

The Senate Enquiry : The Forgotten Australians

To whom it may concern,

Please accept the following submission, a brief account of my experiences in Victorian , Queensland and Western Australian institutions. I cannot go into great detail as I have signed a contract with a publisher for my autobiography (due out in May, 1995).

My name is Brenda Hodge, I am 54 years old, and I live in Geraldton, WA. I was made a ward of the State in Victoria when I was 14, having been charged and convicted of 'being a neglected child'. I was sent to Winlaton, where I spent most of my time in solitary confinement - my punishment for being depressed. I was then sent to Laurundel and Mont Park, and after running away was sent back to Winlaton. They eventually sent me to a farm at Wedderburn, where I worked without pay for three months, then ran away again. When the police took me back to Victoria, none of the above institutions wanted me so I was sent to live with my biological father in Brisbane, Qld. He started screwing me, and his wife told him to "get that slut out of my house". I was then sent to a hellhole called Sandy Gallop, where I nearly did go mad, and from there to Goodna Mental Hospital. All this before I turned sixteen.

As an adult I spent nearly 12 years in prison for killing my de facto, who was a police sergeant in Kalgoorlie. It was a case of domestic violence, but was treated as an anti-social act and I was sentenced to death at the age of 33, in 1984. I am not a criminally minded person, but am now branded for life as an ex-crim, as well as an ex-wardie and a nut case.

The good news is that I gained two university degrees while in prison, and now, ten years later, I am slowly becoming confident enough to put that work and knowledge to good use. Being in institutions is totally demoralising. The feeling of being 'a good-for-nothing' is hard to shake off.

I appreciate this opportunity to add my name to the growing list of care leavers in Australia, and I hope the Senate enquiry will help prevent future abuse and neglect of children in institutions.

Yours sincerely,

Brenda Hodge.

B. Hodge
26/01/05.

