

1st March 2011

Senate Inquiry Into

" Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices. "

Preamble to Submission

I Karen Anne Saville am a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia resident in N.S.W

As a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia I have an inalienable right to protection under the Australian Constitution and the Common Law of this country. As an Australian citizen, the Commonwealth affords me protection from unlawful and harmful actions that threaten my right to life, liberty and justice from those who would deny me these rights, within and without, the borders of Australia.

This is my story of the forced adoption of my son in 1975.

I lived in a very small country town in N.S.W. I do not wish to name the town or hospital. On my 14th birthday I was raped by a 17 year old guy. This crime resulted in me becoming pregnant and this changed my life forever. My parents were divorced and my mother was already raising 4 children on her own. I was to be sent to Brisbane to a home for unwed mothers but my grandparents intervened and I went to live with them 5 days a week and back home for the weekends. I was visited once during my pregnancy by a welfare worker. I told him I had been raped and that I wanted to keep my baby. He told me that because of my age I had no choice but to have my baby adopted. He told me I was not capable of providing, looking after or loving a baby and that if I did loved my baby I would give it up for adoption. I was told not to be selfish and to think of what was best for my baby. This was also told to me by my doctor and mother. No matter what I was going to find a way to keep my baby. I was never given any information or told about what to expect during the pregnancy or birth of my baby.

These are the facts of what happen to me once I was admitted to Hospital according to my medical records that I have only just received weeks ago and what little memory I have of what happened to me.

- 15th May 1975
- I did not sign any admission forms - these were signed by my mother.
- My medical records are marked "**Babe For Adoption**"
- **The drugs I was given during my labour were**
- **Pethilorfan - Atropine - I.V Pentothal - Mixogen (laction suppressant)**
- **During my stay in hospital I was given - Magadon on a daily bases (sedative)**
- **Other drugs I was given during my stay - I.V. Ergometrine - Pencillin – Aspalgin - Anti Gamma Globulin - Citravesant granules**

I cannot understand all the writing in my medical records and there may be other drugs that I may have been given.

I was not told what to expect or what was going to happen. I was left alone for hours, I do not remember much pain and I slept most of the labour. During the later stage of my labour about 12 trainee nurses entered the labour ward to observe the birth of my baby without my permission. I remember feeling so ashamed and embarrassed. My legs were put up in stirrups and tied/strapped there so I could not get them down. When my baby was born I tried so hard to lift my head to see my baby, but I was that drugged, I could not lift my head off the pillow, I could not even open my eyes. I wanted to see my baby so much and the nurses and doctor would not let me see or hold my baby. They would not give my baby to me. All I had of my baby as they rushed it out of the room was the heart wrenching cry which I heard every minute of everyday for the next 19 years. That was the only thing I had and they could not take that away from me.

They put something over my face and the next thing I knew I woke up in the ward. My doctor came to see me and told me I had a healthy boy & he weighed 7lb 9ozs. That is all I was told about him. The records show he was hidden away in the premmie ward, so I could not accidentally see him. I was put in a 4 bed ward with 3 other married mothers whose babies were bought into them ever 3-4 hours to feed, which I observed them feeding and holding their babies, and their babies crying. While mine was hidden away. I have very little memory of being in hospital because I slept a lot of the time. (records show I was there for 12 days I was sedated every night to be kept calm)

I remember my breast being very painful and swollen for days.

Whenever I asked the nurses for my baby I was told it was better not to see him dear because I would become too attached to him and it would be harder for me then to give him away. I kept telling them I wanted to keep my baby and they kept telling me I was too young and did not deserve to be a mother when there was so many deserving married couples out there who desperately wanted children and were not able to have them. I was told not to be so selfish and if I loved him I would not keep him.

On Sunday 19th May 1975 (the day before the welfare guy came to see me to sign the adoption papers) my grandparents came to see me and told me they had a solution for me. They told me not to give the baby up for adoption that they would help me raise my baby. My grandmother had already given up work to be there for me and they wanted me and the baby to live with them full time. They wanted me to go back and finish school and after that get a job. My grandmother would have the baby while I did that, than I would have him the rest of the time. Finally I had a way to keep my baby.

I would like to add here that my grandfather was actually my step grandfather. As my father was born out of wedlock in 1936 to my grandmother. In those days my grandmother was able to keep her baby and raise him herself. My grandparents tried very hard to have more children but never could. They were devastated when my baby was stolen.

The hospital would still not let me have my baby and they said that I would have to work it out with the welfare guy.

On Monday 20th May 1975 the welfare guy came and I told him that I was keeping my baby. He told me that I would have to work that out with my mother and grandparents but seeing he had come a long distance, he would fill out all the papers anyway just in case I changed my mind. He told me to go home and work it out, that I had 30 days after signing the papers to come back to the hospital and get my son. So I answered the question and signed the papers.

After receiving the adoption records recently I notice that my son's father's age had been altered. Documents say he was 16 years old which is wrong, I had informed the welfare guy that he was 17 years old. Why was this altered? Was it because I was raped and the laws of the time would have said he should have been prosecuted. So did they alter his age so they did not have to pursue the matter which would have slowed down the adoption proceedings.

I was never offered any legal assistance or even a witness in the signing of the adoption papers. I was only 14 years old I was not of legal age to sign those papers without a legal representative present to explain the legal ramifications of what I was signing. I was never told of any of my rights or informed that I even had any.

There is no "yes" in front of my signature

I was never offered counselling or informed of the short or long term emotional & psychological affects of surrendering a baby.

I was not even told I could even name my son. For 18 years I just called him baby whenever I thought of him or talked about him. Until I received his amended birth certificate in 1993. (Than I found out his name)

I was never offered any information what so ever about what assistance was available to me under the regulations of the Child Welfare Act 17 1939, which evolved in the 1950's to help me keep my baby. (This Act I only became aware of about a month ago) I was never told there was financial assistance available for me to help with the costs of raising a child. I never became aware of this benefit until 1991. I was never informed of any other help or assistance that was entitled to me if I kept my baby.

The welfare guy also told me the same as everyone else at the hospital, I would be wrong to keep my baby, that I did not deserve him & he would be better off with two parents that could love him & give him everything that I could not give him. A good life, a good education, anything he could ever want.

I told the nurses I was still going to keeping my baby, they still would not listen & bring me my son. They told me it was for the best this way dear & that I should just forget all about him & go & have fun. They said that as time went by I would forget all about him & would not even remember him or his birth.

I told them not to let him go that I was coming back to get my son within the 30 days.

I went back to the hospital before the 30 day period was up to get my son, but I was told I was too late, my son had gone with his adoptive parents. The records show he was discharged on 22th June 1975. The records show he was in fact still there when I went back. They lied.

What I wanted & what my grandparents wanted was totally ignored.

For 18 years I never spoke to any family about him, it was just like it never happened.

The damage that has been caused to me has been unbelievable devastating. I do not know if I can fully explain in words. It is like a never ending grief it just does not go away, 36 years later it just gets worse. That day I walked away from the hospital with my arms empty, without my son & abandoned him, left a hole in my heart & soul that never went away, it just grows bigger with the passing of time. I cried a lifetime of tears in those 30 days, I have never shed another tear for the rest of my life. Not even at my beloved grandparents funerals. I am not capable of feelings, I am aware of what I should feel and how I should act but I feel nothing. The only way I can cope is to push everything way down deep but it is always bubbling away. My heart is numb and made of very fragile stone, that I am afraid will shatter any time. I have been hanging on for dear life for all these years. I am just a shell of a person because I have internalised everything and have blamed myself for all these years for abandoning my son. **What sort of mother lets them take her baby away.**

I have had a very difficult life with many obstacles and heartache to overcome. I went on to have 3 more children, (I have never married) and have been a devoted mother to all 3 and have been there every minute for them. I now have 3 beautiful grandchildren and 2 more on the way. (I do not know if my first born son has any children). I give nearly all my time and energy to my family when I am not working. They have and will always be my life. They too know and have suffered the loss of their brother with me, and share a part of my ongoing grief too. My world is my family but my family can never be complete....

I have found my son, but he has chosen to have very little contact. His adoptive mother died when he was 10 years old and he was raised by his adoptive father. He said he has had a good life & loves his adoptive father dearly. He was raised by Italian parents who migrated to this country and could not speak a word of English when he started school. I am a white Australian with blue eyes, reddish hair and freckles. I know he would have felt different to his adopted family and thought it odd.

I have had one letter from my son and 11 photos of different stages of his childhood back in 1994. This is the day the memory of my son's cry from when he was born left me and I have never heard it again. I had something else to hang on to. I have his pictures, I have something physical to look at.

In 2001 I met my son and his wife for the only time, he was 26 years old. I cannot put into words what that meeting was like, but it was all over so quick. The hardest part was to turn & walk away again. I have not heard or seen my son since. I send a yearly update letter praying one day for him to forgive me and make contact.

I have no idea what affect adoption has had on his life. He was never told of his adoption until he was 18 years old after his father received my first letter. He did tell me that all he has ever wanted was a mother and he called me "Mum".

He is now nearly 36 years old and the pain never leaves me it seeps from every cell in my body, it is my life. If only someone would place my first born baby in my empty arms and make all the pain go away. Make me whole again.

I think what the "Inquiry" means to me is that I now realise there was a greater force at work here (The Federal & State Government policies/practices was a joke) The government employees who preyed on vulnerable young woman and girls like me to experiment with us and morally cleanse us of our babies. What other species on this earth has ever been denied the right to raise there offspring. Only the young unmarried white woman/girl and the stolen generation rip from there mothers arms. **Shame Shame** on these people.

Writing this submission has enabled me to finally put it all together and into perspective and now someone will finally hear my story and not pretend it did not happen. I cannot be silenced any longer.

The inquiry will enable me to finally be able to forgive myself. Those who committed this inhumane crime against me and my baby will be held accountable. It will be noted in our history, finally documented that **"Our babies were stolen by the government of our time"**. They were not **"given away by their mothers"** as this country believes.

I can provide copies(if requested) of all the files that I have finally been given by your government departments/hospital. I have been told that no other files exists. I believe there are other files that do exist that I have not been given. I was told that mine and my sons medical files were destroyed but when I persisted and sent a formal letter noting the ramifacations of destroying medical records that were involve in adoption, **stamped by the Supreme Court of Australia** they very quickly surfaced. I believe if I dig deep enough there will be more files.

Karen Saville