

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION TO SUBMISSION NUMBER 81

Dear members of the Senate community Affairs reference committee in Forced adoption practices of the past.

On Monday I had a minor event occur which then made me decide to further address the inquiry. This submission is addressing the second half of the terms of reference and relates to the current projects being conducted by the Monash University and AIFS.

I work as a face to face interviewer for a major commercial research company and have been involved in projects like the Living In Australia Study for over ten years. So I have no problems chatting with strangers.

On Monday I was travelling to Melbourne on the train for a briefing for that study and started up a casual conversation with the lady next to me. I had advised that the last time I was on the train I had been heading to this inquiry. This lady then proceeded to ask me more and more questions about the inquiry. She then advised she had been adopted and that her mother had been shipped from Melbourne to Sydney to have her and she adopted and raised in Griffith, NSW. She further advised that when she started searching for her mother she was stymied for many years as the NSW authorities had no records of her mother. I was only when a nun she had befriended told her where her mother had come from that she was able to organise a reunion.

This lady then advised that she had never known that an inquiry was underway. Nor had she been aware of the Monash history of Australia project or the AIFS National Research Study on the service response to past Adoption Practices. Having chatted to many people over the last few months and hearing similar responses to people who have lived under the shadow of adoption, I now realise that the public advertising in relation to this inquiry and the two studies has been so shallow that only persons actively involved with groups directly or indirectly, who seek action on the issue. The dear little old lady from the back of Burke would have no idea of what is being done because of the lack of publicity. When you consider that there have possibly been over 300,000 adoptions in the last 50 to 70 years, the persons under the shadow of adoption could reach some 2 to 3 million. All these people should have had the opportunity to make submissions to the inquiry and also to be able to contribute to the studies. Only then can the results be truly representative.

To overcome this situation, I strongly recommend to the Inquiry that they recommend that the Monash and AIFS studies have major sized advertisements placed in all national and regional newspapers so that all affected can make informed decisions to contributing to the projects. As both projects are funded by the federal government it should be easy to amend the contracts. I make no recommendation in relation to this inquiry as it may be too late for such public announcements. However if the inquiry is extended for a substantial period of time, full media advertising would ensure that many individuals would then have the opportunity to contribute and the senators would have a clearer picture of what has happened in the past.

Furthermore it is also imperative that all are able to get an idea of the magnitude of the potential medical and psychological problems that will arise as these generations of individuals who have lived

under the shadow of adoption reach the senior years where it is common for such issues to resurface and manifest themselves in the form of depression and other psychological disorders. To help get this understanding I suggest that either the ABS be approached to include questions on adoption on the Census for the next period (not this year). Alternatively FACHSIA and AIFS, who commissioned the Living In Australia (HILDA) longitudinal study, could use the personal questionnaire instrument next wave (wave 12) to obtain statistical data in relation to the level of population who live under the shadow of adoption. Either way the Australian Parliament would become very much aware of the extent of the problem they will face over the next twenty odd years.

I thank the honourable senator's for accepting this late spur of the moment submission

Murray Legro

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