

Sharon Thornton  
(...)



Re Senate Inquiry into

“Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices

Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee

I would like to present a submission to the above Inquiry I would like to state that the consent to the adoption of my 2 children was given without information of my legal rights

- I was/ not given information in regard to foster care for my children
- I was/ not informed of any life long future regret if I surrendered my children for adoption
- I was not given information on financial assistance that would enable me to keep my children

Finally I would like to say that:

As citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia resident in NSW  
I had 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

Please accept my submission

Yours Sincerely

(...)

Sharon Thornton

## Submission

Sharon M Thornton  
(...)

This STATEMENT is made by **SHARON MARGARET ANNE THORNTON** of  
(...)

To..... The Standing Committee

### **Inquiry Into Adoption Practices**

This is a truefull and accurate account of my adoption experience. I ask that I would not be called to give evidence in public as I am still suffering from chronic Dissociative Disorder, Borderline Personality and Multiple Personality Disorder.

I was born on 18/6/63. I am 35 Years old. I was adopted out when I was around six months old.

**I have had 2 children which were both lost to adoption.**

- (a) " (...) ' Born (...) at Liverpool District Hospital;**  
**(b) " (...) ' Born (...) ) at Fairfield District Hospital.**

I have suffered a number of traumas in life, the first of which was from being an adopted child. I had difficulty in that I really didn't know who I was. I also had a an identity crisis

When I was a small child I had what is called "Catatonic fear" Which is where I was so fearful that I couldn't move This was part of my adoptive condition. I also had a wish to suicide from a very early age.

In my teens I got very rebellious and angry and I started smoking marijuana and I also started getting into trouble at school. I did not confide in anyone about my life.

At the end of 2nd form I got expelled from Westfield High and then in 3rd Form. I attended Fairvale High School. I wasn't actually expelled they just politely asked me not to come back. I think this was caused by my anger that I projected at other children.

## Submission

In my teenage years I had what was called "adopted child syndrome" and I was also diagnosed as having a "high anxiety disorder". This was diagnosed by Dr (...) (...) of (...) Health Centre. I was 16 at the time.

I ran away from home at the at the commencement of 5th form in High School when I was 17 1/2 years old. I ran away to my friend's home. I was sick of everybody at home. I was fighting with my adopted parents. I then went to live with my boyfriend, (...) at Cabramatta. He was 30 years old and he worked in a factory. He had a couple of horses. He was European. He came from (...). He had been in Australia for about 10 years. I commenced living with him and I was not taking any contraception.

I didn't take contraception because I wasn't really with it half the time because of the problems I had at the time. I probably had depression as well. Anyhow I fell pregnant very soon after we started living together and he ran off.

Although I fell pregnant probably in about early 1981 (very soon after I moved in with (...)) I did not accept that I was pregnant and put it out of my head. At the time that I fell pregnant I only weighed about 6 stone and I suffered from an eating disorder that I had had from the age of 12

At the age of 20 I was diagnosed as having Borderline Personality Disorder by Dr (...)

### Birth of my first Child

When I was about 34 weeks pregnant I started getting bad pains, this was on Saturday (...) September 1981

I was so dissociative that I actually thought I had food poisoning, not so much because I didn't know I was pregnant consciously, but because I didn't think I was pregnant far enough to give birth.

Sometimes during my pregnancy, I felt happy about being pregnant. But I did not have any antenatal care in relation to the pregnancy due to my dissociative disorder.

I was home alone at (...) Street, Cabramatta. And I was suffering from dissociative disorder at the time. I was then taken by ambulance to Liverpool Hospital. The child was born in the ambulance in transit to the maternity ward my child was born 34 weeks into my pregnancy. I recall giving birth to my baby. I was in a lot of pain and there were no drugs given to me to help me with my pain.

## Submission

Whilst giving birth I heard the ambulance drivers talking about me on a microphone. I think this was to the hospital.

I was not given the baby when it was born

When we arrived at the hospital I was put on a table, it was then that I went into my 2nd labour and gave birth to the placenta. I did not know where the baby was at that time. After that I was then taken to the Maternity Ward at Liverpool Hospital. I was put into a ward that had a woman in it, that had lost a baby to stillbirth. This upset me greatly.

I think I had been in shock. I didn't ask for my baby. I sort of knew I had given birth to a baby but I was really suffering from Dissociative Disorder at the time. I did not know what I was doing. I don't recall saying that the baby was to be put up for adoption. My medical records have "baby for adoption" on them.

The hospital notes state that on Saturday the (...) September that "*Mrs (...) rang Re: adoption and would also see the patient (pt) at 11 am on the (...) September*"

The hospital notes also state that On the Sunday (...) September, (...) saw the patient to discuss adoption. The notes also state "*the patient was very uncommunicative and frightened girl*"

The Request to Make Arrangements for the Adoption of a Child was signed on Sunday (...) September 1981.

The hospital notes state on the (...) September "*patient restless*" later that day notes "*patient still reluctant to converse with some staff members*"

The hospital notes state on the (...) September "*satisfactory for discharge Social Worker will come and see her now*"

I was given drugs so that I wouldn't breastfeed. I was told that I was taking tablets so that I couldn't breastfeed. I did not ask for these drugs they were just given to me.

My baby was born on Saturday at about 7.30pm On the Sunday the (...) September. I spoke to a social worker who worked for the hospital. Her name was (...) She said: "*It's best if you give the child up for adoption*".

I did not ask to see the child. She said: "*You really do not have anything to give it*".

She patted me on the back and said: "*You'll be right love and have a little cry about it*".

I was also told by the social worker that my baby had a liver problem, this upset me and I was very distressed. I feel that this also contributed to the state of mind I was in at that time.

## Submission

The hospital notes on that day say *"very uncommunicative and frightened girl"*.

And later that day they state that I was *"very withdrawn"*

The notes also say on the (...) September also say *"Very quiet, not very talkative. Patient refused to get up for a shower, finally persuaded to to have a wash, given a dish"*

I recall that (...) told me that she was a Catholic. On the Monday morning after the birth I recall that (...) told me that she would call the Adoption Agency. I don't remember being asked if I wanted to have the child adopted, just being told that it was the best thing to do.

I don't recall saying or agreeing that I would have my child adopted at the Monday meeting on (...)September 1981 that I had with (...), she said to me words to the effect of: *"Someone will come out to your home to get you to sign adoption papers."*

The hospital notes say that I left the hospital on the (...) September

When I left the hospital I was sent home in the same blood stained clothes that I had been admitted in. They also sent me home by bus and train and I had to borrow \$5 from the social worker. I was very upset that I was sent home in this way.

I was still in a dissociative state at the time when this same social worker, (...) (...) came to see me at the property where I was staying (...), Cabramatta) She said *"there are papers for you to sign"*

I said *"I m not going to sign anything - just piss off"*. I was very distraught, angry and very upset at the time. After I arrived home from the hospital I was crying all the time. I cried all the way home not knowing what I would do, I was in a daze.

The social worker said that day she came out to the property about 2 weeks after the birth of my son, words to the effect of: *"Get back to the hospital or your child will be made a Ward of the State"*.

I did not know what that meant. It was only a couple of years ago that I found out that a Ward of the State meant that a child is put in some form of state home.

I went back to Liverpool Hospital about 1 to 2 weeks after (...) came to see me and I went to the social worker's office, and I saw (...)

I was crying. I must have had the consent form read to me but I did not understand what she was saying to me.

(...) was a very tall woman. (...) told me that they try to match the physical attributes of a child's mother and the child to the adoptive parents

## Submission

At this meeting (...) told me that she knew who my child was going to be adopted out to, and that she had met her. She told me that my baby was going to a good home and the adoptive mother *"understands everything you are going through"*. She also said that *"the adoptive mother says that you are doing a good thing."*

I was not told about a contact register by (...)

I was not told that was able to obtain a pension or how much I would get. I really did feel bullied that day. I recall they told me that I could not give the child anything.

I felt that I was supposed to sign the document and that I would be in trouble if I didn't. I was very angry, but I did sign the adoption papers. No one helped me. I was crying all the time.

I was then told to go home.

In a letter from the Anglican Adoption Agency dated 9th August 1994 written by (...) who referred to the social workers unabridged notes, which were taken on the 18th September 1981, Ms (...) writes *"The Social Worker described you as being composed and teary eyed as you signed the consent and you were aware of the implication of signing"*

She also went on to say that *"you had decided all along that adoption was best for the baby. You felt too young to care for the baby and you wanted a good secure and stable home for the baby."*

Also the letter goes on to refer to 20th May 1983 *"you spoke at length about your reasons for surrendering the baby, you were mixed up, frightened, and the whole situation was a great shock to you."*

### Summary of events

The ambulance report states that they called on me at (...) Street, Cabramatta and arrived at the location at 17.32 PM and arrived back at the hospital at 17.46 PM. The ambulance report states that I delivered a baby boy on arrival at Casualty. The ambulance notes state that I had never seen a doctor about the pregnancy and did not know how far pregnant I was.

In other words I was in denial of my pregnancy and should have been seen by either a Psychiatrist or a therapist during the time I spent at Liverpool Hospital. I consider my treatment to be negligent and unethical. Considering what I have found out about adoption trauma and mental health I feel that they knew what I was going through, but did not help me in any way, other than to promote the adoption of my child.

## Submission

*(Enclosed is a letter written on 1st Oct 1991 by (...) . In this letter she says "during the eighties agency workers have been very aware of the devastating and often permanent effects of relinquishment on the mother".)*

If this was the case then why was an adoption consent taken from me in my condition

1. I was in denial of my pregnancy.
2. I went into premature labour at 34 weeks
3. I delivered my child in the ambulance
4. It was stated that I wanted my child adopted on the day I gave birth. Given that I was in denial of my pregnancy.
5. I was seen by (...) the next day after the birth on a Sunday. (one would ask the question why didn't she wait until Monday to see me?)
6. I signed the Request to Make Arrangements on that day, the day after the traumatic and unexpected delivery of my baby.
7. I was discharged on the 15th September.

It was obvious to the hospital staff and to the Social Worker that my condition was not that of a person who was capable of making an informed decision regarding adoption or any other decision regarding my baby at that time. I would like to know from these people why this happened to me. I would also like to know why the Social Worker went above and beyond the call of duty to see that I signed forms on a public holiday.

### My Second Child

After I lost my first child I was deeply upset and traumatised and I fell pregnant two months later with a second child. I was even in more of a dissociative state than I was with the first child. I was deeply traumatised and did not talk about the pregnancy to anyone or see anyone about it.

I stayed home all the time because I was ashamed to go out. The father of my child refused to marry me. The only time I left the house was to do the shopping. During the whole pregnancy I again did not see a doctor or visit the hospital (I was too scared) I could not bring myself to visit Liverpool Hospital again.

I did not receive any contact from the social workers that dealt with my son's adoption. I was living in total fantasy world. I feel that had I been given some form of counselling or follow-up treatment after my son's adoption. I may not have fallen pregnant with my daughter so soon after the loss of my son.

## Submission

My whole pregnancy of my second child was again in a state denial. I had split off from all reality.

I went into labour with my daughter on the (... of August 1982. I was walking around the house in labour. I went to next door to use the telephone and rang a cab. I went to my boyfriends work he gave me some money to pay the cab and I asked him if he would come to the hospital with me, but he could not leave his job as a security guard.

I then went to Fairfield Hospital. I had dilated so the the nurse said the baby was due to be born. I signed myself in as an un-booked patient and was taken by trolley to the Maternity Ward I had the baby later in the delivery room as the baby was being delivered they told me to "bear down" one of the nurses told the other nurse that "she does not know what you are talking about" I delivered a baby girl and she was put in a crib next to me.

They asked me to hold her I turned my head and said "No" because I had went into terrible shock and trauma. I tried to get off the bed straight after the birth. Because I was so dissociated so they took the baby away. The nurse screamed at me and told me to get back on the bed.

They later put me in a room with other women who had also given birth. There was a girl there who I went to school with but I could not talk to her, I was too stressed and in shock I was in a worse state of affairs than in my previous labour with the birth of my son. I had a drip in my arm and I went to the bathroom, a sister followed me in and said to me "are you going to run away" I was more traumatised and just cried.

I was in the hospital for 1 or 2 days when they told me that if I did not sign adoption papers they would make the baby a Ward of the State. I still did not know exactly what a ward of the state was. That is all I remember the nurse saying to me.

I was withdrawn, crying and depressed all the time. I did not have any visitors and the nurses in the hospital treated me badly. I just wanted to get out of there. I was not seen by a psychiatrist or a counsellor whilst I was in this state.

It was also stated on my medical records that I was on drugs. I was not on any drugs at this time and I am angry that this was written on my records. I feel that this was written to discredit me.

I was later told by a doctor that my baby girl had Cleidocranial Dysostosis Syndrome this was a genetic disorder I went into shock and did not know what they were talking about. I was told about my daughters condition before I had signed the adoption papers.

I was then seen by a worker from the Department of Youth and Community. (...) (...) who told me that the baby would be better off being adopted. I had to go to Liverpool and sign the adoption papers on the 8th October 1982.



## Submission

I was sent home after I signed the adoption consent, with no follow-up counselling or contact from the Department or any adoption agency.

The consequences of the loss of my children have had a devastating effect on my life. I have not had any subsequent children, never married and I am living at home with my adoptive mother.

I have had a traumatised life, and been on a self destruct path, more so since the loss of my children. I get waves of anger, waves of anxiety and waves of deep depression.

I have been put on a disability pension for Dissociating Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder. I can put the reason for my condition down as a result of my adoption and the loss of my children to adoption.

I feel that I was given no choices as to the adoption of my children. I was not counselled adequately whilst in a severe state of emotional distress. I was not offered suitable financial alternatives or alternatives such as detailed information on foster care or substitute care for my children until I was in a position to look after them.

I believe that the way that I have been treated by the social workers, doctors and nursing staff and also the department workers from the Dept Youth and Community is abominable, unethical and inhumane.

I would also like to bring your attention to the letters from the Anglican Adoption Agency in response to my inquiries concerning the circumstances surrounding my son's adoption and also their response to my inquiries regarding my son's welfare.

About 2 years after the birth of the 2nd child ( towards the end of 1984) I had a lot of anger and anxiety. I had repressed the births. About 3 or 4 years after the births (about late 1986) I started having nightmares and memories kept coming back.

By about 1989 I realised (about 8 years after the 2nd child had been born) that the children had been adopted out. By about 1989 I also realised that I had psychiatric illness from the adoptions.

At the age of 20 I was diagnosed as having Borderline Personality Disorder by Dr (...)

In about 1989 at the age of 25 I was diagnosed as having Multiple Personality Disorder by (...)

I have been to various people to try to get help with my adoption issues but to no avail. I would just like to try to understand the whole thing.

I now take an anti-depressant tablet called Prozac and I have now been taking it for 6 years. The drug began to work for me after I had been taking it for approximately 3 weeks. If it wasn't for the Prozac I would not be able to live life to the extent that I able to now. **Which is just surviving.**

## Submission

### Measures to assist me at this point in time would be.

1. Payment for grief and loss counselling.
2. Compensation for personal injury.
3. Acknowledgement of my loss
4. As my children are not old enough to fully understand what has happened I would like them to be told about the adoption practises, and for them to gain an understanding of what has happened to me so that when I meet them they will benefit from information on adoption.
5. Compensation for my children who have had to live without each other
6. Recognition of past adoption practises.
7. Those people responsible for unethical and illegal activities dealt with through the legal system.

(...)

Signed by.....

Date

17/2/11