

[Secretariat Note: Also see sub 486]

Submission for Senate Enquiry into the Treatment of Children in Care

For the purpose of this Inquiry I wish to be made known as Jane Doe. I am happy for this submission to be placed on the Senate Inquiry Submissions Site on the Internet.

From the age of 3 ½ until I was 17 I was in 'Care' at the Salvation Army Children's Home at Stanmore NSW (which at one time was called The Lodge). I believe there were about 28 kids in the home. I was made a State Ward due to the fact that my mother was a heroin addict - I was born addicted to heroin.

It is almost 21 years since I left the home and I have decided that I can't keep hiding things anymore. The things that happened to me while I was in 'care' shouldn't have happened. The decisions made by the courts of NSW and the Officers 'caring' for children at the home were inhumane. I am not writing this submission because I blame all the bad things in my life on the fact that I was brought up in the home. I am writing them because they need to be told. The Australian Government needs to be aware that these things happened and apologize to the many children brought up in homes and orphanages.

Family History as I know it. My mother was 19 when she gave birth to me. I was Born at Auburn hospital NSW. My father was 21, and when my parents were married he went AWOL from army. Dad is one of 9 he was born in NSW and he himself grew up in orphanage. I have sisters and brothers. All of them were in care in orphanages in NSW.

When I was a baby, my mother lived in Campbelltown in a Tin Shed behind a Laundromat. My mother was bashed by some bikies and our Greek neighbours who ran the Laundromat rang my aunty. My Aunty came and took us kids. In 1969 this Aunty and uncle tried to get custody of us. One day when I was approximately six months old my Mum and Aunty were in court for the custody hearing. My Mum had shot of heroin just before she went into court. Mum was holding me and in front of the judge and other people in court she dropped me. In all his wisdom the judge still decided to let my mother have custody of me. I was in mum's care until 3 ½ years.

After this Mum left me at Salvation Army Children's Home at Stanmore. Matron Envoy Entwhistle picked me up and was nursing me. My sister was 14 months old at the time. After this I had little or no contact from my parents. I have evidence including photo's of myself and my siblings while we were in the home.

Below are some of my memories of being in care:

When I was young I was a pretty little girl and I was a poster kid for Salvo's - this helped to raise money for the Salvation Army - not much of that money went on making life better for us kids.

Some of the Lieutenant's at the home were extremely cruel to me and the other kids at the home.

One Lieutenant **Chris Cole** was especially cruel. While at the home I was a chronic bed wetter. When I was 4 ½ I wet the bed and she rubbed nose in the wet bed – I was then taken out of bed and made to wash the wet sheets 4 am in the morning. On another occasion I watched as this Lieutenant ripped out a girl's earring. People like this Should never have reared children.

Another very cruel officer was **Captain Johnson** – as far as I know she was not affiliated with the home. She lived in unit at back of the home. When we kids made any noise she would shout at us to “settle down and quieten down”.

On another occasion when the Salvo's tried to move matron Leona Scholes who was one very kind matron I became very upset and objected strongly. Captain Johnson assaulted me – grabbed my hair and hit me. She said about me “this girl needs 3 months in Minda Children's Home. She threatened me with this. I got very angry and she slapped me – I hit her and other kids hit her to protect me. She said that I needed a good tanning. She slapped my face – I kicked her and ran away. We called her the ‘Wicked witch of West’ –

One time at Christmas she told me ‘You don't deserve Christmas present’. I replied ‘I'm an orphan and I do deserve presents. She slapped me for being rude.

When I was about 8 yrs old I came back from Netball training. As I got near the home I saw a woman and said to the Lieutenant “what an ugly woman” laughing about this. When I got back to the home the matron told me ‘Your brother arrived, I think his name is Daryl. I ran out to the Laundry lady and said where is my brother. She said she didn't know and called out “which is D...” this little 2-year-old boy put his hand up. That is how I met my brother. Later I was telling other kids about the ugly lady I saw when a Lieutenant said ‘I wouldn't laugh – that was your mum’. I was shocked, what a way to be told about your mum.

There was another extremely cruel Lieutenant her name was Lieutenant Weir – once when I was 5 or 6 the other kids and I were experimenting – looking at each other's bodies. Lieutenant Weir was looking through the window at us in the ‘wet bedroom’ this was where kids who wet their bed slept. There were 7 kids in wet bedroom. She came in and came up to another girl and me and grabbed our heads and banged them together. She said “You dirty dirty little girls” – she flung me across the room into the wall. Later she told another brutal Matron named Matron Entwhistle what we did. This matron then bashed me. The bashing was so severe that I could not go to school for 2 weeks.

When I wet the bed Lieutenant Weir would rub my nose in it when she woke me at 6 am. She would then throw my sheets at me and rub them in my face saying, “You're a dirty dirty girl”. One night I tried to stay awake all night to try not to wet the bed to get her to tell me I was a good girl. When she knew I hadn't wet the bed all she said was “it's about time”. From the day I left the home I never wet my bed again.

One time Lieutenant Weir got angry at one of the kids S.... we kids got very angry and we laid into her. She was hitting all of us. She punched me. She ripped out S....'s earring.

Lt. Weir tormented us on a daily basis. She was never nice to us.

Downstairs underneath the home there were dungeons from the old days. One day Lieutenant Weir took me down into the dungeon and told me that this was where I would be locked up if I was bad. "That's where all bad girls belong - behind closed doors"

Matron Entwhistle also did all of these things including severe bashings. She was one of the cruelest people I have ever met.

Holiday Hostings

The kids at the home including me went to people's places in the school holidays whenever Matron Entwhistle said so. The Drazes' family was one family I went to and they were nice. But their 2 friends molested me (I was 10). The friends lived at Botany and we used to go and sleep over at their place. The husband (the friend of the Drazes') molested me. He used to put me to bed and when he did he used to put his hands under the covers and he touched me on my genitals. I tried to block it out.

During the first 'holiday' - I went to a disco - I was 10 - I got drunk. The father said 'don't worry, I won't tell anyone. This is our little secret'. This man was fingering me.

On another holiday I went on a two-week holiday at Maitland - this happened on two occasions. The woman used to come down to Sydney on the train to get me. The husband was scout leader. He often molested me. He used to come into the room at night and put pillow over face. We went to a Caravan Park at Shoal Bay. He used to tuck me in (we were in a tent). He used to put his finger under the blankets and finger me and molest me. I used to ask him to stop. One time a person walking past heard me and came in. He asked what was happening and this man said he was just tucking me in. I said 'No He's trying to hurt me'. He stopped and the man left. He continued to molest me, he was fingering me. While he was doing things to me, his wife was drinking with other people. He used to come in during the night and molest me.

When I went back to the home after this I told Matron Entwhistle she said "don't be silly, they are lovely people. They donate a lot of money to the home". How dare you say such awful things? They are a lovely family.

At another holiday hosting with the Drazes' their friend, the father was teaching me piano. He was sucking my ears and fingering me at the same time. He wouldn't let go of me. I told Drazes' and I never had to go back there again.

When I came back after this, there was a new Matron Leona Scholes - The new Matron was very good.

My Stepmother tried hard to get dad involved and caring for us but he didn't want to. Dad took us out for 2 hours at a time. Dad has let me down constantly.

I left the home in August 1983 at 16 ½, lived with my Aunty and Uncle. I had a job as an apprentice hairdresser. I lived at Leumeah.

Later:

I went to a 100-year reunion of the Children's home in 2002. This was very hard. I was supposed to pay to go to the reunion – I couldn't believe I was expected to pay to get into my own lounge room. Seventeen of the kids from when I was in care went to the reunion.

I still do not have contact with my father. When my stepbrother killed himself before his 21st birthday I was told there would be no funeral. Later I found out there was a big memorial service held but I was not allowed to go.

To the Government: You need to acknowledge what happened to children in care and do something about it. We need counselling and support. We need to be heard and to have those who abused us make an apology at the very least.