

**Senator Andrew Murray
Parliament House
CANBERRA**

Dear Senator

I was out of Australia when the "Inquiry Into Children Held in Institutional Care" commenced work. I did not send in a submission but I do express my sincere thanks to the committee members for their diligent work that must have been horrendous at times. I applaud the courage of those who appeared before the Committee.

Now , at 70 years of age, I am still unable to shake off all the effect that years of being a "homie" in the 40s have left me with.. Along with two siblings I spent some years in a Protestant home in South Grafton. We were fed, had some clothes and a roof over our heads. We also had extreme punishments, lack of any sort of affection and the knowledge that we were nobodies from nowhere. By the time I was 11, I could garden, work hard in a kitchen, wash and iron clothes for hours, wash floors and do many household chores. I could also stand in a corner for hours and quickly learned that when forbidden to speak with any of the other children that was exactly what was meant. We were constantly reminded that we were charity cases. The only people who I remember with affection are those from the Salvation Army in Grafton, they took us on outings and provided some little personal extras.

As an adult I can accept that times were difficult then but those years did leave me with a lack of self worth and an inability to trust or to accept that there are people who are willing to do things for me.

We three sisters survived our "homie" years, managed to make new lives., marry kind men who have treated us well and to hold down good jobs till we were ready to retire. Our experiences, to a certain extent, made each of us a loner and it is just in the last few years we have been able to establish a sense of family. Every now and then a door opens in the memory bank and the ghosts escape to make us lonely children again.

I hope that with the work of the Committee, the conditions for the care of vulnerable children will be changed forever.

Yours truly



Mrs Gwen Armstrong (nee Wilkinson)

