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This is part of my story and I am writing it for the Senate.

I am an elderly person & it is only this year that I have found it at all possible to speak of my time spent as a Ward of the State, which was at The Childrens Welfare in Royal Park, Victoria, Elizabeth Fry Home, at South Yarra, Victoria, & Brighton Hostel, Brighton, Victoria. I also spent some time in a concrete cell with bars for walls, 2 blankets on the floor, & a toilet with no seat. Men were in other cells & everyone in the cells could see each person in the other cells. Because I was a young girl I was too frightened to use the toilet, because I thought men would see me pulling my pants down. I did not use the toilet for 2 days & nights, which was extremely uncomfortable.

Prior to being put in the cell my head had been split open & the policeman's wife had sewn me up. The scar is still visible under my hair. In those days only people with money went to doctors.

During this time I was charged in court & deemed as a neglected child. The court case was so traumatic, when I saw the perpetrators who had inflicted stabbing & violence on me that something happened to me that made me stop being able to speak. In the court they asked me over & over again, questions relating to the attack, but I did not speak whatsoever. I could not. If the records could be found, that would surely be recorded that I did not utter one word even. As much as I wanted to talk, especially to other girls my age, I was unable to. I began to point to things and made my own sign language up & I could make it be

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known what it was that I needed to say, usually. This went on for 8 months & not once was I taken to a doctor to see why I couldn't talk. Once I had been deemed a Neglected Child, I became a Ward of the State.

When I turned 60 years I wrote to the Officer In Charge of the Records Department of the Victoria Police & requested a copy of the file that there would have been on me at that time of the court case relating to neglected child details. However, phone calls & correspondence that followed, told me that all the files were burnt & that nothing existed. I was very disappointed, but believed it at the time, nevertheless, after hearing other words of state quoting the same replies I now doubt the accuracy. Perhaps the police do not want me to know what is written!

I was taken to Melbourne & put in Royal Park, which was a cold, cruel place. The food was actually rotten, I vomited often because of the rank old butter, the bread & fat, weavils, & if meat was available it was rotten & stank. I was already a small girl for my age & I was skinny & did not have enough clothes to keep me warm. Constantly I was hungry & cold & I also had colds & runny noses. No handkerchiefs were supplied & the staff who were the worst kind of people for that job you could imagine, knocked all of us around, and called us gutter snipes, sluts, & filthy names & punished us if we had dirty noses. We could not stop our noses

running & had nothing to wife them on. We were all so young & no education was given, we had to do physical work like men & look after little kids as well. The staff had nice food to eat & it was cooked in big cauldrons made of metal, & it took 2 kids to lift them off the fire. It was very hard not to spill the boiling liquids. Some did get scalded, I was fortunate to avoid being burnt there.

These women staff members were dangerous in other ways. They had 'instruments' which were smooth wooden carved objects & they would enter the dormitories & choose a girl to go with them for 'medical checks' which of course was a misnomer for sexual assault. We all dreaded being chosen, even though cakes were often given as a present after the 'examination'.

I was both glad & frightened when I was sent to Elizabeth Fry Home. Glad to get away from the absolutely vile staff at Royal Park, & the food, but afraid from the stories I had heard about Elizabeth Fry from other girls.

I soon found out it was an absolute nightmare of a place as well. Everyone was tightly locked up with a very high brick wall all around with broken glass imbedded in the top. I had always been a great tree climber & could climb very high gum trees & being small, could get to the top thin branches, even. But this brick wall stopped even me from escaping. I wanted to, because the cruelty was indeed immense, the food was as bad as at Royal Park if not worse, & the

punishments were truly unbearable. Some of these punishments were - no lunch, no tea, wash by hand the menstruation pads (old bits of sheets) used by some mentally disabled ladies who were kept there (I had not reached puberty myself yet at this time), scrub the wet laundry which was 100 feet long, on the knees with scrubbing brush & floor rag. This was a full night's job, it would take until dawn to be finished & if your night's got wet during this shocking amount of physical exertion, you would be re-punished. There were many, many punishments both in type of, & also amounts of. Three other punishments come to mind as well.

In those days was a V.D. hospital, just down past the Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital, & anyone who had venereal disease (like AIDS these days because it was incurable in the 30s & 40s) was made to go there. However, if a younger person contracted syphilis, gonorrhoea or associated venereal disease, they used to be sent to Elizabeth Fry if female. These V.D. girls were given a toilet of their own & we were always told not to use their toilet as we would catch V.D. We believed that & so were careful to avoid any contact with their toilet.

However, if one of us was cheeky, or crossed our arms, or ate a mulberry from the plentiful crop on the two trees, or, walked on the lawn these were serious crimes & instantly earned punishment. One of these punishments unbelievably was - 'V.D. toilet for you for 1 week'. In other words we were not allowed to use our normal toilets & must use the one the V.D. girls used. Whoever got that punishment was absolutely

terrified they would get V.D. as it had been drummed into us not to use it. And of-course better is known now. I know now that it could not have been contracted through the toilet, but then it was different. The girl would cry & plead to not have that punishment, but the staff would insist.

If a girl talked at night when the lights were out, the staff would come & drag you out of bed in your nightie & down some stairs into a cellar that had no light, no window, & had water 2-3 feet deep. In the water was an old rusty iron bed & spring. The depth of water was just over the spring. When it happened to me I was flung onto the mattress screaming & terrified & saying I'd be good & begging to please please don't make me stay there. The door was slammed shut & locked. I screamed, & screamed & screamed & was so hysterical I thought I would die. I had to crouch on my haunches with my feet in the water squatting position because I could not lie down. I stayed there for all night.

It is the most terrifying thing that has ever happened to me in the whole of all of my life.

Also at that time I was very naive & believed all stuff that they told us & some of that included the story that black snakes lived in that cellar. So that was an extra frightening aspect of it.

Punishment was the order of the day. Now I look back on those days & feel so very sorry for those mentally disabled women who had a terribly unhappy life. Some or all of them had lice & nits & I remember being made to wash

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one of the women's hair in the concrete troughs. There was a row of these troughs the full length of the wet laundry, they were not smooth nor shallow as of today's type, instead were quite deep & rather sharp where pieces of bluestone protruded through the concrete. This was a commercial laundry where washing was brought in from hospitals & hotels. A dry laundry was attached too. Not being very big, I could not reach inside the trough, or the woman's head, so I had to climb up & get inside the trough without shoes & stand in the water I was using to do the job. Either squat or kneel on my knees across the top where the 2 troughs joined. But that hurt after a little while, so I got inside the trough.

I certainly endured many appalling acts of cruelty, & horrific punishments, yet I worked like a man for them in their on site commercial laundry, while they fed me basically on bread & fat. I was always hungry, & permanently cold from only wearing short sleeved cotton uniforms.

There are many other incidents of these extreme cruel incidents, punishments & psychological & emotional deprivations etc that I have endured & if need be I could give you other examples.

My life has been anything but normal. There are a lot of things I have never learnt. This is quite likely hard for a lot of people to understand but it's important to me. I am unable to write appropriately on a birthday card. What I want to put on a grandchild's card sounds quite exaggerated & stupid, I just cannot say properly what I feel & wish for the child.

Also I'm unable to perform properly at Christmas time. Instead of feeling apparently great joy, I just feel it's a hell of a lot

of chores to do.

All these years I have had all this stuff inside me & it is only now coming out. There is tons more! I went to a program this year at Quest for Life at Bundanoon where I met a group of blen members who had each had similar experiences to me. I found that program to be the utmost positive experience I could imagine.

That is when I began to speak about this whole subject, only this year, & it made me realize what a fabulous job they are doing there at blen.

I realize the damage done to us Welfare people cannot be undone, however, it needs to be addressed in the gen & every effort possible done to assist us in living a normal life. We have learned to feel ashamed which isn't the right feeling we should have. We didn't do bad things, why should we feel shame?

It was these carers - the staff at these homes that damaged us, who carried out their duties so callously, dangerously, uncaring, violently, neglectful & in some cases sexually deviant.

Amongst medical problems I have, a most serious one of these is bone disease. I have spent a considerable amount of time in a wheelchair in continual pain. After years of "sorry I cannot help you" answers at every Melbourne & Geelong public hospital, I found a neuro-surgeon who could & did help me in the way of spinal surgeries. The last one included a transplant which has been marvellously successful. I am now out of the wheelchair, out of the walker, off the walking stick & ambulating freely. The downside of this is the cost. It has cost me many thousands of \$s, as these surgeries can only

be done at a private hospital where the neuro-surgeon works & that alone costs \$700 per day. Also, parts inserted in the spine were obtained from Michigan, America & had to be paid for prior to the surgery. Many other medical people were involved, plus 5 months in rehabilitation, learning to walk again.

I am steadily paying off these enormous medical bills, but it will be years before they are finalized.

Opinions amongst the medical fraternity are that the fact that I lived constantly feeling cold, without adequate warmth, plus the fact of the inadequate diet regime, had contributed heavily to my state of health.

I have also had bone surgery on both hands, which includes plastic implants of both thumbs & joints, & transplanted tendons in the 2 palms.

I hope this gives you some sort of understanding as to how it was for us when we were supposed to be getting looked after by these appalling monsters.

This is only a little bit of my story written here as I said, I have only began to confront these abnormal life experiences this very year & it is with extreme difficulty I write this account.

I do not want my name & address published, but I give permission for you to print this under my made up name for family reasons.

Yours Faithfully,