

My story began in 1964/5 when I went for a working holiday in Perth. I met all my acquaintances in ballrooms in Perth and Adelaide me being a very keen ballroom dancer and 22 years old.

The natural father I met in Perth he was 25 years and English and we became friends, we were both very accomplished ballroom dancers. We eventually over a period of approximately 3 years had a good relationship, or so I thought. Unbeknown to me he was an alcoholic, very possessive and unbeknown to me at that stage was having other affairs with married or single women. He would often be paralytic, I ended up bankrupt.

We bought a Volkswagen car at the local dealership towards the end payments were my responsibility, then I found out the car was in my name. He travelled to Perth in the car and from there we still had the relationship. He kept on asking me for money I had secure employment and knew how to handle money, he was often unemployed when he had money, would spend on alcohol and cigarettes and we would go out somewhere or go dancing. Towards the end of the relationship I was frightened of him, he still pursued me repeatedly.

I led a very sheltered life, I'm one of 8 children, 4 girls, 4 boys my parents not wanting me to socialize till 21, I was not explained anything about sex education and was very naive and vulnerable. My parents did not like the natural father and he did not like my parents and he knew I was naive and vulnerable and took advantage of that situation, therefore succeeded in getting back at my parents in getting me pregnant, I never lived with him but in a boarding house in West Perth. My parents were very strict and disciplined members of the Adelaide community.

My parents called in the Police after the natural father tried to re-enter my parents premises, he eventually went away. In West Perth Bailiffs were sent to the boarding house and anything I owned of value was taken because I could not keep up vehicle payments, at this stage I was made bankrupt by my baby's natural father and had problems paying my board, my pregnancy did not help and working full-time at a Perth Department store on 5th floor a shorthand/typist. After I gave birth at the King Edward Memorial Hospital and returned to the West Perth boarding house, I was not welcome back at the boarding house by the senior female in charge but stayed there until I found another place, I was given a very difficult time and I was made feel very uncomfortable.

The natural father followed me 3 times from Perth to Adelaide by train, rail being the cheapest mode of transport at that time. I had already returned to Perth, eventually forced himself on me (physical abuse) and I became pregnant, I wondered what was happening to me when I became very sick, I had never lived with him, when I tried to contact him by letter after I was advised by the local doctor I was pregnant there was no answer to my letter, I was deserted he had moved, living in a Guest House, Marine Terrace, Geraldton. I was referred to the closest Public Hospital the King Edward Memorial Hospital, Bagot Road, Subiaco. I was deserted and alone.

While going for my monthly checkups and eventually fortnightly checkups we were given instructions by the nurse/sister that we would be called, we were not permitted to sit, we needed to stand in a group in a corner away from the seated public (usually happily married women and presumably their husbands), when our corresponding number/s or names were called we would be called to the cubicle corresponding to our given number, checked then allowed to go, no communication.

I was 3 months along to deal with it alone. I was lucky enough to obtain a job at a bakery close to where I lived in West Perth, I was not showing much yet, so I was in a sense lucky, the job was filling the bread vans, then driving on our designated route and handling money/change, it was a job where you were required to run when doing deliveries, I did not last there very long, as I found it very difficult to run. I was then working at Boans Department Store in Perth on the 5th floor as a shorthand typist in a small office, I did not know the severe stomach pains that I was starting labour it seemed a long time. I worked there till the night before knocking off at the normal time, my baby

was about to be born, my waters broke at boarding house so unfortunately everyone knew a mess was left, I was staying at a boarding house women only in Colin Street, West Perth, my baby was born at King Edward Memorial Hospital, Bagot Road, Subiaco, WA on (...) August 1967.

When time came to admit myself to hospital I crawled up the hill with my suitcase to the nearest telephone booth rang a taxi to take me to King Edward – I never ever paid the taxi driver as I was dropped off at the Emergency section, I gave birth shortly after. The baby was whisked away from me out of my sight straight away after the birth, I heard nothing whatsoever, I was advised nothing, not even the sex, or whether the baby was dead or alive, I was told just to get over it and get on with my life then I was discharged. I spent days in a public ward having to deal with unspeakable things taking place against me as that is how I was treated at that time. I learned later, the natural father had died in Royal Perth Hospital as result of a car accident, there was a passenger in the vehicle, he was 28 years old and buried in the Fremantle Cemetery.

From non-identifying and identifying information received from Department for Community Welfare I learned my son had been adopted by Dutch Migrants at that time in their 40's they had migrated from Holland years previous, lived in Perth for some years before they learned many years previous they could not have children and immediately put their names on the Department for Community Welfare merit list for a baby. They returned to Holland before my son needed to start school in 1972.

I was told nothing by Department of Community Welfare, (**now Department for Child Protection**) no counselling by anyone about the consequences/repercussions of adoption, I had no idea what adoption was/meant, if unmarried mothers questioned anything we were ignored as though we did not exist. Department for Community Welfare asked questions about my parents and family members, no counselling – when I was approximately 3 months pregnant already under duress and distressed. The authorities took complete advantage of my total vulnerability and naivety, they were going through the process of matching my particulars for adoptive parents, I had no knowledge of this process.

I will never forget it will be with me for the rest of my life, the treatment and attitude was disgusting by the Department, and Hospital. While at King Edward Memorial Hospital I was administered tablets/drugs to dry up my milk, my breasts were bound and were very sore, I was treated like a criminal. When we went to the bathroom/showers it was made sure that we did not go anywhere near the nursery where the baby/s were, we were to walk along the wall, the venetian blinds were shut at all times.

I was sedated at the King Edward Memorial Hospital and woken up to sign something? I had no idea what it was, and I have no idea how long after the birth, maybe it was a discharge from the Hospital, instead it must have been a consent from me to be separated from my baby, naturally I signed even though I had been woken out of deep sleep, I fell straight back to sleep not aware of what had taken place.

After a few days of giving birth the babies for adoption were moved to another floor and another place (Kensington House) an annex of King Edward Memorial Hospital away from the eyes of the natural mother – either that or the unmarried mothers were moved to another floor into a public ward – away from their baby/s.

Not realizing/knowing or remembering much about what had taken place and numb about 10 years later I wrote to the hospital asking what sex was my baby, including the date that I had given birth, this information was eventually forwarded to me from the Hospital. Then I learned medical records could be obtained from the hospital, I went about getting my records, I was advised they had been destroyed – of course learned this was not true, I felt totally very angry, seething. I travelled to Perth going to the hospital asked for a copy of my medical records but they were totally

undecipherable on A4 and poorly presented, I asked for 3 more copies on A3 paper receiving same before I returned to my lodgings. I have learned since my medical records may have been tampered with.

I WAS NOT advised about the 30 day revocation period – where I could change my mind – we were given no other choice – there was another choice (fostering) and financial assistance, the mothers were not advised of them, because the authorities wanted our baby/s.

A new birth certificate is issued (a legal nonsense as one cannot have two births and one baby) the child's name is changed, expunging the natural family from their life. The baby/s are then raised by strangers with little (frequently incorrect) or no information about their family or origin. It is true that many adopted adults describe feelings of abandonment by their natural parents. Consider then, the experience of adopted people and natural mothers. Many adopted people are immobilized from reconnecting to their family of origin by feelings of loyalty to their adoptive family, waiting instead until the death of the adoptive parents sometimes never advising them that they have reunited.

A photo was given to me in 1972 by a Social Worker with Department of Community Welfare, Perth in 1972 by a social worker on one of my many visits to Perth, my son's face appeared amongst the background foliage, so I thought, how would I know if I had never seen him ?. This photograph I later found was to upset my son – he was very angry I have no idea why, I later found that the child in the foreground was not an adopted child and my son was very angry with me, this was of course unknown to me, how would I know? I used the photo in the main newspapers Australia-wide to try to locate (...) – being successful, relatives in Perth saw the article and were in contact with Adoption Jigsaw, Perth.

Department for Community Welfare (F.I.S) offered a service which was totally useless to me – to leave letters for (...) or his Adoptive Parents to pick up – (a message box) – totally useless – how would they know the letters were there if nobody was informed? The messages/letters would possibly have sat there for years.

I wondered for many years was the baby born dead if the baby was born healthy, is the baby still alive and where his/their whereabouts? I began looking and heard about Jigsaw Perth, I was in contact with them my baby was approximately 13 years old I am still Jigsaw follower. When my son turned 18 years Jigsaw Perth was in contact with Adoptive Parents in Holland by letter, the Adoptive mother wrote to Jigsaw Perth and said they were happy I was in contact and could contact (...) when I wanted. We did for 10 years, we corresponded until (...) after a broken marriage migrated to Perth unbeknown, rang me at my Adelaide home 3 February 1995. (...) sent me a letter I received next day. We eventually met in Perth 25 March 1995 I took 4 weeks of from training to travel to Perth, met him at a private home of a Jigsaw Adoption member, I took photos received from Holland years previous, thinking this would be good for conversation, (...) asked to have a look and one photo of himself wrapped in a shawl when he was 6 weeks old with his Adoptive parents. I asked for it back but he has never forwarded me a copy of that photo since, I've asked for a long time.

The re-union with my son (...) was quite strained/cold on his part, both of us were quite nervous, I felt he did not want to be there and was not ready – why didn't he write or phone me and inform me? I only saw him a few times during the 4 weeks. After arriving home in Adelaide, I started writing to him again, he began sending unpalatable registered letters to me requiring my signature at local post office, these letters were very upsetting and contents of same were totally untrue, I don't know why his attitude or behaviour, the whole thing has totally devastated me.

(...) changed is name to (...) this was found when I obtained a copy of his birth certificate showing a side entry change of name, his address was deleted off Perth public records. My son then went to the Department for Community Welfare, Perth, April 1977 lodging an

indefinite veto against me, this veto still stands today although he is living overseas I believe, in (...), I do not understand his actions. I believe his Adoptive father is deceased. I have learned that (...) has moved with his wife (...) of 16 years to Belgium. To date I still do not know why he has re-acted this way, I was sending birthday and Xmas card to him via his parents-in-law in Perth they support me emotionally, I get on well with them ((...) married their daughter (...)) (...)November 1995. (...) is the name he uses (his Adoptive name).

Department for Community Welfare (F.I.S.) and King Edward Memorial Hospital, Bagot Road, Subiaco, Western Australia along with other hospitals conspired together to take babies off unmarried mothers to hand over to so-called happily married women and their husbands who were infertile trying to have a baby for many years.

I was made to feel totally guilty, ashamed, I felt used, numb, angry, totally devastated totally disempowered, totally useless not having known for many years what had actually happened to my baby, whether he/she was dead or alive. The Department for Community Welfare and the hospital used my vulnerability and naivety to play "God" with my life. The shame and secrecy surrounding a pregnancy outside of marriage meant that mothers were told that they were selfish if they raised their babies. They were separated at birth and although many unmarried mothers were too young to vote, they were coerced/forced into signing adoption papers which meant they were legally separated from their child. I/we were not permitted to have any eye contact or hold the baby.

The Hospital staff administered me drugs which on further research contained cancer/health causing agents, how was I to know anything we just did as we were told and raised in those days definitely do not talk back or ask questions - we were seen and not heard. Who in their right mind would want to be deprived of any quality/quantity time with their baby for more than 20 years of their life or never see them again— this type of action is totally absurd.

In October 2010 I travelled to Western Australia to attend the Apology ceremony at the Western Australian Parliament. I am pensioner of limited means it was very difficult for me to make the trip, it was very important to me so I attended, it seemed unlikely that I would be able to make another trip soon, I also intended to visit the Department of Child Protection, after arranging by email from Adelaide time and date was made by them (19/10/2010 the day of Apology. I informed the Department for Child Protection on 21/10/2010 my thoughts and feelings of my whole situation, he offered his hand to shake but I declined advising him it was too difficult for me, I was too upset and distressed and he seemed not to care. The meeting was approximately 30 minutes, another mother in similar circumstances came as my witness. As I was explaining, Chief of Staff stated 'You signed the paper' that made me very angry, I tried to advise him how the situation has affected me over the years. I felt totally intimidated by him, he would rather not listen. I was more upset/distressed after leaving.

I also visited Past Adoption Practice alone asked to speak to the signature on my letter, she was unavailable, I left a note at reception and my contact details, I have never received any acknowledgement or phone call to date. Both these Departments are in total denial. I have asked the **Department for Child Protection** for a long time for a full Apology on Departmental Letterhead and signed by the appropriate person for all that I have been through, they said **NO**, you have received n Apology on 19/10/2010. I also want an Apology from Past Adoption Practice.

All the Departments handling Adoptions or involved in/with Adoptions are a total and complete on-going hindrance as to access to my records and copy of same, they will not release records even after 43 years, it is ludicrous. I am wanting access to the Adoption records – the Departments do not care less about my health.

Attached are drugs administered to me in King Edward Memorial Hospital, Subiaco in 1967.

Set out is a Summary of some of the legal and Human Rights abuses exposed by an Inquiry into Adoption Practices

- Systematically denying mothers all knowledge of their legal rights and options
- Using both overt and covert methods of coercion to obtain consents.
- Actually promoting adoption – rather than following their legal fiduciary duty of having to warn mothers' of the potential harm such a course of action may cause them.
- Introducing the violent act of interfering in the very primal act of giving birth between a mother and child by snatching new-borns from their mothers wombs prior to the completion of birth while their mother was still in labour, often heavily sedated and bound by stirrups.
- Introducing the inhuman practice of forbidding eye contact between mother and child to supposedly prevent bonding (severing instead the natural symbolic bond between mother and child which had already begun at conception, which culminated in a violent trauma to the psyche of both mother and child).
- The measures used to prevent bonding included placing a pillow on the mothers chest or at her face, holding a sheet up to obstruct her view, turning lights down or off, blindfolds, turning mothers head away, standing in way of vision, rushing baby out of labour room immediately upon birth, using heavy sedation during labour, holding shoulders down to prevent mother from lifting herself up, pushing mother back down if she sat up, shackling mother to bedhead.

The consequences of forbidding a mother to see, touch and smell her child at birth, by the way, keeps the mother suspended forever in a psychologically pregnant state having never completed the birthing process.

This could account for an estimated 60% of such mothers never conceiving again, while others fell pregnant soon after the loss of their baby in a futile attempt to finish giving birth to their lost firstborn and replace the lost child.

- Preventing lactation by using the synthetic hormone DES Stilboestrol, administered in three times the legal dosage and known since 1971 to be carcinogenic, and or by the method of breast binding. All without written consent from the mother. Most mothers would still not know they had been administered this hormone nor would they be aware of the now known potential health risks to themselves or their subsequent children.
- Sedating mothers during labour with what were known as lytic cocktails (used medically to obliterate feelings) consisting of phenobarbitone, pethidine, sparine, largactyl. Postnatally hypnotic memory altering barbiturates such Pentabarbital, Sodium Amytil, Methadone, Heroin, and Chloral Hydrate, Bombardon, would be administered during the post confinement period until a consent was taken.
- Hiding babies from their own mothers within the confines of the hospital, in staff rooms, in linen closets, in locked or hidden nurseries, denying mothers free access to their own babies – at a time when she was still the sole legal guardian of her child and could not legally be denied access to her child.
- Showing mothers the wrong baby after signing a consent to ensure no bonding takes place.
- Telling mothers their babies had died at birth – when they had in fact been adopted. (known in the trade as rapid adoptions – more later).
- Transporting mothers by ambulance, whilst heavily sedated, to different hospitals without their babies and without their permission (an act of kidnap by maternity hospital regulations).
- Forbidding mothers to see their babies until they signed a consent (legally classified as inducement to sign a contract).
- Taking consents from mothers prior to or upon birth and post-dating the consenting date of the legally required day five.

- Getting Mothers to sign empty documents and filling them in at a later date.
- Forging signatures.
- Shackling mothers to the bedhead during labour with leather straps attached to chains or using bandages.
- Forbidding mothers to leave the hospital until their records were marked with the term “socially cleared” indicating that they had signed a consent and could then “legally” leave the hospital.
- Forcing mothers to sign a consent on day five when she could legally take time to recover from the birth before making a decision.
Day five was only the earliest time her signature could legally be taken.
- Taking unenforceable (and therefore invalid) consents from minors.
- Not informing mothers of the 30 day revocation period.
- Preventing mothers their legal right of revocation within her legally permitted time by advising them that their child had already been adopted when it had only been placed in an interim placement that was not legally binding.
- Not providing professional counselling facilities either prior to during or after confinement.
- Employing non-skilled and non-licensed staff to conduct legal transactions, prepare legal documents and interview unmarried mothers without knowing the law.
- Expecting young unskilled mothers to sign legal documents without an adult advocate present, and without her understanding the legal meaning of interpretation of the document she as signing.
- Not advising young mothers of the permanent nature of adoption.
- Some young mothers believed that adoption meant that an adult would help her to raise her child, that she would only be giving up her parental rights. Many young mothers had no idea that they would never see their child again until they contacted the agency, or went to get their baby upon leaving the hospital after signing.
- Misrepresenting the more recent open adoption system where the girl would be promised open access to her child but would not warn the mother that the adopting parents of her child were under no duty to comply with any promises they made to her in order to acquire her child.

AND ABOUT THE EFFECTS ON MOTHERS

Expert testimony to the Inquiry has confirmed that the effects of these traumatic experiences resulted in sequelae such as pathogenic grief, learned helplessness dysfunctions, psychogenic amnesia, severe dissociative disorders, chronic depression, anxiety disorders, severe post-traumatic stress disorders, alcohol and substance abuse etc.

Because mothers were told to go away and forget their experiences they do not attribute their emotional problems to the loss of their babies and their condition leads to being continually misdiagnosed by the health profession. Along with this recognition at the Inquiry, has been the request for more adequate resources to address our needs (trauma recovery and support services).

On closing I have documentation verifying the above facts. My details in 1967 –

Lorraine HARDY
(...)

Thanking you in advance. My postal details below :

Lorraine HASSETT

(...)

(...)

**DRUGS ADMINISTERED TO ME AT KING EDWARD MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, SUBIACO, WESTERN
AUSTRALIA IN 1967.**

OMNOPON® 10 Ampoules

OMNOPON® 20 Ampoules

SCHEDULING STATUS:

S7

PROPRIETARY NAME

(and dosage form):

OMNOPON® 10 Ampoules

OMNOPON® 20 Ampoules

COMPOSITION:

Omnopon 10 ampoules contain: Morphine HCl 6,72 mg/mL

Papaverine HCl 0,6 mg/mL

Codeine HCl 0,52 mg/mL

Ethyl alcohol 6,44% v/v

Omnopon 20 ampoules contain Morphine HCl 13,44 mg/mL

Papaverine HCl 1,20 mg/mL

Codeine HCl 1,04 mg/mL

Ethyl alcohol 6,44% v/v

PHARMACOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION:

A 2.9 –other analgesics

PHARMACOLOGICAL ACTION:

Omnopon contains both the phenanthrene and isoquinoline groups of opium alkaloids. The former includes codeine and morphine, which exert a marked narcotic action on the central nervous system. The second group is represented by papaverine which acts as an antispasmodic, in vitro. Its effects in vivo are limited.

Omnopon has the analgesic and narcotic properties of morphine.

INDICATIONS:

Omnopon may be used in all cases in which morphine or opium is indicated.

Omnopon 20 is clinically equivalent to 10 -15 mg of morphine. Indications include the following: Pre- and post-operative medication; severe or intractable pain; cardiac asthma; pulmonary oedema; coronary occlusion; pulmonary embolism.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS:

Omnopon is an addicting drug with an addiction liability equal to morphine. It should not be administered in the presence of bronchial asthma, narcotic idiosyncrasies, respiratory depression, head injuries, raised intracranial pressure, patients on monoamine oxidase inhibitors or within 10 days of stopping such treatment.

Omnopon should not be given to patients with a history of hypersensitivity or idiosyncratic response to opium alkaloids.

DOSAGE AND DIRECTIONS FOR USE:

Adults: 0,5 - 1,0 mL by subcutaneous or intramuscular injection usually not given more often than four hourly.

Children: 1 –12 Usual dose 0,02 - 0,03 mL/kg **Omnopon 10** or 0,01 - 0,015 mg/kg **Omnopon 20** as
Years: maximum single dose.

Age	Approx. body mass	Quantity of Omnopon 10 solution required	Quantity of Omnopon 20 solution required
1 year	10 kg	0,2 - 0,3 mL	0,1 - 0,15 mL
12 year	40 kg	0,8 - 1,2 mL	0,4 - 0,6 mL

The use of a small graduated syringe is recommended for the accurate administration of dosages given to children. In the absence of graduated syringes, **Omnopon** ampoule should be diluted with Water for Injections before measuring the dose. Maintenance of stability cannot be guaranteed when **Omnopon** ampoule solution is diluted. **Omnopon** ampoules are not recommended for use in babies under one year of age.

Elderly: Elderly patients are more sensitive to the actions of narcotic analgesics: the initial dose of **Omnopon** should not exceed 0,5 mL.

SIDE-EFFECTS AND SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS:

The commonest side-effects that may occur with **Omnopon**, as with other narcotics, are nausea, anorexia, constipation, confusion, sweating and occasionally vomiting. Micturition may be difficult and there may be ureteric or biliary spasm; an antidiuretic effect is also possible. Dry mouth, facial flushings, vertigo, bradycardia, palpitations, faintness, sedation, restlessness, changes of mood, and miosis may also occur. These effects occur more commonly in ambulant patients than in those at rest in bed. Raised intracranial pressure may occur in some patients. Due to the histamine-releasing effect allergic reactions such as urticaria, pruritus, and itching in the nose occur in some individuals and idiosyncrasy to morphine and other narcotic analgesics is fairly common. **Omnopon**, like other narcotics should be given with caution or in reduced doses to infants, old or debilitated patients and to patients with toxic psychosis prostatic obstruction, hyperthyroidism, adrenal insufficiency or impaired liver function.

Like all medicaments of this type, **Omnopon** may modify patients' reactions (driving ability, behaviour in traffic. etc.) to a varying extent depending on dosage, administration and individual susceptibility. The depressant effects are enhanced by depressants of the central nervous system such as sedatives, phenothiazines, etc.

The established medical principle of prescribing medicaments in early pregnancy only when absolutely indicated should be observed. **Omnopon** crosses the placenta and is also excreted in breast milk. This should be borne in mind when considering its use in patients during pregnancy or breast feeding. Administration in labour may cause respiratory depression in the newborn infant.

KNOWN SYMPTOMS OF OVERDOSAGE AND PARTICULARS OF ITS TREATMENT:

Signs and symptoms of overdosage:

1. Coma
2. Depressed respiration
3. Pinpoint pupils
4. Cold, clammy skin
5. Muscle flaccidity
6. Nausea and vomiting
7. Hypotension

Treatment:

1. Maintain respiratory status by suitable means such as establishing a patent airway and to ventilate the patient.
2. Narcotic antagonists such as naloxone should be administered to reverse severe narcotic induced respiratory depression. If naloxone is not available, nalorphine or levallorphan should be used.

IDENTIFICATION:

A clear liquid in colourless ampoules.

PRESENTATION:

Omnopon 10 Containers with 10 x 1 mL ampoules

Omnopon 20 Containers with 10 x 1 mL ampoules

STORAGE INSTRUCTIONS:

Protect from light and store below 25°C.
KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN.

REGISTRATION NUMBER/APPLICATION NUMBER:

Omnopon 10 K/2.9/304

Omnopon 20 B1006 (Act 101/1965)

NAME AND BUSINESS ADDRESS OF THE APPLICANT:

INTRAMED (PTY) LTD

6 Gibaud Road

PORT ELIZABETH

6001

DATE OF PUBLICATION OF THIS PACKAGE INSERT:

23/04/1992

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Sue's Media Statement.

In Parliament this year, Mr. Templeman exposed the truth about past adoption practices. He spoke of the horror in our nation's hospitals and of the barbaric, government sanctioned policy and practices – that tore babies from their unwed mothers at birth. The Greens called it “institutionalized baby theft” and other MP's have declared - it was a Nazi-style social cleansing exercise and a blatant abuse of human rights.

Past governments wanted ex-nuptial children adopted. It cut welfare costs and they believed only married couples were fit to raise children, so Welfare Departments advertised these babies as “unwanted”. The “unwanted baby” story became the central theme of welfare propaganda. Society believed mothers CHOSE to give their babies away. They did not!!!

In reality women were preyed upon, traumatized and denied both their civil and human rights. Single, unsupported mothers were treated like breeders, denigrated, dehumanized and de-babied. Removal of babies was systematic, with government, religious and non-religious organizations colluding, in what has now been labelled the adoption industry. Adoption workers acted with impunity. The Act was treated with contempt.

In the Australian Medical Journal 1960, a leading obstetrician urged his colleagues not to worry about breaking the law, when taking babies from unwed mothers - he stated: “The last thing an obstetrician might concern himself [with] – “is the law in regard to adoption.”

Mothers were emotionally, physically and psychologically, de-humanized and de-railed

They were isolated from family support and heavily sedated with mind altering drugs. They were demeaned, shamed and threatened. Some were tethered or hand-cuffed to beds and physically assaulted. To prevent eye contact and bonding, their faces were covered as they gave birth. Terrified babies were whisked away and their mothers' screams for them fell on deaf ears. Some mums were told their babies had died, only to have them turn up decades later and some babies not quite perfect enough for adoption, were left in institutions.

This litany of horror finally stopped in 1982, but it wasn't out of compassion for mothers, it was out of the fear of reprisal - a Health Commission circular warned hospitals of litigation.

Ten years on, Justice Chisolm of the Law Reform Commission officially exposed these practices as illegal. He later testified to a NSW inquiry using these legal terms:

Duress kidnapping..... false imprisonment.....fraud.....Tort of Deceit

In testimony to the same Inquiry (psychiatrist) Dr. Geoff Rickarby said:

It was a well oiled system ... there was organization and conspiracy at every turn... They were drugged and traumatized then made to sign consents. Young women were in an incredibly powerless position, dealing with a linked series of people, who had marked them out in what was, frankly – conspir-a-torial activity to abduct their babies....

All of the things—the separation from their families, the baby being taken, Their faces covered - the power difference was built up over months..... the young woman was put into a powerless, shamed position.... then the drugs were added on top ...

All this was done to the sole legal guardian of the baby, BEFORE the Adoption Act could [come into effect].... [BEFORE] the consent was signed.



At a 1994 adoption conference, Mothers openly wept when a social worker said:

....I apologize for my neglect, my acts of coercion, and my failure as someone with a moral, ethical, legal and paid duty to care..... Another worker wrote:

I was... part of a profession that obviously failed so many women and their children both by acts of commission and omission failing to challenge a system that inflicted so much pain

Law Reform Commission lawyer, Cathleen Sherry wrote:

.....their experiences revealed systemic violations of human rights. The treatment..... from doctors, social workers, charitable organizations and government depts. violated their right to be free from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, free from discrimination, free from arbitrary interference with the family, as well as their right to be entitled to special protection as mothers.

The Australian Government admitted in 2005 that past adoption practices had led to another stolen generation.

Our Government is the first Government in Australia to publicly acknowledge the injustice of these practices and we are deeply grateful for their desire to reconcile a great wrong.

To other Governments in Australia and their stakeholders – HANG YOUR HEADS IN SHAME!

We have lived our lives, feeling our maternities were medically butchered. We feel this violation and the loss of our children - in every cell of our being. The trauma is so deep, so complex, that over 40% of us never had another child. Children have suffered, believing their own mothers callously gave them away. Hearts have been shattered, lives have been taken - Isn't it time you all publicly apologized for the actions of your predecessors and cleaned up the mess they left behind.