



Senate Inquiry into “Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices.”

I , Margaret Hamilton am a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia
resident in Queensland

As a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia I have an inalienable right
to protection under the Australian Constitution and the Common Law of this
country

As an Australian citizen, the Commonwealth affords me protection from the
unlawful and harmful actions that threaten my right to life, liberty and justice
from those who would deny me these rights, within and without, the borders
of Australia.

I was born in Queensland in 1946. My name was Margaret (-----).

The life skills I learnt from birth was, love, security, trust and family.

This all changed in 1966.

The Government, Social Workers in Government Department for Child Safety,
The Church, Doctors and Medical Staff in Government Hospitals taught me a
new set of skills that I retain to this present day.

Hate; Anger; Mistrust; Unresolved Grief; Loss;

Long Term Suffering; and my faith in the Church has been permanently
destroyed.

This is my story.

I was a quiet and shy girl. I met my boyfriend through my work. We started
going out and fell in love. I was 18 years at the time and he was 23 years and
my first boyfriend. Sex happened twice, first time I did not know what was
happening and the second time I became pregnant.

There was no such thing as sex education in those days and my parents never
spoke of it. Even if you could go on the pill, you needed a parent's permission
for a prescription.

I became engaged and, my “shot gun” wedding was planned.

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One night, 3 weeks before our wedding, while out on a date with my fiancée, he excused himself and went and made a phone call. On his return, he said to me, "I have just rung your parents to come and get you, the wedding is off."

With that one phone call, I went from being a young girl in love and about to be married and have her own family, to a single, soon to be unwed mother.

From then, life as I knew it, finished.

Over the next weeks, I was expected to pull myself together and go back to work, which I did. I couldn't think what I had done wrong. I asked myself and (...) this many times but his only reply was he was not ready to become a father.

Time passed.

My parents had me institutionalised at St Mary's Home for Unmarried Mothers at Toowong, Brisbane, (a Church of England home,) where I was kept isolated from my family and friends. I thought I would just keep away from all the girls there, (thinking I was different.) To my surprise, the girls, about 40 of them were all nice; they were not what I had expected.

The home had a local doctor who looked after most of the mothers, Dr. (...) (...) from Ashgrove. He did in home pre-natal visits. Dr (...) seemed to be a nice man. He told me of my progress, but never during my confinement did he give any advice about what I should expect with the birth of my baby. He never asked me if I wanted to keep my baby. He never spoke of other options that were available to me.

It was preconceived that if you were in the unmarried mother's home your baby was for adoption.

During the time I spent there, January to May 1966, there were no Social Workers who called and no counselling made available. Because I was there, adoption was their solution.

I made friends with the girls, two of them especially, who forty four years later, we are still good friends.

I cannot look back at my confinement at the home as all bad.

During that time, my baby was just that, my baby. I loved being pregnant. I learnt not to look forward, just to love my child while I carried him. There were no other options other than adoption presented to me, so I thought that was the only option.

If you ever said that you wanted to keep your baby, you were told you were being selfish.

Here are some of the standard remarks I received;

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If you love your baby you will give him to a married couple who can provide for him and give him the security of a permanent home.

What can you do for your child; put him in a crèche from birth?

He will be known as a bastard because he does not have a father.

He will be treated differently from children who have a mother and a father.

There were many more, "gems of wisdom".

What could I do, I loved my child.

Adoption was a "supply and demand," solution for infertile couples and a financial solution for the Government.

On the night that I went to hospital, 11 30pm on (...) 1966 the girls all got out of bed to see me off, I was so scared of what was in front of me.

On reaching the hospital, The Royal Women's Hospital Brisbane, I was put on a trolley and left by myself in a green corridor. My pains were getting stronger and more painful. I heard another woman scream and thought that that must be the way you got some attention, so I screamed. A nurse came and told me to, "shut -up," she told me I was disturbing the other mothers.

I was so frightened, but, wasn't I a mother too?

I had no preparation for birth.

Injections were given to me and that is all the memory I have of the birth of my son.

I have very little recollection of my stay in hospital. I believe I was kept sedated to keep me in a state of calm till after I signed the consent form.

On the 5th day a Government Social Worker came and told me to sign the adoption form, which I remember I signed very calmly.

There was no parent with me, no guardian, I signed alone.

The Social Worker said, "One day you will have children of your own."

I was 19 years old, a minor, under the legal age by QLD law.

I was kept from my son and only after the consent form was signed, I was allowed to see my son. I went to the nursery and a nurse showed him to me through the window. I asked to hold him and she told me that I was too upset to hold him. I never got to touch or hold my baby. She told me to go back to my bed and that is what I did.

When I was released from hospital, I was in a state of shock. I had just had a baby but my arms and heart were empty. I did not want to go back to my family so I went back to the St Mary's. I could not stay there because I had had my baby and I do not think the matron wanted me to talk of my experience with the other girls.

I was then expected to, "put it behind me and get on with life."

I went back to living with my parents and my son was never mentioned again. I went back to the same job and my son was never mentioned again. I went on with life and my son was never mentioned again.

I found myself checking prams with babies to find him. To this day I know what my son looked like as a baby, I saw his blond hair, his long fingers and his beautiful face through the nursery window.

His image has never left me.

I moved out of my parents' home and went to live with one of the mothers from St Mary's Home. We spoke about our babies but told no one else.

We were told not to speak of our babies.

Without my son, I hated being alive but I was too much of a coward to take my own life so instead I took risks.

I crossed busy roads without looking, drove my car too fast and turned corners in the hope I would crash, but I lived. Or should I say I survived, it certainly could not be described as being alive. I was dead in all but body.

As time passed I began searching the faces of small children looking for my son but I couldn't find him.

The people had told me that this pain would go away and I could put it behind me.

They were wrong!

In the early 1970's I moved to Melbourne so I could have some resemblance of normality back in my life. I would not have to see all those familiar places that caused me such pain.

Life was better in Melbourne but still I could not forget my son, but now I was alone with no one to talk with.

The secrecy continued.

In 1973, I met my future husband. I told him that I had had a child. He stayed and we married.

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When I had my next child, our first child together, I remember thinking two things, no one will take this child from me and I am glad I had a daughter. It would have been too painful for me to have another son.

There was too much sadness to have a boy. Our second daughter was born and life became busy. We had two children to rear and we were also renovating our home.

This was the happiest I had been for such a long time.

As our girls grew my thoughts kept returning to my son. Where was he? Was he alive? Was he happy? Does he have good parents? I suffered with depression but I suffered alone and inwardly. "Put the past behind you," they had told me. How do I do that?

I did not want to burden my husband with my sorrow. He was a good man but he felt helpless that he could do nothing to fix the situation. This is now recognised as unresolved grief.

In 1990 we moved back to Brisbane. By this time my son was 24 years old and still I did not cope. I spoke to many telephone counsellors but that did not help. They did not know how to deal with my grief. The last counsellor I spoke with knew of a support group for mothers separated by adoption and gave me their number.

I went along to meetings and was made feel welcome.

Last year I received the results of a study by a student attached to PASQ, it showed that in the year that my son's adoption, the number of adoptions by the Queensland Governments were,

1965-1966; ex-nuptial 1,233.

1966-1967; ex-nuptial 1,231.

Total ex-nuptial adoptions for the period 1945-1980 were, 26,974.

This figure does not include private adoptions.

Were these figures taken on a financial year basis?

These records were taken from Annual Reports of the Director of State Children's Dept.

During the time with this group one of many questions kept coming up, why could I not remember my labour and birth of my son?" I can remember both my daughter's births quite clearly. I asked the mothers I knew from the home if they could remember their baby's births and they couldn't. We all had the same doctor and our babies were born within 2 months of each other. As I do not have my medical records for my son's birth, I asked (...)

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Executive Director of Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital this question. He told me that I was probably given drugs and that the pain and trauma of what happened to me has made me unable to remember or deal with my experience.

I also gained the knowledge that after my son was born; I WAS HIS LEGAL PARENT AND SHOULD HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE SAME HUMAN RIGHTS THAT WERE SHOWN TO MARRIED MOTHERS, FULL ACCESS TO MY BABY.

The law was broken by denying me full access to my child.

When speaking to other mothers I also discovered that the law gave me 30 days in which time I could revoke my consent.

That piece of information came 24 years too late. In 1991 the laws for adoption changed and I could then get my son's new name. The relief to know that he was alive was overwhelming.

For 24 years I had lived with the fear that he might be dead. Daniel Morecombe's parents have the sympathy of a nation because he is missing. My son was missing for 24 years and no one cared! The 30 days I should have had to reclaim my son was a farce; he was gone 12 days after his birth.

I made contact with my son myself. I did not trust anyone to do this for me, I wrote to him and a few months later we met for the first time.

I did not get back the baby I grieved for, I got back a man. Even though I knew this would be the case, to this day, the pain and loss and the fear for his safety that I felt for all those missing years has not diminished. I cannot bear to see photos of his childhood or his youth, it is too painful. All I know that the joys and the heartache of that time should have been mine.

My son was not told he was adopted and only found out by chance at age 23 years. He was devastated by the discovery. He chose not to tell his false parents that he knew, he let them live the lie.

Secrecy and very possessive false parents made it hard for him to connect with me. After all, the lie was, I was the one who "gave him away and didn't want him."

I do not blame those parents for raising my child, they were misinformed, and they were told they were getting, "unwanted babies." However, I am angry

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that those parents could not share all those years (from 24 years onwards) with me after they knew that I had made contact with my son.

My Uncle was also an adoptive father and he helped his daughter to find her true family. He knew how to share!

For the last 20 years I have worked very hard to form a bond with him. I do not believe there is such a thing as a "reunion." In this period of time, I have not been able to see him marry or see the birth of his two children because his false mother would not let me be there. She has not told anyone that he is not her natural son so the lies and secrecy keep him silent.

No one knows, so the lies continue.

Do you know how painful it is to be excluded from your child's wedding?

My two Grandchildren do not know that I am their Grandmother and know me only as "the nice lady who visits."

Do you know how painful it is to be a grandmother and not be acknowledged as a grandmother?

I am now 64 years old and I have no other grandchildren.

My son is not comfortable with what happened to us. It is so painful to him we are not able to talk about our separation. On his "Expected Child for Adoption" form it says, "Heavy physio to feed." I never knew. I was still in hospital as it was in the first 5 days so, why was I not told? I like to think that it was his way of objecting to being separated from me.

He is very angry that he was taken. He was bought up by his older false parents as an only child and is very bitter that he was robbed of his true family. His two half sisters are delighted to have a brother, and they share many common interests.

As for me, most of my brothers and sisters who do not know him as a family member, exclude him from their family functions.

This has alienated me from most of my siblings. As for my mother, there is distance between us.

Adoption is a life sentence; it permanently destroys so many lives.

A life sentence for murder is 25 years.

A sentence for adoption is; for the rest of my natural life!

How is this fair for the crime of being unmarried!

I will not accept guilt and shame.

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That belongs to those who should have put my care and best interests of my child first. And, the best interest of the child should have been to stay with his mother, ME!

The pain of losing my son will only stop for me, when I am dead. Even after my death, the lie will continue. My death certificate will not hold a true record of my life; it will not hold any record of my son.

This causes me overwhelming pain and anguish.

So much so, that at the age of sixty, I got a tattoo on my arm with my three children's initials tattooed into a flower. That is the only way I can have my three children recognised all being my children, the children of Margaret. The futures of my three children and two grandchildren will still be filled with lies and secrecy.

How can that be acceptable?

My human rights of being a Mother were stripped from me. It was a well oiled system with flawed policies and lies. The Government Social Workers who knew what other options there were, took advantage of vulnerable young mothers like me, by taking my consent without fully informing me of my legal human rights or informing me of other options available to me other than adoption.

Past adoption practices as well as being illegal were barbaric!

To explain further the life skills I have spoken of;

Hate; this is my feelings towards a Government who encouraged their unskilled Social Workers to pressure and brainwash unwed mothers, and for the Laws they deemed our babies, "Child of no one" to allow their adoption policies to run smoothly.

Anger; is what I feel. It helps me stay strong, and enable me to fight against a system that took my child.

Mistrust; for people with power positions who were left unsupervised to inflict their personal beliefs and opinions on unsuspecting mothers who, at a time when we needed help the most, were instead punished by abuse and indifference.

Loss of Faith in the Church; I lost my faith when the church had special homes for unmarried mothers where the biased and the uninformed got to feel superior and to take advantage of "fallen women" as we were deemed by the clergy. No signs of forgiveness there!

Grief; Is having a missing child and not being able to do anything to find him.

Loss; Overwhelming emptiness which is soul destroying.

Long Term Suffering; ADOPTION.

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I have included 4 attachments;

- (1) The Apology from RBWH acknowledging past treatment of unmarried mothers in their care.
- (2) A personal Apology from The Most Revd Dr Phillip Aspinall, Archbishop of Brisbane.
- (3) A transcript of a question I asked Prime Minister Julia Gillard and her answer from the Community Cabinet Meeting at Clontarf, December 2010.
- (4) A letter I wrote on behalf of my son. He cannot face contributing to this Inquiry, it would mean he would have to acknowledge the truth of his adoption and lies that keep him silent.

Margaret Hamilton.

(...)

(...)

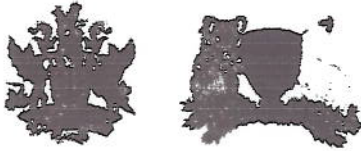
To be able to write my story has bought up so much pain and has given me many sleepless nights but our stories need to be told and you need to listen.

I would like this submission to be published on the internet.

Thank you for having a Senate Inquiry.

I have filled in many, many research studies over the last 20 years but nothing has ever come from them.

I have also read the transcripts from the NSW Inquiry into adoption practices and the recommendations. They were not followed through.



Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital
Metro North Health Service District



**Queensland
Government**

Queensland Health

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To Members of the Adoption Loss Adult Support Group

Dear Friends,

Thank you for meeting with senior members of Women's and Newborn Services at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital on 10 February 2009 and sharing your stories with us about the care you received at the Royal Women's Hospital some time ago. It was very moving and indeed saddening to hear how your experiences have adversely affected your lives, and many other lives that are near and dear to you.

From our frank discussions, we understand that each of you was denied the right to experience the natural relationship between mother and child to care for and to raise your children yourselves, but because of hospital practices were not permitted to do so.

In summary you have described to us how your much wanted babies were taken from you by the practices of the hospital operating at the time and that you feel you were coerced by hospital staff to sign over your babies for adoption.

In this regard we acknowledge the hurt and suffering you have described and sincerely apologise for any ill treatment experienced by you as single women during your pregnancy and confinement at the Royal Women's Hospital.

Yours sincerely ()

Professor Ian Jones
Obstetrician and
Executive Director
Women's and Newborn Services
Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital
19/05/09

Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital – we don't smoke here anymore

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Mrs Margaret Hamilton
(...)

Dear Mrs Hamilton

Thank you for your letter of 12 September 2009 regarding your experiences in St Mary's Home in Toowong.

I apologise for the delay in replying to your letter.

I was most concerned when I read of your distressing experiences in St Mary's in 1966 and the sad separation from your baby as he was taken for adoption. As you have so poignantly written, the effects of that separation are still with you and your son even after so many years. These effects may perhaps be only slightly lessened by your knowledge that he is alive and safe.

It is concerning now to be made aware of actions taken in the past which – while often taken with the best of current knowledge at the time - have now caused so much distress and hurt to those persons directly involved.

I sincerely apologise to you for the hurt and distress caused to you by past actions of the Church and those persons employed by the Church at St Mary's. On behalf of the Church, I would like to offer you pastoral support and counselling. If you consider this may be helpful, please contact Mr Rod McLary - Director of Professional Standards – on 3835 2266. Mr McLary will then make the necessary arrangements with you.

I trust that you may be able to commence your journey towards healing as you address the effects of the adoption of your son.

Yours faithfully

(...)

The Most Revd Dr Phillip Aspinall
Archbishop of Brisbane

23 September 2009

DECEMBER 2010

Julia Gillard: We'll go to the lady with the purple T-shirt and white jacket.

Question 6: My name is Margaret Hamilton. I'm from ALAS, Adoption Loss Adult Support. There are over 250,000 white mothers who lost their babies to forcible removal at birth by the same past illegal adoption practices as Aboriginal mothers. How do you feel personally? Should they receive an apology?

Julia Gillard: I think our society has been working its way through some really difficult questions. One of those questions was the stolen generations and apologising to Indigenous Australians. I'm really glad we did that and I think it made a big difference to people's sense of being respected by the rest of Australia. Now we need to do all of the other things to close the gap and to make sure Indigenous Australians have the same life expectancy as I do, the same life chances as people in this hall enjoy. The apology was important and the apology to forgotten Australians was important too. We have had a major inquiry to raise the issue of children who were forced migrants to this country, some of whom were treated appallingly in institutions, and we apologised for that. I see in the media and have heard sometimes face-to-face some of the stories of women who face very devastating circumstances, of having children taken or being put under intolerable pressure to relinquish their children in a different age and a different time.

As a human being, of course, you extend your sympathy to anybody who lived through that and through years of not knowing what happened to their child. So, I think it's something we can all say we're sorry that that ever happened in Australian history. I will call on Jenny Macklin to make some direct comments too.

Jenny Macklin: Thank you for your question. You may be aware that the Senate has recently decided to embark on an inquiry into this very, very important issue. What I would like to do is make sure that you're connected with the relevant people who are going to be part of that inquiry in the Senate. I'll get one of my staff to come down and make sure we take your details. As you would be aware, there has been a lot of debate about this issue and about the nature of the inquiry process that people have wanted. There have been varying different inquiries, some of which people like yourself haven't been very happy about at the state level. So, we're very conscious of that. We are also doing some separate work through the community services ministers. The Institute of Family Studies is doing some work on the dimension of the issue that you've raised, which we do understand has affected many, many individual women, but of course also their children and then their families. So, we're wanting to really understand how widespread it was through the Institute of Family Studies. But I can see one of my staff at the back, he'll come forward and just get your details and we'll feed that into the Senate inquiry process.

Question 6: Mothers are over 70 now, in their seventies and eighties. That will come too late for them. They just want an apology so that their children know they weren't given away.

Jenny Macklin: I appreciate that, having been heavily involved in the other two processes that the Prime Minister referred to. I was very involved with the apology to the stolen generations. And it was exactly the same point -- many, many very elderly people who have waited all of their lives for recognition of what happened to them and their children. But it is very important that we have this inquiry and I know that's what some people want, before we go down the path of a possible apology. So if you would give your details to Max, who is just behind you, we'll make sure you're put in contact with the right people.

“The Importance of being Paul.”

In 1966 when I was born my mother named me Paul.

Five days after I was born I was stolen from my mother by forced adoption practices in Queensland.

At 12 days old I was given to strangers by Social Workers employed by the Government.

These strangers gave me a new identity and a new name and called me, son.

The government Department, Births/ Deaths/and Marriages then compounded this false identity by issuing a Schedule Birth Certificate which was a legal document consisting of lies.

I then had to live with this false identity.

When I reached the legal age of 18 years, I wondered, “Where were the Social Workers who deemed this to be, in my best interest, where were they to check if this was indeed, “For the best interest of the child”.

No one came to inquire if I was ok, or if I had good adoptive parents.

No one asked me if I wanted or consented to being adopted!

I have lived this false life for over 40 years now.

By taking my identity from me, I have been deprived of;

My name, my true self.

The special bond that exists between a mother and child.

My mother’s love and caring from my birth onwards.

My siblings and my extended family.

The right to my birth name and to enjoy my heritage and for my genealogical continuity to remain untouched.

My children to continue with my heritage and to know who they truly are.

The best and honest interest of the child would have been to stay with his mother.

THIS WAS NOT ALRIGHT THEN AND IS NOT ALRIGHT NOW!

No one in my lifetime has ever asked me, "Was this ok for you?"

I have lived my life as a lie.

Paul's birth certificate states, Son of Margaret.

These two people can never officially celebrate Birthdays, Mother's day, Marriages, Birth of Grandchildren or even Deaths as Mother and Son.

These two people can only be joined on a piece of paper that is the first true Birth Certificate.

Even in death we will not be recognised as mother and son.

I am two people with two birth certificates with two names which both hold different information for parentage.

MARGARET AND PAUL OFFICIALLY CEASED TO BE

MOTHER AND SON FIVE DAYS AFTER MY BIRTH.

THE GOVERNMENT DEEMED ME, "CHILD OF NO ONE."

WHO CAN TELL ME HOW I CAN BE LEGALLY RECONNECTED TO MY TRUE SELF?