

Senate Inquiry into

“Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices.”

Preamble to Submission

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia residing in Western Australia.

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 the 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.

### **MY SUBMISSION**

Having read a substantial number of the other submissions I realise that my circumstances are quite different – as it shows the other side of the story plus how the changes to the Adoption Act caused havoc to me, my daughter and my two sons.

My husband and I adopted our beautiful daughter in 1973, she was 2 weeks old.

She made our family of my husband, me and our two wonderful naturally born boys, complete and we were very, very excited and happy.

We decided to adopt after two miscarriages, both girl babies, one at 3 months and the other was lost at 5 months, we were devastated. This is the only reason I can give as after all this time I am not really sure if there were other circumstances.

We waited two years for our beautiful girl and never during that time did our resolve to adopt waiver, in fact my mother, mother in law and I busied our selves by wall papering a room in pink bunnies and sewing and knitting a lot of pink clothes; all the time enjoying our lives with our two boys.

When the day came I can remember just how excited we all were – and we were asked to go into St John of God’s hospital in Subiaco, to “see if we liked her!” As if for one minute we were going to say “no.” We all went to see her and we all came home so excited that our new baby was going to be with us very soon. In hindsight it wasn’t that different from being pregnant and bringing our new born baby home.

At this point I should let you know that our sons were 7 and 4 respectively.

I should also point out that the welfare people who interviewed us and processed the papers – specifically told us that as we had other, natural children it would be a good idea if we DIDN’T tell our daughter she was adopted. **I REALLY WANT TO STRESS THIS POINT – WE WERE TOLD NOT TO TELL HER SHE WAS ADOPTED.**

The fact is that we were contacted by a person (30 years later I was told it was the birth mother’s lawyer) who told us that the mother was 26 years old. She was the type of person you would find in a “receptionists” position and that she didn’t want to have a child at this time in her life. (Or words to this affect)

So, my husband and I proceeded with the adoption and one year later our little girl was legally ours – another especially happy day.

Our life proceeded, we moved houses our lives changed our children grew up and we never told anyone we had adopted our daughter she was just part of our family and **IN LINE WITH WHAT WE WERE TOLD WE NEVER TOLD HER SHE WAS ADOPTED.** In fact to this day there are very few people who know my daughter is adopted, that is the way I wanted it but not the way it stayed.

Along the way I received two phone calls – years apart, from a lawyer asking about \_\_\_\_\_ s (my daughter's name) health and well being. Each time I became very upset but gave them the information they were seeking. During these conversations they became aware that \_\_\_\_\_ had not been told that she was adopted – they said nothing.

I think I should explain why I became upset – I guess I saw it as an intrusion into our lives. We had a legal agreement with the birth mother's legal representative – and with extrapolation with the birth mother - that we would bring our daughter up in the proper manner. The only condition to the adoption was that we would not bring her up in the Catholic faith and I was very cognisant of this fact. I will divert a little at this point to say that I was so aware of sticking to my agreement that when, my daughter was getting married to a Catholic in a Catholic church I was quite concerned and went as far as discussing this turn of events with a councillor to seek their opinion on whether or not I was doing the right thing in letting this union occur. It was pointed out to me that my Daughter was now a women and was making her own decisions which ultimately over road her birth mother's or my wants – so I said nothing.

The years went by and as happens in so many families my husband and I parted and divorced, leaving me to bring up three children. Which I did, they are, all three the pride of my life.

However, in xxxxxx the West Australian government passed a law in **retrospect** allowing all birth parents to get in touch with the children they had let go to adoption.

Once again, having read some of the submissions provided to you for this enquiry I see that there is another side to this story and of course being a mother of two natural children I always knew there was and I always wondered how any mother could give up her child.

However, you must realise that my Daughters natural mother was **not** 15 or 16. She was 26. Not only was she older but **she gave up the child of her own free will.** In fact she and the natural father continued to live together after the birth of their child for another two years – and are still friends.

Nevertheless, when this law came into being my daughter's natural mother saw an opportunity to contact "her" daughter. Hence I received a letter from the Child Welfare department telling me that the natural mother wanted to contact her daughter and that if I didn't tell \_\_\_\_\_ that she was adopted within three months they, would write to her and let her know.

In writing this missive – I can still feel the anxiety, pain and anger that came with that letter. So much pain and anger that I spent \$10,000 and the next three months fighting with lawyers to try and make it go away. I would have spent a million dollars to save my daughter the pain and destruction that was about to be brought into her life. Here she was a newly married woman trying to have a baby herself without any luck because she suffers with endometrioses; undergoing three bouts of surgery and "this stranger" wants to come back into her life. **WHY? Because she was feeling guilty;**

**because she has never had any other children; because she was lonely and now wanted a daughter!**

As I said in the beginning I have a different perspective on adoption and I do not apologise for it.

This birth mother knew what she was doing, she entered into a legal agreement willingly and 32 years later chose to break that contract without a single consideration as to what her actions might do to the person she was about to contact.

I will not even talk about what that letter and her intentions did to me the person who had taken the little baby and made her my own. I will only say that if I could have given my life to save my daughter the pain she experienced – I would have. I even considered it – but that was in a selfish moment just to get away from the pain I was going through at the time.

After much soul searching and several sessions with a psychologist who coached me on how to break this secret to my daughter, I told her just after Christmas 200xxxxx. The blackest day of my life - I will never forget it.

Of course the psychologist was right, once the words were out the burden went from my shoulders to my daughters and after several hours of talking and trying to reassure her that nothing had changed as far as I was concerned, she fell to pieces and had to be taken Royal Perth Hospital. To say she had absolutely no idea that she was adopted would be an understatement and it came as a tremendous shock to her – she was ill for years – if not still.

I know for a fact that she still feels abandoned and that is with me around the corner.

In her own time her birth mother contacted \_\_\_\_\_ by letter and then by email. So did her birth father. To say that they lied to her is only a judgement on my behalf but let's just say their stories of events didn't match and so \_\_\_\_\_ decided not to see or have anything to do with her Mother – although she does see her Father on an irregular basis and did get to meet her paternal Grandfather – which I concede is a lovely thing and I am glad she did.

My beautiful daughter now has a child of her own and I know from her actions and the things she says wants to protect him from ever feeling abandoned or unloved. She has her cross to bear like we all do I guess.

**However, I want you all in Government to know just how much your decisions can affect people when they are taken as a blanket solution to a problem and do not have a clause in them which ensures that individual situations can be given consideration.**

**I didn't have any legal grounds on which to fight this law and my daughter didn't have any legal rights – she was just told. The do-gooders of this world think that every situation is the same that is not correct.**

Over the years I have heard of other cases where a person's life has been turned upside down by similar revelations to ours and I can assure you the majority say "I wish I never knew". In fact I was told, by my psychologist, that in the USA when a similar law was passed there was a significant rise in the number of suicides due to the stress these revelations caused.

Thank you for the opportunity to put the "other" side to the story to you and please, please consider the consequences of your actions. As representatives of us, the people, you have an unenviable

responsibility to realise that not all situations are the same and you will always need a get out of jail clause in all your deliberations and laws.

TO CHANGE ANY LAW IN **RETROSPECT** CAN HAVE DIABOLICAL REPRECUSIONS – PLEASE ACCEPT THAT AND CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF ANY FUTURE CHANGES TO LAW YOU MAY BE CONSIDERING.

Thank you