

## My Story at the hands of the Government and the State Ward Department of the Day - 1933

I arrived at the Women's Hospital. A beautiful baby girl to a mother also a beautiful baby Aboriginal girl of 15. A girl with love and joy for this baby. Little did we know that this was just the beginning, the beginning of our troubles.

My Mother had been in the care of the nuns that lived opposite the hospital in Grattan Street, Carlton. After my birth she went back to the nuns, but she left soon with me in tow to make our way in the world.

At one month and three days old I was forcibly taken from my mother in Fitzroy after she lost a tug of war with the police who were trying to pull me out of her hands.

I was taken because of my white looks under the practice of genocide that removed white looking babies from their mother's so that they could be assimilated into white society and never know their Aboriginality. To ensure I would never track or be tracked by my family and Aboriginal heritage my name was changed, as well as other important facts about my forcible removal. My mother was sent to Oakleigh Convent for wayward girls as punishment for having me.

I was now known as State Ward 189....That was my number at St. Joseph's Babies Home Broadmeadows until I was 2. Then I lived with the Courtis family for the next 7 years until I was moved to Box Hill because of the death of Mary Courtis.

For a short time I found myself in the care of the                      family in                      . They were a good solid christian family who dumped me in the orphanage run by St. Vincent De Paul's because they were going on holidays. I wonder how well paid they were for their troubles and if that's how they could afford a holiday.

I now had a brand new number.....4213. I just kept moving up in the world every new place meant a new number so in the end I was State Ward 61636. I don't know who the book keeper was, but they managed to get all my dates and information wrong including my name.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> December, 1939, my Mother walked into the welfare department, Flinders Street at that time, as she wanted to see me. They would give her no information about the whereabouts of State Ward number 61636, or even what my new name was, (they never made any reference to me by my name, I was only ever a number in their system).

From the orphanage, I went to another bad situation, to a bitch called who in . I lived at in . I don't know what her connection was with the nun's, but it was all bad news for me. She absolutely hated me and made my life hell. One day she slapped my face so hard....that I slapped her back and ran back to Mother Winifred who was a strong woman and a good person. My face was really red. Well, sister got hold of someone to help her and the three of us went to that factory, and that nun gave that the best dressing down I have ever seen. She told her in no uncertain terms that if she ever found out about her hitting me again there would be TROUBLE.

Unfortunately for me, I was so frightened of going back to that woman that I ran away and before I new what was going on, I had been placed in the Good Sheppard Convent in Abbotsford for 2 years. The nuns who ran this place were very cruel and hard women. I had to work in the mangle room, working with wet, heavy sheets that were so hot that they blistered my hands without any protections which gave me more blisters. It was a work house where you worked long hard hours with no pay, you worked for your room and board and the privilege of being treated as slave labour with no rights and ripe for punishment at any moment.

Suddenly, I was saved from this torture by the daughter of the

family who lied to the convent telling them I was her sister and I was moved to Merbin. She had 6 children and was almost crippled with arthritis. I became the general dogs body in the house. Her husband was a sleaze bag creeping around the house touching me inappropriately while his poor sick wife was asleep. He really frightened me and I had nobody to tell....I was 17, innocent and felt I had no power over my life.

Around the same time I was raped by local town boys. I became pregnant and sent to Melbourne until I gave birth. The baby was taken away straight away. I was not even allowed to see her.

I left Melbourne and went to Sydney, met up with this Koorie girl, Joan Sutherland, and we travelled all around Australia together. We would work to get a bank together and then move onto the next place. We did that for nearly 2 and a half years. They were good days, but we didn't have a family or anybody. I was working in Longreach in QLD, at the hotel when I met my first husband. I got married and moved to Mt Isa where on Feb 14<sup>th</sup> my son, Kim Anthony was born. I would turn 21 in the August.

Life was good for a few years, but then we came back to Ipswich and lived with my husbands parents which didn't work out. The marriage ended and I had to leave Kim, my son, with his grandparents as I couldn't get a job with a small boy as there was no financial support ie. Pensions etc in those days. I bummed around in Brisbane and then went back to Sydney and worked as a barmaid, wherever I could. I even worked moving the first shipment of Japanese cars from the docks.

I returned to Melbourne, met husband No. 2 while working as a barmaid. I married him in 1962, had 3 children and finished up in WA, after being bashed so badly that I was in hospital for 3 weeks. I came back to Melbourne and have never looked back.

Throughout all I have survived, my sense of humour has been my lifeline and my saviour. I enjoy every day of my life.

I was 36 years old when I finally met my Mother. No-one told me she was Aboriginal. They told me she didn't want me. She tried to tell me the truth but I couldn't hear it through my hurt at being left to such a cruel fate. I know the reason for this, because as a child they could pass me off as white.....SHAME ON YOU PEOPLE THAT HELD MY LIFE AND CARE IN YOUR HANDS. GOD MAY FORGIVE YOU, BUT I NEVER WILL.....I AM PROUD TO BE ABORIGINAL BUT I CARRY MY ABORIGINAL PAPERS WITH ME.

In 2004 I was named "Citizen of the Year" for the City of Port Phillip. In 2010 I was inducted into the 'Victorian Honour Role of Women'. In 2009 I was diagnosed with Lung Cancer. At present, I am in remission. I am back in the community going to meetings. At the age of 77 in August, I think I am entitled to compensation for the atrocities I endured as a child and a young woman. If I do get anything at all, I want to go back to Uluru and the Northern Territory because of the intervention order. I want to see this first hand myself of what is going on. This is my next step to help my people.