

Mrs Fay May Gatchell



Whom It May Concern 7-5-2004
Dear Sir or Madam

This letter is about the Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care. I have just become a member of the Care leavers of Australia network (Clan) as a child I was taken & made a state ward of N.S.W. (Clan) would like me to write to the Senate Community Affairs, about myself and how I became a state ward, I understand that it is very important to write down this story and this information of my life when I was in the Girls home,

I believe I came from a good family. I am the 4th child in a family of 9 children I was born in Lithgow in 1932.10.11 - things were not easy back in those days, my father Reg was a good hard working man working in the mines in Lithgow and when the work in the mines closed - we left Lithgow and went back up to my Grandfather's place at a place called native dog - we all loved living up there - near Bathurst and Oberon & we didn't mind the cold weather we thought the snow in winter time was so beautiful - and I ask you to please take the time to read this piece in this newspaper I wrote it back in the Remembrance year of 1995 they put it in the Bathurst paper for me, and I thought it would help you know us as a family a little better, you will know

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and you will understand me more, when I tell you about what went wrong in our lives at ~~the~~ a later in this letter.

I have also put in a copy of a Poem I wrote about nature dog, the place we called Home, if you have the time would you please read it also, and I would also like to tell you a few things about my father, I believe he was a very misunderstood man, you see at nature dog our home his Grandfather was Robert Francis Williams, was killed in a fallin of Earth when he was digging a race up to the old Gold fields - they burned him down by the creek - my father missed him and always looked after his Grave. But he also lost his own father Phillip Francis Williams he was accidentally shot with his own Gun getting through the fence - my father with his twin sister was 5 years old my Grandmother went home to her people she was unable to keep the twins so Dads sister was taken down to Shelburne and stayed with Dad uncle Sam Williams - Dad did not stay with his mother, he went to other people - they said he never really got over all this, and when my mother got sick after her lost Baby Girl was Born ^{the} Baby only lived about 3 weeks - and our mother Elsie did not really get well after all that Dad was so up set he loved her so much and some time in 1943 - they were told that mum had Cancer, Dad wanted to take her some more nice for a change, so we packed our car and went to Griffith it was lovely in Griffith so warm, we got work on the Peas - when they finished - Dad sent me and my sisters to the Convent school - all this time our mother was in Hospital

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in Griffith, she never came out of the Hospital she Passed ^{away} in May 1945, leaving poor Dad with the 8 of us. he had mum Buried in Griffith, everyone could see that he couldn't cope, a few days after the funeral, my oldest Brother Phillip Brought us his 5 Sisters and Baby Brother back to native dog our home, Dad + our other Brother Keith did come home Dad was drinking very heavy lye this time going into town drinking + fighting, he had one to many drinks + fights, and hurt some man, he went to Court in due time, and was sent ~~to~~ the prison in Bathurst for 3 years - we were so very crushed, no mother and now no father, the Photo of the family was taken in 1943 - after a days work of Tea Picking, But as I see it today, we looked poor - But we also looked very happy we are all smiling and together, 2 years later we had no mother or father, so hard to believe that good can turn to bad and Sadness + Grief so quickly, Phillip went down to Sydney, where we all settled down a little ~~little~~, he got married to a woman that he knew before we went to Griffith, he was about 17 at the time, they got a army house to live in out near Liverpool in Sydney a Place called Borsley Park, he took us there to live with him + his new wife Betty, we did our best to make it work But the little ones Cried a lot for mum + Dad and the place was a bit small, I didnt like down there at all I missed the Country I missed our home and the lovely Rabbits that came at night in the moon light to eat the Green Grass down by the Creek I missed mum + Dad we all did, I put my age up and got a job in the Cotton mill in Liverpool making army Blankets. we were not down there long, when I came home one day

and my 3 younger sisters were gone, they were put in Strauss orphanage in Liverpool

I was upset and there was no way to silence me I wanted to know why, my sister in law said she was sick of the lot of us, she married my brother - not all of us, and my sisters were put in the orphanage, and that was that, but I couldn't settle down, the money that I got paid from the mill, I gave to my sister in law to help with food and things for myself and my young brother he was about 5 years old - I became rebellious and cheeky and I thought I was quite grown up with working in the cotton mill and with caring for my brother when I wasn't working - one day after some family trouble - she told me that my brother Jack and I would be next to go - and soon after that time the police was there one afternoon when I came home from work, they took me, and put me in a place called Glebe Girls shelter I think the year was 1946 or early 1947 - I was in the shelter until they took me ~~to~~^{to} the Children Court some where in Sydney - I believe I was charged with being a unwanted and in moral danger - and a rebellious girl - I didn't speak to anyone all through the hearing, and there was not one member of my family at the Court ~~case~~ case and after all that they took me to that terrible place called Paramatta Girls home in fleet, Paramatta, I am quite sure that I was in shock - with the big high wall around it and all gates and doors all locked, no way out no one with a smile or a bit of kindness - I was there for a long time - ~~put~~^{first} in the Hospital Block to have all my medical

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Examination to find out if I had any Diseases - nothing could of prepared me for all this - they kept asking me about intercourse - I just Cried & Cried I wanted my mother - they told me to get over it - and when they were ready I was taken over to the main Block, my first night in that big dormitory with so many Beds and people - I had a night more of fear - But like everyone I had to get used to it - But the worst thing about the dormitory was - when you got locked in there to go to bed - no one was allowed to take any water to drink with you - the officer said they didnt want any Bed wetters in the dormitory, so if we needed a drink in the night the Girls told me just get a drink from the toilet - just pull the Chain - and when it flushed you got the clean water to drink no one was allowed to tell, and there would be big trouble, Mrs Daries was in charge and all the Girls were frightened of her - as if you did anything to up set Mrs Daries - she would get very angry, and pull your hair and put her knee in your back and bend you back over, and it would nearly hurt your back and your hair would come out in her hand - or she would hit you very hard about your head & Shoulders - Call you things that I never heard before I went there - bad things, and tell you how worthless you were, and I had no one to tell as I had no family to come and see me - anyway. We were always under a Watchful Eye - and we always had plenty of work to do - we all took turns about the work, and a Roll or muster call 4 times a day, we had to answer when our name was called - so they knew that we were still there - then we would have to go to our jobs, like working in the big

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laundry that did all the linen and clothes for the Girls home & took through out all the home, the kitchen that did all the cooking & the washing up - in the dining room and big sneezing rooms sewing room there was always so much heavy work to do, and if you couldn't do it right the first time you did it all again, ~~and~~ until you got it right and if you couldn't please the officer, you would have to go and cut the grass with a pair of scissors or try with a knife - or go and scrub down the big long covered way on your knees with an old tooth brush, until you had it all done - it had to look so nice and clean, my knees got very red and swollen and very sore, and in relation to any privacy, there was none as we all had to go down into old dungeon like shower rooms with no doors on them and all the girls had to strip off ready to shower - we would hold a towel up in front of us for privacy, line up and have a very quick shower we could all see each other, I could not get used to that, we never did that at home, these occurrences took place in this institution along with many ~~many~~ things that I can't go on with - as with this letter that I write is true but I keep thinking I might get ~~me~~ into big trouble about saying so, but I have lived a long life as I will be 72 years come this November - and I have lived with this shame and stigma, as I have never been able to talk about this time in the Girls home to anyone, from Paramatta I was sent to Thornleigh a lovely place I had a fair go there - and from there I was sent out to a place to work as a home child, a home at Silverton ~~stations~~, the home over looked Fern uglys Bridge, the

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welfare officer said that some one like me was lucky that some one like Mr & Mrs Ferguson would have me in their home to live & work, I was to be very Grateful - they had three children all going to school, my work started on the same day I arrived - the officer Miss Dorron left me, and said if I had anything I wanted to know just ask Mrs Ferguson - well I never seen or heard of Miss Dorron again, I was shown my sleep out room out on the Vandalah, I put my few things in there, and then I cleaned the kitchen - and I prepared the family meal, set the dining table for six it looked beautiful I looked forward to being with a real family again and sitting with them for my meal as well, I couldn't believe how lucky I was, I had learned about saying Grace - and real good table manners and some really nice things at Thornleigh. I was ~~asked~~ asked to serve dinner & I did & I was placing it on the table & it came to mine & Mrs Ferguson took me by my arm & said O no Dear you don't eat with the family, you just put a tea towel down here on the end of the kitchen table, that is where you will have your meals she went into the dining closing the door behind her. I was so hurt - I just sat there thinking why am I so lucky - they don't even think I am good enough to eat with - things didn't change each day I walked the children to and from school, and kept the house work done & the washing & ironing done - they went to Sandhow island on a lot of holidays, I was left at the house to look after Mr Ferguson, I spent a lot of time on my own, just thinking about my mother & father & Brothers and sisters wishing we could be back before mum died, being

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to be a matron in the Panamatta home, I was to go with them out to Dolly to work on a sheep and cattle station, but news made it, as the Stains family were holidaying down on the Gold Coast for 3 months, so Mrs Stains took me with her down to Gold Coast, I never seen Miss Dintin again, I stayed and work for the Stains, until their holiday time was over, and then I go a job and stayed on the Coast, and when you are alone you really are alone, I didnt know just how hard life could be out there. It can really be hard when you cant read or write or add up, I was locked into one sort of work to earn my living and that was consequences of neglect of me as a individual child while I was in the institution and not being taught any proper Education. I feel this all added, to my failure with my first marriage and in the Brake of up of the marriages and the nature and cause of major changes that took place in my life, at the age of 25. I was a mother of 4 lovely children - I had my own family at last, I was so proud - and I tried to be a wonderful mother, I loved my children with all the passion a mother could have. But we were ~~married~~^{married} almost 10 years - when I knew ~~for~~ that my Husband was alcoholic and getting mean and nasty - we were not having a nice time, he started beating me, the human anguish and abuse that we suffered - yes we suffered, me and my children - in due time I got brave enough to take my children and leave him, for 3 months we hid out - we slipped much better, we were safe for a time - But him and his mother found us - and late one after noon in July 1959 they came and took my children and drove away with them - they kept them - and

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and did all in their power to cut me from their lives. they grew up with out me - and his mother played the place of me - as their mother, my 4 children all have been affected unhappy lives it has been difficult with a alcoholic father - they have never been told about me or the Experiences that I lived through as a very young Girl, in the hell hole Jail called Parramatta Girls home, I believe that things were still in the dark ages back in the 1940, I will never forget my horror life or the horror life of many other Girls, when I think of their screams in the night - I still get very stressed. It was a hard cruel inhumane institution. the Girls that were there when I was there would now be like me in our last years, but still carry the burden of unresolved issues - and the scars of my Emotional deprivation and neglect - separated from my sisters and Brothers and my father for 15 years - until I found them again - my oldest Brother Philly I never did see again in my life ^{again} ~~2014~~. I am sorry to say - but I don't have one good word or memory about the Child welfare system of yesteryears, I am pleased that there is some recognition at last, and I would like to see some support in the future for people like myself - to help build self worth and not to be afraid to speak out and to know we are not worthless we have a rightful place in our society. But to be taken away and never to be with your family again has a life long effects that require life long support. I feel as if I am on the Road to know where, but before I die - I would like to be able to put my Psychological abuse of the past to rest - to know why I was really put in the institution in there I was just a no - no 55 - you didn't hear your name very often. Just 55

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why I was kept there for so long, why I was so ashamed and why I had to live in silence, why I am a forgotten survivor of a very unfeeling of the Child Welfare system - I was never in any sort of trouble before I ~~was~~ was sent to Paramatta - and I have never been in any sort of trouble with the law since I came away from Paramatta over 50 years ago, I have suffered my pain my failures and my losses in silence - I am the mother of 5 children, the Grandmother of 18 children, and the Great Grandmother of 12 children - and I think these people one and all are very good law abiding people - so maybe I am not as rotten and as worthless as I was led to believe all these years ago - and if I can be of any help with this matter at anytime - I would be pleased to speak out with more truth, please for give my bad spellings - I know you will understand - and I thank you for taking the time and care enough to read this letter of mine.

Please Excuse me writing more, Again I thank you & all
in the late part of the name of the Superintendent was Best wishes Joy May Getchell
Mrs Simons (nee) Williams

and the matron name was Mrs Davies - and Mrs Steins was second in charge and it was then and the Senior staff officers at industrial Girls Home, they should of been suspended as they were the one with the misconduct they were the ones that did the hitting the kicking - the locking us in the solitary confinement, for 24 or 48 - hours at a time, they fed us food with weevils and worse - and the toilets with no Doors on them Showers with no Doors - no Private - if you stayed a minute to long you would get pulled out of the Shower by your wet hair - you would feel very humiliated, and hurt, I believe that there was no real Bad Girls in that Jail, only uncontrollable Senior officers - and those in charge of us and the home, they said we were dirt that would never come to any good in life - may God for give them for all the hurt they caused
Joy G.

Just a small poem of Native Dog our home

*If I had but one wish left in life,
I would wish to be taken back in time to my childhood days*

*Back to my old home Native Dog Creek,
Just below the old one time Chinese diggings.
I would wish to see the imprints of my fathers car wheels along the muddy
road, that takes me back to Native Dog Creek.*

*To see the fruit trees in blossom,
To see the rabbits scurry in the moonlight,
Just to know that home is home of Native Dog Creek
To be a child again, with children, to run as wild as children can.*

*That's when things of none importance, were of real importance to us,
As we had each other, and come rain or snow we still made it home,
Old Native Dog Creek.*

*If I could be back there in life a child again,
No more would there be silence in the diggings,
As still you would hear the ring of our laughter,
As it carried through the white ghost gums that stood still and proud,
Only the whisper of the wind will they be come alive again.*

*Those days have gone but in my mind they remain,
As things have changed,
For there are no more muddy wheel imprints in the road,
Only imprints upon my heart of things that used to be,
And my home at Native Dog Creek,
That stood on the brink of the old Chinese diggings,
Near that town called Oberon so far away.*

Fry Mary Gotchell - (nee) Williams

(Mrs) Williams

Aussie families survived hard times

BY IVY GETCHELL

I would like to write to tell of some true experiences that happened to a very special family that lived through the early depression years, the 1930s — a family of three boys and six girls.

Through the depression years we lived, the poor years, and the war years. I, Ivy, am the fourth child born in the Williams family, Reginald was my father's name and Elsie was my mother's name.

I was born in 1932 in a coalmining town just west of the famous Blue Mountains. My father Reg was a good man, a very hard working man like most of the men and all of the people were in those days.

You always made a living by working on the main roads labouring with a pick and shovel, shearing sheep or horse breaking. We travelled from place to place as we owned a car.

Sometimes when times were tough, we would finish up way out in the country living in the bush in a marquee tent for our home. Dad would go setting rabbit traps or do a poison trail. He worked hard doing the rabbits, preparing the rabbit skins for sale.

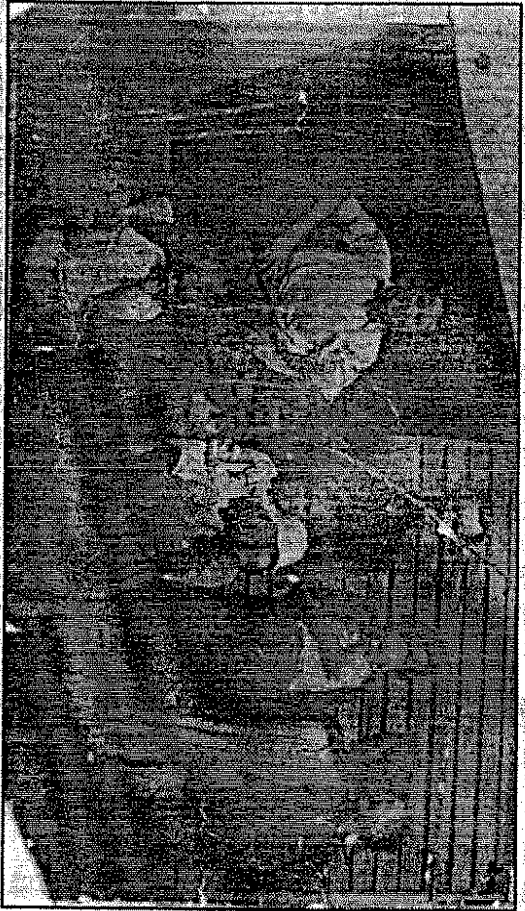
When the rabbits came to their end through being worked out, Dad would then turn his hand to gold digging. We did a lot of gold digging and prospecting finding gold now and again.

We always managed not to starve. Most of the times in our humble camp there would always be something to eat that would keep us going.

There were always the necessities like tea, sugar, flour for making damper, golden syrup, plum jams. I don't remember any one of us being really sick, not until later on into the 1940s. The war had broken out by then.

In 1939 a new way of living had to be found. Dad was in some new sort of government scheme called the Red scheme. He worked for the money he received from the government.

He was sent down to a place called Ballsly Park, near Sydney, to learn how to pick peas. He took with him my two older brothers,



Ivy Getchell's family made do during the war and depression years: Reginald Williams and wife Elsie, with Phillip, baby Allan, May, Keith, Winifred, Betty, Josie and Ivy. The photo was taken at Black Springs near Oberon in 1943.

Phillip and Keith, and so we became a family that could earn our own living by pea picking.

There became many pea growers in several other districts throughout NSW. My father Reg was exempt from the Army because of his large family. He became an itinerant seasonal worker or a piece worker.

He was able to take all of us, his children, and we would work as a family in the pea paddocks. We worked side by side with our family, earning a living picking peas.

We worked beside the Land Army women, only we would work longer hours.

I was around 10 years of age and, with my elder brothers, Phillip and Keith, and my elder sister, Mary, my three younger sisters, Betty, Josie and Winifred, we would start picking at daylight most mornings and were still picking well into the late afternoon.

Pea picking was not easy work as many

hours were spent with our backs bent as we reached down to pea vines or kneeling on the hard, clodded, ploughed ground. We had to work with speed and pick as many peas as we could, with no looking round the paddock at other pickers. The weather was very changeable. The summer heat inland is very extreme between November and March, with the opposite extreme coming crashing in around March.

The wind and sleet coming over the Great Duck/Dooly Mountains would chill our hands to the point where we thought that they would freeze as we would try to continue picking.

We did not have warm clothes to speak of, and shoes were hard to get, but my father told us constantly that there was a war going on and there were no luxuries to be had by anyone. I remember my mother making our pants to wear out of the white bags that the flour came in.

Our home back at the marquee tent site,

where we lived and spent about five years of our growing life in this style, was also demanding.

After finishing in the fields for the day we would have to return home and light the camp fire as we would use the fire to cook our evening meal.

Water was brought from the natural spring. My sister, Mary, and I would carry the water for bathing, cooking and washing in our kerosene tins with a stick between the handles to hold them by.

With this kind of lifestyle and living during the war years we did not go to school to learn to read or write.

We missed out on all of this by doing what Dad had said and doing our bit to help provide food from the land to the great Sydney market to help with the food for the men who were fighting in the war and at the front line.

This is the year of remembrance, 1995, when so much is being remembered — the war, the men that went away to fight and those who stayed and fought, the Land Army girls, the great things that had to take place, the sorrows and the pain, the wars since and all the things of great importance that we remember.

And I thought that if I may say I believe that this remembrance is a great thing and that the war and all should be remembered. I think that the families that stuck together and prayed and worked and stayed together for the good and help of this great land.

Of our country Australia in the war from 1939 to 1945, I can't help but say that even though I was only a child I will remember. For you see my mother Elsie passed away May 20, 1945, not long before Victory Day.

And yes, I remember the day that peace was declared, but sad we were because we had lost our mother. She did not live to share the good news. I do remember the families and the kids that worked in the fields and I now pray that there will come an end of all wars worldwide. And all people will strive to live side by side in peace.



PS - new no.

whom it may concern

Dear Sir or Madam

1-6-2004

This letter is a follow up letter to the Inquiry into Institutional Children, as I wrote in my submission to the Inquiry on the 7th-5-2004 - as I told the Senate Inquiry that I was a State ward and put into notorious Parramatta Girls home in Fleet St at north Parramatta at a very young age - and I know that most girls went through the same anguish arising from the neglect and abuse that did occur in the home while we as children were in their care and protection in them, was very unsafe and improper and unlawful treatment of us, some much worse than other girls - and as I said in my last letter to you, I have joined (Clan) and I have ^{made} a decision to tell my Husband everything about my treatment in Parramatta Girls Industrial School - he thought that I was Exaggerating - I know that he found it hard to believe me, but since joining (Clan) I have been receiving newsletters - and I have been able to borrow their library books my Husband Frank of 45 years - has been reading the Reports - But what shocked him the most was a video tape - that I got on loan about the former girls home in north Parramatta and as I sat and watched the video - I can't explain - how I felt - with memories of humiliation and abuse, came

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flooding back to me - all those dreadful experience, that I lived in silence with because of the stigma it carried of being a Rejected as a Child - I am not sure how I became strong enough to survive - feeling no self worth - and now that my Husband has seen this Place on tape - and seen me shake uncontrollable when viewing it with him - he now knows and believes me, that I was not Exaggerating about what happened to me as a young Girl - My Husband Frank is a Returned man he served in the Royal Australian Navy he was in the Korean War he said that he had no idea that Australia children were being treated like that here in their own Country Australia, he finds it so hard to believe - But he also knows that it did happen to me and many other young people, he is sorry that I have had to live with this silence of my Girlhood, But this ^{never} seems a convenient time, as the thought of it was like sitting in darkness and Captivity of some kind you become to think that the ones that love you - will think less of you - because I was told so much it was all my own fault and I was so worthless no one wanted me that was why I was in the Girls home, But I understand now, that it was because of my mothers Death and my fathers unable to cope, we needed Guidance & direction - it was very difficult to cope with the Grief and the Break up of the family, This will always be so much to write about this cause - But for this time I will close with many thanks for your time in reading my letters of Submission if you dont mind would you please put this letter with my last letter of Submission - I wrote on the 7-5-2004 again thank you for the time you take for this matter of mine

PS I am happy for my submission to be made Best Wishes,
Public Imb, Joy Mary Getchell.