

Hello my name is Jody Anne Smith. I was born on the 17th April 1968 which makes my age 36. My partner and I are parents to our fifteen months of age little girl, Olivia. I have resided in New Zealand since 2002 and we are returning to live in Australia in April 2005. I have recently completed studying Women's studies here in New Zealand and became a mother so it is through these two fields that I have come to realise that there are issues from my childhood that are affecting me in my life now and have done for a long time. My inability to form long and trusting relationships, in particular, with persons in positions of authority (for example medical professionals, social workers and employers) can be related directly to my trust breaking experiences with so called professionals and persons of authority in the care of Burnside Presbyterian Homes for Children, which myself and two brothers, Peter John and David Robert were residents of twice in 1973 and then again from 1976 until 1982 in mine and David's case. (Peter having left the homes in 1980). Intimate relationships haven't fared any better as the sexual abuse and mistrust of men started in the care of Burnside Homes. Luckily I have an understanding partner now but the past ones didn't know how to help me and I didn't know how myself.

The following is two major experiences I lived through that have affected me, I believe, psychologically, emotionally, culturally, spiritually and physically. Because of the level of psychological abuse I received and emotional neglect, I made a decision when I was in my late twenties to forget the past and get on with my life. As I said before, studying women's studies and becoming a mother made me aware of a lot of issues that needed airing so recently I asked for access to my files from Burnside (now Uniting Care) and it has taken six months for them to put it in order but arrive it did in December 2004. To me it was like receiving a present of my childhood - I was excited as I had 'forgotten' how unbearable my childhood had been - until I started reading it. I found I needed to take two days to read it as it brought up emotions of anger, hurt, distrust and deep grief to much to absorb in one reading. Then I went into a depression for two days. Thankfully my partner looked after our daughter and me during this time. Below I have written about the abuse as much as I can remember and I have also written as a witness to one incident of the physical abuse my older brother Peter received while in Reid Home.

In February 1973 until June 1973 Peter and I were placed into Burnside Presbyterian homes for Children by our father, Christopher John Smith. We were placed there again for two weeks in the September 1973 but were soon discharged. It was during one of these stays at Burnside's Reid home that I was sexually abused and Peter was physically abused by the male houseparent. I cannot remember his name but his daughter was named 'Vicki'. Peter was physically abused by the same man but that is his story to tell.

At bedtime we, the children, were taken to the toilet room where we would brush our teeth and go to the toilet before going to bed. This is where I remember abuse taking place. The man was wearing a dressing gown that came to his knees and entered my toilet cubicle. He parted his dressing gown and told me to put his erect penis in my mouth. I did as I was told and I gagged as he moved himself in and out of my mouth but he wouldn't stop. I recall the taste, smell and texture of that man and the feelings of disgust, shame and guilt I felt for years after. These same house parents punished

me, a four year old, by making me polish the wooden floors with a cloth on my hands and knees, missing my meals while the other children ate. I am not sure if it's related but in my teens (1982/3) I had problems with my knees that created extreme pain in them and they would 'lock' if I knelt on them or squatted. My mother took me to the doctors who suggested I attend physiotherapy at a Hospital in Hurstville, Sydney, as the doctors could find no reason except muscular problems as the reason for the pain and locking. To this day I am wary of how I sit on my knees and squat. I refrain from doing it if I can.

As for the physical abuse Peter received, I can recall one incident very clearly. All the children, Peter and I included were sitting outside under the willow tree in the right hand corner of the property. The clothes line was beside it directly behind the house. The assistant, who I knew as 'Rosie', was hanging out the washing. The house parents daughter whose name was 'Vicki' was sitting with us as well. A little girl was playing with a doll and Vicki wanted it. The little girl wouldn't give it to her so Vicki pulled a twitch off the willow tree and started to hit the little girl with it. The little girl started crying and screaming so the house parents came over. Vicki blamed my brother Peter for hitting the little girl and Peter continually denied it. Peter was then taken inside and as I watched through the front windows, he was put over the mans lap and beaten with either the mans hand or a strap. This I recall went on beyond one or two hits; I started crying and felt so helpless to help my brother. He was screaming and screaming as this man held him in place. He was six. I had seen my father give Peter the belt when we were little but not with the same intensity or length that this man was doing it to Peter. I also knew that he was innocent of any wrongdoing. I remember this particular man as always shouting, slightly hyperactive and sweating.

In 1977 Burnside decided it would be a good idea if we, my brothers and I were placed into a group family home, Montrose at Epping, so we could be together. According to my files, a psychological assessment was carried out on each of us and it was decided it was a good decision. We had been warned by other children in War Home that the house parents were nasty and we told our social worker about this and that we didn't want to go. We weren't listened to and we were placed there in approximately June 1977. At first it was fine and we were happy then things started to get ugly. For very minor, trivial 'wrongdoings' we were made to write out thousands of 'lines. For example 'I must twirl my spaghetti with a fork'. This punishment was metered out at the dinner table after I had been slapped across the back of my head for not using my utensils properly by Aunty Maria Day, the housemother. My legs would be swinging under the table and I came to dread mealtimes. I developed a phobia about eating in front of adults that carried through to my twenties. I eventually realised if I kept eating with my hand in front of my mouth while my stomach churned anticipating the hit to the back of the head, then it was going to be a difficult eating life for me. So I slowly started eating and concentrating on relaxing in front of adults and in public. I can do it now. We complained to our mother and maternal grandmother and social workers but nothing changed. I do however recall my grandmother telling Aunty Maria that she knew what was going on and it had better stop. Going through my files I see that my mother complained and there is a record of her contacting the homes about Maria and Norman Day's treatment of me and my brothers but that is all that seems to have transpired about it. The secretary at the time, Nancy Hogan, took the phone calls from my mother and then wrote a report of the

call and added her judgements on the situation and how it should be dealt with. This from a woman whose position was secretary.

These incidences may sound trivial and of minor consequence compared to what some of the other children went through but they affected me deeply for many years and still do especially when it comes to supposed authorities, restrictions and fitting into society not to mention my ability to form lasting relationships. I do not have a criminal record or psychological record as I had some self respect and love and it is now in my 36th year that I believe I can do well academically even for a 'cunning, manipulative and sly child' whose mother is a 'slut' as one house parent referred to me (written in a report on me which I have copies of) and my mother. If you would like a copy of my files I am quite happy to send a copy to you for your perusal so you can see how little Burnside has given me considering I was in their care for eight years and the undertones of some of the writing. There are several comments referring to a 'preventative file' but no one seems to be able to locate it. In 1985 and my mother called twice to speak to Mr Roy Jenkins and Uncle Jim Mackay about the sexual abuse I received in Reid Home as a child. Again no further reports can be found concerning what procedures Burnside took to deal with it and when my mother was killed in 1986 I found no papers or correspondence in her files.

When I contacted Burnside in May 2004 and said I would like to press charges against the houseparent who abused me they said that the procedure was for me to sign a mini statement, then that would help them to locate the particulars of the male houseparent and they would give me the information so I could proceed. I spoke with Kerrie Orth the After care worker, Lynette Clark and Jane Woodruff. I explained I couldn't remember the mans name but if they looked in my files and checked the dates it would show the house parents. My brothers and I also knew they had a daughter named Vikki. And the assistants name was "Rosie". I think it was Jane Woodruff who told me there was no one named Rosie at that time and that I should think of getting legal aid to help me proceed further. She said that as I couldn't be specific about the times I was in the Reid home there was nothing more they could do. She also said that the records they did have were administrative in content and do not go into why any house parents left the homes. In my files there is reference to a list of house parents from the times I was in Reid home written by "Jan" in a memo from 1985 and mention again of the 'preventative file' then nothing. The files I have received from Burnside are incomplete. From eight years of being in their care I have forty pages. I have no dental records and my medical records only mention the usual measles mumps and such. Yet I recall being in hospital quite ill at one point and several stays in the hospital for minor ailments. My files constantly refer to 'controlling' me without actually dealing with why I would be misbehaving. When I was sent to the social workers and I was told anything I said was between them and me, I would tell them what was happening in the house and within days of that meeting a comment would be made by the house parents to me about what I had said in the meeting. This happened so often I learned to keep quiet and say nothing. This earned me the label of troubled and uncooperative.

As for the sexual abuse this has affected my intimate relationships in that I am constantly on guard against real or imagined attempts at controlling me sexually. The constant vigilance on my behalf against any attempts to control me during sexual activities is undermining these important relationships and has me ready to defend at

all times. Thankfully my partner, after reading my files has a deeper understanding of me and why I am the way I am in certain situations. This enables him to step back and detach instead of getting caught up in my drama and taking it personally. He was tired of believing I was out to get him and now sees that it's the actually the past I'm dealing with.

I placed an application to go to Griffith and Southern Cross Universities in Australia in December 2004 and will know this month (January 2005) if I have been offered a position. My choice of degrees is Bachelor of Social Work (SCU) and Bachelor of Psychology (GU). I intend to use my education to empower women and children from all backgrounds to have self respect, self love and self confidence regardless of their backgrounds and upbringing. My brothers and I are also of Aboriginal descent on our father's side so I have applied for an indigenous cadetship with Centrelink. This will help pay for my education and give me employment on graduating. Wish me luck.