

Dear Senate Committee Members,

" I grew up a Worm"

I was born on 12th June 1915 in Sydney at home above a shop. I had a Mum and a grandma I remember I saw my mother dead, it was awful and dreadful. and someone gave me a bunch of jonquils in my hand, I've never like them since.. I don't remember seeing my father ever! My Mum had T B , she died at Gladesville Hospital. My grandma tried to look after us. My brother Roy, who was 18 months younger and I were put on the welfare. Roy was born 28.10.1918 , he is deceased.

We were then boarded out to a place, I don't know where it was, but it was horrible place. These people neglected us. The authorities took us back .

We were taken back to Bidura for about a week and then taken to Foster People in Gladesville and they were "SO OLD", they reminded me of my grandmother. They looked after us ok but they were very hard. They had a backyard of fruit trees, she would never give any of it to my brother and I. I was a good thief. It was so ridiculous, the fruit was rotting on the ground and she wouldn't give us any. It was hard. I had to do the shopping, they depended on me to do the work. They sent me to Sunday school, telling us we were bad enough, so you'd better go to Sunday school.

It was hard, you were never allowed to ask for food or anything. You were 't game to. I feel like I grew up as a worm, as I felt I was beneath everybody.

I remember she wanted me to go down to the shops , the foster mother was making a curry, so I pinched a chop. when she wasn't looking.
I attended Gladesville Public School and the domestic science school, as well.

Anything we did was wrong, in this foster family , they would threaten to send us back to the Homes. They had their own adult children we missed out on things though, we didn't go any where..

They took us for the money

I remember being treated differently to my school friends, because they knew we were foster children and it made me feel peculiar, as though I didn't belong.

I've always felt that I didn't belong. I still feel that I don't belong.

When I was 16, the Foster mother took me back to Bidura, because she didn't get paid once I turned 16.

Then the Foster mother's adult daughter , Mary took me for a purpose and that purpose was she was lazy and I had to look after her child and do the housework, washing up etc as well as go to work . She would lay in bed until I went to work in the morning.

I stayed there until I got married at 27 years old.

It was terrible times in the depression, but Mary gave me hell, in anything , she blamed me for everything.

I felt as though why had I been born.? I couldn't escape as I had nowhere else to go. You didn't have anyone to stick up for you at all.

When I got married in 1949. I had my first and only child in 1951 and that was when I had a nervous breakdown. I had bottled all these feelings inside me of discrimination against me and it all came tumbling out. I had a lovely , supportive husband who helped me to get through.

I could talk to my husband about problems. James my wonderful husband who I was married to for nearly 50 years . when he died in 1988. He was a wonderful man. When he died I felt I lost everything, but I had my daughter. but I didn't have anything as a child.

I remember that I didn't want my daughter to have what I had had as a child.

I could never talk to Mary about problems, she would threaten to kick me out of the house and she knew I didn't have anyone to go to.

I felt dreadful, I felt as though she didn't want you. the Foster Family let my brother Roy go out on his own and he was working and living in Chatswood.

You wondered why you were born and why you were put on this earth. No one cares about you.

When I look back now. I wonder how I lived and how I put up with it.

It was a terribly sad life. you got everything second hand. When I spoke I was told it was wrong, they made a fool of you , so you said nothing. At meal times, no talking, I was too frightened to speak back to them.

Sometimes the Child Welfare Inspector's would come out and check which bed you slept in, it wasn't the bed that the foster family said it was. I slept all over the house and veranda.

They had a cat of nine tails that they used to threaten us with.

They made damn sure I didn't belong to them. I certainly lived with fear. When Mary got me, I got hell. She would say to family friends "I'll pack them back to where they came from" as well as saying " It was a mongrel breed that I came from"

I was made to feel different.

It was only when I got married that I started to survive.

All through my years, I've not told a soul about my childhood. When people have talked about their families, I feel a bit left out of it. I can't talk about my parents.

I think it should wake people up that it didn't happen just to black children. It happened to white children and they were just as unhappy as children.

I also think that there should be check ups on foster parents. I also think that foster children should be questioned apart from the family.. as children would be too frightened to say anything in front of them..

People who haven't had this life don't understand. Your life is ruined as a child and then when you grow up it is still with you, it never leaves you.

I would not like my life all over again.!

Rebecca. 89 in June.

P.S.I am in the process of getting information about my life as a State Ward of NSW from DOC's