



The Secretary  
Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee  
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Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care

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### *A Shared Consciousness*

My experience of being raised by the Child Welfare.

Up until three weeks ago I didn't realise that I had a shared consciousness.

I was with a group of other people who were from state orphanages and other institutions at Quest for Life . We talked and talked about our experiences, story's and emotions .

All those angry feelings of abandonment and the feelings of being absolutely and totally alone in your life, I know where they come from.

Reared by the child welfare as I was from about 1952 till 1965.

As a consequence, I thought I was crazy.

As an adult I have been in Psychiatric Hospitals with Anxiety Attacks for years of and on. I had a drinking problem and I had a drug problem.

I didn't know love. I wasn't able to receive love on any level.

I couldn't cry. I was frightened inside all the time that someone was going to hurt me. I never knew why, I thought I was mad.

I am 54 now and it was only three weeks ago that I realised it is not me. It is the consequences of childhood.

As a teenager I was brutalised, flogged , hair pulled and so on and so forth. As an adult I have a charm, I have been a liar and that's how I existed.

Existed; I haven't lived as a whole person and the reason why is because I haven't trusted. You have no Idea of the consequences of that.

Constantly I looked over my shoulder. Every time someone said something nice to me, I thought no, you mean something else.

Because of that, no-one has been able to get in my armour, in my soul , In my heart.

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I have been having nightmares and strange dreams as I haven't been able to talk about these things.

The sadness I have carried all my life has welled up in me for the first time. It's hard to put sadness into words but sadness is a manifestation of thinking your not lovable.

If your told as a child – you're a dirty little liar---no wonder your mother killed herself—it's your fault.

My mother killed herself. I don't know why my mother killed herself.

A product of the 50's I would imagine.

Anytime she would go into Callen Park she'd come out with a new baby. Every time she'd have a new baby the welfare would come along and say your mad, you can't have that baby.

She would go to court. I have the transcripts of the court cases.

I read my file twice and I didn't understand it.

When I thought I would do my submission properly, I would need some dates and times so I had a look again. I saw that I have a sister that was adopted , I never knew I had that sister.

My mother had a baby under a bridge up at the north coast. She didn't want to go to hospital. She had it outside in the open because she knew it would be taken off her.

Her baby died and she was charged with that. She was put back into Callen Park anyway.

I have a younger brother.

When my mother came home from hospital and we all lived in a little room in Bourke Street, she said to me, you've got a baby brother and he's yours and you better look after him.

When we where taken again we ended up in Budura.

I was about five, he was about three and I wouldn't let his hand go.

One day the staff came along and said your brother has got to go to the dentist and you can't come. I let go of his hand and they took him.

That was the last time I saw him until he was about fourteen.

I tracked him down but he hated me. He blamed me because they took him away. This is the consequence of the child welfare system.

This is how they treated you in these days.

My brother now a mature aged man, still hates me because I let them take him away all those years ago in Budura.

I am not able to get through to him that I was a little girl and had no control over the situation. He is not able to understand because he as an adult man is not a normal functioning man. Because of those memory's and the things he endured, he is totally dysfunctional.

I don't know my other brothers and sisters, they were taken at different times when I was in the homes.

My mother would go to court and say that she was alright, she could look after us. I would go home for about a month and the child welfare would come around and say she was mad, she was drunk, she was on drugs, and I would be taken back again.

So, from home to home and my mother and back to Institutions. In and Out and In and Out till I was about eleven and then... she killed herself.

From eleven to fifteen I was completely Institutionalised.

I was brutalised and it became the norm.

In my twenties I was violent. In my thirties I was violent .

In my forties I was violent.

When I say violent- I was violent to myself mainly.

I would allow people to bash me. I would go looking for it.

A little while ago I met a women who I was in the home with.

She told me I was never violent as a child, the violence was done to me.

The woman who run Lynwood Hall---I was her punching bag.

Every time I'd turn around she would smash me in the mouth with her keys. She would pull my hair, she would knock me unconscious in front of all the other girls. I was used as a wiping board.

I was used to keep all the other girls subservient and in control.

They knew if they "got out of hand" they would get what I got.

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As a consequence of the violence I suffered, violence became my norm. Psychiatric hospitals, I allowed them to be violent to me. My anxiety attacks were prolonged. I couldn't understand why I thought people were always going to hurt me. I would hide in my room for long periods of time. I lived alone nearly all my life because I didn't think I was a nice person.

Nine years ago I met my partner. I learnt from my partner how to love and I realised that if I can love this person and she can love me, I must be alright. When Caroline who I was in the home with told me that I wasn't violent, it made sense.

Education, or should I say the lack of it.

I was traumatised as a young child, I couldn't talk until I was about eight. When I did start to talk I had a stutter and I still have it as an adult when I am nervous. I was classed as an idiot and retarded, so I had no education what so ever. I am not able to write anything down, my partner does all my important letter writing.

I have always had low paid jobs and have no such thing as superannuation or a home. I am on a pension, a disability pension as a by-product of how I was treated as a child. Last year I had a battle with social security, they tried to take my pension off me. They told me I could go back to work.

Go back to work with my anxiety attacks and everything that goes with it. Like my withdrawals and my suicidal tendencies.

I have an ongoing struggle with Social security.

Reactions from Child Welfare still stay with me now.

It's hard for people to understand, they say you will get over it but it never ever goes away.

Until recently I didn't understand all that it meant.

I have a shared consciousness with a whole generation, including the Stolen Generation – of who we are now as adults.