



**SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REFERENCES COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE**

**Submission from**

**DENISE JOAN BROOKS**

**EX RESIDENT OF GOODWOOD ORPHANAGE**

**JUNE 2003**

# SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

## INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE

### INDEX

1. The Beginning and Why I was in the Goodwood Orphanage
2. My Experience
3. Life after Goodwood
4. Summary
5. References

### PICTURES

1. Before I went into the Orphanage aged 3
2. Denise Aged 4 Years
3. Denise at Her holy Communion, May 1959
4. Spinning between reality and fantasy
5. Take me home
6. Sister Patricia and her fury
7. Easter, 1964
8. Growing up 1966
9. Speaking of feelings
10. Reaching for Happiness
11. Frightened, hurt, angry, alone
12. Many confusing influences in my life
13. My relationships
14. The pain has been excruciating
15. Visiting Goodwood and facing the memories 1996
16. Finding out about mums death, newspaper cuttings

17. **Smashing the Moulds of the influence of the Nuns on my Life**
18. **I am Alive some of the others aren't**
19. **Recognising Darkness & Light and similarity**
20. **Grandchildren and breaking the cycle for future generations**
21. **Finding Love, Forgiveness and Acceptance**
22. **Finding the spirit of the Angels to support us through our pain and tears**

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. **Centacare Records**
2. **Letter to Centacare**
3. **Denise's letter to Sister Patricia**
4. **Letter From Helen Wilson of *Turnaround Personal Development***
5. **Personal Development Workshop notes**
6. **Letter from Sisters of Mercy to Mr D Forster, solicitor**
7. **Letter from Sister Mary Densley, returning material to Denise**
8. **Letter from Denise to Sister Mary Densley requesting Counselling support, 1998**
9. **Letter from Sister Helen Owens, 2000**
- 9a. **Letter from Hollows Solicitors to Secretary of Goodwood Orphange Group**
10. **Letter from Denise to Sister Meredith Evans**

## **The Beginning of why I was put in the Good wood Orphanage**

I Denise Brooks at the age of 3 years and later my two sisters Pamela and Carolyn) was voluntarily placed in the St Vincent De Paul Goodwood Orphanage by my natural parents to be 'cared' for under the trust of the Sisters of Mercy from 1954 – 1964. (See records that I know are inaccurate Attachments 1 & 2).



### **1. Before I went into the Orphanage aged 3**

Mum was ill and hooked on barbiturates, and in and out of hospital and a history of mental illness.

Dad was working as a labourer at the Sulphuric Acid Plant at Birkenhead, SA. It appears that dad was an alcoholic. Dad obviously had problems coping with my mother's condition and the responsibility of raising 3 daughters. He went to the local GP and the local priest to ask for support. I believe that several attempts were made by the local priest to encourage my father to keep his children at home with him as a family unit. However, eventually he convinced the local priest to recommend admission the Goodwood orphanage. This was at the time the only form welfare support available to struggling and dysfunctional families.

## My Experience

Being put in the orphanage was a terrible shock to me; I knew at the moment I was left at the orphanage that it was the worst day of my life. I had already learned at that age to be a good girl to try and keep my parents happy, so in that aspect I was well trained to behave myself with the nuns in the orphanage. To do what I was told, by the nuns.



2. Denise Aged 4 Years



3. Denise Aged 7 and a half Years, May 1959  
At Her Holy Communion

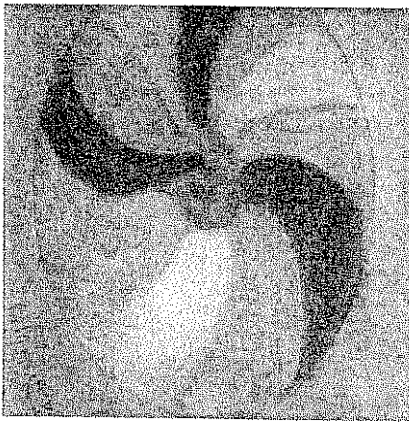
I remember being told in a harsh manner not to cry by one of the nuns as I waved goodbye to my mother from the balcony on St Mary's side. Right there and then I wanted to throw myself off the edge of that balcony, I wanted to die. Life didn't feel worth living without my parents, they were all I had, and all that I wanted.

These strange harsh looking women in their black and white clothes and their hard uncaring voices made me feel scared and even more alone and abandoned. But, I had a strong survival instinct despite my suicidal thoughts. I did all I could to comply with Sister Patricia's demands; she was the nun in charge of my care on St Mary's side. Sister Patricia was very cruel she beat me for what I now know were very petty reasons, I felt that I was bad, I felt there was something wrong with me, I felt ugly and lonely. I used to wet the bed all the time, I remember Sister Patricia dressing me up in nappy and pilchers and standing me in the middle of the dormitory and getting all the girls to laugh at me, I've forgotten how old I was but I was too old to wear nappies, I remember being made to stand on the line in the middle of the brick courtyard with my wet sheet over my head.

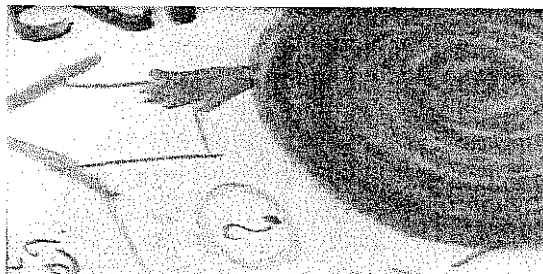
Public beating and humiliation were Sister Patricia's forte. Sister Patricia used to beat me until I cried then beat me until I stopped. She would make me run to her when she called, stand to attention and look her in the eyes. If I did not look her in the eyes she would beat me more. I have many very hurtful memories of the beatings and sadistic treatment that I received from Sister Patricia. Also, I witnessed the cruel treatment of many other young girls as well. This made me afraid to sometimes let my basic needs be known. Some of these memories have been locked away in my mind and body and may never be recalled. But, this does not mean that it did not happen.

I'd frequently sit on the merry go round near the front gates, I wanted so much to run away, other times I would just sit there and wait to see if mum and or dad were going to come and take me home.

The merry go round would spin around and around and my emotions would spin between fantasy and reality. Trancing and daydreaming were my only ways of coping.



4. Spinning between Fantasy and Reality



5. Take me Home

My mother was burnt to death in a house fire in 1960 when I was 9 years old and I was told by Sister Patricia that; '*wasn't it nice that my mother had gone to heaven*'. This seems a bizarre way of telling a child of such tragic news. There was no emotional support provided by the nuns or other counselling services available only more abuse and loneliness.

The abandonment, the violence, the fear and humiliation instilled by strict the catholic policies and overzealously enforced by Sister Patricia.

*She usually calls you in a very stern voice to come to her and look into her eyes and stand to attention. She usually had the cane end to the feather duster, the rubber sword or the wooden brush or a belt, whatever she could get her hands on quickly enough. But she hardly ever hit us with her bare hands because that would hurt her.*

*When she was in a thrashing mood I was so frightened, I would get pains in my chest and my groin and I would feel like wetting my pants, sometimes I did wet my pants. She would hit me more, it would sting and then she would send me to the toilet.*

*Sometimes I would say to her "please Sister, please sister, I am sorry sister, I didn't mean it sister, I won't do it again sister," But I would see her gaining on me and just have to accept that she was going to thrash me anyhow.*

*She often said cruel things to me like "you disgusting despicable child", "liar", "your parents put you in here because they could not manage you, you evil child"*

*She'd thrash and thrash looking coldly into your eyes, I could see the hate in her face. Her face would go red the white mantle around her face would get tighter and her face would puff up. I would see how determined and mean and cruel she could be.*

*Sometimes I would hold my breath and refuse to let her hurt me, she'd belt harder until I cried and then would say "stop it, stop that crying, now", so I would hold my breath again and stop. It even crossed my mind one day that I would love to grab the feather duster off of her and belt her back and see how she liked it, but belting a nun would be unforgivable by God.*

*We all dreaded Sister Patricia calling us, the ache in my chest and my pulse would start racing as soon as she called out my name to command me to go to her. She would say "stand to attention miss, you bold bold brazen hussy you!" Then she would say "look me in the eyes you despicable, indolent child" as she thrashed and thrashed me. Sometimes I would pull my hand away or move my legs as I heard the whipping of the air as the cane feather duster cut through it and came down or across towards me, depending on which part of me she was trying to hit. If she was going to hit me on the bottom or tops of the legs, sometimes I'd automatically put my hand there and she got that instead, that often hurt even more and I had two sore places on my body. When I did something to protect myself from the pain she would belt me even harder and harder. So it was hardly worth moving or trying to pull away. On cold mornings it used to really sting, then you'd go numb and later in the day the red marks and bruises would start to show. Nobody ever asked about the bruises, it was as if they didn't see them, not even Mother Superior. After a while I didn't even notice them on me or on other girls who frequently got the same treatment. It was easier to be blind to the pain, and try to be happy. I started to ask God to help make me happy, soon.*

*(excerpt from an unpublished book I am writing on my experiences, Denise Brooks, 2003)*

The lack of acknowledgement (even to the point of not celebrating or even acknowledging my birthday), the times I was sick, had minor health problems eg; chilblains that used to stick to my socks which used to get infected and cause me much distress every evening when I had to take off my socks, nobody noticed nobody cared (I still have the scars from those sores), when I was in grief and hurting and afraid. Inadequate love and care was provided to me at those times.

There are so many incidents that I could continue to recall that that resulted from physical, psychological, spiritual and emotional abuse in every day of my life in the orphanage.

### Experienced and saw abuse

- Beaten until I cried then beaten until I stopped for trivial matters
- Publicly humiliated on many occasions for bed wetting eg: standing on gold line with wet sheet draped over my head
- Made to stand in middle of the dormitory dressed up in nappy and pilchers and the girls were encouraged to stand and laugh at me and call me 'wet bed'.
- Made to wash my wet sheets in freezing cold water under the stairs in the tubs on St Mary's side. I remember being quite small and finding it a struggle to reach the tap and sheets in the tub. Trying to squeeze the water out of the heavy cotton sheets to carry them to the lines out the back was a physical struggle also. I used to cry for my parents when I was doing this task it felt too hard, nobody ever comforted me.
- Told in a very uncaring manner about my mother being burnt to death in a house fire at the age of 9 years.
- Not treated for minor health problems eg: infected chilblains and sores, postoperative care after an appendix operation, conducted at the Adelaide Children's Hospital.
- Not provided emotional support when distressed.
- Continuously threatened that god would punish me for being naughty
- Sister Patricia would stand on the balcony clap her hands call our name in a publicly humiliating way, and demand that we run to her. If we took too long she would beat us harder. She would make us stand to attention in front of her and look her straight in the eyes if we looked away she beat us and accused us of being deceitful.
- Birthdays never acknowledged or celebrated
- Encouraged to do in other children for wrong doing and watch them be beaten with the wooden Brush, the rubber sword or the feather duster or any other instrument she could get her hands on when she was angry.
- Sister Patricia would go into a sadistic rage where should beat deliberately with every intention of causing pain and psychological submission.
- She would make us go and get the instrument rubber sword, wooden brush, ruler, cane handle to the feather duster, that she was going to beat us with or sometimes go and get it for someone else.
- Made us kneel outside of her cell door or in the cloakroom for long hours into the night for what she declared were wrong doings.
- Sister Patricia would get us to rub her head and her feet when she was tired and stressed, we compliantly complied with her requests and demands to try and win over her approval and compassion, this approval was short lived.
- The way food was portioned out and controlled left one feeling undeserving and greedy. Frequently felt hungry and called black eyes in a nasty way when I lined up for porridge or rice.
- Other children had nasty and sometimes racial comments made about them as they lined up for their food.



- Always given second-hand clothing and shoes, any new things given to us for presents were taken away from us or we sent home with our father on visiting Sunday if we had the chance.
- Mass treatment for headlice using "Mortien", which at the time I believe the active ingredient may have been DDT. We would cover our eyes with cotton wool and it would be poured over our heads. Sometimes it would get into our eyes.
- Visitor's days were traumatic for children who had no parents or for those not receiving visitors that day, no counsel or support provided to children who experienced abandonment every visitors Sunday. However sometimes attempts were made to provide activities or outings for children who were known not to have visitors.
- We were instructed by Sister Patricia not to make a scene if our visitors did arrive and to be brave and go away from others who did have visitors.
- The nuns put on their best faces on visitors days, smiling and appearing kind and nurturing.
- Every decision about our wellbeing was imposed upon us no choices given. The schedule and regime for conducting chores, meals and other day-to-day matters were overly strict and called for compliance and submission.
- Lack of life and sex education to prepare us for adolescence, so much so that that one time when I was billeted out on holidays I was told by the woman who cared for me about menstruation. When I went back into the orphanage and told one of the other girls about it because she was older and looked well developed, that girl dobbed me in to Sister Patricia. Sister Patricia thrashed me and told me that what I had told the girl about menstruation was not true.

So many de-powering processes and actions were in place for every corner of our life Physical, spiritual, emotional, 24 hours a day every day of the years I lived in the place.

- **Sister Patricia on St Mary's side was the main perpetrator**
- **Sister Bernadine at school**
- **Sister Margaret in the Kitchen**

**A Letter to Sister Patricia ( see Attachment 3 )**



**6. Sister Patricia and her Fury**

## LIFE AFTER GOODWOOD

After leaving the orphanage at the age of 12 years, my two sisters and myself were taken home by dad to a SA Housing Trust home at 5 Barunga Street, Osborne, Adelaide, South Australia .



7. Les Brooks Denise, Pamela And Carolyn, Easter 1964



8. Growing up Denise, Pamela And Carolyn 1966

Its almost embarrassing to continue to tell the story because for both my sisters and myself life has been like a comedy of errors, going from one confusing dysfunctional situation to another. We each have our stories to tell from a different perspective, each experienced forms of abuse and pain; each of us somehow coped, pushed the pain away and switched into survival mode.

My father had an Aunt and Uncle (Aunty Joyce and Uncle Benny) come live with us to care for us. An incident happened where the Uncle Benny had sexually molested my middle sister Pamela and then they left the house leaving us to fend for ourselves.

In the meantime Dad tried to find another housekeeper and Oh Boy we had some shockers, because Dad claimed that he could not afford good quality Housekeepers.

I was driven to nervous breakdown looking after my Dad and two sisters, keeping the house tidy preparing, breakfasts and lunches. My academic grades started to suffer and my anger and stress became more evident at school. I received attention from several schoolteachers for my behaviour and outbursts of rage.

I lost my virginity with the boy that lived over the back of our house, I did not even know at the time what virginity was, on another occasion I was sexually molested by one of my fathers friends who lived around the corner and to this very day I have kept it a secret from my father. I was afraid of my father's outbursts of rage and severe beatings.

My sisters and I used to fight a lot about many things, including getting the housework done; there were many emotional and physical outbursts between us. I was 13 years of age and had learned to model Sister Patricia's and my father's behaviour and perpetrated physical abuse on my sisters when they wouldn't do what I requested. I was a nervous wreck, dad even took me to the local GP for treatment of nerves and I was given a nerve tonic.

One day when we were going to the beach we met the Castle family who lived around the corner from us, the girls Ellen, Norma, Wendy and Jolene. They were the children of a divorced woman who was in a De-facto relationship with Mr Kerr. Doreen their mother also came from a traumatised and dysfunctional background, which had also affected the children. Doreen was an alcoholic and a history of neglect and abandonment of her children and I remember Sister Patricia publicly humiliating them in study class about their mother "Living In Sin".

Anyhow Doreen sought out the sympathy of my father one time when Mr Kerr had hit her, eventually my father and Doreen had an affair and eventually he married her and Doreen and 7 of her 9 children lived with us in our very small 3 bedroom home in Barunga Street, Osborne. Until the Housing trust could find us a bigger home in Taperoo. This added more chaos and dysfunction to our family and I found myself also being bullied by the Castle children and Doreen and treated like the Cinderella of the and expected to do all of the household, cleaning washing and cooking after the lot of them. Doreen left my father 3 times and on the last time she left because my father had beaten her.

This family introduced me to some sexual awareness, without protection and boundaries. I experienced gang rapes and sexual assault from young men that I met through my Step Sister Joyleen at a local store that had a juke box, Joyleen was not raped only me.

These rapes in my early teen years have remained unreported to the police.

As I reflect on this situation, now I put this down to poor self esteem, lack of personal boundaries, my lack of awareness and poor sex education, extreme tolerance of abuse, , lack of protection and nurturing by a stream of people who have been responsible for my care. In fact this most recent information has just come out in the open in the past 6 months in therapy, it has remained hidden for all that time, because I believed that at some level that I had deserved being abused because I was there at the time and I wanted to protect the perpetrators, dobbing the boys in was very un Australian. Now I could not even remember many of their names and I am tired and I have had enough of taking political action. At some point I just want to move on with the rest of my life, I need a rest from pain and anguish.

When I was 16 I found myself pregnant, I ran away from home to go to the Sisters of St Josephs at Wattle St, Fullarton (a home for unwed Mothers). That is an experience in itself. I went there because institutionalisation was what was familiar to me and I was afraid and confused. We worked in laundry for long hours of the day, and also paid a major part of our Social Security benefits to the nuns for board and keep. I now suspect they made a lot of money out of us.

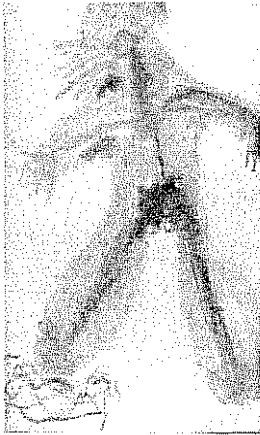
We were encouraged by the nuns to adopt our babies out. At the age of 17 I had a child out of wedlock, and I decided to keep my son because I wanted to know that he would have a better life than I did. I raised my son for nearly 3 years on my own. Eventually I married a man who was kind and supportive, but also had gambling and alcohol abuse problems.

I experienced sexual harassment in a job that held; somehow I seemed to be an easy target for abuse. I left my place of employment not following the complaint through out of shame and fear of longer- term reprisals. Losing many benefits to my employment.

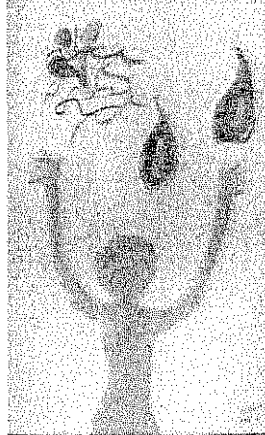
This was in 1981 when I first started seeking Therapy with Alan Jenkins who at the time worked at the Tea Tree Gully Community Health Centre.

Many times I felt like suiciding, and undertaking counselling has probably helped me to talk greater care of myself, develop deeper respect for myself, express my grief and disappointment at not fitting in and being normal like other people. Learning to nurture myself and eventually learn more about setting boundaries.

### **IT'S BEEN A VERY LONG ROAD TO RECOVERY.**



9. Speaking of Feelings



10. Reaching for Happiness



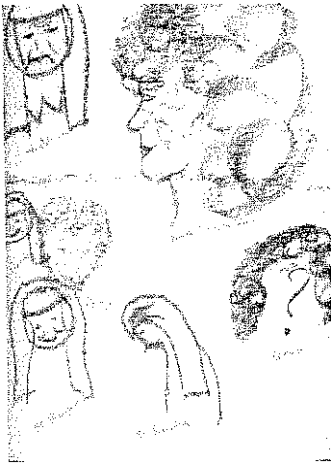
11. Frightened, Hurt, Angry, Alone

It has cost me many thousands of dollars and time in therapy, purchasing personal growth books and undertaking many workshops and courses. It has taken me many years to come to terms with my life in the orphanage and the powerful impact that Sister Patricia and the orphanage / catholic environment had on me (See attachment 3, unsend letter to Sister Patricia).

Id did therapy with

- Tea Tree Gully Community Health Centre, SA
- Hindmarsh Women's Community Health Centre, SA
- Impact Centre McPhee/ Andrewartha, SA
- Elizabeth Community Health Centre, SA
- Cope
- Carramar Clinic, SA
- John Brinnand, QLD
- Trudy Owens, QLD
- Marguerit Koenig, QLD
- Turnaraound Personal Development, QLD
- Others that I cannot remember

A considerable amount of my recent Therapy has been undertaken with Helen and Mark of Turnaround here in QLD (See attachments 4&5). It has been easier to do the more painful aspects of my therapy whilst living interstate, somehow being away from Adelaide and the environment where I grew up gave me the distance I needed to face up to the issues.



12 Many Confusing Influences on my Life 13. My Relationships



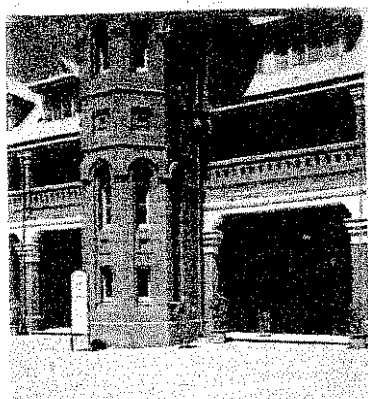
14. The Pain has been Excruciating

I have struggled with my betrayal and loyalty to the nuns and the respect that I am supposed to have for the Catholic Church and I find it amazing that there has been such devout blinkeredness by the Catholic administration to what is right what is fair and what is charity and kindness.

I was kept in institutional care at Goodwood for almost nine years of my childhood from the age of 3 years until I was 12 yrs old. With intermittent attempts by my parents to bring myself and my sisters back home in short bursts, only to find us put back into the orphanage.

Triggered from significant stress factors in my life including sibling rivalry, the grief and break-up of my marriage and a further De-facto relationship, I embarked on a personal growth journey to explore my past and the reasons for my constant anxiety, lack of social skills, rage, fears of abandonment, tolerance to alcoholism, violence and abuse, anger at bureaucracy, and even my choice of career.

Since 1996 I have used my holidays and personal budget to fly back to Adelaide from QLD almost annually to undertake more research on my past to find out more about the why's and wherefore's of my history and those of my family.



15. Visiting Goodwood Later & facing the memories 1986



16. Finding out about my mothers death through the coronial Enquiry  
The pictures of my past, including newspaper cuttings of my Mothers Death

I have called several meetings with the Sisters of Mercy to discuss with them the difficulties in overcoming the experiences and requesting support for myself and other women who grew up with me. I have made it a personal mission to open dialogue with the Leaders of the Mercy Congregation to increase their awareness and understanding the issues facing those who grew up at Goodwood Orphanage (see attachments 6,7,8,9). It has taken them a long to apologise or accept any responsibility at all for my emotional well being, and my argument to them has been that I have accepted responsibility to take control of my emotional wellbeing, however this has been at great personal and financial cost, and I felt it was time that they accepted and took responsibility for their part as I have taken on more than my fair share. In my most recent meeting we discussed the following; (See Copy of Attachments 10,11)

**RECLAIMING MY POWER AND SAYING GOODBYE TO THE POWERFUL  
INFLUENCES ON MY LIFE**



17. It took me all year to sculpt and make the nun and the angel and all of my life to reach this point (age 52) and about a minute to finally smash the mould of my conditioning  
I do not have to do what they tell me anymore, I refuse to be a victim anymore and I acknowledge my strengths to move forward. I deserve to be acknowledged for the effort I have made to heal and break the cycles for myself and others.

# See Letter to Sister Patricia (ATTACHMENT 3)



18. I am lucky to be alive to survive and tell the tale many others aren't



19. We need to acknowledge the dark and the light and recognise similarity



20. I am a grandmother of 5 children & we have to break the cycle for future generations



## SUMMARY

For many years I have felt ashamed and embarrassed about my upbringing, feeling that I caused it all to happen it was my fault, there was something wrong with me. Growing up within a catholic system as an orphan with parents from a working class background has created some unusual and personal cultural disparities, with my not fitting in one class or another. Never felt like I belonged anywhere.

I couldn't wait to change my name when I got married. Leaving Adelaide and going to Queensland after my divorce was my way of leaving my past behind and starting a fresh beginning with some anonymity and less shame. Triggered by emotional trauma at several stages in my life, again started me on a personal journey that eventually uncovered the skeletons in the closet, gave me clarity and insight into the dysfunctional patterns in my life.

When I look back it has sometimes been embarrassing facing the incidents in my life that seem like a comedy of errors going from one dysfunctional pattern to another. However moving away from Adelaide, South Australia provided me with the safety to face up to the issues and deal with them. I have taken many trips back to Adelaide to do my research and uncover my past, including my mothers history.

My mother had a history of Mental Illness, and suffered epilepsy and depression; she was treated at Parkside hospital, SA when she was pregnant with me. She was hooked on barbiturates and eventually she was burnt to death in Housing Trust House fire in South Australia when I was aged 9, and mum was aged 28 (See copy of Coronial Enquiry summation, 17 June 1960, Attachment). Dad is an alcoholic and is still alive, he has suffered from denial and lack of awareness of the full impact that putting his children in an orphanage has had on us. It has taken me a long time to move through my anger, resentment and sadness to reach a point of forgiveness. Where I have chosen to break the cycle of abuse and abandonment in my family and develop some clarity and connectivity.

I am now committed to ensuring that I see dad through his old age gracefully and in the last couple of years I have with the agreement of Dad moved him from Port Adelaide to Queensland. He now lives in the same town as me. Reaching this point of forgiveness and acceptance in my in my life has taken a lot of inner work and thousands of dollars spent on and many hours in therapy. I have spent many years searching for who I truly am, and researching my family history. This has been extremely important to putting the pieces together and helped me to understand from where I came and why I have behaved the way I have. I have kept journals and produced art work (Sandplay, Pastels, paintings and claywork) through the many years of therapy that depict the arduous journey to healing and I believe that my writing and art could assist both therapists, other orphans, even nuns in recovery who are seeking reconciliation and transformation.



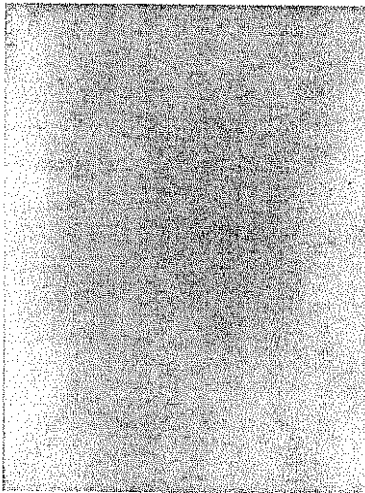
(See letter of support from Helen Wilson of Turnaround Personal Development, Attachment 4)

I am now aged 52 with over 60, 000 words of frank and honest writing in my personal journals to refer to and reflect on my journey.

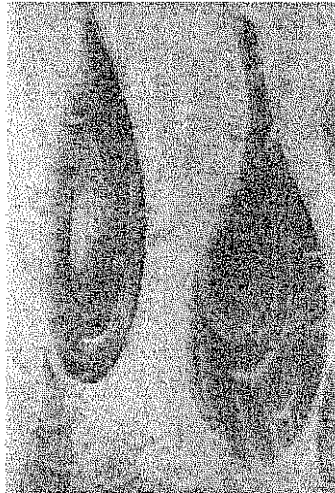
There has been considerable media attention on the mistreatment and abuse of children kept in institutional care of recent times. This issue is topical, but we need to get from the point of complaint to Healing. We can only do that with those who understand, who have been there and can demonstrate how we did it for ourselves.

We all need to move on to the next stage from complaint to healing.

Some people could say that I was lucky because I survived and am still alive, they are right, but that does not mean that others have made it in the same way. Some of us are given more responsibility and gifts and burdens to carry to pave the way for others.



21. We need too find forgiveness, acceptance and love to move on with our lives



22. Finding the Spirit of Angels to Protect us through our pain and tears

To enable the story to be told to give acknowledgement to the suffering and to provide information and tools to assist those people in recovery from trauma related to institutionalisation.

Yes, I feel it is important that the Catholic Church and the nuns involved acknowledge the hurt and pain that has been caused to the children who were raised in the Goodwood Orphanage and where possible seek out the accountability of those who were responsible for cruel and obviously abusive behaviour. I believe that Sister Patricia should be asked to answer for her actions and that where possible an explanation and compensation should be made to those who have been so deeply affected by those violent, hurtful and neglectful experiences.

## Contact With the Congregation of the Sisters Of Mercy

I have a meeting with Sister Francis Cody in 1996. Also with other congregational leaders of the Sisters of Mercy approximately every 2 years, I just wanted to know if they were moving on admitting and accepting the their predecessors had made some terrible mistakes.

During these meetings they never admitted anything, only listened to my story. I still said what I needed to say to them, but there was little response.

It was finally in September 2002 when the Sisters of Mercy offered between \$600 and \$800 for my therapy with Turnaround Development. Even then it took them nearly 3 months to reply and grant the approval to go ahead. They arranged to pay *Turnaround Development* directly as a service provider.

I regarded this token gesture by the Sisters of Mercy, as a very paltry amount, but I accepted it.

It was important to have some kind of recognition from them no matter how small it was. I used it as a statement of my desire to have them at least accept that they do owe us some reparation, rather than accepting nothing at all.

I have spent this much every year and more, since I was aged 23 seeking out therapies.

I have needed the therapy and personal to help me get through different stages of trauma. My past experiences and adapted coping skills added complications to my recovery.

I still need ongoing therapy about twice a year to keep me on track with my life, otherwise I easily slip into depression and self doubt again. I have accepted that it is necessary for me to manage this at my own personal cost for many years.

I would like to be financially reimbursed for the money I have spent undertaking therapy. This therapy has been necessary help me work through the issues that placed a lot of difficult obstacles in my life.

If I borrowed somebody's car and smashed it, they would expect me to pay the repair bill, the Sisters of Mercy borrowed we children and have proven to be deficient in providing adequate care of us. We have ended up with many broken children, some have not made it, others have had to be glued back together and nobody has taken full responsibility for the repair bill. Why should the innocent party pay the price whilst perpetrators get off without paying suitable remuneration? It is not fair that they hide behind their religious organizations, protected by their solicitors that we cannot afford. Know that they are safe because of the Statute of Limitations not being applicable to us.

Questions still remain in my mind about how many systems had let myself, and my family down. Where were they? Why did the checks and balances fail so miserably in their duty to protect innocent children?

## MY VISION

Perhaps, we can all reach a stage of enlightenment love and forgiveness to a point where we can move on with the rest of our lives with compassion insight and learning which will hopefully prevent this kind of child rearing and effects of institutionalisation and behaviour from ever happening again.

