

Senate Inquiry 28 November 2018

My name is [REDACTED].

I was born on [REDACTED].

My birth was a difficult one. I was 2 weeks late and was stuck in the birth canal. They had to use forcips to pull me out.

It wasn't until I came out did they realise why it was difficult for me to come out. I had very little arms, one was actually in the middle of the front of my chest and the other one was in the middle of my back.

According to Mum, the Doctor's examined me for along time before she was able to see me. I think this impacted me from then on because I was constantly aware that I was stared at and noticed wherever I went.

The Doctor's stared at me because they didn't know what caused this. It wasn't until they found out that there was a boy, with the same arms as me but on the opposite sides, in Germany, that it was Thalidomide.

A few years later, Dr. McBride was the one who proved that it was in relation to the Thalidomide drug.

All I wanted, throughout my life, was to blend in and be seen as normal but that was not to be.

This should not have happened! Why did it happen? Why was it let into the country? Where was the Government when we needed you?

This took away my ability to be independent. I always had to have someone to help me. I could never go anywhere by myself like others could. This made me angry and frustrated.

There were those who where overly kind and wanting to do things for me, which I didn't mind sometimes. There those who just stared at me and made me feel very uncomfortable. I felt and still do, sometimes, feel like a second class citizen. Not equal or worth anything.

I hate being looked at. Growing up I was taught that I was normal, to a point, but I wasn't because when people saw me, they saw me as different. I was only physically different not mentally!

The ups and downs I went through, though, were emotionally draining and exhausting.

My Mum was amazing, she did everything she could to help me. My Dad, brother and sister were good too.

Mum became my help. She was told to leave me to work things

out for myself, which she did. Only helping when needed or asked.

There were things Mum had to do for me. In the colder months, when I wanted to wear warm pants, she had to help me with pulling my long pants down when I needed to go to the toilet and up when I had finished.

These were clothes Mum had made for me, from her own hand. She had to learn to cut long sleeves short for me and hem them. Even had to make my underwear so I could manage them myself, but I could only do that if I wore dresses or skirts.

I had to be able to go to the toilet by myself before I could attend my local public school. I had to be able to feed myself at school because there were no Teachers Aides to help me.

Whilst I could manage most things by myself, while young. I still needed help from Mum to dress, shower, sometimes toileting and eating.

When at school we had a few over night excursions I had to rely on a few good friends to help me. I treasure them for doing that to this day.

Whilst I wasn't exactly bullied at school. There always those who laughed at me because of the way I had to do things, different to others, that hurt me.

The emotional scaring I went through was very tough. I had friends around who would be there for me but sometimes would turn away too.

I was often angry at people because they could do things better than me. They got rewards on their efforts whereas I felt I only got them through pity.

I often felt alone and isolated. No one understood what I was going through.

Whilst we did have a group of parents of Thalidomide kids around meeting and supporting each other. We were still each individuals, not knowing how to help each other because we all had different needs and were going to different schools.

I am very disappointed this happened to me. I would not wish this on anyone,  
not even my worst enemy.

I thank God for my faith in Him, that He chose me, because I may not have  
been here today. At one time, I wanted to kill myself because I saw no future  
for me.

God gave me hope and a future!

I have now been married 30 years to my wonderful husband who wanted to  
marry me. We have 2 handsome boys.

I want you, the Australian Government, to recognise what has happened to us  
and support us in whatever we need in our future needs.

My body is starting to wear down and it is getting harder and harder for me to  
do things I use to do before.

My legs and knees are beginning to really bother me, they are vital in helping  
clean my face, do the washing, cooking and some cleaning.

My teeth are wearing down because I have to use them, turning the key  
to open my front door. I have no strength in my arms to do this.

The Governments support would make a big difference to my life to be able  
to get the help and equipment I need for use in my own home.