

Submission to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee

Review of Government Compensation Payments

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee members

My name is Edward Bain and I am 67 years old.

I was placed into state care in New South Wales when I was 8 years old. Removed from the care of my mother, an Aboriginal woman, because the authorities believed she was not capable of caring for me any longer as she was an alcoholic. Before being made a state ward, I was a happy and very much loved and cared for little boy.

I was initially placed into care at Yasmar, Children's Home in Haberfield. My mother had appealed the decision to place me in care however when she visited me and saw that I was attending a number of educational classes, she thought perhaps I might be OK. I remember her asking me if I was happy and I thought I needed to tell her that I was, and that I liked the classes. Shortly after this visit she withdrew her appeal assuming that I might be better off, not because she didn't love me. This was the last time I saw my mother in many years.

I was soon transferred to Royalston Boys Home in Glebe, and although I missed my mother and sister, it wasn't too bad a place to be. However, I was only here for a very short time when I was transferred to Weroona Boys Home in Woodford. This is where things started to go horribly wrong and my life became very sad and violent.

Within 2 or 3 weeks of my arrival I was beaten by the _____ I remember one morning, he indiscriminately selected six boys from a breakfast line up. We were told to take our shoes and socks off and he proceeded to beat our legs and the soles of our feet. This was the first of many beatings. On another occasion he slapped me so hard around the side of the face that my head swung around and hit the side of the chair leaving me with serious damage to my eye.

_____ would regularly beat the boys for no apparent reason, once I received a beating because I had eaten something I shouldn't have, on this occasion he hit me so hard I hit the floor and when I got up he beat me down again.

Often his assaults would occur without other adult witnesses. He would also come into the dormitories at night and beat boys across the body, including myself, with a cane as we slept.

There were other staff too that used to physically and emotionally abuse the boys. including _____

The years spent at Weroona were terrible years, and my memory of them are of beatings and cruelty. It was place where education was not a high priority and where young boys, who were meant to be in the care of the state, were fearful of the adults and worked long hours.

Throughout these years my mother was never informed of my whereabouts, although she asked many times. She was told that "it was for the best" and "it was for the good of the boy", that she did not know where I was.

Years later I was reunited later with my mother, but I never lived with her again.

I have received some counseling for my unresolved grief and trauma, of first being removed from my family and for the ensuing violence I experienced. The psychologist I was seeing told me that I have post traumatic stress disorder as a way of explaining why I was not able to let go of the past, and although my life is pretty good, with a loving wife and family, I remain on medication.

I believe the current compensatory mechanisms available do not address the plight of people like me. I was not only robbed of my childhood, and of my mother and family, but I also suffered years of physical and emotional abuse at the hands of people who were meant to care for me. The state was meant to ensure that I was safe and educated, but I experienced neither.

I believe the NSW government owes me a great deal. However, there are no avenues for me to follow. No compensation scheme that acknowledges the great harm done to me. The onus is always on the abused to prove that these things have happened to them, but there has been enough research and testimony provided that the government knows that really bad and terrible things happened to children in state care.

I hope that this committee considers how current mechanisms are not fully addressing the needs of people who have experienced trauma at the hands of the state. The committee needs to consider ways in which compensation can be accessed more broadly by people like myself and how once and for all governments take responsibility for what happened to little children in their care and the adults who survive.

Regards

Edward 'Teddy' Bain