

Hi my name is Kathie Armstrong, I am a second generation of my family to grow up in state care and now there are the 4th generation of my family growing up in state care today.

I entered care in 1974 at age 2 and half, I was charged with incompetent guardian ship. I spent time at Bidura Children's home, Minali, Phillip House, Youth Angle and 4 different foster care placements. I suffered at the hands of people in authority sexually, physically, psychologically, emotionally abused, neglect from my own family and carers. I have felt the lack stability in my childhood and the absolute loss of family, and of that sense of belonging that I know other people have had growing up. The loss of identity as they changed my name with every new placement has had an impact on the need to now know who I am and where I come from. I still know little today about my family including my parents, grandparents and extended family who may well live nearby¹. As a child growing up in care I was always waiting for my parents to come and save me not knowing that my father had actually passed away.

I was sexually abused in 2 different placements at 2 and half and from 6 to the age of 12, I was physically abused from 3 and half to the age of 5 and 12 to the age of 15. I was psychologically abused by every placement and treated like an unwanted and certainly unloved thing. I grew up believing I was abused because of who I was, that I had something in me that made people abuse me.

I have not applied for any redress scheme because there is no such scheme in NSW even though there has been a National Apology and even a memorial service in NSW.

For some reason NSW government makes near impossible for a vulnerable part of society to make claim or redress against the NSW Government direct responsibility of care and wellbeing and safety of children who had no choice but to live through this traumatic experience at the hands of people the government deemed appropriate to be in authority of the care and protection of children. Other states have given at least provided a method for redress that is accessible and minimalistic in regards to cost of effort for claimants.

The National government has admitted in its apology that the blame was the failing of the government in protecting our most vulnerable part of society, our children. It stated we were in no way to blame. It is time the NSW government stopped avoided responsibility in its lack of care and protection management and provided an accessible system for redress.

I have attempted twice now to make a formal statement about the sexual abuse I suffered for several years. I have not been able to complete this statement due to the process you have to go through to do this and the impact this has on my emotional wellbeing. Some things are just too painful to relive.

Redress is really important to me because it gives weight to the National Apology that Mr Rudd gave on 16 November 2009. It would imply that they were not just empty words. The excitement I felt when Mr Rudd and Mr Turnbull said 'you are in no way to blame for what has happened to you' lasted a little while. Now I need something to back those words up. Something that is real and tangible, something that I can pass onto my children. Due to growing up in care and not having a nurturing environment to thrive in, it has meant that I have had to pursue my education later in life while parenting my 4 children. I have issues with going to a medical/dental and recently discovered optometrist appointments. This is due to abuse taken place by the matron and doctor at Bidura. I also have no medical history to share when asked by professional. The emotional and psychological abuses I have suffered have impacted on my whole life. Hence Redress would at least show that some acknowledgment and responsibility of the traumas I have been through.

For the first time in my life I didn't feel different to other Australian children who had grown up in care of the state or as we were known state wards. The National Apology was just that, a National Apology bringing children from all states together. I thought this was to unify and acknowledge Australian wide that child abuse in care was a national epidemic. This means it should be dealt with on a national level with the same standards across the nation. All churches and charities and state governments should contribute to a national scheme.