

Why we need a Compensation Fund

My name is _____ and I was Sentenced to being a State ward of Victoria at age 7 after my parents died, I was a State Ward from 1967 to 1977. I have 4 siblings, one being my twin brother. We were immediately split up despite the fact that there was many family members who offered to take us, I come from a very well to do family, with many professional people as my great aunts and uncles.

After becoming a State ward, my siblings and I were split up and we all began a horrific life as a State wards. I can only for the purpose of this document state my treatment but can assure you my siblings face just as much miss treatment as I did.

I am only going to briefly out line what I suffered as a State ward. During the 10 years as a state ward of Victoria I attended 19 primary schools, Many different foster homes, children's homes, Girls reform homes, catholic hostels. I was even sent to New Zealand for six months.

During my ward ship, I was treated as property not as a child, My first lesson as property was when at age seven I was placed in a foster home that introduced me to cruelty beyond belief, Starvation, sexual assault, humiliation and unbelievable punishment. At age 8, I told the social worker what was happening and was called a dirty little liar. This set a pace throughout my life. If she didn't believe me who would, even though there is on my state file letters from my family stating how bad things where at that time. I learnt very early to shut my mouth and take it.

I am only going to give you two incidents of the many many things I suffered. At age 8 fostered to a high school teacher I was made to stand naked on his desk for hours while he marked papers then the abuse began – There was nowhere to run, I can remember even today the feel of his hands, breath etc , Where was my protectors.... At age 14 in one of the girls home a staff member didn't like me, so she had a special punishment for me, At midnight I was drag out of bed, taken out side and a teaspoon of honey put on my lower legs, I was then made to stand on a small ant hill and she roused the ants with a stick – depending on her mood I had to stand for 5 to 10 min while being bitten. The last home I was in we were told every day that we were emotionally damaged and that our children would end up in homes. I grew up scared, damaged, degraded, insecure and very, very angry at authority.

Despite this I got married had three children, but when my husband left because he could not handle my nightmares I was left to raise my children by myself. I have taken sleeping tablets every night for the last 30 years. I have been to over a dozen different Psychiatrist, psychologist as well as other types of help, as yet the demons are still there. I have overdosed 4 times and YES I placed my children in care for a short time 3 months. I did not believe I could be a good mother. One time my daughter Jodie asked me – Mum why don't you smile. I could not tell her why , but I know that for me Smiling feels unnatural. Even today smiling is very hard... Despite all my damage I managed to go to University at age 30 and tried to study criminology for 3 years, but my emotional state has stunted my learning.

Eight years ago, after another overdose I decided to sue the state of Victoria. I went to many lawyers, but none would help, statue of limitation, evidence etc There was no one to help me, so I went to the County Court and learnt how to file a case my self, I,

with out legal help, filed my claim, I spent a month in tears writing my Statement of Claim, the judge was very understanding and gave a little guidance. After my case had been on the court docket for two years I finally found a lawyer. But despite my objections I was forced by the lawyer to take and out of court settlement, at which she the lawyer benefited greatly. Nearly half the settlement Under terms so tight that any court would rule unfair . I still have the letter from her FORCING me to settle.

I then applied for crimes comp 5 years ago as I need the crimes against me recognised in the courts and those individuals hat asulted me be made to answer , but that is still ongoing, and my new lawyer has dumped me. Where do I go, who do I turn to? Was the compensation I received right,. – No – Our government can spend a million dollars on a statue, but can not help those who where damaged by their system. Their neglect, their responsibility. – This writing is only a very brief history I shall say no more on my past.... But the government must Stop the pain. As it stands today anyone seeking compensation, Can look forward to a battle, they will have to get their files, read them, find a lawyer, tell the lawyer their history (at which most lawyers will write down wrong) - seeing ten lawyers has taught me this, then wait years for an outcome. Hoping that somewhere in this confusion there maybe an outcome for their benefit.

I know of four other people who grew up in care apart from my siblings. One person – Noel – is dying, he was an alcoholic. He lives in poverty with his wife, he doesn't have the time or energy to fight for compensation. Another friend won't even try because he saw how hard it was for me. In every state the question of compensation is hard to get, even in Tasmania. (they still have to prove their claim beyond doubt).

Has the apology made a difference – yes – People now know what happened but the pain does not end – We were sent out into the world damaged, unprepared, with little help.

Trying to get help now is still hit or miss. Did my compensation help - the little I received allowed me to buy a second hand car and a new lounge suit (my first new one) and pay a few bills = that's it, all gone. I still live in public housing, I still count every penny, and I still can't afford the petrol to get to appointments for help.

In Australia if you are the victim of a crime you can get an award payment – heard by a court and you don;t have to do much to apply, fill out some forms and wait. But we were and still are victims of crime, it just that ours is a secret crime. Forgotten Australians are child victims but to be compensated we must relive our past in public.

It is hard enough to live everyday with our trauma, but to claim compensation we must be assaulted again. Don't let this happen, don't clog up the courts, don't let us be victims of lawyers, and let there be a fair system of redress with little pain, like crimes compensation works. And make sure that all organizations involved are made accountable for what happened . Australia was our mother and father but we were not protected, so stop and rethink of how to help those who were damaged.

Be compassionate, be fair, and help stop the pain.

Permission given to publish.

11/6/10