

Dear Committee Secretary

Firstly I wish to express my great concern that in recent times there has been inquiries into -

The Stolen Generation

Children of the British Empire and -

An Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care. Now this inquiry is to take place regarding overseas adoptions. I ask you why, again we mothers, whose children were taken by the nefarious actions of hospital staff, religious denominations and social/welfare agencies are denied any recognition at all?

The Senate inquiry of Children in Institutional Care in August 2004, wrote in their report "FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS" -

4.60 "While the treatment and care of girls in institutions who became pregnant and those who were placed in institutions after falling pregnant are relevant to this inquiry, there is a much wider issue of past adoption practices when babies were routinely taken from young unmarried mothers. When allegations are made that social workers of that time used "unethical, emotional blackmail and inhuman practices to illegally gain consent forms" and efforts to obtain medical and social worker/almoner's records, at least in Victoria, are denied, there needs to be inquiries at the State level to uncover the truth surrounding past adoption practices."

I cannot understand the Senate's reasons for "fobbing off" our issue to State Governments, especially here in Victoria where for the past four years this government has stated categorically that they WILL NOT hold their promised inquiry into past adoption practices.

One could imagine the complete and utter despair and betrayal for the mother's of Victoria. This was indeed a very cruel decision. Mothers were entrenched in the belief that they would finally be able to re-write history that had damned them as mothers who could willingly give away their own children. Their children would now never know that they were loved. Their children would forever believe that their own mothers did not want them.

The pain of this continuing injustice for these mothers is beyond description.

In the Senate's second report of this inquiry, March 2005

"Protecting vulnerable children: a national challenge"

MacKillop Family Services submitted the following words regarding single mothers -

1.36 "Mothers have the right for their anguish and pain to be heard, and are similarly in need of support and acknowledgement. Their suffering will continue until it is acknowledged and addressed and adequate support services are in place... We support the call for an inquiry into past adoption practices to aid in the story of mothers being heard, to effect reconciliation where possible, and to enable people (mothers, children and carers) to move forward constructively."

Mothers respectfully request that it is time for the Senate to bring about a

NATIONAL INQUIRY into past adoption practices for the following facts -:

State governments adapted changes to their adoption acts in the 1960's as a direct result of the NATIONAL ADOPTION BILL of the early 1960's

Social Workers were informed about adoption procedures at NATIONAL conferences.

Social Workers were kept informed of adoption practices, in their own NATIONAL Social Workers Journal.

NATIONALLY, staff of hospitals and institutions used the same cruelly coercive and mostly illegal practices in adoption in order to separate a mother from her own baby.

We allege that as past state governments have been shown to be complicit in past adoption practices that a NATIONAL INQUIRY would be a fair and justified platform for mothers to express the truth of the trauma which inhumanely and illegally took their babies from them.

My Submission

I wish to present my submission to the Committee as a mother who has suffered for decades the loss of her first baby due to the past practices of adoption workers.

These adoption workers, during one of Australia's most blatant era's in adoption, routinely removed babies from their single mothers, by the use of unethical, illegal and emotionally punishing methods in order to obtain babies for adoption to mostly infertile strangers.

The adoption workers who practiced these methods were also acting on behalf of these infertile couples seeking a baby of their "own."

I was 19 years when I gave birth to my son in 1961. My son was the result of a two and half year relationship with an Asian student.

When I found I was pregnant I had no one to turn to for help as my mother and father were separated and I did not live at home nor could I ever return home to the abuse of my father.

My son was born at the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne. The staff of this hospital, in particular a senior nursing sister, usurped their fiduciary duty and condemned me repeatedly for being a single mother. I had already informed them that my son would never be adopted as I loved him and would never let him go. I was informed that my son deserved better than me and that two strangers would be better for my son than I ever could. I was spoken to in a demeaning manner tinged with contempt. I was told that I was selfish for wanting to keep my own son. I repeatedly told her I would never let him go. This person informed me in no uncertain terms that I would never be allowed to take my son out of the hospital as I had no where to take him. Not once did she ask for the Almoner to visit me for assistance in keeping my baby. No counsellor attended me for my complete trauma at the thought of losing my baby. I was offered nothing but condemnation.

A few days later I apparently signed consent to adoption. I do not remember doing so but thirty-seven years later I was to see my name on a consent form. This person, from the hospital removed my son from my bedside and left me in a ward of new mothers (married) and their babies for several more days. My son was taken and

placed in a cot in the nursery where I could see his small body wrapped in a cream blanket every time I passed by but I was forbidden to see or touch him.

After several days I was to be discharged from hospital, as I was leaving this person placed my son in my arms and put us both in a taxi. We were taken to St. Joseph's Foundling home, in Broadmeadows. I remember entering a door clutching my baby to my breast, crying profusely. A nun came out of nowhere and ripped my son from my arms and turned and ran from the room. I was totally shattered. I started screaming for his return. I yelled that I did not want him to be adopted. I was bereft. Another nun pushed me into a chair at a desk and started pushing paper after paper under my nose telling me to sign here and here. I do not know what I signed for I could not see through my tears. I was hysterical and screaming. I believe that because I would not leave the premises I was told I could visit my son until the 30-day revocation period was up. I do not remember getting home or much of the next few days, but I did return to this evil place several times to see my son to hold and love him. No one spoke to me. All heads turned away.

Before the 30 days expiration I revoked my consent. I could not let my baby go. How could I? I received a telephone call from a person at the Foundling Home, who asked me in a blunt voice what I expected to do with my son. I told her I didn't know but I didn't want him adopted. She told me to come into the home. When I got there a female in a suit was waiting for me and on the desk was another, this time typed, consent to adoption form. I started to cry.

She also made me feel worthless. She said that my son deserved better than I could give him, that a married couple could give my son a better life as I had nothing to offer him.

She told me that she would try and find an Asian couple to adopt my son. In retrospect this was a complete lie. I sincerely believe a married couple had already been promised my son as this home also arranged adoptions for the infertile. I was subjected to her propaganda for a long time. I signed the consent only this time I was not given the revocation paper.

What happened to me happened to tens of thousands of other single Australian mothers during the 1950's to the 1970's. Babies were routinely taken from their mother's wombs, their arms and their breasts to provide a baby to strangers on the long list of those infertile seeking a baby of their "own."

During this time orphanages held many, many children, who today we now know were often in abusive situations. These children needed parents and a loving relationship but were ignored in the adoption frenzy that provided strangers with a healthy newborn baby to pass off as their own. Even birth certificates were issued stating that the adoptive parents gave birth to our children.

We have seen these nefarious decades moulded by those in the adoption arena to project to society today a panacea of adoption wonderment for infertile families. Adoption destroys one true family to create a fantasy for another.

Over the decades we mothers have been referred to as "birth mothers" and "relinquishing mothers." These very hurtful, cruel and false expressions; have been

devised by those in adoption, to disassociate a mother's connection to her child and alleviate any guilt for others.

In recent times I wrote to Pru Goddard who apparently holds a senior position in the NSW Human Rights and Equal Opportunity forum. I wrote to ask her why she used the term "birth mother" on one of her governmental forms, informing her that this was a very hurtful term to those whose children were taken by past adoption practices. She told me that adoptive parents had requested that ALL natural mothers be called "birth mothers" because they believed to call mothers natural mothers presented them as un-natural mothers.

It would seem that adoptive persons can dictate how mothers can be described, yet my application to the Equal Opportunity Office in Melbourne to bring about an end to the cruel name calling of myself as a "relinquishing mother" met with no empathy.

For too long has adoption been demanded as a RIGHT for any person who is infertile or in a self imposed infertile relationship. NO ONE has EVER undertaken ANY known studies into the effect that adoption has on a mother especially during the above period in our history.

Today we are still condemned as mothers who were able to willingly give away our own babies. Our children have been presented with this fiction since they were removed from us. Can you imagine even for a moment what it would be like to grow up believing the lies in adoption that your own mother did not want you?

My own son who was adopted and who will not see me wrote to me and said that his [adoptive] mother had told him how hard it was for single mothers in those days. This too is propaganda and in my eyes denies my son the truth of his abduction. Past governments, hospital staff both medical and nursing, religious denominations, adoption and welfare social workers denied mothers the information they needed to make an informed decision regarding the future of their own child. No alternatives to adoption were provided to mothers.

Mothers were bullied from the moment of delivery of their babies. Some were denied their right to see and hold their own baby even though no consent had been signed. Many breastfed their babies only to have them removed from them and taken for adoption, again although no consent had been signed. Mothers who demanded to see and hold their babies were informed that once they signed consent to adoption they could see their baby for a moment. Mothers were placed under illegal duress in order to gain consents to adoption. Some mothers were told their baby had died and were asked to sign a "death" certificate, which in actual fact was consent to adoption. Their live baby had been placed at the breast of a married woman who had suffered a miscarriage. After discharge from hospital many mothers returned to claim their babies only to be told that their baby had already been placed with an adoptive couple. (This was within the revocation period and was illegal). These mothers were told that it would be cruel for them to take the baby from the adoptive couple! These mothers were to find out many decades later that their baby had NOT been placed at that time.

Adoption/welfare workers of agencies and past governments usurped their fiduciary duty, their duty of care and the law.

The Medical Journal of Australia Sydney, Saturday July 30, 1960. No 5, presents that Dr. D.F. Lawson, M.B., F.R.C.S., F.R.C.O.G., Royal Women's Hospital Melbourne, as saying "The last thing that the obstetrician might concern himself with is the law in regard to adoption."

In 1965 Mary Lewis Social Worker at a National Conference on unmarried mothers stated. "Many agencies in this country have **punitive, illegal and harmful** rules regarding the mothers inalienable right to physical contact with her child"

Father J Daveron stated, at the first Australian Conference on Adoption in 1976. "That the mother is powerless and particularly vulnerable to abuse, and that abuse is not uncommon." He stated that mothers have the **right** to see, hold and name their child. He said, "Many of her rights are not being recognized, apparently on the grounds that restrictions are in the interest of the mother or her child. He went on to say not only is there **NO** evidence to support restrictions on such grounds, but there is **AN ABUNDANCE OF EVIDENCE** that this type of repression is damaging to mother and child and can seriously jeopardise the **realism** of the decision that the mother is endeavouring to make about whether **or not** she should surrender her child for adoption."

Adoption/welfare social workers used the lie of "in the best interests of the child" when referring to placements of our children for adoption, but in 1966 an infamous consent taker and social worker is on record as saying about placing our beloved babies "that in the heat of the moment we may give a child to the wrong couple, perhaps too soon, and perhaps to unsuitable people"

In 2000 the State Government/Department of Human Services in Victoria, contracted a consultant Mr James Jenkinson to give a background paper on adoption 1945 to 1984.

This document has supported mother's claims of the past illegal and unethical practices in adoption. Past governments failed to protect mothers and their children who were in their care and who they had a legal responsibility towards. In their submission to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care; the Victorian Department of Human Services stated that from 1956 they had a legal duty to care for children in homes both government and non-government that provided care and accommodation to children. The names of the homes that were listed in their statement included babies' homes that were also well-known unmarried mothers homes.

Staff of the Royal Women's Hospital Melbourne breached their fiduciary duty and breached statutory law when they harassed me to hand my baby son over for adoption. The Josephite Catholic Nuns at Broadmeadows were complicit in my son's abduction.

I was denied access to the information of Federal payments that *were* available to me at that time. I was denied the right to know of foster care until I was discharged from hospital and was able to provide a home for my baby and myself. I was denied all knowledge of ANY of the other alternatives to adoption that a widowed or deserted mother would have been advised of.

Adoption has absolutely no place in an educated society as adoption destroys the genealogical life of a person for the wants and needs of another person. A child in adoption is denied their own RIGHT to their own truth. Their name at birth is denied them. Their right to their heritage is denied them and unless they are told they are adopted; with the current false information on birth certificates they will never know their truth. How is all this in the best interests of the child?

Much has been written and said of the identity issues and abandonment issues of adoptive children yet we still sacrifice their rights for the "perceived" rights of others. This is fact.

Mothers whose children are taken for adoption will, in the majority of cases, suffer the dire effects that adoption *will* have on her for her lifetime. This too is fact.

Today we hear that we are "helping" third world children to have a better life by adopting children from overseas. This is now another avenue for those seeking a baby of their own. Why, if we express an intention of caring about these children's plight, (who although in orphanages are often NOT orphans) we destroy who they are, deny them their culture, deny them their right to their truth. I have always believed emphatically that children's welfare is paramount.

Children who can no longer live with their parents or extended families because of genuine fear for their welfare should grow up knowing the truth. They have the RIGHT to keep their own name, to know of their heritage, their culture and the reason they cannot live at home. When THEY are older if it is what THEY wish then THEY could adopt the family that cared more about THEIR welfare than their own. Many of these so-called orphans are in orphanages as a direct result of wars, invasions, famine and government policy.

Adoption today continues as a direct result of unethical and illegal past adoption practices.

Adoption workers have perpetrated and perpetuated the lies in adoption to society, governments and lawmakers for these past decades. They have presented a panacea that adoption is the answer for infertile couples and those "unwanted children" of societies marginalised mothers. Adoption is built on lies and deceit.

June Smith

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