

To give you the full aspects of my story I will start a little while back before I became a State Ward so please bear with me.

My story starts as a very young child living in a house with a sexually abusive father and a mother with depression. Both my older sister and I were victims of my father's abuse.

When we were both at the age to understand what he was doing (ages 9, 7 respectively) we finally told my mother what had been happening, she was in no state emotionally to deal with it and virtually told us not to lie. So at a young age I realized adults couldn't be trusted and that they didn't believe you. I also remember a few of my dad's army buddies performing sexual acts on me. As you can imagine all this had a major impact on my life and my sisters.

By the time we had reached our early teens we were very sexually advanced. My sister, in November 1978, gave birth to my nephew, aged only 13 years old. The father was an 18 year old man. I was 12 years old at the time. Never did DOCS come near my family when this happened. My sister slipped through the net.

December 1978 I was brutally raped by 5 people (ages 14-21) that I thought were friends. I was held prisoner in a unit for the whole day while I was repeatedly raped by the 3 boys and 2 girls. I managed to escape and get home. When I got there my dad was home and my older sister. Mum was at work. Because of who my dad was and what he had been doing to me for years I sure as hell wasn't going to tell him what had happened so I told my sister and only her. I knew that telling mum was no good cause all she would do is cry. Anyway adults had proven to me in the past that they wouldn't believe me or help me so why go to them. I was also too scared to go to the police as the 5 people were locals that I saw on a regular basis and they all said if I told anyone they would all deny it and eventually get me. As a sexually abused child of 12 I can tell you I was frightened, ashamed, feeling guilty and totally beaten.

March 1979 I realized I might be pregnant and went to see my school Counsellor who took me to a Community Health Centre where a pregnancy test was done and I was told I was 6 weeks pregnant. Because I was told I was 6 weeks pregnant the 16 year old boyfriend I had was charged with Carnal Knowledge and got probation.

I was stunned. I had just 5 months before watch my sister give birth at 13 and now, here I was, 12 and pregnant. I knew one thing and that was I didn't want the child as I knew I was too young to cope.

Enter DOCS! Mt family got a visit from the local District Officer. We were advised that we would be going to Minda Children's Court and the charges were Neglect, Exposed to moral danger and Uncontrollable. I so understood the Neglect charge. I was neglected. Exposed to moral danger yes I could understand that too cause I was being exposed by my sister dating older men, my dad's sexual activities and his mates. But uncontrollable? Here I was the abused child who never waggged school, loved school and was doing ok. I had never run away from home. I didn't have a police record. I'd never been in trouble before and I was supposed to be uncontrollable. I still to this day don't understand that one.

Anyway I appeared in Minda on the 14th March 1979 and the matter was remanded for 14 days. I was remanded to Minda. Not only didn't I understand what was happening in the court room I couldn't hear a thing. As a confused 12 year old I couldn't understand why I wasn't going home. I hadn't done anything wrong so why was I being locked up? Minda at the time wasn't a nice place. My first night there I thought of suicide often but just didn't know how I would be able to do it. The indignity at being stripped searched. The humiliation of being watched as you showered and went to the toilet. Being in a prison with older girls who were there for hard crime. My time in Minda was

like a nightmare I couldn't wake from. Why was a 12 year old sexual abuse victim being looked away in a juvenile prison?

My case was brought forward to the 24th March 1979 so after 10 days in Minda we were in court again. I was made a State Ward on this day and remanded to Minali Reception Centre. Again I was dumbfounded. Not at anytime through all this did I even consider telling any of the adults around me (and that included Psychologists, Teachers, House Parents and Doctors) just what had been happening to me. Adults weren't to be trusted. Besides who would believe me.

While I was at Minali I was taken to a major hospital to see about terminating my pregnancy. While I was there during the examination the Dr told me I was 3 months pregnant not 6 weeks. If this was true then the baby was conceived due to the rape and not the boyfriend I had. Again this was something I kept to myself.

The pregnancy was terminated.

I was still 12.

Never was I given any counseling about this event. It was as though the baby was gone so the problem was too.

While I was at Minali I started a relationship with a 27 year old man under the noses of my parents, the department and the House Parents. A friend of my dad's once again taking advantage of a 13 year old girl who just wanted to be loved.

I remember having my 13th birthday at Minali. I remember the anger that was starting to build by this time. I knew I was becoming a very angry negative young girl. All the adults who had hurt me were living a normal life and here I was someone just wanting love but being punished instead. I truly started to believe I was no good cause look where I was.

I'm not sure of the month but I then went to Fauld's House. It wasn't too bad there. I did witness a few awful events there. I was bashed by other girls there. I witnessed a rape. I had personal belongings stolen. There were local boys who sneaked in. There was no privacy in the dorms. Emotionally I was a wreck and my emotional well being was never taken care of. Not by my parent's or by the department. Yes I was clothed, feed, had a roof over my head, medical attention and was being sent to school but emotionally NOTHING!!

After a while there I grew comfortable with a House Parent and finally confided to him that I had been raped the previous December and I thought the terminated pregnancy was from that event and once again I was told "It's too late now just forget about it". My trust once again blown out of the water. Would nobody protect my innocence? Would nobody help me?

While I was at Fauld's House I did get weekend leave to my mum to begin with (she had left my dad and sister and was now living with a new boyfriend) but because her boyfriend was abusive I couldn't go back there. When once again I tried to tell the local D.O just what was happening he believed my mums boyfriend and blamed me for causing the problems. I guess it was true I was a bad seed but how did it happen?

When this fell through the department allowed me to go for weekend leave with my dad and sister. Back to an abusive environment. It was better then staying at Fauld's House on a weekend when everyone had gone home on leave. Weekend leave was used as blackmail by the staff and House Parents. If you didn't tow the line then you lost weekend leave. The one thing that kept us all going was being used against us.

The final straw in this situation came when I was severely bashed by my sister and raped by my dad while I was very drunk (aged 14). Yes I had been drinking (the start of many years fighting alcoholism) but I didn't deserve to be beaten and raped for it. That punishment was just to much to handle. This event was reported to the House Parent when I got home from weekend leave but again nothing was done. Once again no adult came to my defence. This event led to me going really off the

rails as I just couldn't handle anymore. I wanted to take care of myself as everyone else seemed to be letting me down.

Around this time I met my new D.O. He and I formed a close relationship from the beginning. I could tell that he was attracted to me. I knew this cause I had been used sexually for so long I knew the look in his eyes.

I ran away from Fauld's House in late 1980. I was found at my sister's place the next day and was taken onto my D.O's office with the house parent from Fauld's House. While we were there it was agreed that I would now move to a local refuge where my D.O did volunteer work. My D.O allowed me to leave school even though I was under the legal age to do so by 2 months. I found out why my D.O was so eager for me to go to the refuge. When I moved to the refuge he would volunteer to spend the night as a staff member and that's when it started. I would wake during the night to find him standing at the bottom of my bed. He would always make up some excuse for being there but I knew. After a short while he then started taking me into the night staff bedroom where he would kiss and fondle me. He never attempted to have intercourse with me while I was staying at the refuge. But there was plenty of foreplay. I didn't care this was happening cause I felt he really care and all I wanted was love. I was still 14 at the time this was happening.

Finally after a few months my time at the refuge had run out so after stays at other church run places I got my own unit to live in. By this time I was 15 and working. I was still a State Ward and supposedly still under the care of DOCS. My D.O then took our relationship one step further and we started to have sexual intercourse. It only happened a few times but it happened. I didn't care at the time cause I was in love with him and would have done anything for him. All my life I had been shown that sex was love so if my D.O had sex with me, then I thought he must be in love with me. Sadly the thinking of a very naïve abused child.

I would like to mention that this man is still in the same line of work but in a different state.

Not in any of this time did I receive any counseling or emotional support from anyone. Not DOC'S or family or friends.

I pretty much glided through life for the next few years drinking heavily with no support. I went from job to job, house to house and at times living on the streets. At 17 I turned to heroin. I so had to numb the pain. I couldn't afford my habit and didn't have the courage to do crime so I turned to prostitution. Please keep in mind I'm 17 still a State Ward and still supposedly under the care of DOC'S. There was no-one in my life at this stage to abuse me so I abused myself cause life just wasn't normal without abuse.

I am now 37 years old and have suffered Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, Adjustment Disorder, Panic Attacks and Depression. I have tried many times from the age of 15 to commit suicide and by the grace of God I am still here today. Because of my drug use I know have Hep C and suffer very bad Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. I will be on medication for a long time and will be in counseling for a long time too. I am unable to work and I have no schooling. I accept my role in all this but feel very strongly that not only did my parent's fail me but DOC'S did too. The State of N.S.W took over my care when they made me a State Ward and they did just as bad a job as my parents had. If not worse as they were supposed to be the professionals.

Why didn't someone question why two girls in the same family were pregnant at such a young age?

Why was there no intervention with my sister, a 13 year old girl raising a baby?

Why didn't any of the so called Specialists (i.e.: Psychologists, social works, Dr's), in all their psychoanalyzing pick up any of the abuse that was happening? The signs were all there.

Why was I placed into a juvenile prison? What was my crime?

Why didn't I receive any counseling after the termination of my pregnancy?

How did a 27 yr old man date a 13 yr old state ward and get away with it?

Why didn't a House Parent act on the information given him by a State Ward? Why was I ignored? Why didn't a House Parent investigate a brutal bashing perpetrated by the wards own sister and a rape by her father? The physical signs of a bashing were all there.

Why was I allowed to leave school at such a young age?

How did a District Officer cross the line and have a sexually relationship with one of his wards?

So many questions, with so little answers.

Today am working though all of these issues. My sister and I now have a strained relationship. My mother has now passed away but I was able to make peace with her before she died and for that I am thankful. My father, I have had nothing to do with since having my oldest son (aged, 16). That little boy, who was born to that young 13 year old girl (my sister's child), is dead. He died at the age of 20 after a battle with drugs, alcohol and the law. He committed suicide. My sister has battled drugs and alcohol and depression for many years. She too also has Hep C.

I so believe that if DOC'S had done their job properly, that both my sister's and my life could have been so much better. I believe that our drug and alcohol problem could have been avoided. And also that my mental illnesses and my sister's would have been a lot less disabling if DOC'S had provided the right care when my family came to their attention.

I accept my parent's responsibility for my life. I accept my responsibility in my life but in doing so then DOC'S has take their responsibility for my life.

I have never really told anyone the full extent of my abuse so I thank you for giving me this opportunity to put it all into words. I just hope it hasn't been too long. I also thank you for finally speaking out for people like me that was so badly failed by the department. It feels good to be able to tell the truth and have someone listen. Finally as an adult someone is listening.

Yours truly,

Mrs. Trish Read