

Inquiry into
Children in
Institutional Care



July 7, 2003

In the Sunday Telegraph dated April 20, 2003 on page 43 I have read this article and, from my viewpoint it is nice to know that there is somebody concerned about certain disastrous things that happen in our society.

I am a mother of six (6) children, came to Australia 33 years ago but I feel very regretful of having children in this country. For years I have sorrowed my captive children. I have had to cope with the worst experience of my life, which is losing all my kids in this country. Removing children from their parents is all a game to increase bureaucracy, since most of their cases end up in lengthy court cases. I think there is no justice in Australia. Also, many laws are a shameful example, since all what they do is break down many families. Some existing laws don't encourage parents to fully control their children. Ironically, many children do control their parents. I'm just one in many other parents that have shed blood due to this entire situation. Whenever a child goes into captivity, it is suggested that his/her parents are unable to look after them properly. Reality has shown a different picture to all of us, because most parents going through this situation are branded as useless and unfit to rear their offspring. I wonder whether the DOCS workers are better than us, as parents are.

Bureaucracy members fix with money everything in their private lives. Does anyone of them consider the sacrifice made for a mother to raise her kids? Obviously, none of them.

I got married at 18, had my first child at 19 and from that moment, life in Australia has been a continuous struggle. Some examples of this are: Maternity, rearing them, cooking, washing and ironing their clothes, do shopping with them by my side, coping with the economical problems of a numerous family, taking to and pick them from school in addition to attend their teachers requests. Living in Housing Commission area is not suitable to raise children. My dwelling (now under Community Housing tenancy) is in horrible conditions: For instance, water leaking from a bathroom pipe find its way into two of the bedrooms so the

floor carpet has been wet for months and the water/humidity is now under my bed and furniture. Also, because the bathroom floor IS the kitchen's roof, the leakage releases the water on top of my fridge. There is a crack on the kitchen's roof, so water keeps going this time on live wires, causing concern of a fire ready to happen.

Obviously, the disgusting conditions in which I live put a barrier on the chance to bring my children back home. They're not even allowed to come for a weekend visit. In addition, most of my neighbors are bad people (troublemakers) so there is no way to let my kids mixing with them. In a certain form they are responsible for many nightmares in the whole dispute. As a consequence of all this unnecessary family division I cannot see my grandchildren either. Due to the DOCS intervention in my family and its subsequent collapse my mother went on to suffer, became ill and passed away about 5 years ago. I can not comprehend the family divisions between my mother, my daughters and me. I think there is a cover-up between DOCS, Anglicare and my eldest daughters with their husbands. My elder daughters aged 26, 25 and 24 and their husbands discourage my 4th daughter, 19 to stay away from me.

As you can see, mine is an absolutely frustrated situation whilst I have no money to hire a lawyer, nor to get Legal Aid.

In the same newspaper, on page 30 there is an article under the headline **Children in care on rise**, which informs readers about the increase in children under the Director General of DOCS. According to this article, in June/1997 there were 14078 children in care and I know mine were among of them. In June/2002 the figure jumped 34.1% to 18880 children. Therefore, what is happening is absolutely shameful. We may probably think that breaking down families by taking our children into custody for years and years is all part of a great industry: **breaking down families to their injury**.

Ever since the government of Mr. Bob Carr took control of DOCS, all these disastrous problems for many families became nightmares for parents and kids. Birth rates keep lowering down to the point of causing alarm; however, if I could go back to the past with today's experience, I wouldn't dare to have any child and see that he/she becomes a State Ward during childhood and ends up with foster parents and step-brothers/sisters. Children are supposed to grow up with their biological parents at their homes not with strangers. Whenever I chat with friends and tell them that my children started their 9th year in captivity they agree with me in not having any child and discourage young teenagers and

recently married ladies into having children in Australia. It is very bad to have children here. Instead of helping parents in rising their kids, the government puts up the cost of living, taxes, rates, etc. and give foster parents double help or resources/support to rise children outside their families.

As a mother and grandmother I think a lot in my grandchildren and realize that it was a big curse coming to this country. I have lost my entire family, I starve, my health condition deteriorates every month; I cannot afford medication nor the expenses required for a dental treatment.

I came to Australia in 1970 and have never been back to my homeland; I know very well this country and its people so I'm convinced that all that has been said against me is all rubbish and a pack of lies. In spite of my situation, I had to cope with daily problems in addition to the ones coming from outside, but the DOCS never helped with anything. Also, my children had health setbacks because of living in a humid house but the Housing Dept. decided my change after four and a half years. Actually, I've been transferred when I was pregnant of my last baby because an upset neighbour entered my home backyard, violently assaulted me with his fists and broke my nose, which heavily bled in front of my children. All this could have been avoided had DOCS taken action earlier. My children have been out of home for the past eight years, but I've been told to see them for one hour only, twice a year and nobody provides my with a solicitor to fight this injustice. And believe me, this abuse of power (which I would call corruption) unfortunately grows bigger and bigger every day.

The children suffer because they cannot see me more often, so I am sure they have been psychologically hurt. I also know they are being told lies or they have been brainwashed to avoid any contact with their mother. That is why the 1-hour access visits are supervised. Since my children were taken by DOCS (the youngest being only 4 years old), I have always felt my life been destroyed. As consequences, I'm having health problems, and with a financial situation that prevents me from taking proper treatment I have to take diet food and look after myself and also I am losing my eyesight. Since I don't belong to any health fund, Medicare does not cover me with costs of treatment or medicines. To worsen the situation left by DOCS in my family, I cannot find suitable work so I cannot afford to go to movies, social life and not even to cover my basic expenses. Public transport where I live is very bad, and not having a car it is impossible to use taxis. I also need to fight certain situations to clear my name.

This is the life I live in Australia, without my own children and with so many disadvantages.

All this shameful problem, which is a source of great concerns and suffering to many family parents, has to be addressed properly and solved as quick as possible, so hundred of children will one day be free of captivity and live a very happy life with their parents, not with strangers.

Thank you very much for considering this information letters and I hope to hear from you as soon as practicable.