

SUBMISSION - FORMER FORCED ADOPTION POLICIES

To Senate Enquiry Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee in Community Affairs
P O Box 6100 - Parliament house
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Committee,

MANY WAYS OF FORCED ADOPTION

1. *"Who is going to take care of this baby. The mother is too disturbed"* the doctor asked after the birth of my only child in late 1940's. The doctor insisted - someone else had to take him. Two options were available - one a rich stranger. These people already had the money to give the child an education, trip overseas and a house, I was told.

However the baby was born with deformed foot. How could I be sure they not abandon him as defective? Whereas I knew we would do the exercises on him that doctor said would correct the foot. Another worry was that the people wanted to ignore and override adoption procedures and take the baby straight from birth and put their own names on the birth certificate - as the biological parents.

2 Then my mother said she would take the baby. For me this still amounts to forced adoption too - because at the doctor's orders it took my only child away from me: - And because I was too poor to pay to travel to visit the child, outside Brisbane, more than about once a year.

When I had the baby I was like a ten year old child, in a twenty year old body.

3 I add that I too became an adoptee when I was taken by the State, when about eight years of age. . This is because there was no widow's pension for my widowed mother, or child support in the 1940's. So the policy was to make such children Wards of the State as status offenders - which effectively makes the State and government the parent.

Whereas had the policy been to give financial help to the biological parent - instead of the church and government homes. - I probably would not have had a child out of wedlock.

Practises in children's homes stultified my development. Unwritten Policy of limiting education of those in children's homes - stifled my mental capacity. I was stilted by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder stunting my emotional intelligence. Bashing with the loose leg of a chair and other children's home tortures made me a different person to who I was: A bright average person of some talent.

MAKING THEM SUFFER

Practise and policy in the 1940's in hospitals was to refuse any pain relief to unwed mothers. The idea was that if unwed mothers were made to suffer they would not have more children out of wedlock. However the gentle, kind poet, Judith Wright, paid for the baby's birth in a private hospital at Kangaroo Point, Brisbane. Judith had found out that this hospital would not let unwed mothers suffer. "*We don't let them suffer them here*" the hospital said. I drifted through the birth of my baby lulled in a soft haze of twilight sleep. Still there was a problem.

Unwed mothers were required to have a doctor for the birth. When I began to bleed profusely the nurses asked, "*Who is your doctor?*" Shock. I didn't have a doctor.

You may ask, "*How could my mother take the baby when she had not had the money to take care of me?*" Well my mother remarried when I was about nineteen. She then had a home and financial support. Yet a problem arose.

Before my mother remarried Mum and I lived together in a small flat for about a year. After their wedding they took the baby with them for a brief time. However her new husband insisted he wanted some time alone with my Mum. They promised me the baby would only be in a children's home for about six weeks. I was working and had no one to care for the baby.

Only in about late 1990's, at the time of the Forde Enquiry into historic abuse in children's homes, did I learn the following: That after six weeks the baby was transferred from the baby home for unmarried mothers home in Toowong to - Tufnell Children's Home for most of his second year of life. I understand children could be adopted from the homes.

I had visited the baby in the first baby's home. However my mother did not tell me about the second home he was abandoned into. Afterwards a photo I took of the baby shows definite baby miasma depression. All light is drained from his dull eyes. His eyes express only sorrow. His mouth slumps loosely with disappointment. A rattle tied to his wrist hangs limply. I will always feel tormented that this happened to the baby.-

The loss of my baby was the loss of any opportunity to ever be a mother as I had no other children.

My own adoption by the State as a Ward of the State - led to suicide attempt when workplace bullying opened old wounds from abuse in children's homes. Much later I managed to catch up on some of my lost education and became an artist. - Yet I am still haunted by what the baby suffered, and its ongoing effects from policies, practises and omissions of that dark time.

End

From: Muriel "Mim" V. Dekker (nee Willson)

P S Poet Judith Wright is deceased. So I understand can be mentioned. Either way I give permission for this submission to be published.