

**CHAIRMAN OFSTANDING COMMITTEE ON FAMILY AND HUMAN
SERVICES**

**MRS BRONWYN BISHOP
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600**

Telephone 2 6277 4566

Facsimile 2 6277 4844

E-mail fhs.reps@aph.gov.au

SUBMISSION NO. 196

AUTHORISED: 21-07-05 *Phil Althi*

Submission

Elizabeth Edwards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] VICTORIA

[REDACTED]

Dear Committee Members I would draw your attention to the fact that there have been inquiries into

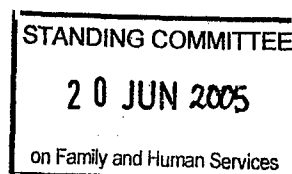
"The Stolen Generation"

"Children of the British Empire"

"Children in Institutional Care"

In 2000 The NSW Standing Committee Releasing the past The Final report established that some Past Adoptions consents were gained by fraudulent means.

Therefore I respectfully request that you call for a National Inquiry into the Crime and unethical policies used to gain our babies for adoption in Past Adoption Practices are thereby change the history books to record that 400,000 mothers did not give their babies away for adoption.



This is very hard for me, I do not know how much I can put to paper as it is my personal story that I relive daily, however with so much more intensity and pain now, because Steve Bracks our Victorian Premier gave his endorsement for an Inquiry to be ALP policy, only to inform us in 2003 that the inquiry would not go ahead.

I feel the shock and a heightened awareness of the sense of betrayal that the original assault inflicted into my very psyche when in 1963 without my prior knowledge or permission, the doctor and his assisting nurse turned up the gas (Nitrous Oxide) to a level that rendered me unconscious as my baby's head crowned.

I gave birth to our first baby a girl that we intended to name Kim a week after I turned 18, resulting in being forced to live a created reality and then denied the right to talk about let alone grieve the baby I carried for nine months and gave birth to only to be told to forget I had that I had experienced that maternity.

My parents refused to give their permission for us to marry despite the fact that I had just celebrated my 17th Birthday when my parents announced our engagement.

My parents were worried that (Bill my fiancée) was not of the same religious tradition as our family so before they gave us their blessing he had to give his word that we would marry, and any children of the intended marriage would be raised in my faith. However they had not counted on my getting pregnant three months later.

My mother arranged for me to be isolated in a Western suburban hospital and the baby would be adopted.

At no time did she ask Bill or myself what we wanted to do.

So we consoled each other with the belief that once my parents saw their first grandchild they would soften and give us permission to marry.

I worked as an assistant Nurse in the aged care facility that was situated in Coburg two Kilometres from the main branch of

Vaocluse Private Midwifery/Surgical and Medical hospital. Until the day before I delivered my baby.

I was paid above award rates for a fully qualified nurses aide and combined with penalty rates was not financially destitute neither was Bill, he worked full time for KL Mc Kenzies in Footscray.

The nursing staff and the Doctor knew of my commitment to Bill and of our intention to marry.

On one of my antenatal visits the Dr asked me about Bill his height, eye and skin colouring, and his occupation.

Bill had not been informed of my being admitted to the labour ward where I delivered our baby on the 21st November 1963 at approx 12.20 PM.

Regaining consciousness I requested my baby, but the doctor looked me in the eye and said, "society will forgive one mistake" with that he turned on his heel and walked out of the labor ward. I was then placed on a trolley and wheeled away from the midwifery section and over to an independently owned and run surgical ward and placed in a private room, this was a distance from hearing any baby cry.

I was told that one day I would marry and have a baby of my own.

Administered sleeping tablets and told to rest, I recall being in a 'dream state'. After lunch on the 22nd of November my parents arrived my mother was agitated and demanded to know if I had told anyone about Bill, because if I had he would go to jail for carnal knowledge.

Immediately I went into shock as confusion and panic seized me but before I could reply a man who was a stranger to me walked into the room.

He introduced himself to my parents, he possibly acknowledged me but my head was spinning and I could not think or connect to anything anyone was saying.

I recall him putting a paper in front of me and my parents instructed me to sign it.

He then left and shortly after so did my parent. Glad of the tablet the nurse gave me to ease the "afterbirth pain" I fell asleep.

The next day I awoke to learn of the assassination of President Kennedy, once again shock riveted in my stomach and my chest.

Bill arrived at the hospital that afternoon accompanied by his sister I lay there frozen and wishing that he would hurry up and leave before they (the nursing staff) came and finding him there notified the police.

Little did I know my baby was earmarked for a local policeman.

The matrons and her husband were heavily involved in procuring illegal operations and the policeman received two babies from Vacluse. He had been denied a baby from the conventional source because he and his wife did not qualify, neither being infertile.

On the following morning 24th November my mother came to collect me and take me home. She and the matron quibbled about the fees. I paid the difference between my hospital fund coverage I also paid for every last morphine aspirin tablet, sleeping tablet, or any other thing they administered to me.

Two weeks later I collected the mail and opened a birth certificate for "unnamed Toohey" baby daughter of Elizabeth Toohey, Once again I felt nausea overtake me then the shock of what I was looking at compelled me to action I rang the Matron and demanded my baby.

Her voice was composed as she told me that it was too late, she then said that she was short staffed and asked when could I return to work.?

I now turned all of my anger toward Bill, desperately wanting to break off our engagement I felt he had let our baby and myself down.

When I confided this to my mother she replied well I think you are mean after all he stood by

Bill was putting pressure upon me to return to our previous relationship, but I was lacking any passion, I had withdrawn into myself so I capitulated. I felt totally defeated.

When I found I was pregnant again Bill wanted to run away!

I stood firm and informed him that I knew of an elderly couple that minded babies whilst their single mothers went to work. I was vehement in my resolve to keep my baby with or without him.

He responded by saying we better telephone my parents and tell them we were getting married but we would prefer their blessing. We married on the 26th June 1964

An adoption order was not signed for "unnamed Toohey" until 13th April 1965 by that time I was expecting our third child. Our daughter was legitimated and by virtue of the Commonwealth marriage act 1961 she had become Baby Edwards's daughter of William John Edwards and Elizabeth Edwards neither signed consent to adoption for Baby Edwards.

Despite the staff and the family doctor being aware of our marriage they failed to inform us of the facts surrounding our baby.

They did inform the people who had our baby in their care, it is my understanding that a member of the staff of Vaucluse informed them of our marriage upon which the police officer successfully applied for a transfer to Western Victoria where he and his wife stayed until the adoption order was signed on 13th April 1965.

However they adopted a baby that no longer existed.

I cannot get a birth certificate that records our legitimated babies details, instead our daughter has been issued with a birth certificate that records the police officers wife as having giving birth to her.

This indistinguishable birth certificate was legislated in Victoria in 1996 and allows the possibility of illegal adoptions.

We would like our subsequent children to have their legitimate sister registered on their birth certificates. However we have been advised that we must return to the County Court.

Why there has never been an adoption of Baby Edwards?.

After I returned to my training as a nursing aide in 1964 I became very depressed but not wanting people to know that I was different I created a different self

I applied to complete my training as a nursing aide at Fairfield infectious hospital, where my proprietary of a little baby girl by the name of Kelly went unnoticed, and when a four year old child passed away one night whilst I was on night shift I just walked away. I felt absolutely devastated.

Up until this time I had been a competent nurse but I begun to panic when babies coughed for extended length of time and on more than one occasion I was admonished for running with a

baby in my arms to the charge nurses station. We were trained in infectious (fever nursing) and I was putting not only the baby but also others at risk by taking it out of isolation.

The next week I married Bill and returned to Vaucluse once again.

One day whilst walking to work I past a very cute Asian child, when I arrived I announced that I had just seen my baby down the street. (I was fantasising because neither Bill nor myself had any Asian heredity) Although puzzled by the reaction that statement invoked in the staff members present, I failed to heed any warning that something was wrong, or that their sympathy was with the potential adoptive parents

I did not have a consciousness of the fact that I was lying. I desperately wanted that child to be mine I had spent months looking in prams for my baby.

Although I had given up on the idea of getting my baby back I desperately needed to know what my baby looked like.

When my son was born I expresses initial disappointment because he was a boy, what I did not realise was that I thought "I was making my own"

I sat up all night fretting because they had taken him to the nursery and I thought I was not going to see him again.

Returning home I began what would become a lifetime of over vigilance.

I used to wake him up to ensure he was still breathing and would become hysterical if he coughed or ran a temperature,. Meanwhile my mother was moving in on my baby and I felt helpless to know what to do.

I then began to believe I was on the brink of having a heart attack and sought medical treatment for a gamut of symptoms that were very real to me.

I had no confidence in my ability to parent and doubted my decisions, and my mother reinforced those irrational fears.

My self esteem had plummeted however I kept having babies my one aim in life was to "make my own"

I cannot account for a mother knowing what her baby that she has never seen looks like but I knew my first born baby had brown eyes and she looked like my sister. I collected newspaper photos of girls that had brown eyes and resembled my sister.

After having two daughters whom had blue grey eyes I found myself pregnant again.

Two months into the pregnancy I woke one morning to the realisation that I was laying in a pool of blood.

Showering my three toddlers and myself the youngest was 14 months the eldest four years and after Bill went to work I made my way to the Women's hospital where they diagnosed that I was threatening to abort. However I was terrified of losing another baby and I "hung on" Despite many haemorrhages I carried the baby to 26 weeks when I was admitted for a rest.

The placenta was presenting previa so when I delivered him at 36 weeks it was a frightening time.

Born with a dislocated hip, and plethora of other medical complaints he was admitted to the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) to be placed in traction two weeks after he had been discharged from the RWH.

One night a policeman came to inform us that he had been placed in intensive care earlier that evening. We did not have a telephone or a car so we flagged down a taxi and went straight to the RCH. where the doctor told us our baby had pneumonia and was dangerously ill.

Every day I would panic when I got into the lift expecting to find my baby dead I began to hyperventilate but controlled the tightness gripping my chest and ability to breathe by using the breathing method that I had been instructed to use whilst in labor

After the crisis had abated I was alone with my then youngest daughter Michelle when the walls seemed to close in upon me. I grabbed my purse some nappies and ran down the street gripping my baby tight and getting into a taxi I instructed the cabby to go to my friends home.

That night I began to hear voices, repeating the word "*evil*" feeling terrified I grabbed the mattress off the bed and dragged it into my friends bedroom, where her husband and she sat up all night talking to me as though I was normal.

Two days later my friend accompanied me back home she stayed two days, when she left I pulled down the blinds and cried for several days

Then I received notification that my baby was to be discharged so I contacted my mother who had been caring for my two eldest children and packing up we went to stay with her.

Phillip died in my arms two months later.

His medical records show that he was born with microcephalic, a small heart, his lungs were like leather.

However well I seemed to be coping I knew I was different to other mothers, finding it hard to breathe most of the time especially when in company, I did not realise my mistrust of other people.

I asked Bill if I could have one more baby. I was not going to replace Philip nor was I going to try and have "my own"

I knew the need to fill the hole in my heart and Joanne did just that.

If I was over vigilant before I was extremely so now. Joanne began to lose weight and reluctantly I put her on the bottle. That was the beginning of a nightmare she developed lactose intolerance, however she was being treated for gastroenteritis by the RCH

Contacting a professor at the Queen Vic Hospital I begged him to treat her and to not let her die.

She survived but was always underweight and at times her diet was questionable.(Home cooked vegetables and flat boiled lemonade) this was because we could not afford the prescribed formula which was at the time very expensive

She was seven years old and I had returned to work full time I found I was pregnant. Luke was very bronchial but at the time antibiotics had bad press so I lived on my nerves, as doctors sent me home repeatedly, instructing me "wait it out".

On his first birthday he was a very sick little boy but doctors were loath to prescribe antibiotics; consequently he was admitted to RCH one night after I rang a begged them not to let him die, by the time we arrived at the hospital he was no longer conscious. However despite his having pneumonia his recovery was rapid

This last episode broke the camel's back, and by the time he was discharged I had gone over the "invisible line" once again. This left me reduced to crawling around on the floor too scared to go to the letterbox or the clothes line, yet it took twelve months before a specialist admitted me to Prince Henry hospital,

My treatment required me to leave the ward and go out by myself however I did not succeed. Further to this I was also taken off all medication

I crawled around on my knees clutching a brown paper bag for years.

Nobody/nothing seemed to help. I was advised to practice yoga but to no avail.

Then someone took me to an organisation called Grow.

During the initial part of my participation or I should say my nonparticipation I hated being there, it was with great effort that I managed to sit through each meeting with electric shocks running through my body as I felt panic, the repercussion of the unknown.

Slowly I began to read the wisdom's and in due time challenged to retain the readings, It took several years for me to be able to travel on a train and then I began to deliver junk mail as a means to my recovery. However as I grew the maladjustments of my husband were highlighted and I came to the realisation he felt trapped. For many years he had enjoyed the social life of a single man but retained the privileges of a married man as well.

I had needed a lot of assistance in the years when I was sick, my children had been placed into the role of the adult and both Bill and myself were unable to sustain a sense of responsibility.

In 1989 we met our daughter that we had lost to adoption. The adoption Information agency termed it a reunion and this shows how little they understand our dilemma

Once again the issues were clouded and reflecting back I feel I had another "breakdown" because she was not the baby I had lost and she had no recollection of me. The pain was mine alone to suffer and endure.

Bill was not interested in how I was feeling he had been raised to anaesthetise his pain in gambling, drinking or just plain playing anyway he was busy hiding his superannuation

dividing it in the event of our imminent divorce. This happened the following year. It was very ugly time and when it was over I began to realise I did not have my baby back .

Her sense of loyalty was to her adopters who were by now tugging upon her.

Realising the connection to my mental health problems stemmed from the terror of losing another baby that had its roots in the initial way in which I had my first baby abducted from me I was unable to stand by and watch her suffer so I felt compelled to let her go also just as I had done with her Father.

In 1996 I wrote to Christine Campbell MP and outlined the facts surrounding the birth of what should have been the happiest time in our lives. In January 1997 we called for an Inquiry at Parliament House this was at the conception of Origins Vic Inc.

I continue to see a psychiatrist on a fortnightly basis. I still suffer panic attacks, I still have low self esteem and feel incapable at times however I do grasp why I am this way now so I continue to struggle to get an inquiry, so that the truth of adoption can be investigated and studied. Then mothers can be assisted to understand the full facts so that they can forgive a generation that placed fiscal attributes above caring for a mother and her child's sense of emotional stability.

Origins is in the process of lobbying to get a National inquiry and this has kept me very busy so I ask that I be excused for the typing and spelling errors you will no doubt encounter in my story.

Yours Sincerely

Elizabeth Edwards

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

VICTORIA