

Dear Senators,

As I understand it from the ABC A.M. program recently, the Forced Adoption Enquiry is examining the cases of mothers in the middle of the last century who gave up the babies for “forced” adoption, the effect on them and the children who were given up for adoption.

I nowhere see a reference to the children of unwed mothers who (for whatever reason) kept their illegitimate offspring, especially those in small country towns.

In case this matter has not been considered at any time, this is just a document to bring the matter to general awareness and perhaps to consideration.

My mother in 1940 kept me.

I was raised on a property near a small country town and had a very difficult childhood (and adult hood).

In a small country town everyone knows everyone else’s business and so I spent a life of social deprivation, scorn, what is now known as “bullying” and so on ... all in all, a very difficult time.

Mothers would tell their children not to play with me (“that little bastard”), and even the teachers had an antipathy to me .

Therefore I had no peer group to grow and play and socialize with right through my school years. The effects have followed me through my adult life.

Also, being brought up on a country property I spent all my weekends alone, as well as having to walk 10 k’s to and from school in all weathers (from Kindergarten onwards), and so on.

On the property I had to work before I went to school and also when I came home, at week ends and in school holidays, and never went on a holiday, ever.

I wasn’t allowed to participate in sporting teams, with the exception that I represented the school at Combined High Schools, when, even though I was in 6th class (Primary School) I represented the High school in Sydney as I was the fastest runner in the school.

In High school (and to some extent in Primary school) I was constantly in fights because “packs” of boys would “pick” on me, call me names like “bastard” etc but I wouldn’t back down.

I would usually get the cane even though it wasn’t me who initiated the fight.

It was also so very embarrassing when I had to fill out forms at school asking “father’s name” etc. that I eventually learned to put in a make believe father’s name.

Even now, although I am 71 years of age, if I have to provide a Birth Certificate, I try to supply an “extract”, because a Birth Certificate says “father unknown”.

As perhaps a little humour is needed, I was involved in a fight in the school weather shed where I made my attacker’s nose bleed.

The student body was called to the front of the school to assembly where we were to be reviewed by (I think) Sir William McKell who had been a previous Governor-General and was visiting.

Anyway, I was in the front rank, and I had the other boy’s blood on the front of my shirt, and as Sir William came up to me he stopped and said “Been in a fight lad ?”

I really thought I might be going to gaol or something, but I replied “Yes Sir”.

He said “Did you win ?”

I said “Yes Sir”

And he said “Good lad” and moved on. I was very grateful to him.

I was so unhappy in my childhood that the day after I left school I left “home” in the Hunter Valley and went to Sydney, where I was alone as I knew no one and had no family. I also was very naïve and didn’t really know how the world worked

I had no one to seek advice from and was on a steep learning curve, and made many,many mistakes in how to go about things..

I lived in Hyde Park and Central Station for 3 months until I got a job, and so on and on and on I have never been back to where I was brought up except to go to the funeral of my grandmother, a wonderful person whom I didn’t really appreciate how wonderful she was when I was younger.

The above are just some issues to briefly show that illegitimate children who were kept by their mothers also had problems, including being socially deprived.

It appears that now everyone seems to be getting apologies for every “struggle” they had years ago.

The forgotten children seem to have been omitted from apologies..

I personally think that “those were the times” and that was just how society was, not that I think it was “good”.

I realize that my experiences may be trivial compared with others, but I often wonder what I could have achieved in life given different circumstances.

These matters have NEVER been aired by me before and only my close family has been aware of the circumstances of my childhood and its effect on me.

I would appreciate a reply to this letter, even if it is only to acknowledge you have received it.

I have given no specific details at this time as it may not be within the ambit of your Senate enquiries.

Yours,