

SUBMISSION

...on 18 April 1940 to Adrienne Eileen Riley and James Riley. I am from the stolen white slave generation. Ever heard of it? No, because we have never ever said anything to anyone. My name is Ella Audrey Riley, now Street. I was brought up by my aunt Thelma Dobson(?), now deceased. My memories are nothing more than hate and horror, which I locked away inside myself and threw away the key. Now Pandora's box has finally been opened—not very pleasant, I must say.

From what I've been told Thelma had me from three months old—Welfare say seven years. I remember my birth parents in my head only. I never forgot their faces. I had no love or kisses or cuddles a child deserves. I don't even cry any more. Tears come occasionally but do not fall. While other children were playing I was scrubbing a kitchen floor in 30 Smidmore Street, Marrickville. If I cried with back pain I was smacked across the head and told to start again: it was not good enough. I had to wash clothes and boil sheets et cetera in a cement copper, wood fire with grates and hang out to dry on a clothes line by standing on an old wooden butter box which collapsed and went through my right shin. I have a scar to prove it. That was not recorded with Welfare.

Aged two: fell on a coal heap in the backyard, blood blister above the right knee was not released, therefore operated on at age 15 because of severe pain. Removed at the age of 15. Large deep scar and part of the muscle taken where the roots had gone—cancerous. Ever seen the movie *Sybil* performed by Sally Fields? Brilliant. That was me as well, always up on the kitchen table every second day having an enema. That used to hurt, as she was trying to make extra holes in my very public area—not private.

I only ever saw Welfare four times, yet my files say several times they visited. I was supposed to be very happy and chirpy. Open your eyes and take off the cover and see what is beneath that face. My records say the same stuff over and over, like a broken record or perhaps copied from the page before. I was smashed across the head many, many times, punched in the back and arms, hit with wire from Sydney through a shanghai or slingshot.

When will Welfare be in to protect me from their son and the husband? The son tried many times to rape me but I fought him off. One time I locked myself in the bathroom while his mother was out. I did not have a lock on the door, only a large file held in place by several large nails, while mummy's little boy tried to get through the window. I would have put it through him if he had got in, if I had to. Uncle Albert, the husband, used to try climbing into bed with me. I used to push him out with all my strength, and wake the old girl up.

She told Welfare she used to sleep in the lounge room with my sister Veronica and I. Lies. We slept in her room with the settee against her double bed. We were dragged out of bed at all hours of the night, up again at 4 to get her stinking son off to work. He would get a loaf of bread for lunch, which I found out he was throwing away while we were going hungry.

Thelma always reminded me every day of our miserable lives we were not her children and why should she have to rear us? Maybe for the money or the glory. She used to tell us strangers in the street we were on welfare. How embarrassed was I? They would go on holidays, including the goddamn daughter and husband while Veronica and I went to school.

Talking about school, I would ask for writing books so I could do my school work. Smashed across the head and told she can't afford these luxuries. Yes, I had four subjects in one book and could never hand it in. I suffered terribly. She would have biscuits and lollies in her room, all locked up so we could see but not touch. Occasionally we would have a slice of apple and three baked beans and sauce on a sandwich, half an egg, and told: you only need a taste.

I could write a book and it would be a bestseller.

My teeth were supposed to be good news for you. I never owned a toothbrush until my first pay packet. We had to clean our teeth with our finger and salt. I had lost my six front teeth by 15. My boss, Miss Slattery(?), sent me to her dentist and paid for them, and I religiously paid her back every pay. She was so nice to me and I had a lot of respect and loved her.

For many years now I have had a very painful back. Doctor said it was muscular. I have recently found out my right kidney is laying on its side, but fully functional with multiple cysts. I was belted if my feet would not fit into the neighbour's shoes—more battle scars. My feet are so ugly and crippled with pain. I have walked in the ball of my feet since age 15.

It seems to be a favourite age, but it is all true. I don't lie. I had bunions removed and had many falls from this.

I remember living in Concorde Street St Peters, with Eileen and James, and Jean her sister, and Carol, Jean's daughter, who was also taken and put into Dalmar Children's Home at Carlingford. Later adopted out, she was lucky, I guess. My sister Veronica and I were asleep at the foot of a double mattress where our mother Eileen slept in the laundry. James came in and lent over her, and I heard her say the girls were there asleep. I never saw him again.

I went to Newtown Public School in kindergarten and I messed myself and was sat in the middle of the playground for the rest of the school to look at—more humiliation. Thelma did everything she could to degrade us. It was like she was trying to clean our parents out of us. Yes, I had a couple of friends inside the school gate only and left them there in the afternoon. I had no friends out of school. I have none now, nobody really cares. No-one will ever understand unless they have been through it. If Welfare had done their job properly we would never have been put in this dangerous position. I never had someone

to call mum and dad. Do you know how much that hurt? I had an oven and a
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We never had Christmas or birthdays. The teacher would ask us what we got for Christmas and I lied and told her what I would have liked and did not get. She must have known. I was so ashamed. My hair had been cut above my ears. I'd look like a freak. I used to wear paraffin oil in my hair to keep lice off me.

I find I can no longer cry and I feel dead inside. I hate Christmas and my birthdays. Yes, I do get depressed but I get over it by going inside myself to escape. I learned at a very early age. I still have no friends. Now I keep to myself. If I want to see others I walk around the shopping centres and then shut myself in the house. I used to get Chinese burns on both wrists, where you'd twist the joint in opposite directions, they're very painful now. Many a time I would say: I wish I was dead. This woman was so cruel in the home, yet I've heard: 'that dear old sweet nan'. I could not believe my ears. People must have heard our screams, yet no-one came.

If I was to tell anyone I would be threatened with being locked up in a room with bread and water and see no-one ever again. So I had to clam up. She told everyone I was shy. I don't think so. When I told her about her son, her words were: 'you must have deserved it'. He spent a lot of his life behind bars. We were blamed for him being there. Veronica and I stayed out of trouble. We are not close; we were never allowed to talk to each other.

I have since been in touch with a brother whom I have not seen in 46 years, a sister for 53 years and we are still searching for another sister aged 55 years. I have no feelings whatsoever. They were all total strangers. Maybe one day. We were all kept apart. Brother was brought up as an only child. He knew of Veronica and Ella only by name, no contact.

I could go on and on. I only sleep a couple of hours a night, listen to 2CH all night, good music.

Save the children. Do not allow it to continue. Put these children where they are loved, not treated like garbage and slaves. My life included scrubbing, washing, ironing, cooking, gardening and mowing with a push lawnmower and vacuuming, the very last job. I do not believe in welfare departments, I am sorry to say, since 1951. I would say tomorrow never comes. Unbelievable.

Thank you for listening to my story. I hope it does help other children.

I remain, yours sincerely, Ella Audrey Street, nee Riley.

Thank you.