



Judith Hendriksen lost her baby to forced adoption practices employed by St Anne's maternity hospital in 1973. The Catholic Church's Sisters of Mercy have just apologised to her, in the first apology of its kind from a private hospital.

Nuns offer apology

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JOSH NYMAN

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ALBANY resident Judith Hendriksen's 17th birthday should have been her happiest.

Instead it was heartbreaking.

Her first child, born on September 11, 1973, was illegally taken from her by the Sisters of Mercy Perth in a practice of forced adoption experts say affected tens of thousands of women across Australia as recently as the 1980s.

Ms Hendriksen said she was forced to live at St Anne's Annex during her pregnancy and then give up her newborn baby immediately after delivery. "I was denied my motherhood," she said.

"The idea that women like me willingly gave up our babies couldn't be further from the truth."

After decades of demanding an apology, Ms Hendriksen finally received one last week from congregation leader Sister Marie Fitzgerald.

The Sisters of Mercy refused to comment publicly on the matter. But the written apology to Mrs Hendriksen said they prayed for her forgiveness.

"It is with sorrow that we look back on our involvement in separating you from Anne," the letter read. "We deeply and sincerely apologise for our past actions and the trauma it has caused yourself, Anne and your loved ones."

Ms Hendriksen said the apology came as a relief, but she wanted greater acknowledgment, such as a government apology.

josh.nyman@albanyadvertiser.com

