foster families didn't want me anymore because I was bad. Yet I was never taught how to act in a family. Many years later I actually found out for one weekend foster family in particular, that all they knew was that I stopped coming.

As I was coming up to the age of fifteen it was nearly time for me to leave Phillip House. Sister Marie helped me to be able to go and live at Saint Catherine's at Brooklyn. Mr Dray told me he was sending me there because he couldn't make a lady of me and maybe they could.

After I left Phillip House I went back to visit after Mr. Dray had left. A man called David was running it and he told me that Mr Dray was given the opportunity to retire early or he would be sacked. He also told me that the Government had budgeted \$13 per child per day including food, clothing, gas, electricity, etc. Mr Dray ran it on \$9 per day.

***SAINT CATHERINE'S, BROOKLYN: 1982-
1986?***

When I arrived in saint Catherine's I was in the middle to last term in year nine. I remember thinking "wow, they actually care". We were given umbrellas to take to school on rainy days. At Saint Catherine's I know they did the best they could because, as nice as they were, they really weren't qualified to look after me. In hindsight by the time I got out of Phillip House I realised I needed specialist care. I was so traumatised I needed real help – instead I was expected to play the guitar and sing at church and be an upstanding member of the community.

At the convent my bedroom door was nailed open so I couldn't close the door and it was nailed flush to the wall so everyone could see in as they walked by. The convent said it was because I wasn't doing my homework. Because of this I spent my time rushing to the showers for privacy to change my clothes. My room was opposite the lounge room next to the kitchen and dining room, so each morning everyone walked past my room to have breakfast. My room was like that until I moved downstairs, which was about a year and a half later.

My time at the convent I still feel confused about. I was meant to forget about my past and the convent wasn't part of it. I was in the convent now and I should put everything in my past behind me. Again I was constantly on diets and now going to aerobics once a week to lose weight.

At the convent they had yearly fetes, where we were given \$5.00 to spend. But if we didn't spend it at the fete we had to give back what we didn't spend because they couldn't afford to give us the money. Money was a huge issue at the convent and how we couldn't afford things.

They also had "working bees", where all the children would work to make improvements around the house – like help to build a tennis court. We constantly worked. I was helping to build a retaining wall for the tennis court. I also helped build a garden where I wheelbarrowed loads of soil to help construct a new garden. I was just expected to do the work. I didn't find out how much was expected until an incident some time later.

This happened when I was working at the NRMA, at this stage I was earning a wage, whilst still residing at St Catherine's. I had spent a week at my Aunt's because there was a train strike and I had helped organise the car pool that the NRMA was running, so commuters could get to work. This particular week I had worked long, hard hours and, by the time I got back home to the convent, I was exhausted, after walking half an hour from the train station with a week's worth of clothing. I got home and Wendy Weir told me I was to be a waiter at Angie's 21st. Angie was a long term resident at St Catherine's. I said no one had asked me and all I wanted to do was go to bed and sleep. A heated argument broke out where Wendy called me lazy and said that I wouldn't share in any of the festivities. I said fine, all I wanted to do was sleep. I slammed my bedroom door in her face. The next minute she was on top of me on the bed - I was laying down – pushing me back and forward, screaming "you better not ruin Angie's 21st". I remember the shaking was so violent and I had actually curled my fist up to hit her so she would get off me. Then I saw Sister Elizabeth at the end of my bed and she said "oh Liz". {Note 4} Wendy then saw my fist and said go on, hit me, go on. I didn't.

In hindsight I can now say I wasn't a lazy child. I was an exhausted child. I needed therapy. I needed to be a child but I was being groomed to go out in the world. I was now working and I was sweating on my letter from the Government saying I was no longer a State Ward in 1985. I knew that once I wasn't a State Ward I could be in control of my life. Once again I had to move on and I did. I was lucky I could stay at Saint Catherine's after my eighteenth birthday and I did until I was nineteen. I was lucky because some of my friends at Phillip House when they were eighteen were sent to refuges, boarding houses, and halfway houses when they were eighteen with two weeks dole.

So my feelings about what happened at the convent are complicated and conflicted because they did care. I also got tampons, a packet at a time. Although I was still constantly on diets, I was told how wonderful Wendy was and how much work she did for us kids. And you know they were nice but were they qualified to take care of me – no.

Why, when I moved to the convent, did they stop my visits to the hypnotherapist. Maybe they couldn't afford it. I needed to deal with my past and be a child but I had to move on. My childhood was over, I was about to go into the world and that is what was expected of me. And so I did.

POST STATE WARD: 1986 AND ON

When I left the convent I moved to North Sydney in a share accommodation house, which I organised myself, and to my shock my breasts started to grow again and I experienced growing pains in my legs at night. My whole body changed and kept changing until I was about twenty-one.

I have never had a safety net to fall back on. I have always had to be careful of each step I've made. Now, not only was my childhood an issue, I had to make a living and be a member of society.

To date I can't hold down a permanent job. I need a casual job because I have flashbacks. Some are so severe I have to go home. I have to go home to bed. Sometimes I cry in the toilet because the feelings are so intense and I hope to pull myself together enough to go back to work before I'm noticed missing. I have also studied counselling so I can help myself deal with my childhood. I have good days and I have bad days. Bad days can be at varying degrees. Some days it's one flashback of horror, others it's moment by moment of hundreds of feelings, emotions, thoughts. These bad days are the days I feel like I'm going crazy. These days are the worst, especially because I'm working and I have to work because I can't afford to lose my job because I have to survive. I've tried being on the dole but \$400.00 per fortnight is unbearable.

Before I studied counselling I tried to kill myself. I swallowed a bottle of painkillers with a cask of wine. The thing that scared me the most was how unexpected it was. I just decided to do it and I ended up in Adelaide hospital. It was a blessing in disguise because then I knew I had to deal with my childhood and it led me to studying counselling so I could figure out what was wrong with me.

I dealt with so much self loathing, self belief, self validation and self love and for the past three years I have been teaching myself to believe in myself, love myself and validate myself and my life. I am retraining myself, and the way I think, or more correctly, the way I've been taught to treat myself. This is a daily battle that I am still struggling through, and trying to keep a roof over my head at the same time, because psychotherapy is just too expensive. I also still don't trust doctors or people in authority.

I was thrown to the wolves when I was made a State Ward but it was better than living on the street. I feel like my childhood never was.

I have been infected by so many peoples sickness. By the time I lived in Phillip House I had lived with over 100 people (staff, children , my family and foster parents), and in order to live a constructive future I have to deal with their sickness (something they never did). So if one day I ever have children they won't have to deal with their sickness. I think of my childhood as a huge cyst that I have, I have lanced the cyst and cleaned it out in order for it to heal. I don't care how long it takes and I will do it so I can have a quality of life that I have never known.

Whilst I was on the dole I claimed overpayments from Centrelink. I got a letter from them stating I owed them \$1,615.34 and that:

“• Recovery from your wages or other income tax refund, bank account, etc.- we do not need a court order to do this.

What I would like to know is what do I need to do to get back what was stolen from me – my childhood.

I read my file when I was twenty-three, that's how I know about the reports. Why, when there are reports on my file that I had all these problems, wasn't there anything done about it. Why was I just shoved from pillar to post. I was given no love, no safe environment, no nurturing but expected to be a good member of society. And the reason I was made a ward was because the Government could give me a much more stable environment than what my aunt could. She still lives at the same address she lived in back then and, yes, she is still very much in my life.

The Government made huge calls on our lives and had nothing to back it up. The Government failed me in every possible way. I had no security, no support and no childhood. They had a duty of care to me and did nothing except clothe and feed me. I was made feel useless, worthless, ashamed and a burden and I was blamed and punished because my parents died. That should have been reason enough for counselling but no, I was thrown to the wolves, the Government and all their “carers”. And I now know that you don't have to touch a child to abuse them. When the laws changed the abusers didn't they just get smart. It was also when I was twenty-eight that I learned from my Aunt that my father suicided at the Boyd Charleton swimming pool in the Domain, not above a pub in a dingy room like Mr Dray had said. As for my dad's head and how it swells when your neck doesn't snap, you'd have to ask a doctor. There's nothing on my file about that, or my father raping me, like Mr Dray had said.

I went from exhausted child to exhausted adult but at least now I'm helping myself and I'm slowly getting there, and the exhaustion is being replaced with energy on a good day. I know I'm nothing like what I was told and taught about myself, and that's the best thing about me. I had always been so proud when I would tell people about my life and they would say to me I would never have thought you would have been through that. I loved it when people used to say that to me because I hated where I came from and all I was doing was running from my childhood. Now I'm proud that I survived it and I'm no longer running from my childhood, or myself.

I also no longer diet and I should never have been on diets all my life. Looking back it was puppy fat but because of all the yo yo dieting I continued that problem until I was a size 28. I'm still overweight but I'm not on a diet. I'm working on myself and the weight is naturally coming off because I'm addressing the cause, not the symptom, and I'm now a size 18.

1985 was the year I turned eighteen, when I left the convent, I thought the worst was behind me. Little did I know I had only won the battle and not the war. This submission is part of me winning the war. I have an opportunity to make something good out of my childhood.

Elizabeth Vicha Senate Submission

The Government needs to take responsibility for what happened to me so I can have closure to a part of my life I wish I never had. I can only do so much for myself so now I need the Government to help validate and acknowledge me. What happened to me shouldn't have - but it did. I hope the Government doesn't do what it has always done to me – recognise there's a problem and do nothing about it. Maybe this inquiry can make something happen.

This is not just a submission to me, these are the memories that make up my childhood. A childhood I have fought with all my might to conquer so I can lead a normal life.

Thankyou for giving me a voice, and allowing my story to be told.

Liz Vicha

NOTES

NOTE 1

Mrs Barbara Lynch was my Aunt and, according to my file, my grandmother, Mary Elizabeth Lynch, suggested that I should live with Mr & Mrs Lynch. Shortly after being placed there my grandmother died.

NOTE 2

When I was about 23 I accessed my file due to the Freedom Of Information Act, at Strathfield DOCS. When I wanted to copy my file they told me that their photocopier was broken and that I couldn't copy anything but I could write down anything from the file apart from addresses. My file comprised of all my movements while I was a State Ward.

NOTE 3

It was common practice throughout DOCS that the State Wards call all the female staff working in homes Aunty and the male staff Uncle. Mr Dray demanded that we should call him and his wife Nan and Pa.

NOTE 4

Sr. Elizabeth was the head Nun at St Catherine's. She made all the decisions regarding our welfare. Wendy Weir was in charge of the girl's downstairs and did all the maintenance in the yards. She was also the person who we had to answer to if we did anything wrong.