

From: Maureen Melville  
Sent: Wednesday, 11 May 2005 1:17 PM  
To: Committee, Mental Health (SEN)  
Subject: Life of pain.

Maureen Melville

Senate Select Committee on Mental Health  
Department of the Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

Wednesday 11th May 2005

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Senate Committee Inquiry

It is with deep hurt and anger that I find it necessary to write this letter.

The hurt comes from the pain and loss of my baby stolen from me at birth 38 years ago.

The anger comes from irresponsible authorities and health care workers and the fact that I was coerced into giving up for adoption my baby son by a social worker who, at that stage, did not make known to me any other options, such as childcare, mother-craft and financial assistance. I know that if I had been aware of any of these rights I would have certainly kept my child.

On 13th August 1967, at age 16, I gave birth to my first child - a baby boy. My name is Maureen Melville, and this is my story.

Because my parents both worked, I helped raise my younger brother and sister, 3 and 7 years my junior respectively. It was from age 10 that I first held responsibility for my siblings until my parents came home from work, which was often late at night. I cooked and cleaned, and supervised the house until they arrived home. This developed much responsibility and nurturing within me. This experience I now realise would have made me more than capable of raising my own child several years later.

When I was 15 my parents were involved in a car accident, which resulted in the death of my mother, and subsequently a nervous breakdown in my father. I was then left with the full responsibility for child brother and sister, then 12 and 8. My mothers death was extremely devastating to me. I was very lonely and confused.

I believe it was this situation that caused my pregnancy - three months after my mother died I fell pregnant at a very distressing time of my life when I was vulnerable and open to being taken advantage of.

During approximately the last 4 months of my pregnancy I was receiving constant 'guidance' from a female social worker at the Royal North Shore Hospital, St Leonards, Sydney NSW. This woman denied me my human rights of being a mother as she held my hand and never stopped telling me how she was my 'only friend' at that particular time, and that she knew best for 'baby'. The only option she offered me was adoption, she really brainwashed me into believing this was the best thing I could do. Even when my father and I decided that it would be possible for me to keep my baby, she refused, reiterating that the best thing

was adoption - she had her own agenda, as there were 'parent' waiting in the wings. She told me that denying them this opportunity to have my baby would be a selfish act on my part. Ever since (for the past 38 years) I have been filled with anguish and have mourned the loss of my first born baby. I just cannot express the pain I have felt over this traumatic experience. Within 12 months I had lost both my mother and my own baby. My relationship with my father has suffered over the past 38 years, I also know that if I had have been allowed to keep my baby, it would have been a bonding experience between my father and I.

I resent the fact that I was not even allowed to see my baby. One night whilst still in hospital I swear I heard him cry, and then heard the nurse on duty comfort him with 'you poor little thing, nobody loves you' which has gone on to haunt me ever since. I was grieving for my baby in the hospital. and firmly believe I was drugged to keep me quiet. I told the social worker I wanted to keep my baby, and she told me 'it was best for baby to give him up for adoption, because I could not feed him, could not support him, could not provide for him, or give him a proper education'. I have now found my son, and have learnt that his adoptive parents split up when he was 8 years old, and he was passed backwards and forwards between parents most of his life. I know I would have been able to give him a much more stable life.

Psychologically the whole experience had a detrimental effect on me, as I blamed myself - I believed I was not capable of being a good mother. I felt branded with shame and guilt, as though I was a sinful person. This was instilled in me through the actions of the authorities involved in the adoption of my baby. When I eventually married and had 2 more children I constantly questioned myself was I being a good mother.

Over the years I have tried to get help with counselling and seeing a Psychiatrist but I have never been able to find that they fully understand my needs, and now I feel my trust in the medical profession has got worse as I have gotten older, I can only speak to other women who have been through the same experience. I really feel there is a lack of services for women like myself that have had their babies stolen from them and the medical profession cannot acknowledge unless they too have been through this experience, I know this to be true as I speak to alot of other women, like myself.

I find that authorities still till this day do not fully understand the extreme pain that what they did to us (mothers and children) and dont seem to want to acknowledge these past practices that have cause detrimental effects on us. I would like to see a National Inquiry into Adoption Practices and their Known Damage and I would love to see adoption outlawed.

Yours sincerely

Maureen Melville.