



Donald Edwards,

The Committee Secretary,
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee

Dear Sir/Madam

My welfare number was B12848/3/4. I was COMMITTED on 3rd August 1948 at Coffs Harbour the reason being "Neglect, under improper guardianship".

"COMMITTED" this sounds like something that would happen to a prisoner NOT a 7 years old boy who had done nothing wrong. My only crime was that my mother and father had split up and I was living in a tent with my mother and 2 sisters and my younger brother.

Family and friends had talked my mother into giving them what money she had from our previous home.

Although poor we had a carefree life on the beach front and as brothers and sisters were close.

A policeman arrived one day to check out how we were living. He came back with a box of food for us. Several days later another policeman arrived and we were taken by the welfare by train late in the afternoon to Sydney. We were all scared and wanted to stay with our mother. (I did not see again until I was an adult).

The two boys, Norman and myself were taken to Royalston at Glebe, my sisters Lorna and Ivy were taken to a girl's home up the road. I can recall seeing my sisters a couple of times after this and that was on Sunday mornings at church. The boys were marched up one side of the road the girls the other. We sat separately in church and were not allowed to talk to each other.

After a couple of week they stopped coming and I didn't see them again for years.

I was soon to learn that Royalston was no holiday camp. Rules were strict and I must have done something wrong one day as I was made to scrub a flight of timber steps with a tooth brush while the officer kept a constant eye on me. I became very depressed in this horrible place and missed my family and the life on the beaches at Sawtell. The staff noticed this but I can remember them saying "don't worry about him he is only fretting for his family".

On 16th September, 1948 just after I turned 9 I was boarded out again, this time to a

Her and her husband had several other state wards in there care, if that word care is the right word. These people were getting the children out of the homes for the money and to work on the farm. We worked pulling weeds after school and on weekends. This couple were experts in the mental and physical abuse of the children under their care.

They seemed to get delight out of belittling the children in care and the physical abuse was a hit around the head or a belting with a razor strap, sometimes with the buckle end. To live with these people was like living a nightmare.

I would lay awake in bed of a night on the veranda planning ways I could get away from them. I can recall I even asked God to help me (the minister at church had said if anyone needed anything, ask God)

One afternoon after school I ran away. I was not sure how to get to Coffs Harbour and ended up at North Sydney. It was dark I was lost so I went in to North Sydney Police Station and a detective spoke to me for a while then took me back to [redacted]. I failed but this time but I knew I would try again. I can recall the detective warning the [redacted] not to touch me in any way.

Within days things were back to normal with abuse. I decided to get out of there again, I ran away again but got lost again. This time ending up at Parramatta Police station. [redacted] came and got me and took me home and gave me a flogging with his razor strap; even though the police had warned him not to touch me.

Some days later a welfare officer came to speak to me, I told her I did not want to stay with these people so I was returned to Royalston on 24th November 1948. THANK GOD.

On the 3rd December 1948 I was transferred to Yarra Bay Boys Home. Here the discipline was hard. It was like a prison with 8ft iron fencing with barbed wire on top. We all had to work in the steam laundry at different times.

Some of the staff would get a great delight out of giving the boys an overdose of Epsom salts then laugh at the boys all trying to get into the limited toilets at once. I can recall one young boy attempting to commit suicide by jumping from a top floor window. He was struggling with the officers. They took him away and we never saw him again. I spent the rest of my time there trying not to be noticed.

On ^{28th}~~27th~~ January, 1949 I went to live with [redacted] and [redacted]. At first I was treated like a new puppy. After a few week the honeymoon was over. I was expected to look after the baby girl, sometimes by myself and take them cups of tea in bed on weekends plus other chores; while their own son did nothing.

One of my other jobs was what they called running bets. There was an S.P. Bookmaker at a shop in Hornsby. It was run out of a general store. I had to run bets for _____ and his mates around the surrounding streets. Most of this was at night for the trotting and grey hound meetings.

By this time in my life I was quite dissalusioned. _____ did not care what happened to me. I can remember having ulcers and boils on my legs and arms; I didn't get any treatment from her.

There was trouble in the house when they took in boarders. _____ had an affair with the lady. I walked in on them one day. Even though I was only young I knew it was wrong.

Eventually an officer came to see me. I told her I did not want to stay and did not want to be fostered out again with any so called carers.

On the 6th October, 1950 I was sent to Weroona at Woodford in the Blue Mountains. As far as State Homes go it was a lot better but still run hard. We all had our jobs to do and school was on sight and we weren't able to mix much with outside children, except for the occasional cricket match.

In 1953 I was sent back to Royalston and then to a home at Castle Hill. I went to high school at Carlingford. This was the first time I mixed with the outside world.

Here I became friendly with a boy..His family took me under their wing. I was lucky at this point as a lot of the other boys ended up in jail (or dead).

I married in 1960 and have three children. It took me a long time to feel settled.

I did not see my mother again until I was about 24. By that time she had dementia. After being able to read my notes under the privacy act I learnt she had written to me while in the homes and asked if she could have us home for holidays. These letters were never passed on.

I learnt where my father lived and sent a letter, it arrived a week after he died. On only last year in 2009 I learnt he had tried to contact me but kept hitting brick walls with the welfare. By the time I met my sisters and brothers again they had their own lives. Our original family were NEVER a family again.

In 2004 I suffered a severe breakdown and was put into a physciatric hospital at Gosford. The doctors said it was due to my childhood memories and similar to returned soldiers.

My wife and I both put in a submission to the Forgotten Australian Senate Inquiry.

My wife sent letters to the Prime Minister and other politicians regarding saying sorry to the "Forgotten Australians". We went down to Sydney for the "Sorry Day". This was great but only a start.

I feel we should be compensated for the loss of our childhoods, our families, and the abuse we suffered, both physical and mental as well as our ongoing problems over the years with our loss of self esteem and the ability to trust and show love.

As innocent children we were taken from situations we had no control over and put into MUCH WORSE situations by the very people who we were committed to , to be looked after. "Neglect,

under improper guardianship” – we suffered this TWICE only the second time without our families while in the welfare system.

Yours faithfully,

Donald Roy Edwards.
Number B12848/3/4