



Judith Anne Burkin  
(...)

25th February, 2011

Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**Re: Senate Inquiry into "Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices"**

Dear Committee,

I gave birth to my son at Paddington Womens Hospital - Paddington Sydney NSW on the (...) November, 1964.

My name is Judith Burkin. I now live in Smithfield a suburb of Cairns Queensland. This is my story and how the effect it has had on my life. I was failed by the system; I was never told the truth; I was never told what options or help were available! I felt like a guinea pig being used by the Student Doctors; treated inhumanely by all the staff; spoken to and verbally abused being told how I was scum because I was pregnant and unmarried.

Prior to my pregnancy, I enjoyed a wonderful long term relationship with my boyfriend, until I fell pregnant under the age of 21 years. The way I was treated by people the staff of the Paddington Womens Hospital and society in general was so cruel and to this day, 46 years and 3 months later, I can clearly recall the hurt and the emotional turmoil that I felt during this traumatic experience.

To marry my long term boyfriend was not an option as my Mother made it impossible for him to come near me, with written threats from Solicitors and personal harassment, all of which I was never informed of until nearly 20 years later.

I was taken by my mother to the Paddington Womens Hospital and forcibly put into the unmarried mothers quarters; a dungeon like room located at the bottom of the Hospital where I was to stay while I was pregnant and until I had my baby. The arrangements for my stay were made by my mother's sister-in-law as she was the Matrons Personal Assistant at Paddington Womens Hospital during this time. The Matron of the Hospital told me, "This is what bad girls have to do. Bad girls have to give their babies away to a couple who will love and care for your baby - better than you can." I kept telling them that I wanted to keep my baby, and I believed that I was there only to give birth to my baby." The constant reply

would always be, "No your not, you're under age; you have no money and no way of keeping your baby." Never was I informed that I was entitled to a 30 day revocation period, where I would be able to get my baby son back. Had I known this I would have walked out of the hospital with my son, back to the loving relationship that I had shared with the babies father. I was denied my rights! I was not given any information! I was not given a choice! I was however, bullied and forced into a situation that I had no control or say over. I clearly remember the anger and hurt that I felt, with no one to turn to at all.

Once I was in the hospital, I was made to do cleaning, washing floors, windows and help prepare meals with other girls, some of which were very young just 14 and 15 years old. Myself and the other girls who I was in companion with were all treated very bad and we were constantly told how "bad" we were and that we needed to be punished for our terrible sins. The hospital staff never looked me in the eye and I felt as though I was a criminal.

When I would go to the Clinic to see a Doctor, my patient card informed the Doctor and staff that my baby was up for adoption. The staff and Doctors would all speak loudly, so anyone in the waiting room would hear, further adding to the humiliation that I was already suffering.

I had many medical tests during my pregnancy and couldn't help but feel that I was there for the training of student Doctors and Nurses. I was pushed and prodded and found my stomach covered in bruises and from one examination was left bleeding from my vagina. I tried to resist upon one examination, but was forcible pushed back onto the table, being told, "this is your punishment for what you have done! You have to endure this so that the Doctors can practise and be experienced for a real life situation. You just have to get over it!" One nurse even told me, "You don't care about your baby, if you had, you wouldn't have fallen pregnant and ended up here annoying all of us. You will do as you are told!"

I found it very difficult to sleep and I had no appetite. I was a nervous wreck. I had no-one to talk to, no counselling was offered. I was totally alone.

I decided that if I mentioned it enough, someone would listen and help me, so I told anyone and everyone that there has been a misunderstanding and that I wanted to keep my baby. The reply was always the same; that I had no choice; you are a bad person so you would be a bad mother.

The Matron informed me on one occasion, that it won't be long now till I could get on with my life, but I would be lucky if I ever met a nice man, because bad girls have to live with their sins.

I found being locked in my room at night, all alone, very traumatic and at times, other girls would go into labour. We had a buzzer that we had to press if this happened, and it would be over an hour before anyone would come.

I was in labour for many hours and my waters had broken and I was made walk to the labour ward. I would have to stop whilst I was having a contraction and the male orderly would tell me to just hurry up that he had other work he had to do. I was terrified of what

was ahead of me. When I arrived at the Labour ward I was ordered into the shower and had a towel literally thrown at me and told to hurry up that they were all very busy. I felt doomed that my baby was being born into such a world; such a place as this.

I was told to get on the table and my legs were put in stirrups; I was shaved examined for dilation and then left alone for many hours. I was in terrible pain and was not offered any relief from it with gas. At one point I yelled out and after about 20 minutes, a nurse put her head around the door and told me to, "shut up, we are busy! You have hours to go yet." but she never checked me. I asked if there was something that she could do about the pain and she said, "No! You have to suffer so you will always remember what you have done." So once again I was left alone and was sobbing uncontrollably. I had an urge to push and then found that I couldn't stop pushing, so I screamed so loud a Doctor came in and my baby's head was coming out and I was reaching down and trying to hold on to him. The Doctor was furious that I was left alone and he yelled for staff to help him. My baby then popped out. When the Doctor went to put my baby on my stomach, one of the nurses threw a pillow over my head and another held me down, all I got to see what a tuft of hair as my baby was being wheeled out. Once he was gone, I was released. I was told that I had delivered a boy and he's not your baby anymore. I felt sick! This was, and still is, the worst day of my life.

I needed stitches, but the nurse said not to bother, just get her out of here. I was not well after the birth and had haemorrhaged quite a lot. My son was born on his father's birthday! I was told that the father was not allowed to come to the hospital or the Police would be called.

Finally I was allowed to go and when I asked about my baby son I was told, "You signed your baby away to a lovely family." I went into a rage and demanded that I see him, which was denied. I told them I wouldn't leave until I saw him and I stayed for about 2 hours. They finally let me see him through the glass of the nursery and it broke my heart knowing that I had no other choice but to leave him there. I was never informed that there were choices or help available. I was only told that because I was not married and under 21 I had to give my baby away.

From the hospital I went to stay at my Aunties house, but the next day I was in severe pain with my breasts. I had to go back to that terrible hospital where I was told I had "Milk Fever!" The nurse told me that, "this is to teach you a lesson for what you have done!" I was given a script for medication.

Once I returned to Lismore, and back to a devastated boyfriend, we decided that together we would get our baby back. We rang the hospital and we were told that he's not yours and then the phone was slammed down in our ear. Together we travelled back to the hospital, but with the same response. Had I known about the 30 revocation, the outcome would have been so different and I cannot help but wonder how different all our lives would have been. As it is now, both the father or my baby and I have spent our lives, with the guilt of what we did and the sadness that we will never be all together. My life has been lonely and full of sadness and regret. Losing my son was very difficult to cope with. I distanced myself from my family and broke off my engagement to the man that to this day I still love. I moved from my hometown of Lismore to Victoria, not wanting anyone who knew me, to see the way I

felt. I turned to alcohol and was in a constant blur of liquor and No doz tablets to stay awake so that I could work to earn some money to buy the alcohol that I needed to get through the nights. I was trying to escape my memories and my guilt of what I had done but I couldn't. Thinking back to the circumstances and the loss of my son still eats at me every day. Eventually I did marry and I gave birth to two sons. The birth of my babies should have been a wonderful event for my husband and I, but the trauma that I had experienced previously turned the events into dramatic, grief stricken and anxious times that I will never forget.

I found it very difficult to rid myself of the guilt and this eventually tore away my marriage, which became another casualty to the horrors of that time. The events that I went through with the forced adoption of my first born, have forever etched themselves well into my life, with my heart bearing the scars vividly.

In summary, I was not given any information in regard to the welfare of my baby after birth or any information regarding Foster care for my child. I was not offered any counselling or guidance after my child was born and I was not given any information on financial assistance that would enable me to keep my child. The consent to the adoption of my child was not given willingly and I constantly informed all the staff of the hospital that I wanted to keep my baby, no matter what.

I believe that as a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia who resided in New South Wales, that I had an inalienable right to protection under the Australian Constitution and the Common Law of this country. As an Australian citizen, the Commonwealth affords me protection from the unlawful and harmful actions that threaten my right to life, liberty and justice from those who would deny me these rights, within and without, the borders of Australia.

I appreciate the opportunity to tell my story and I ask you to please accept this as my submission.

Yours sincerely,  
(...)

Judith Burkin