

4 February 2011

Department of Senate

PO Box 6100, Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Senate inquiry into "Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices"

Dear Committee,

I would like to make a comprehensive submission but due to the emotional trauma and turmoil of addressing personal and painful effects of my adoption process I have limited my submission.

I was born in the mid 1960's in a small country town in Victoria. My adoptive parents (immigrants) were told by government officials that I would never find out about being adopted. On reflection my adoptive mother did everything she could to ensure that I would never discover my true identity. My adoptive parents lived 100km from the town where I was born and their application for adoption was approved within 1 week.

At age 4 years, my adoptive parents moved to a populated city to ensure that I would never discover the truth about my real identity. When I started primary school I experienced behavioural problems and sent to boarding school. While growing up I can clearly recall a "gut feeling" or "intuition" that my parents were not my real parents. I also believed that I had other relatives in Australia.

During my adolescents I was depressed and had several psychiatric admissions. I did however excel in study which distracted me from feelings of depression and confusion. I suffered loss and grief issues but was unaware of the cause. I consequently undertook a Psychology degree to primarily assist my ongoing issues.

At 22 years, I had a car accident and the solicitor asked for my birth certificate. She asked if I was aware of being an adopted child as the heading 6 schedule represented adoption. I was shocked but not surprised. On reflection my adoptive father did provide some hints about being adopted but did not explain the process. I would refer to my birth certificate which reinforced that my adoptive parents were my real parents.

I received my original birth certificate (2nd Schedule) and birth records 16 years ago which contained with a different name, different place of birth and name of my birth

mother and maternal grandmother. I also have criminal law background and it remains my view that changing a persons identity is unlawful.

My re union story is lengthy and I am grateful that the laws changed to enable me to reunite with my birth mother, birth father, grandparents, half brothers and sisters on both sides, uncles, uncles and cousins. In my assessment, my birth mother is emotionally unavailable, alcoholic and living in an abusive relationship. One of my sisters on my mothers' side (she was not adopted) remarked that our mother was equally detached and emotionally un available while she was growing up. I have made a decision at this point in time not to contact my birth mother as contact is one sided which is not mutually advantageous to my emotional well being. I have no doubt that my birth mother was and continues to be traumatised by relinquishing me to adoption.

I have never been able to maintain an intimate relationship which I believe is linked to being separated from my birth mother and left in Hospital for 6 weeks. Psychological studies have shown that bonding and attachment is vital for psychological development and the authorities at that time believed that no bonding had occurred between mother and infant. This is simply not true.

I am a recovering alcoholic / addict and suffer from a mental illness which requires a combination of psychiatric medication. In my assessment my adoption issues contributed greatly to the onset of my illness. Research has also shown that adoptees' are 10 times more likely to develop psychological problems as compared to non adoptees'.

I have read numerous stories regarding the damaging effects of forced adoption and in my view there is ample evidence that many birth mothers were victims of such practices and continue to experience severe trauma, psychological distress, unresolved grief and loss issues. Mt birth mother was not told that financial support was available as well as being a young mother (age 16 years) did not assist due the stigma of illegitimacy.

Communicating with birth mothers and adoptee's on the face book site I have experienced overwhelming emotional pain, grief and loss issues. I ask your committee to keep my details confidential as I wish to remain anonymous. I am prepared to discuss my story if required to support this enquiry.

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