



Rosemary Beggs,

26th August 2003.

The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs References Committee
Suite S159
Parliament House
Canberra. A.C.T. 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Rosemary Beggs, (Du Heaume) and I was a State Ward in Queensland from 3rd June 1951 to 11.3.66. I was at Nazareth House at Wynnum from 3.6.51 till 27.10.51. As I have no memory of that time, I will proceed to my time at St Vincents Home, Nudgee. (Nudgee Orphanage) which I first attended on 18.5.52.

I would like the Senate Committee to understand the brutality of my childhood and the impact it has had on my life and those around me. I lived my childhood in absolute terror, and the nightmares and horror never leaves you. I liken my childhood to a concentration camp for children. I huddled in corners trying to be invisible for fear of being noticed, and flogged when I had done no wrong. We wore rags that didn't even fit us, except for church or occasions when someone might see us.

We ate food that was not fit for human consumption. Cold grey milk with curdled milk and

and deposited their droppings in our food. Cockroaches ran across the floors and tables. My friends and I swatted flies and ate them and picked four leaf clovers to fill our empty stomachs.

Bath times consisted of being lined up in groups naked, and then being dipped like cattle in dirty water that contained D.D.T. to get rid of any germs we may have had. We had all our hair shaved off, and so had to wear berrets on our heads. When I was a very young child, there were not enough beds in the dormitory and so I slept on a mattress on the floor. I had no blankets, and when it got dark the rats would come out, and run over the top of you and bite you. On several occasions I climbed into a friends bed, because I was scared of the rats. I had to be out of my friends bed before daylight, or I would be flogged and told by the nuns that I was a filthy dirty little girl and the devil was going to get me

Running was forbidden, and because I knew I would get flogged for being late for church, I ran down the stairs, fell and split my head open. I was 4 or 5 yrs old. I was taken to the Pharmacy, where I was beaten for running, with a cane then had my knuckles beaten

3.

with a pair of scissors. I was then plunked in a chair and had my head sewn with a needle and thread. Schooling consisted of a nun walking up and down with a cane, and if you looked up you were beaten across the head, back or anywhere else she could reach. Very often we sat at the front of the class with a dunce cap on to be ridiculed. I was so fearful I learned nothing.

Medical treatment at Nudgee was administered by the Pharmacy Nun (Str Perpetua) and consisted of cod liver oil, beatings, and plunging childrens limbs into boiling water if you were unlucky enough to get boils or carbuncles. If you got sick you either got better or died. Us children had nothing. There was an old tram at Nudgee and that was our only toy.

Children who came into the home had all their possessions confiscated, including their clothes never to be seen again. At Christmas you were given a plastic bath duck, for the day and they were taken back on Boxing Day. You knew when someone important was coming

Quilts appeared on beds, Boxes of toys we were not allowed to touch. We were lined up in our Sunday clothes and put on Show. Nobody spoke to us, nor would we have told them what went on in that place. The repercussions would have been too great. Children who ran away were sent to Goodna or Westbrook. You had no Identity. I did not know my own name or birthdate or age. I'd forgotten I had sisters in a different home. The children who had siblings at Nudgee were not allowed to acknowledge each other. I knew myself only as Rosie.

I watched my friends die and was flogged for asking where they went, so I gave up asking. If you wet yourself or your bed, you were flogged made to wear your underwear or sheet on your head, you were put on parade while everyone heard what a filthy evil creature you were, I was locked in dark rooms as punishment for days at a time.

And then the Catholic Church hid their pedophile priests in our

'When they could no longer hide them in the community. (With the full support of the Archbishop.) (See FORGE REPORT).

The result was many children were raped. ~~Those~~ who spoke out were beaten and called liars. We accepted it was their right, for we knew nothing else. Nobody from the State Childrens Dept, cared what was happening to us.

There was never an ounce of kindness shown to us. We were beaten, starved, raped. It was a terrifying existence, full of pain, devoid of emotion. I never cried for I learned to feel nothing. When I was 10 years old I was fostered into another Hell Hole. I was told the day I arrived that I was only there as a playmate for her child and to help with the work. Because I could not read or write, and Mrs Anderson was not going to be shamed by me. I was made to stay up to midnight every night. I was flogged with peach and figtree sticks, and straps till I learned. I wet myself and vomited in my bed every night as I was such a nervous wreck.

This woman who's care I was placed in told me everyday how much she hated me, and what a worthless piece of nothing I was

Yes, I had food and clothes, but in a way it was worse. I saw how much she loved her daughter, I walked miles to school, while her child got a lift. I sat and watched her daughter have swimming lessons, I was not allowed to sit on the lounge with them. I was forced to use their name and I became Rosemary Andersen.

And then the State Childrens Dept told her my mother was in Goodna. I didnt even know I had one. She told me everyday about my crazy mother and how I would end up just like her. She took me to Goodna so I would see how I would end up. I was terrified of my mother and that impacted on my relationship with her, because I was so afraid of her illness. They left me in this Hell Hole for 12 yrs.

The State Childrens Dept and the Church let me down. Nobody protected, cared for or loved me. I returned to Nudgee for several months before being fostered out again.

Fortunately Nudgee had changed a little, due to Mother Liam taking over. There was at least food and clothing. It was still a Brutal place where children were never valued or loved, and still being beaten and abused.

I was lucky enough to escape by being fostered out to Mrs Karger at Camp Hill. It took a long time but she taught me that not every adult in the world was evil, and someone loved me.

When you grow up in that background, you accept things you might otherwise not. The result is you grow up vulnerable, with no sense of yourself and you struggle to find your place in this world. The system of that era found it acceptable, for children to be used in that manner. There is no acknowledgement of our pain and suffering, no justice, no ongoing trauma counselling. Most of us live in incredible poverty and we are the forgotten people, that nobody takes any responsibility for.

I hope this submission gives the Committee, a picture of what it was like growing up in so called care in this country. I hope we do better for today's children. Doing this has caused me great stress, but I know this is the only way anyone will have a true picture and recognise the long term affect of child abuse.

Thanking you,
yours Sincerely,
Rosemary Beggs (Du Hezume)
R. Beggs