

To whom it may concern,

The dissolution of my family began on the 22nd September, 1961. Two Welfare Officers drove to my parents home and took my 4 older brothers, by car, to Parramatta Children's Court and they were found to be under incompetent guardianship and committed to the care of the Director of Catholic Welfare Bureau, Sydney until the age of 15 years.

My mother was suffering an episode of Schizophrenia and my father, (a returned service man from World War 2 who saw active duty in Rabaul, P.N.G.) was a heavy drinker. My mother had suffered breakdowns from the age of 14 after contracting Rheumatic Fever when she was 11. My parents married when mum was 16 and dad was 26 as mum was expecting their first child. My brothers were born in 1951, 1953, 1954, 1955 and 1957. The last born, died at nine months of age after having Shicken Pox. I was born in 1958 and my sister in February, 1961. My mothers

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first breakdown whilst married to my father occurred in 1954. Relatives minded the 2 older boys and then the baby after its birth whilst mum received treatment. My parents loved and wanted everyone of their children. They just needed help. My father and all service men and women should have been given counselling after the war. When I read my father's war records (after his death) my heart went out to him. Dad was called home from the war for his mothers funeral, dad was 19 1/2. His father died when dad was 5 and now his war wages were sent home to his 2 sisters and invalid brother.

My parents were tricked into believing that the Welfare Department were going to assist them by temporarily caring for my 4 brothers and my sister and myself whilst my mother obtained psychiatric treatment as no relative could mind 6 children while dad worked. This claim can be proven by reading the Welfare and Court hearing documents when the Welfare picked up my brothers and took them to Court that day everything had already been put in motion to commit them to care in Boys Homes until reaching 15. My sister and I were to be sent to Scarba but as there were no placements we missed out, how lucky were we. Neighbours and relatives helped mind us. Mum refused to go to hospital as she

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was petrified she would be given electric shock treatment, something she had endured on several previous stays in mental hospitals. If mum had only stayed on her tablets she wouldn't have had these breakdowns, it was getting her to restart the tablets which was the problem. Finally on the 14th November mum was admitted by force to North Ryde Psychiatric Hospital by ambulance and police escort. I have seen my mother taken from the house by force a few times and can still hear my youngest sister screaming when the police broke down the bathroom door after mum had locked her self in. In mum's medical records it states she told them her period was late and they gave her Diastaval without first checking if she was pregnant and this poor little baby girl was born a Thalidomide in July 1962 with no ears, one kidney, facial palsy, paralysis of the palate, no lateral movement of the eyes and later in years developed epilepsy. Mum wasn't disturbed with all of my sisters disabilities, she just wanted to know when she could breast feed her and go home (this is written in my mother and sister's birth records). Mum cared for my sister until 1965 when once again the Welfare stepped in and by Court order she was made a State Ward. She was placed in Grosvenor Hospital (which was

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previously called Benwick Hospital) in Summer Hill, NSW. She remained at Grosvenor Hospital until May 1971, then she was transferred to Stockton Hospital for the intellectually handicapped and died 3 months later, aged 9 years old. My parents were never asked once if they would like to regain care of their 3rd daughter, which my mother would have said yes to immediately, nor were they told of her transfer to Newcastle. In my sister's records it states she choked to death on food after being fed by a male nurse and being laid down on a mat, they were short staffed that day. A telegram was sent to my parents informing them of my sister's death. The government organized the funeral and none of my family attended as my father never owned a car and we couldn't get to Sandgate Cemetery, Newcastle. My husband and I visited her grave in October 2003 for the first time, there is no plaque on her grave, her resting place is full of weeds. Surely the government could have paid for a simple name plaque to go on her grave, it's like she was never here, they took over guardianship of this child but disowned her in death. My parents had 8 children living at home in 1971 and on dad's meagre wage he couldn't afford a name plaque. I have also wondered if

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the government claimed for my sister being made a Thalidomide from the compensation that was made to parents as a result of this drug. My parents never claimed for the compensation that would have been rightfully theirs. A government hospital administered this drug to my mother in November 1961 (when did they find it caused Thalidomide?) whilst she was mental (at her lowest) she had no choice, then the government took guardianship of my sister. This probably took away my parents' rights to that compensation. I would like to know if anyone did claim for this compensation and if yes, I would like them to pay for a plaque for my sister's grave, it isn't very much to ask.

My four brothers were sent to St. Michael's Boys Home, Baulkham Hills in 1961. My parents borrowed a friend's truck and drove my 2 sisters and me to visit them (3 brothers) in June 1963. I have a lovely picture of all of us kids sitting on the tray of the truck (it is very special to me). I went through the dining area of the Home looking for my brothers and I remember rows of big tables and chairs, it was very daunting, a Nun came and told me to go outside. That is the only time I remember visiting my brothers in that Home.

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The youngest of my four brothers later told me that he didn't even know he had sisters until that day.

My oldest brother was sent to St. Vincent's Boys Home, Westmead in January 1963 where he remained until the 13.12.1966. He was then allowed to walk home to his parents to live. The second brother was sent to St. Vincent's in February 1965 until May 1968 and the third brother was sent to St. John of God Training School, Morisset on the same day until August 1969 (he was deemed a slow learner). He is still a slow learner to this day and is epileptic. I have often wondered if the Mental Hospital gave mum electric shock treatment while she was pregnant in 1954 with this brother. My second brother told me only last year that when he said goodbye to my fourth brother (who would be all alone at St Michael's now), he said, "don't go, I'll be scared of the thunder at night if you're not here". My fourth brother was sent to St Vincent's in January 1967 until August 1970.

My mother gave birth to another son and daughter in 1964 and 1966. The welfare visited our house every fortnight until 1971 and wrote down how the beds weren't made, the washing up not done, the house untidy and us children dirty. We played in the yard in dirt, yes glorious dirt,

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which now a days is an acceptable type of creative child play. The old house we lived in belonged to my late grandparents. Dad never asked for a War loan, he never asked for anything. The toilet was in the backyard, there was no hot water connected, we boiled the jug and washed up in a dish, we heated up a copper and bucketted the water to our cement bathtub to wash in. I made sure I was first in. When the bottom of the copper rusted through we filled the washing machine and heated it up for hours and then used a hose to syphon it into the bathtub, which you started with your mouth, you just made sure you were quick so as not to sop a mouthful of warm water. We were never sick. We had a chack pan and ducks and loved all the double yaker eggs. The first time I visited a doctor was when I was 15, the air conditioning at work gave me bronchitis. I can't even remember having a cold before this. This life-style may seem hard to people that had all the mods and cons, but we weren't daunted by it one little bit, it was what we were used to. We had fun having plum fights from our plum tree and taking cocoons to school from our mulberry tree and catching tadpoles from the local creeks, it was a simple happy life at home with a 'drunk' father, who never missed a day at work

(he actually died in his work uniform) and our 'mental' mother who loved us and looked after us to the best of her ability. It was enough care as nothing happened to us and we all ended up growing into fine tax paying adults.

If only my four older brothers could have had such a carefree fun life. But their lives were deemed to be in danger to stay with their parents and siblings, so the government gave them a better life and stole them from the only loving people in their lives and sentenced them to the care of monsters. They witnessed and endured terrible unspeakable brutality. Some of them were sexually abused, some were bashed with cricket bats over the shoulders. They had to sweep the grounds for hours until their tiny hands turned to blisters, wash up huge amounts of dishes and do lots of inside housework. When they had their teeth pulled it was by one of the Brothers in the Home without any anaesthetic, they didn't get taken to a dentist. Who looked after them when they needed a bandaid or a hug? I don't think it was natural to have young boys looked after by just men, they needed a female role model too, if they were to succeed in a happy son/mother, husband/wife, father/daughter role. Even in a homosexual relationship sons have aunts, grandmothers and female friends to relate to.



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Where was the government to check on these people that were deemed safe for my brothers to be brought up by? They were visiting us (whinging about menial things) and many other poor people that just needed a bit of a helping hand, not to have your children stolen and put into the hands of devils in Priests, Brothers and Nuns clothing. Some of the Brothers and Nuns were nice to the boys, but you can't honestly tell me that they wouldn't have known what those depraved cowardly adult men were doing to the most vulnerable of children, and yet they turned a blind eye to it. When there were too many complaints about a certain brother (which I could name) he was just up and sent to another Boys Home to wreck a few more children's lives. My parents and us kids used to walk up to Westmead Boy's Home for the annual fete in November every year and dad would win us teddy bears, glasses or some small treasure on the chocolate wheel. I remember quite vividly one year that we spotted one of my brothers and when he seen us he turned and walked away fast, dad called out to him, but he wouldn't come near us. I would guess he hated all of us for what he was going through. My father never would have guessed in a million years what those people of God were doing to

his boys. If he had of known the extent of torture they went through I know he would have done time in jail over it. Dad was brought up by a strict Catholic mother and grandmother and would have had full trust in the power of the Catholic clergy. My youngest brother was once hit on the legs with a ruler (which left very red welts) at school (Public School 3rd Class) by a teacher, and when my father found out he visited the school Principal that night at his home (he lived in a house next to the school in Parramatta) and went off his brain about someone hitting his child, especially with an instrument, dad never hit any of us so he wasn't about to let someone else hit his child. The Principal was great and apologized sincerely and said he would follow up on this. He was true to his word, that teacher was removed from the school. How I wish dad could have protected the four oldest boys. In their eyes he could have protected them by not drinking and being home more at night. With mum being in and out of hospital (17 times between 1949 and 1976) I don't know if dad could have saved the boys from the degrading years they endured even if he was a teetotaler like me. But why should he have had to save them, they were supposedly

put in the best hands of care. why did my brothers get sentenced for their father being an alcoholic and their mother schizophrenic. How dare these morons have caused so much turmoil in our lives. What these boys needed was love, that's not too much to ask for. The authorities would have been better to take the parents to court and sentence the drinkers to Alcoholics Anonymous for a period of time and send welfare officers to assist the other spouse in the home. The children could have been sent to places like Stewart House, and the same welfare officers visit them to see if they are happy and well looked after. If the 'alcoholic parent' succeeds in their treatment then their children should be returned to them.

When my brothers started coming home to live fulltime some of them were angry, very angry. They would get into violent arguments with my father. They blamed him for all their pain and he really had no idea of the hurt they endured. Dad would then come home drunk and rant and rave for hours about the outbursts of some of my brothers. When the boys started drinking the arguments became worse and dad would be bashed brutally by some of them in front of me and my younger siblings.

Dad never lifted a hand in retaliation against any of them. It scared the life out of us. All we wanted was our big brothers back, and a happy family, but my four brothers were really strangers to us now. I used to sit on my old swing in the backyard and pray to God to give us back our happy boys, but how could they be normal after all they had been put through and how on earth could we at home have known what was happening to them over all those years. I love each and everyone of my siblings and I am very sorry for hating them when they turned our lives upside down when they came home from those religious Homes. I am proud of all my siblings. Our father died in 1978 (aged 53) and our mother died in 1983 (aged 48). I think they did the best they could with their circumstances and I love them both very much.

These people that did harm to all the children ever placed in institutions should be held accountable. Even in death their names should be recorded publicly. They deserve a little humiliation, that's not a lot to ask. If I had my way they would all be lined up and shot, but they say two wrongs don't make a right, but in this case I would like to see the outcome and then I'll let you know

if it was right.

Please make sure this treatment is still not going on. No child should be forgotten and left to endure this type of punishment just because their parents have problems, don't want them or die. Make sure someone is genuinely checking on these special children. Put yourself in their shoes. How would you feel if your little 9, 7, 6, or 5 year old had to go through this. Please find a way of publicly acknowledging all the adults who for years have secretly held all of their hurt and humiliation in. There could be a memorial garden in each State with all of the willing ones names printed in granite, a place where all 'homies' and their families could meet for friendly picnics and an apology written from the Government, Churches and Institutions. Free counselling to all who need it and free special classes to give back self esteem to all. That and the promise to never let these atrocities happen to one more child would be a good step toward healing.

Please honour these adults with some kind of dignified and compassionate olive branch. Help them to lift their heads high once again. Which will also help their families and society