

1

# Senate Inquiry into 'Commonwealth contribution into forced adoption policies and practices'

Submission from:

Margaret Larsen



I, Margaret Larsen, originally from Denmark has lived in Australia almost 40 years as a resident of the State of NSW.

Here is my story:

My son was born in Germany at Helzer Hospital on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 1972. I had travelled to Germany from Denmark, when I was 5 months pregnant with my son. I had been raped and got pregnant as a result. I was not able to tell my mother I was pregnant, as I was afraid of her, because she was a very stern and old-fashioned woman, who was sometimes even cruel to me, so I was a-

fraild she would abandon me and throw me out of home.

While I was pregnant with my son, I stayed at a home for unmarried mothers near Ulzen in Germany. During my stay there, I consulted a German doctor, who encouraged me to go through with my pregnancy and have my baby adopted out. I had never even considered ~~this~~ but he put that idea into my head.

When the time came, when I had to go to hospital to give birth I was treated right from the start, as if my baby was going to be put up for adoption, even though I had never mentioned a word about adoption. Deep down in my heart I was yearning to keep my baby, as this was the first and only child I have ever had. I was thinking very hard about all the possible ways I could keep my son, but I had no support. It was all about adoption.

It was a very difficult time for me, when I was a young mother at the hospital in Germany. I was alone in a strange country, unfamiliar with the language and afraid to go home, not only because I was terrified of my mother there was also a stigma in society, as it was not morally acceptable to be pregnant and unmarried.

in those days.

I had nobody I could communicate with in my own language. There was a social worker at the hospital, who could only speak German and all the other personnel at the hospital were only German speaking. There was nobody there, who I could communicate with in my own language, Danish, and no translator was found for me, so I was completely left in the dark, totally uninformed about anything.

I was legally entitled to have a translator, who could explain to me all the possibilities, that were legally available in order to keep my child. Without this important information, I was therefore coerced to give my child up for adoption, as I did not know any better nor see any better at the time. The authorities brainwashed me with stories about, how much better my child would be off with total strangers, than with his own mother. I was young and naive enough to believe them.

I was only given a very short period of time in which to make up my mind. If there was such a thing as a revocation period, I was not told about that either.

Ever since my baby was 'stolen'

from me, I have deeply regretted it, and I still regret it today. Nobody ever warned me about this possible future regret, before I had to make the biggest decision in my life, to keep my child or to adopt him out.

After my son was born at the hospital in Germany, I had to go to a legal office in Ulzen, where my son was born in order to sign the adoption papers, which were written in German. There was a Danish translator present, but she was not able to translate the adoption papers for me. So in reality, I had signed for something, I did not understand and which I signed only, because I was severely coerced into doing so, due to the dire circumstances, I was in at the time.

This kind of practice is not legal in any country in the world.

As I have always deeply regretted having my child given up for adoption, I have tried very hard to find him. I have travelled back to Denmark to search for him many times, until I was finally fortunate enough to find him through the national register in Copenhagen. As soon as I came back to Australia, I wrote him a letter. He respon-

ded soon after and he seemed to be happy, that I had written to him. We corresponded together for a couple of years, until suddenly he stopped answering my letters for no apparent reason. I have a distinct feeling, that the adoptive parents have found out, that we were corresponding and that they got very angry and told him to stop all contact with me.

It is very hard for me not even being able to correspond with my son any longer but it is even worse, that I'm not able to see him, when I go back to visit the rest of my family in Denmark, for it is my son, I want to see the most.

Many years have now passed, since I last heard from my son. I don't even know whether my son is dead or alive or if he is married or if he has any children. I could be a grandmother without even knowing it.

As a result of this unnatural and inhumane treatment, I am suffering from severe depression, so I need to take a large dose of antidepressants in order to cope. I find it too difficult even to talk to other people about all my traumatic experiences. And it makes me feel very sad writing about them, although I'm grateful for finally being heard.

I just live in the hope, that one day my son and I will finally be reunited again. That would be the best and only cure for my depression.

No innocent mother should ever have to go through all the trauma, that I and hundred of thousands of mothers in the world have gone through, ever again. The bond between a mother and child is sacred and no one has got any right to destroy this bond by removing any child from its mother. Doing so is criminal, the most brutal act in human history.

Finally, I would also like to write to the German Government. Would you please let me know, who to write to regarding this matter.

Thank you

Margaret Larsen