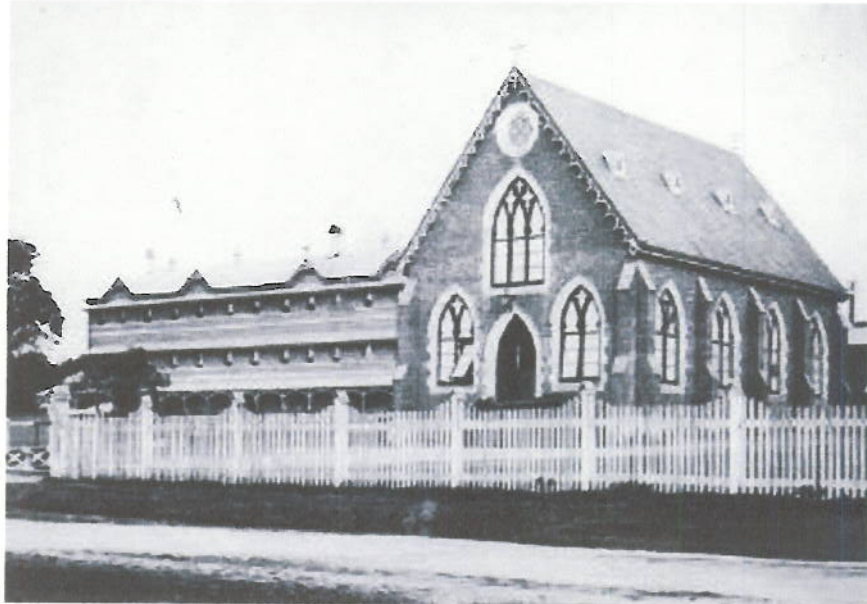


**Senate Inquiry into  
"Commonwealth contribution to former forced  
adoption policies and practices."**

**Origins SPSA Inc  
Slavery and Child Exploitation**



**MAGDALENE LAUNDRY**

**HOLY CROSS WOOLLOOWIN QUEENSLAND  
Operated by The Sisters of Mercy**

**Origins would like to present this submission on behalf of state wards and mothers who were minors who were used as slave labour and who have lost children to unlawful adoption in Institutions throughout this country**

Australia along with several other countries ratified the International Convention on Slavery in Geneva on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1926 and yet it allowed State governments to incarcerate young mothers into State and religious institutions where they were forced to work without pay.

State run hospitals and institutions "farmed" out these young women as "cheap labour" to members of the medical profession

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Young mothers were placed into places such as infamous Magdalene Asylums throughout Australia, Holy Cross Industrial School for Girls is an example. The average age of girls in this institution ranged from 14-16.

Girls were placed into this institution by the Children's Court, parents etc and were being forced to work without payment, a breach of the **Queensland Children's Services Act 1965 sec 110. 111**

In 2004 a mother applied for the wages due to her for 9 months of forced labor and incarceration from the Queensland Department of Child Safety and received a letter stating there was no provision for wages from girls under "care and control"

Young pregnant mothers put into these places and were forced to perform hard dangerous work, not only in the commercial laundries but also in the home buildings, for a periods of up to seven months, without rest and up to the very day they went into hospital to give birth.

In places such as Holy Cross they were forced to stand all day folding sheets that were ironed by the steam press or untangling wet sheets for folding before being fed into the giant press, bending over wire trolleys pulling and tugging up until the ninth month gestation of pregnancy.

Forced to work in the laundry, and refusal to do so resulted in girls being kept in solitary confinement, whipped with feather dusters or being sent to Karalla House a maximum security reform home and subject of Forde Inquiry confidential investigation

The 'reward' for working in the laundry was 30 cents worth of sweets on a Friday any misbehavior by the girls saw this privilege removed

## **ENTITLEMENTS .....WAGES AND BENEFITS**

Queensland Children's Services Act 1965 sec 110. 111 Under this section of the Act mothers were entitled to award wages for a person depending on age.

State aid 1965 Children's Services Act, plus other benefits i.e. school books, see Qld Directors Report to Qld Parliament 1967

Commonwealth Special Benefit available after 1945 to persons who did not fit any other benefit. And benefits including child allowance etc. also maintenance from the child's father from as far back as the Infant Child Protection Act 1905



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As the guardian of mothers placed in these institutions it was the duty of the State and the Commonwealth not only to look after its wards properly but to also protect vulnerable Australians from slavery, danger, physical and emotional violence, it was also its duty and responsibility to ensure that mothers had full information on what was going to happen them.

Not only in respect of wages but also financial benefits to enable them to provide for their baby, and also the treatment they was to receive in the hospital and information on the care and protection of their baby.

Origins would add here and ask that this Inquiry should also include the issues of "stolen wages" for the young and vulnerable mothers exploited for their labor and for the commercial gain of religious institutions and State authorities etc



**Aboriginal girls Holy Cross October 1967. All were forced to work in the laundry.**

Picture on the left is "Chris" aged 14

Picture on the Right from the left girls name forgotten about 14, "Chris' Sister Theophane "Mary Chris's sister aged 15 and "Veronica" aged 15

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Left photo "Dot" aged 15 > Right "Venita" about 15-16 and Dot notice fences in background