



Therese Margaret Pearson

**My Submission to the Inquiry into the Commonwealth
contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices.**

Department of the Senate

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I Therese Margaret Pearson was born on the (...) September 1944 to (...)
 (...)

My mother was Irish and my father was Australian. My father was a Waterside Worker whilst my mother worked from home as a seamstress and while ever she had a sewing machine managed to find work. My older brother (...) was born on the (...) of June 1941 at ST Margaret's Hospital and was my mother's pride and joy. He was a beautiful baby and was much loved and cared for by the family.

The family unit was a happy one and generally confined its activities to the family rather than with the outside world.

(...) was not a sick baby however he was a very small child. He had lots of love from his Grandmother and Grandfather (...), as well as being greatly loved by our Grandparents on our father's side.

My mother was not blessed with good health and spent quite a bit of time in hospital. However during those periods when her health was good she devoted considerable love and time to her son. (...) was a good baby and gave very little trouble. He used to spend a great deal of time with older cousins (male of course) as we all lived in the same street. Our house was located at (...)
 Watsons Bay. We all loved the beach and spent considerable amount of time there. (...) spent a lot of time with his grandfather (...), who worked two jobs to keep his family. He had been a Jockey back in Dublin, one of those jobs was riding track work, he was considered to be a very good Jockey. When he came to Australia he met my grandmother, a very beautiful lady, they were married at the Watsons Bay Catholic High School.

Four children resulted from the marriage, three boys and one girl, my mother of course being the girl.

My uncle (...), who was a wardrobe drinker, was first born, a very tall man with beautiful wavy hair and of quite handsome appearance. However it seemed to me

that he was not a very happy man but because I loved him very much I never said anything to him about my thought on the matter. Uncle (...) was the next born, my memories are of a handsome man with rosy cheeks and who was always smiling. My grandfather was very proud of his boys. Apart from his horse training job my grandfather also ran a bakery and he would often take the boys along on the bread cart as he did his rounds. He worked very hard to look after his family and as a result the family formed a very tight bond.

My mother was the next born and following her birth my grandmother was struck down with Polio, for a while she was convinced that she was going to die. However she eventually returned to good health. She subsequently had one more Son, Uncle (...) who was to become my Godfather. I was very close to Uncle (...) and Auntie (...)

I was born three years after my brother (...). Mum had me on the (...) September 1944 at St Margarets Hospital Darlington. Like my brother I was a very small baby as well and for a time very healthy. However, when I was 15 months old my godmother Auntie (...) and Uncle (...) found that I could not use my right arm as well as the left after one day, when completely out of the blue I fell off my dad's knee. Unfortunately, like my grandmother, I too was struck down with Polio. Auntie (...) was very upset because I was born a completely healthy baby girl.

I was very close to my dad, in fact, it would be true to say that I was dad's girl. My father loved me very much and used to sing to me from the moment I was born and he was always there for me when I needed him. My dad was always singing and as I grew up I took after him in many ways. My home life was very happy and as a result of influences from my dad I took to music. However, he had many other influences on my life and we spent a great deal of time together. Because I had Cerebral Palsy, which is a form of Polio my dad wanted to always be in my life and he had the conviction that I should never have to leave home and go to work.

My mother gave birth to my young brother (...) in 1946. (...) was also born at St Margarets Hospital in Darlington, (...) was mums final child. Despite the fact

that mum was very sick we were a very happy family and I remember my mum and dad being very much in love.

We lived in a duplex house at Watsons Bay and all the children attended school at Our Lady Star of the Sea at Watsons Bay. This school was the first school I went to, my brother (...) attended the same school. We all had a wonderful life. However when mum got too sick to look after me I was sent to boarding school. After my brother (...) was born, my mother became very ill and was in and out of hospital all the time. She never regained full health for the rest of her life. She developed Leukemia, from that point onwards the rest of the family members lives were turned upside down.

My dad now had the responsibility of bringing up three children and with mum spending so much time in hospital my godmother, godfather, uncle and aunty helped in looking after all of us. I was still dad's girl, but because he had to work long hours to keep us all, as well as caring for my mother I no longer had my dad as a constant companion.

CHAPTER 2

MY MOTHERS DEATH

Before mum passed away, dad got himself involved with another women, which had a great effect on my life. I found that we never seemed to have time to spend together any more. Aunties and uncles took over my upbringing to the point where my dad and I grew apart from each other to the extent that he could not relate to me anymore. I did not see a great deal of my dad from that point on in my life dad although he used to come visit me at boarding school from time to time, we never re-established the closeness that once existed between us.

My mother passed away in Lewisham Hospital on the (...) March 1954. My cousin (...) was a nun at the hospital and (...) another of my cousins was working at St Vincents Hospital Darlington as a doctor.

Both he and (...) were at my mothers side when she died, my father did not take my mothers death very well at all.

I was 9 years old at the time, (...) was fourteen and (...) was 6. I found I had to grow up all of a sudden. I was taken back to the house at Watsons Bay by my Aunty (...) and Uncle (...). Aunty (...) my godmother took over the task of raising all of us.

I attended school at Our Lady Star of the Sea till I was 14 years old, then I went to my Aunty (...) for 12 months, then I went to boarding school at Mater Dei, Narellon.

Dad tried to keep all of us together and he employed a maid to look after us while he went to work and for a time we started to get our lives back together.

However dad was not always there for me anymore and because I was a girl I needed Special Care.

CHAPTER 3

Growing up without my brothers, boarding school and having a baby

Growing up without my brothers was not very good, even though we saw each other some times. Boarding school was not somewhere I wanted to be, my brothers went to another boarding school near Camden. I went to Mater Dei in Narellan. My uncle (...) and aunty (...) had twelve children when they took us on after mum died. After my mother died everything changed. Life at boarding school was not good, as I was very lonely and missed my dad a great deal as well as my brothers. I was 14 years old by then and I needed the help of the nuns so I would grow up a (Lady). I was in boarding school from about 1959 to 1962. It was about 4 years that my aunty (...) uncle (...) helped pay my school money. My father went to work, he was working two jobs to keep us in Catholic schools, it was my mothers wish when she died that we all went to the Catholic school.

Life at school was not good. (...) was the first person to come and see me at school. (...) and (...) went to the Christian Brothers, they used to bring my brothers over to see me once a month. My father came to see me sometimes but he did not come that much and I did not have very many letters or parcels from him in the mail. Aunty (...) wrote to me all the time which was good, otherwise I don't think I would have got any mail at all.

At boarding school we had to work before school and after school we were able to have one phone call home once a month. My dad was never home when I rang, he was always with his new girlfriend when he was not working, I did not take to my fathers female friends nor did my mothers family as my father was out more times with women than the family wanted him to be.

Yes, my father worked but he found a playmate in the female he went with and they were not the kind of women I thought my father would date. I needed my dad. I had good role models in aunty (...) and uncle (...) but I wanted my dad

around me, I did know my school work got good marks, school only went to third year in those days.

(...) left school first he hated school like me, my grandfather (...) took (...) under his wing and (...) became a jockey. (...) did not want to stay at school when (...) left so dad took him out of school and aunty (...) took him for a while. We were moved around all the time not knowing where we were going to live next. I was lucky, aunty (...) and uncle (...) took me as I was aunty (...) godchild and they kept in touch with my brothers. After (...) left school he went to work at Whickfarm which was close to aunty (...) and uncle (...) and my boarding school. (...) hated writing letters but he used to show up at school to see me. The nuns were good, a special nun I liked was Sister (...) she had a way with girls and she was very good to all the girls who did not have a mother like me. I still loved my music I had a nun at school who could not read music, but she could play the piano by ear. The music just came to her. I was in a singing group at school, I sang like an angel. I also sang at the conservatorium in Sydney. Sister (...) was like a mum to me when I was at school, she would not take any trouble from my father when she told him to come and see me as he had not seen me for sometime, she did not take No for an answer. She would make shore he showed up to see me for a visit.

I left school in 1962. We got a two car train called (Dirty Annie) to Central Railway Station and dad and my stepmother picked me up from there. I wanted to live with my father and brothers. When I left school I had to find a job, I went job hunting. When I left school I found it hard to live with my father and brothers. After 4 years being in boarding school I did not know my father very well as he did not know me. I found my fathers rules were over the top as he did not know me after all this time. I joined a penfriend group, it was in a Pix paper, it said write to Army, Navy and Airforce boys, which I did. My father did not want me to work, so I fought against him and won, I got a job on my second try and went to work for St Vincent De Paul at Petersham in Sydney in a lolly factory. I worked there for quite some time, I did go for a job interview with the Army but because of my arm I didn't get the job. I worked at the lolly factory for 5 and a half years.

MY BABY

I met (...) through the Pix paper, it said write to lonely men. Army, (...) took my fancy, (...) was my first boyfriend.

I used to jump out the window to go on dates with (...) he was at Randwick Army Camp for quite sometime. I still had a good sister and brother closeness with my big brother (...). I never told my father anything, as he wanted to rule my life. (...) and I went out for 10 months, we had a good time and we were very close. I had not had sex with any male, I just left boarding school and I did not want to have any sex with a man unless he was serious with me.

(...) was 19 years old by then and I was 19 also. I had never had a boyfriend, I wanted to go home and live with my father as I wanted my fathers love and respect.

Under the board walk was on the Hit Parade at the time, sung by Mick Jagger. I loved the song and so did (...), we did not go to the pictures or coffee shops we were more for just talking. (...) forged his fathers name on the papers so he could leave home as he wanted to go into the army.

It was sex, drugs and rock in roll in the sixties.

I had sex with (...) at the boardwalk near Waverley Bus Dept the night he went overseas, I had never had sex before and I did not like it very much. As (...) had been called up to go away that night, he could not take me home like he used to. (...) rang my brother (...) and asked him to come and pick me up. When (...) got to Waverley he saw me sitting near (...) looked up, saw my brother and told (...) he was going overseas for 4 years to Malaysia, and asked him to look after me. (...) picked me up, put a blanket around me, he picked me up in his arms. (...) took me to his girlfriends place. (...) was wonderful to me, very kind and understanding. I was very upset about (...) having to leave. We said goodbye that night.

I did not want to have a baby, but Catholic girls were not aloud to take the pill, you had to go to a non Catholic doctor if you wanted the pill, but I did not think I would have a baby. I wrote (...) two letters, one in case I had his baby, the other to ask him to keep in touch. The Army kept all the letters from the Army boys, so (...) did not get any letters from me after he went overseas.

Six weeks after (...) left for overseas I found out I was having his baby.

By this time (...) had left home once again and living with (...) , so I was supposed to do the right thing by (...) , my other brother and be the big sister. My father was not home much and when he was he did not care, but I rang my brother (...) , who was in the ACT for the weekend as he was racing that weekend. I rang him before he went on the track, told him I was having (...) 's baby. I was 6 months pregnant with my baby when I told my father.

WARTARA

MY NIGHTMARE BEGAN

My father went to my to my Aunty and Uncle (...) who's daughters were my cousins that were at Wartara.

I was placed in the Mercy Family Centre three months before my son was born. We were treated without respect I was not aloud to speak to anyone about the ordeal. My father came to see me in the Unmarried Mothers Home and I was told I had shamed my family. I was engaged to (...) we went out for over 10 months, it was not a one night stand like the nuns made it out to be. It was not the sign of the times when we were raped. We were all made to think we had done something wrong, as I told my father if my mother was alive she would have been ashamed of him for treating his daughter the way he did.

The doctor who came to Wartara to examine us to see when our babies were due took it to upon himself and raped me six weeks before my baby was born.

My baby was born on the (...) March 1964, at the Mater Hospital North Sydney at 11.30am. I did not want to adopt my child out, I wanted to keep him. My other

cousin was a nurse at the Mater Hospital at the time, she was in the labor ward with me, and when I asked her what sex my child was she said I am not allowed to tell you but it was a boy.

After my son was born, I had to go back to Wartara till I found somewhere else to live. Meanwhile, we had to clean floors and clean up after the nuns. Also, Wartara being a home for adopted and fostered children I had to feed, dress, change and bath other babies, which was heart- wrenching since my own baby was taken from me.

I put my name down to find my son when we were able to do so.

I have 1 daughter and 2 sons from the man I married in 1966.

My father died in 2000. He had not forgiven himself for taking my son from me all those years ago. He was a very bitter man towards me he never forgave me for having a baby out of wedlock in those days.

If anyone told me it was the sign of the time, it was not. What DOC Hospital and everyone who did do this to us should be ashamed of what you did.

Money changed hands between my father and the people who adopted my son. It was the old money in those days, as the currency changed in 1966, so for all the hospitals and unmarried mothers homes, for all the people, you do not know what you have done and the heartache you have caused, the (cancer) some of us girls got over the years. You think you have done the right thing by us all! You did not.

My father never forgave himself for the way he treated me all those years ago. When the law changed and we could get our records and birth papers, my father rang me and told me it should not have happened. My father has always felt guilty for taking he's grandson off me. (...), my son found me in 1996. He asked me strait out if I wanted to give him away. I informed him I did not, and told him what went on. He lives in the ACT now. He had a very hard life with his adoption parents. I was kept in hospital for 5 weeks after I had (...), the name I did not call him. I called my son (...)

(...) 's name was on the birth records, I know there wasn't any whiteout in those days 1964. So how did they get (...) name off the birth records? I want to know. I have not got all my records from Wartara where I went. I also went back to the hospital. Before I left the hospital they made me sign the papers for adoption, I was given drugs to force me to sign the papers. I was not aloud to leave the hospital until I did. So you are still doing this kind of thing today.

Before I left Wartara I was told I would be back to give another baby up for adoption, I was not.

I was married less than two years after I had my son taken from me.

I met another Army man who also became a childhood sweetheart, by that time I went to a non-catholic doctor to get the pill. We both went back to get (...) whom the adoption mother and father had named. What (...) has been through in his life and what you the judge, who signed the adoption paper has done, it's about time it came out in the open.

Because I had my baby stolen from me my working has been involved in Welfare. What DOC had done then, they are still doing today. My son did not have it very good at all. He is very much like me.

My father, we never got close to after my mother died. He killed himself in 2000, he felt guilty for the rest of his life for taking my son from me. He died a very painful death.

So you have a lot to answer for, we feel that all of the people who have done this to us should be ashamed of themselves and set the records strait for all of us. I am doing this for all that we have been through.

My father killed himself by starving himself to death. I loved my father very much even though he did not think so he could have had a very different closeness with me, if only he would have let me stand on my own two feet, I could have married the father of my child with whom I met up with in 1996. He came all the way to Newcastle to see me in 1996 after I met (...). I met (...) on the Coffs Harbour

Railway Station in 1996. I spent the weekend with him and found my son and myself to have a lot in common.

I have still got to get my hospital records from the North Shore hospital. We should not have to pay for any of our records at all. So it's about time you did the right thing DOC and all you people who have stolen our lives and put our children to other people just because we were unmarried.

Therese M Pearson
(...)

(...)