

SENATE INQUIRY INTO
"COMMONWEALTH CONTRIBUTION TO FORMER FORCED
ADOPTION POLICIES AND PRACTICES AND PRACTICES"



I Veronica Rushbrooke (nee Barry) am a citizen of the commonwealth of Australia residing in Queensland.

As a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia I have 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.

Being a single adult and finding myself in a pregnated state I notified my boyfriend that I may be pregnant. He asked me what I wanted to do and I knew he would let me have an abortion if I wanted it. I didn't! It was against my belief! Those days they were back yard abortions and very risky as well. My boyfriend didn't offer any support at all. He disappeared about the seventh or eighth month.

I was confused and afraid to tell my parents. My father was a violent man and to bring shame on his family was unforgivable. I wondered how I could keep my child with no support offered to me. Nothing was suggested.

I decided not to tell my parents and so sort a social worker out at the Crown Street Women's hospital in Sydney. I told her I was pregnant and that I couldn't keep the baby as my father was a violent man and would be mortified to know one of his daughters had an 'illegitimate' child and I also didn't have the money to support my baby. There was no Mothers support pension or anything that I knew I could obtain to keep my child. I wasn't offered anything. She was born in 1969. I spoke to a 'Miss (...) ' and she asked me if I was sure I wanted to adopt my baby out. I said I didn't have the means to keep her and that is all I could think of. She told me not to worry that she would get me into see a doctor and then I would be 'Assessed' as to Information about family history. I asked her not to tell my parents as I would be 21 when she was born. Parents had the right till you were 21 those days. She informed the doctor of my request and he said he would take over as my 'Guardian' while I was in hospital.

I gave her all the history of medical problems in the family and was pleased that that would be passed on. She also asked me if I would like my child to do anything special? I said as I played the piano I would like to know that my child had that opportunity as we were a very talented musical family. Nothing else was offered to me. The Fathers name was taken but not mentioned again. I don't remember if she asked me if I really wanted the adoption to take place. I don't recall it.

I had the baby eventually and I was put back in the hospital ward with three other mothers. They all had their babies - I didn't have mine! - I didn't realize I would be so affected by not having my child with me! I wasn't told of the mourning I would go through, I wasn't told about anything after the birth. I spent feeding times crying my eyes out in the pantry where no one could see me. I hoped that something would

come up and I would be able to keep my baby.

I asked to speak with Miss (...). She came down and I said I want to see my baby. She said it wasn't wise as most mothers that see their babies want to keep them. I said I haven't got the money to look after her and that I had to adopt her out because I couldn't take her home to my father. She asked me to promise that I wouldn't keep her and that I could have five minutes with my baby. I promised I wouldn't keep her and she organized to have her bought down to me and I was able to cuddle her and look at her. I noticed she had tin plates on her feet and I asked her what was wrong with her? She said that her ankles were turned and the little tin callipers would fix that in a few weeks. I then thought 'no one is going to want my baby because she isn't perfect. People wanted perfect children'. I also noticed her naval had a tube coming out of it but was too afraid to ask why!

The nurse suggested to the matron that I be sent back to Lady Wakehurst as I was getting too upset being with mothers and their babies. Dr (...) advised that I had to stay there for medical reasons but later allowed me to go to Lady Wakehurst and have my iron transfusion there.

While having an iron transfusion after the birth, Miss (...) came to me at the Wakerly Unmarried Mothers Home Waverly in Sydney, and said she had some papers for me to sign. I don't remember what she said they were but at the time I was suffering from a great deal of back pain due to the Iron transfusion. Apparently it was a side effect. I signed them and eventually allowed to go home.

I was also given some tablets to dry up my milk. I have my hospital files which I obtained from Paddington Sydney, that tells of the drugs I was on. I didn't know what they were.

I know I had 30 days to change my mind and was still hoping for some miracle that I could find a way to keep her. I didn't! I got on with my life with a piece of my heart missing. I could feel it inside me! I eventually went home to visit my mother and other brothers and sisters and after a few 'incidents' like feeling wet at the breast and looking down and seeing all my night gown covered with liquid I realized that it must be milk for the baby.

It was very traumatizing for me. Every baby in the bus that looked like my baby made it so much harder. I even saw a baby with tin plates on her feet and swear it was her. I found her eventually when she was 23 and had had a lot of problems with her life because she 'didn't fit' into the family she was adopted into. She had different wants and needs that they couldn't recognise and in the end at the age of 13 they let her go. How she survived I don't know. The adoptive parents did keep their eye on her and ended up bringing her back home because she wasn't attending school.

I met her in 1992 at 23 years of age and have never been able to accept that I didn't have the same time with her that I had with my other three boys. I tried to make up time (but never will) and also tried to think of the future ahead with her in my life now. There was a Social Justice Enquiry into Past Practices Of Adoption in New South Wales of which I have the papers here. I was reading through it and it said that they asked a social worker to give them a copy of the social workers hand book and to

look at it and see what were the requirements of the social worker.

In the book it had that the social worker must offer the Widow's Pension to the single mother or fostering. If that wasn't practicable then the offer of going into a home where the child would be looked after while the mother goes to work and when the mother had enough money and someone to look after the child they could attain their independence of the home. It said the Last Option was Adoption!!!! When I read those words my whole body became rigid!!!! That was the opportunity I was hoping would happen with my baby so that I could keep her! NOTHING was offered as an alternative to adoption.

I feel cheated, yes, and missed out the time with my daughter I could have had. I am pleased she was adopted into the family she has the name of now but nothing will give me back my years with my baby daughter!!!! I don't even have a photo of her as a new born. Her adoptive mother didn't take photo's of her till she was around 12 months old. Probably because they didn't know if they were going to allow them to adopt her! How sad!!!!

I hope you can put yourself in my place and see what I have missed out on. I have a sister 20 years younger than myself and she said I had changed when I found my baby. My daughter was a woman of 23 not the baby I had!!! Of course I changed!!! The piece of my heart that was missing was found but it still doesn't give me back the years I missed out on with my daughter and our special times, seeing her first step, hearing her first word, seeing her coping with school. Nothing can give that back to me and I consider that I have been robbed of those times by the social worker not telling me what was available for me.

Veronica Rushbrooke
(...)

