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Eldon Humphries

Senate Inquiry  
into Children in Institutional Care

I never shared a meal with both my parents - how I wish I had never shared a meal with the Anglican Nuns.

I cannot write or talk about a lot of things that happened to me while I was in "St Michael's Girls Home" in Bathurst - I think about it every day & it has affected my life so much - but I always feel as though no one ever cared that they gave the Anglican Church Army Nuns the right to destroy children's lives.

I was told when I was put in St Michael's, that I was a very terrible bad person (Sister Bridges) said that I was been bad that I would always be unwanted - awful & useless & that was why I was there.

I was in primary school when my father left me there - I was very distressed & could not stop crying.

I went to a new school the next day at Belso & was crying so much they rang the Nuns & said to take me back as I was too distressed. They were very angry & put me in the "playroom". The playroom was a large room with a laminate table & six chairs - there were no books - no toys - nothing in it at all. In the year I was in St Michael's I never read a book - never saw a toy - never heard a radio - total isolation. I tried to run away - got out the door & was punished - when I eventually returned to school with my spirit broken the other children wouldn't speak to me. I remember seeing my face in a mirror at school - I had no skin left on my lower face - just scabs & blood - I had spent so many weeks locked up & crying I had rubbed all the skin off my face.

The routine at St Michael's was always the same, nothing could ever change it. We got up very early woken by the Nuns - we got dressed in our uniforms, made our beds & went straight to Chapel - no talking

We knelt on the hard wooden floor in the freezing cold - not allowed to sit at all for the whole time it took to go through all the prayers & ask God for forgiveness again for being such bad children. Then there was breakfast & a very long walk to school in a line with a Nun at each end. After school it was the same - walk back - tea - chapel & bed in the daylight. No talking.

I was not used to a lot of the food, reminding was terrifying if you made it to the table you didn't have to eat it off the table - but you had to continue eating what was making you sick up when I returned to the table & I was not allowed the luxury of staying in the toilet very long.

I was in bed early, everyone slept in dormitories & went to bed at the same time straight after evening Chapel. I was always thirsty & wanted to go to the toilet - which was not allowed. I would wait hours till it was very dark & think if I could just get to the bathroom I could get some

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water out of the toilet bowl to  
drink - I would start to creep up  
the passageway & Sister Bridges  
would always be hidden & send me  
back - no matter how much I begged  
to go to the toilet it was not allowed.

On Saturdays we did  
housework, your jobs got changed  
weekly. I had to stand on a box,  
I wasn't tall enough then to reach  
into the concrete wash tubs. I had  
to wash all the socks separately  
in tubs of freezing cold water.  
Sister watched while I pulled each  
sock over my hand - scrubbed it  
with sunlight soap for so many  
minutes & put it in the rinsing  
basin, then you had to rinse it  
& wring it & later hang them out.  
Barbours is very cold & I only  
had cold water - the pain from the  
freezing cold water was awful, my  
hands used to go blue & after  
several hours hands & arms were  
just numb. I used to sob with  
the pain hoping Sister would not  
notice - I couldn't understand  
why they didn't wash the socks in  
the washing machine - they had

had one in the laundry - as how Sister could watch me for hours - but not help, such hours of pain + misery every Saturday, so scared of doing something wrong + getting into more trouble - not allowed to talk.

I fell + broke my arm when I was twelve - I remember it very well - it was so painful - blue + swollen - Sister would not take me to a Doctor, I sat for days on end with my arm in a bucket of cold water on the floor in the playroom. At night I went to bed in so much pain - the next day the bucket again, they did not send me to school. After some time I could not even make a bed + my arm was going black. Sister took me into Bathurst to the doctor. I remember the Dr screaming at her + I knew when I returned to St Michaels I would be punished because he was so angry with her for not taking me there sooner. My wrist was so badly broken + it had been left so long it had then to be rebroken.

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\* set several times, hospital for many weeks was such an escape I never wanted to return to St Michaels.

I became very ill again \* was locked in sick bay which had its own bathroom. I was many weeks in there - spoke to no-one - saw no one. Sister Bridges would go in with food - she would stand over me while I ate & sing a song "Oh yes she's a great pretender, pretending that she's sick in bed!" I wasn't allowed the lights on or the blinds up, total darkness for I knew not how many weeks, no sound. I used to know if it was morning or night by the footsteps to the dormitory. I wished for someone to see or speak to, I just thought it would be better to die. - I am still afraid of the dark.

So many very bad things happened that I try not to think about & block out such cruelty from the Sisters. The effect on me is lifelong - psychiatric - hospital antidepressants - illness - insomnia & nightmares.

Who gave the 7 Nuns the right to  
destroy my childhood? Who accepts  
the responsibility for my pain &  
suffering - which has destroyed  
my emotional stability & physical  
health for the rest of my life?

I do not fear death I fear with  
it comes the end to all the nightmares  
& terrors, that have been with me since  
my father left me with the Anglican  
Church - thinking I would be safe  
& well cared for.

Yours Sincerely

Blonda Wardman

