

Friday 16th March 2001 Senate References

I Monica Denise Whitman (nee Somerfield) was a 9-10yr old child at the time. I had been placed in the Goodwood Orphanage at 2 and a half years by my mother an Aboriginal, to be kept away from the hands of the Aboriginal Protection Board and placed in the caring hands and safety of the Sisters of Mercy to look after me. I was also there 1942-1943 approximately. My mother married a war serviceman in 1945 before the war had finished. Then I lived for a short time at an Apple Orchard at Paracombe. Whilst we were living there my mother gave birth to a child. This child was dragged out of my arms while I was sitting on the end of the brass bed. My stepfather came in drunk and he put one hand on the child and threw her on the wall, hence she fell down and landed on one side of the bedstead, her head was leaning on the big brass foot. He raced out the door and I picked the child up, the child did not wake up the next morning, so I raced to the bus stop from the orchard with my mother. We went to the Children's Hospital by bus, the child was operated on and died 10 days later, she was 3 months old. I was dragged by my stepfather and thrown on the Cross of Sacrifice, molested, shook and belted not to say anything to those men (the Police). I can remember this incident very clearly and remember being in No 1 Angas St, my mother screaming behind the locked door... I could hear him shouting, "leave me alone". I was asked questions by the Police at the time I was going on 6 at the time. So if I can remember these at the age of 6 then I can remember the English children the day they arrived.

Mrs Patricia Carson nee Russell arrived on the 19th January 1949 at the Goodwood Orphanage. She was 1 of 28 children that arrived. Mrs Carson has made many statements over the past 12 years on television, newspapers and radio here in

Australia and in Britain. Each time Pat Carson nee Russell states about beatings by Mother Superior Mother Michael Cane, and each time she went to media, she fails to say why she got a beating as she called it. She told one 7.30 reporter called 'Carmel' that she did not know what she got a beating for at the age of 14, she did not remember why. Yet she bragged to me for years at reunions and private houses about how she got a pair of pliers and butchered 10 year old children on the 3rd storey, and joked about it in front of the other English children and Australian children that were present. I always felt it was a practical joke that Pat was playing that went wrong. It wasn't until Pat and other children approached the Media that I realised she was just out to make trouble, she never told the story in the right manner, and every time I have approached the media to rectify her side of the story I felt I was always disbelieved.

Yes and I was a victim of her assault in the 3rd storey bathroom with a pair of pliers.

CA304 referring to Pat Carson nee Russell speaking of Welfare Records.

I Monica Whitman can never remember welfare approaching me. I do not remember welfare approaching us or asking questions, they may have approached the Mother Superior but no children as far as I am concerned ever talked to welfare.

CA305 I don't feel the Nuns have any records because another nun told me, sister Mary Rita McIntyre who was orphaned at the age of 4 in 1915, grew up there and left at 17 to become a nun. Then returned and worked in the kitchen as a cook. She informed me later on in her senior years visiting my home, Mother Michael was handed a piece of paper with a list of girls names arriving from England in 6 weeks time, they did not know what part of England they were from. These were the only

records kept by the Orphanage and I can't see why the nuns should take the blame for holding records that were not in existence and supposedly held on the premises.

Others may have arrived at a later date, but handled by Catholic Welfare. I know this to be true because I have checked Catholic Welfare records and a book on the Orphanage with records of the girls is held by Catholic Welfare. I have seen this book in the presence of Rosemary White and while we were there we were given our Baptismal Certificates 50 years after the event.

I do not believe that a girl could be in an Orphanage for 15 years and did not receive a smack from a loving caring environment in England, because I got my fair share of smacks and punishment up till the age of 13 and still received loving care from the Sisters of Mercy at the Goodwood Orphanage.

CA306 Pat Carson nee Russell states, "They kept me at the Orphanage and never paid anything to me". Sister Mary Rita McIntyre was 17 when she left to become a nun, she never got paid either. No one got paid for chores, it was part of the upbringing. We all did our chores, it was the only way the place could be run, this being because it was run on charity.

CA306 Pat Carson nee Russell states that she was involved in having the plaque dedicated at the Migration Museum concerning the British Child Migrants. (I wonder if the museum would place a plaque for an Aboriginal child that was tortured by the 14 year old Pat Carson nee Russell).

Pat Carson states that she was kept there until the age of 17, when I believe an English girl called Pam Smedler was in the orphanage for 8 months at the most. Mother

Michael left in 1951, the year I left and I do not remember Pat Carson nee Russell being there. This question will be revised later.

CA307 Pat Carson nee Russell states that there were two nuns at the orphanage who were angels, but they were over-riding her decision and they could not do anything about it. Mother Mary Thomas Casey and Sister Mary Martha Day. It was Mother Michael that did all the dirty work and ordered it to happen.

I Monica Whitman state that, Mother Michael had complete control over the orphanage, the nuns were under orders and would also use there own discretion on punishment when seen fit. So I don't see where Mother Michael ordered them to do their dirty work, that relates to pages CA307. Father Luke Roberts as Catholic Welfare priest was always visiting Goodwood and talking to the children on many occasions.

Australian and English children could talk to Father Roberts at any time on any ill treatment if they wanted to speak up.

CA308 Pat Carson nee Russell states Mr Fallion brought the beating to the notice of the Archbishop, I Monica Whitman do not know of any Mr Fallion visiting the place, she may have told Mr Fallion after she left the Orphanage, and if this had been told to the Archbishop, I was her victim and I would have been brought before the Archbishop.

The accusation of marks on her back, and that Mother Michael was sent back to Angas Street with others cheering. How could others cheer this when Pat Carson nee

Russell was not even in the orphanage at that time. She left in 1949 eight months after arriving and Mother Michael was still there until 1951, the year that I left the orphanage.

CA309 Pat Carson nee Russell states that while working at Calvary Hospital she had to report to Father Roberts either every week or fortnight. As Father Roberts was in charge of Catholic Welfare Services. I feel she would have been old enough to report the alleged incident then.

CA315 Mr Vic Carson states the effect that Archbishop Beovich did not allow any of the girls from Goodwood Orphanage be adopted. Then he states he had some right to do this. Vic cannot remember the exact wording but 'it is here somewhere, I will get it to you'.

I Monica Whitman state that my mother Elsie Leonard had full legal control over me, and the Archbishop would not have had any consent or authority to have me or any other girl adopted. Reason being a parent or both parents would have had to go to Catholic Welfare for placement at Goodwood Orphanage and any adoption would require the signature of a parent.

I don't remember any girl being adopted while I was there, only allowed to go on holidays.

CA321 Senator, the Chairperson was asked concerning any sexual assaults at the time. I am not sure of the girl that Pat Carson nee Russell is talking about, however there was a girl who had a reputation, and I feel that this maybe the girl referred to. Then the Chairperson talked with you. Pat Carson nee Russell, states that, "because I was one of the older girls, I had a lot of dealings with them". Then she states not dealing with them, she goes on to state 'Old Joe', I think his name was, he used to milk the cows and things. I do not know of any sexual assault but I do remember rumours in the Priest House. These were things Pat Carson nee Russell seems to be grasping at straws. We were never allowed to play where the Gardener lived. The Priest was taken breakfast by a girl every morning and I never heard of any rumours of Father Morrison. He was there in the 1940's, a middle aged Priest and very loved by us all. We were never allowed to venture past a gate as this was a restricted area. We were very protected from any male roaming the grounds. The gates to the staircase leading up on to the 2nd floor, where we were bedded down at night was locked on all occasions.

CA317 Senator Murray states in asking what form of Civil action to take on allegations regarding Goodwood (Mother Michael beating incident).

I Monica Whitman state the only reason why this was not taken up in Civil action is that the Sisters of Mercy would have brought in their witnesses and it would show that I was the victim, and that Pat Carson nee Russell was being disciplined for torturing me and others with a pair of pliers. Pat Carson nee Russell, would not have wanted this matter brought up.

CA318 Senator Murray is asking about the money that was given by the crew of the ship arriving. Pat Carson nee Russell states that, "we never saw that money again".

I Monica Whitman state that no-one in the Orphanage was allowed to handle money. No money was ever stolen that was ever given to me by my mother. I would hand this money into Mother Thomas, maybe a shilling, which was registered in a book and given to me to spend on Saturday's on lollies.

M D Whitman

THOUGHTS AND MEMORIES

OF MY DAYS AT

GOODWOOD ORPHANAGE

BY

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I as an Australian child growing up in the Goodwood Orphanage have no regrets regarding my time there. I now in later life realize that a home environment would have been better, but that was not to be. Looking back I liked my time in the orphanage. I loved, admired and respected the nuns, as they were to me like parents. They educated, entertained, clothed and fed me. They also instilled in me strong moral values for which I am eternally grateful.

For the last fifty years, I have kept a close relationship with all the orphanage nuns, attending functions and funerals, sometimes just casual visits, discussing the old days.

So it has been a source of much sorrow, and disgust to me when over years I hear in the media, serious accusations made against them. These are not exaggerations, but mostly blatant lies. They are made exclusively by some (not all) of the English children.

I can understand their bitterness, which should be directed at the English government. Their motive for attacking the nuns with venom and hatred, and destroying their credibility is something I can only ponder. Maybe it is for monetary gain, or they feel they need someone to blame, or maybe they really believe these things happened.

So I am submitting this document in the remote hope that these accusations can for once and for all be dismissed, and these very old remaining nuns, who have dedicated their entire lives to raising children, can see out their days in the contentment that they deserve.

We are former residents of Goodwood Orphanage, also known as St Vincent De Paul Orphanage of Goodwood. We arrived at Goodwood Orphanage at the age of two and a half years old, and stayed until the age of twelve years. Some stayed longer, until fifteen or sixteen years old. We were schooled at the orphanage, also three meals a day and bedded at night in dormitories. Also disciplined firmly in every way when needed, up until the English children arrived on the 19 January 1949.

Three months before they arrived, the nuns gathered all the children together and told us to be nice and understanding, as they had no families out here. The Australian children were anxious for them to arrive as we would have new playmates, instead of the ones that were already here.

The day before the English children arrived, the nuns called us together to help decorate the hall with balloons, streamers and big **WELCOME** signs and to set up for a party, to **WELCOME** them. The children arrived, we were waiting for them on the upstairs balcony. We were given a girls name each to show them where they were going to sleep, we wanted to take their suitcases up to the dormitory, also to show them around (where to sleep, play, eat) and to make them feel wanted. Some of these girls were not told in England that they were coming to another orphanage, especially the older girls of twelve years to fifteen years. They had rebellious attitudes, fighting with the Australian girls going upstairs to the dormitory. The nuns had to pull the girls apart, fearing they might injure themselves. There were continuous fights between the English girls with the younger Australian girls and *vice versa* when it suited the Australian girls.

Life went on in the same vein as before the children arrived. The English children resented going to school inside orphanage grounds, they thought they would be going to school outside (it was a big shock to them) as in England they were going to school outside. The younger children under ten years of age got on very well with the Australian children of the same age as themselves.

In the big dormitory at night was the **worst behaviour** of the bigger English girls treatment to the Australian girls ten years and under. Punching us in the face and backs while we were sleeping, as they were going past us to the toilets. This was a continuous practice every night. We **dare not tell the nuns** for **fear** we would be **beaten** and **bullied** in the school yard by the older girls even if we did not tell the nuns we were still bullied regardless. The nuns allowed them free rein until they settled in, then they had to clamp down on them but by that time the older Australian children were equally as bad.

Some of us Australians who had fortnightly visits from their mothers, such as Monica Whitman nee Somerfield and [redacted] (these mothers were half cast Aboriginals), [redacted] (non Aboriginal) whose mother had a cleft pallet lip. The English children would sit on the merry-go-round and tease us as our mothers came through the gates to visit us. Monica and [redacted] because their mothers were Aboriginal and [redacted] because of her mothers cleft pallet lip. After our mothers left we would take our **goodies** (lollies, jam, fruit, vegemite and milo) to the Mother Superior's office under the staircase, only to be approached by the English girls, our **goodies** stolen and eaten, after we were pushed and punched to the ground. We could never get them safely to Mother Superior's office. This would always

happen after our fortnightly visits. This never happened to us until the English children arrived. Our mothers were only trying to show us love and compassion by coming to see us each fortnight.

As older women we can look back on the past, we realise they were jealous as they had no relatives to visit them. We dreaded our fortnightly visits from our mothers, for being in **fear** of being **bashed** and **punched** to the ground, to the extent of telling our mothers not to visit us for the **fear** of **teasing** and **bullying** we received from the English girls. We felt sorry for the English children for not having visitors.
It was not the fault of the nuns.

Abel Wiltman