COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

SENATE

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Reference: Children in institutional care

TUESDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2004

PARRAMATTA

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

INTERNET

The Proof and Official Hansard transcripts of Senate committee hearings, some House of Representatives committee hearings and some joint committee hearings are available on the Internet. Some House of Representatives committees and some joint committees make available only Official Hansard transcripts.

The Internet address is: **http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard**

To search the parliamentary database, go to:
http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au

SENATE

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 3 February 2004

Members: Senator Hutchins *(Chair)*, Senator Knowles *(Deputy Chair)*, Senators Humphries, Lees, McLucas and Moore

Substitute members: Senator Murray for Senator Lees and Senator Tchen for Senator Knowles

Participating members: Senators Abetz, Bishop, Carr, Chapman, Coonan, Crossin, Denman, Eggleston, Chris Evans, Faulkner, Ferguson, Ferris, Forshaw, Harradine, Harris, Lightfoot, Ludwig, Mackay, Mason, McGauran, Murphy, Nettle, Payne, Tierney, Watson and Webber

Senators in attendance: Senators Humphries, Hutchins, Knowles, Moore and Murray

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

(a) in relation to any government or non-government institutions, and fostering practices, established or licensed under relevant legislation to provide care and/or education for children:

(i) whether any unsafe, improper or unlawful care or treatment of children occurred in these institutions or places,

(ii) whether any serious breach of any relevant statutory obligation occurred at any time when children were in care or under protection, and

(iii) an estimate of the scale of any unsafe, improper or unlawful care or treatment of children in such institutions or places;

(b) the extent and impact of the long-term social and economic consequences of child abuse and neglect on individuals, families and Australian society as a whole, and the adequacy of existing remedies and support mechanisms;

(c) the nature and cause of major changes to professional practices employed in the administration and delivery of care compared with past practice;

(d) whether there is a need for a formal acknowledgement by Australian governments of the human anguish arising from any abuse and neglect suffered by children while in care;

(e) in cases where unsafe, improper or unlawful care or treatment of children has occurred, what measures of reparation are required;

(f) whether statutory or administrative limitations or barriers adversely affect those who wish to pursue claims against perpetrators of abuse previously involved in the care of children; and

(g) the need for public, social and legal policy to be reviewed to ensure an effective and responsive framework to deal with child abuse matters in relation to:

(i) any systemic factors contributing to the occurrences of abuse and/or neglect,

(ii) any failure to detect or prevent these occurrences in government and non-government institutions and fostering practices, and reporting mechanisms

(iii) any necessary changes required in current policies, practices and reporting mechanisms

In undertaking this reference, the committee is to direct its inquiries primarily to those affected children who were not covered by the 2001 report *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record*, inquiring into child migrants, and the 1997 report, *Bringing them Home*, inquiring into Aboriginal children.

In undertaking this reference, the committee is not to consider particular cases under the current adjudication of a court, tribunal or administrative body.

In undertaking this reference, the committee is to make witnesses and those who provide submissions aware of the scope of the inquiry, namely:

(a) explain the respective responsibilities of the Commonwealth and the states and territories in relation to child protection matters; and

(b) explain the scope of the committee's powers to make recommendations binding upon other jurisdictions in relation to the matters contained in these terms of reference.

WITNESSES

CARTER, Mr Kenneth John (Private capacity)....101
CAVE, Ms Janette Mary (Private capacity)....73
DOUGHTY, Mr Ralph (Private capacity)....86
DOUGLAS, Mr Stephen Anthony (Private capacity)....32
FORMOSA, Mrs Bette (Private capacity)....14
FRASER, Ms Georgina Margaret (Private capacity)....55
HUGHES, Miss Dianne Patricia (Private capacity)....39
KELLY, Mrs Cheryl Anne (Private Capacity)....63
LOHSE, Mrs Verneta (Private capacity)....46
McLEARY, Mr William (Private capacity)....73
QUINN, Mr Peter Erwin (Private capacity)....107
ROBB, Ms Wilma Grace (Private capacity)....1
SHEEDY, Ms Leonie, Secretary, Care Leavers of Australia Network....120
VERNON, Mr Lindsay Leith (Private capacity)....14
VERNON, Ms Pamella Gwendolyn (Private capacity)....14
VERNON, Ms Yvonne Fay (Private capacity)....14
VICHA, Ms Elizabeth (Private capacity)....96
WITCHARD, Mrs Diana Edith (Private capacity)....46

Committee met at 9.07 a.m.

ROBB, Ms Wilma Grace (Private capacity)

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing and welcome everyone who is present today. The Senate Community Affairs References Committee is continuing its inquiry into the very important issue of children in institutional care, an issue that has affected the lives of a vast many Australians. The committee has now received over 400 individual submissions both in public and confidentially. These submissions have provided the often emotional and disturbing stories of many people who spent time in a range of religious, government and non-government institutions across Australia over a period of many decades. The committee is grateful to all these people for sharing their life stories with us.

The committee received many requests from people who wanted to speak at these hearings. Unfortunately, it is simply not possible to meet all those requests. But you can be assured that your voice has been heard, as the committee has gained an enormous understanding of the complex issues through the hundreds of detailed submissions that it has received. Those invited to speak today demonstrate the wide range of institutions children were placed in as well as the range of government and non-government groups who were responsible for providing care in these institutions. I might add that the committee received many submissions from people who were in the same institutions and who shared similar experiences.

I remind everyone appearing today that their comments are on the public record. You should feel free to speak without any fear of reprisal or intimidation, but please exercise caution in your comments so that cases before courts are not referred to and individuals are not adversely identified. The committee prefers evidence to be heard in public, but evidence may also be taken in camera. I welcome Ms Wilma Robb. I understand you have received information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses and evidence. Is that correct?

Ms Robb—Yes.

CHAIR—The committee has before it your submission. I now invite you to make an opening presentation to be followed by questions from the committee.

Ms Robb—I was in the Parramatta Girls Home from 1962 to 1965. There were two sentences of nine months and Hay was included in that. During the time that I was in Parramatta Girls Home, we got bashed and kicked. We got pulled by the hair. We had to scrub covered ways until our knees bled. We had no rights; we had no dignity. Everything was taken off us. We were kids—young girls. We had monsters looking after us. We were put in there by the state. So many kids have been screwed up all their life. It is going to be really hard to bring up what we have got to bring up today, what we have to live with. We had bed drill for hours. We had to make the bed and pull the bed to pieces. We had to throw the mattress around, whenever they wanted us to, for doing something like moving in our beds, turning the wrong way to the wall or having blankets over our head. We used to get put into isolation. We used to get pulled out at night and put into a cold shower. We had to get undressed in front of male officers and stand there out in the cold, with no walls around us. We were 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17-year-old girls. We were going through puberty. We were innocent—innocent to an extent, anyway. All we knew was that we were kids

and we were getting away from what we wanted to get away from, which was usually domestic violence.

I want to know what right they had to do this and I want to know what right they have to not be named, to not be brought to justice. We are still paying and we will pay for the rest of our lives for what has happened to us. A lot of girls have made it. A lot of them have not. They are institutionalised; they are in psychiatric centres. They have passed on what they went through to their kids, kids that did not understand. My daughter came back with me to Parramatta at 34 years of age. It took until then before she could understand who I was and what I was all about. I have reared three kids and my kids have done well. They are all in jobs. I am a full-time carer. Therefore, I am still institutionalised, because that is the only work I can do. I can do backbreaking work, because we were made to. We never had the chance to think because we were told we were not allowed to think.

The Largactil that we were on—and there are a lot of girls who still take drugs today, regardless of what sort of drugs they are—which they pushed down our throats to shut us up have affected a lot of girls. It was a psychotic drug. That is what they used to give people who were psychotic. We used to get it pushed down our throat with our nose held, for no reason at all. I got my teeth bashed out in heaps of sinks because I spat my Largactil out. I had had it. Then I tried to abscond because I had had enough. Four girls, including me, got down a sewer and we sat there. We got found, but then we got sent to Hay. Hay used to be an asylum. It used to be a POW complex, and that is what it was for us girls. Hay still stays with me today; I cannot even think. We were not allowed to talk. It was all in our head. I am a spinner. My head is spinning all the time and I cannot talk, but I tell you what: I am going to talk today because this is our chance. We should have had this chance years ago but everyone was trying to get on with their lives and rear kids.

We were not allowed to talk. At Hay we had 10 minutes a day to talk. It was about whether the flowers were coming upside down. We were not allowed to have attitude at all. We had drill. It was all regimental stuff. We are still regimental. We brought up our kids regimental. We got no after-care at all, and a lot of us could not afford to pay for after-care by ourselves anyway because everyone wants a buck. We did not even get after-care after we had our reunion. A lot of the girls could not turn up to that reunion and a lot of the girls could not come here today. This is going to throw the people who are here today and going to talk—and those who are not even going to talk but just listen. Believe you me, it is going to throw them. Who is going to be there for us? No-one, because no-one has ever been there for us.

The government had no right running places like this. Today it is a holiday. We got locked up in jails for running away. Today they go in for murder, for everything, and they get nothing. They get compensation, they get pats on the back, they get TVs; they get everything. They have their rights. We have never had rights. This is the only right we have ever had in our life, and it is talking in front of you. I feel really good here today because someone is listening and my voice is coming out. It should have happened years ago. It really should have happened years ago.

Every time we walked out that door—twice I walked out—we were told: 'See you next time. You'll never make anything of your life. You're a no-one. You're a no-good slut.' That is what they said: 'You're a no-good slut.' I was a 13-year-old person. I would like to tell them: 'We're not sluts and we are someone, and we got the chance to speak out. We did good with our lives.' I

would like to know the suicide statistics of the girls because they could not handle what they have had to put up with. That was when we were going through puberty and we should have had our parents and had understanding, not to be shown a Modess to see whether we were entitled to another one—that was all personal stuff—not bending down so they could check you and not jumping up and down because they were a mob of perverts.

We never got it, so we missed out on our childhood. I am not saying that we should not have been there because we thought we were better off there, away from our houses, where we were getting bashed and getting abused. We thought we were going to a different place. I tell you what: I did not think they ever made places like that, but they did and no-one cared. No-one inquired into it. It was all about power. It was all about power, and they were let get away with it.

When we got out of Parramatta, Hay or any other institution, we had no-one to talk to. I did not see anyone from Parramatta until 20 years ago. I had to live with what had happened because no-one wants to know about it. How can you talk to someone who has never been through it? You cannot because they do not understand or they do not want to understand. It is in the too hard basket. We just have to push it to the side. We get on with our lives, but it is there. At times it comes out and you have to try and deal with it, but you just cannot. Then you push it down because something else comes up.

All the girls and the guys, everyone who has been in these institutions right up to the seventies, have problems—big problems. I am 55 and I am trying to deal with this now. I have just lost my mother. On Friday I buried my mother and this had to come up, and I have kept it together because this is my time. Is anything going to be done about this, or is this it?

We had no education and that is why a lot of us are in the work that we are in—back-breaking work, caring for people. Do you know why? So that we can get into a system and make sure that it works properly. Old people do not get a good deal, and this is the case in every system you can think of. If you get someone in there who cares, that is one person who does care. At least you have a few who have jobs in that area who really care.

That was the job of these guys working in the institutions. They would be in their eighties now. They were the same age as my father when I went in there and today they are the same age as my father now. For the first time in my life, when I was flying back from Launceston the other day, I saw an old guy and I put his port up on the rack for him. He was an old guy. That is how I have always felt—old people are great; you learn things from them. But I sat down and looked at him and I thought, 'That guy would be the same age as the guys who used to bash, kick, rape and mentally, physically and psychologically abuse us. I wonder what he was like when he was young. Is he a nice guy?' I had never thought like that before, but I now think it because this inquiry is being held. I have never wanted to think that way because I am a carer, but that is how I felt.

Hay was the most inhumane place that anyone could be in and it was in Australia. Can you believe that? It was in effing Australia! We were white girls too. It happened in Australia and it was allowed to happen by welfare and the government. We had to scrub freshly painted cells with bricks and wire brushes when we went into Hay, listening to the drill with the girls running

on the spot. We were told that it would make you or break you, and for many it did: it broke a lot of spirits. We had to reclaim those spirits.

In the institution no eye contact was allowed. Today is the best that I have ever felt because I am having eye contact. I have been struggling with the writing and scribbling, trying to spell, but I do not need the papers to say what I want to say. For the first time in my life I do not need to read from papers; I need to look in eyes. For 15 months I never looked at eyes; I never had eye contact. I was not allowed to think. We were told we were not allowed to think. For 10 minutes a day we could talk. So for the remaining hours of the day we kept everything in our heads. We were listening; we were just listening. I really hope someone is listening here today.

You could not even sleep. We were pulled out of bed for hours at Parramatta and Hay because we were not turned the right way in bed or because we had blankets over our heads. Even today I cannot breathe properly; my breathing is shallow because I was so scared. Everything in that place echoed—everything. You could not bash on a cell and talk. You had a Bible. I never opened that Bible. I wish I had. I really wish I had, because at least I would have educated myself through reading. But a Bible is all we were given.

I just cannot believe that what happened actually happened, but it did. If there is no royal commission into this, I cannot believe that you can just let this go. It is going to be too hard a basket for anyone to take responsibility for, but I will tell you what: this has started and it is not going to stop. We need it; we all need it. We need to be heard.

How can anyone be locked in an isolation cell for three months at a time—I am talking about young girls—just waiting to hear someone walk past, voices or a key drop in the door, wondering whether you are going to get a smack in the face, a key up your face or a drink of water or be allowed go to the toilet? Do not forget: we were girls. We were young kids. And that was for three months. I am so claustrophobic I sleep with my doors and windows open. I have a dog that protects me, because I cannot sleep with doors shut. I cannot sleep with windows closed. I am not scared because I have my dog to protect me. If I had to sleep in a place with doors and windows closed, I would go crazy; I nearly suffocate. That comes from being in Parramatta and Hay. I am 55 years old, and that goes back to when I was 13 years old. Is anything going to be done about this?

CHAIR—This is the fourth or fifth day of public hearings, and we certainly have been taking into account what we have heard. We have all read your story, Ms Robb. We are aware of what you have been through. The committee will deliberate after we complete our hearings.

Ms Robb—Did anyone know this was happening?

CHAIR—I am just a little younger than you.

Ms Robb—But everything is kept on file—no, I am sorry; everything is not kept on file. I applied for my files, through freedom of information, through DOCS. When I got them, they were so small that I thought 'Wow, are these my files?' until I saw some of the other files. I applied for my real files and got them, but a lot had been taken out. Then I looked again at the first lot of files I had got and they were not even in them. So they all covered their tracks. They left us so screwed up, but they covered their tracks. Through freedom of information you are

supposed to get what is in your files. They had no right cutting out what the males had put in there.

CHAIR—What do you mean by that? Do you mean that they whited out people's surnames?

Ms Robb—No. It was their comments.

CHAIR—Could you clearly see that comments have been taken out?

Ms Robb—They had been taken out. We were told that they had to be gone through and stuff taken out.

CHAIR—Why?

Ms Robb—For the other girls' privacy, but they also took out comments that were written. There should be day reports.

CHAIR—Would you accept that it might be the case that other girls might not want reference made to them in your file? I am just saying 'other girls', not you.

Ms Robb—It did not worry me about other girls. I had other girls' names in my file and I also had signatures from the men. I am saying that there were everyday comments on the bottom of all our files that were wiped off. Also there should be punishment files; are they still there?

CHAIR—We cannot answer that. Do you mind if we ask you some questions?

Ms Robb—Yes.

CHAIR—Would you like to comment further before we ask some questions?

Ms Robb—No.

CHAIR—When you were at Parramatta and at Hay, what sort of education did you receive? What did they provide?

Ms Robb—They did not provide any education because we were not entitled to it.

CHAIR—Did you go to the local high school? Is that what happened?

Ms Robb—From Parramatta?

CHAIR—Or Hay, yes, or were there classes at—

Ms Robb—No. Parramatta and Hay have got walls around them; you never saw anything. We did not have schooling in Parramatta and we did not have schooling in Hay. We had work, we had drill and we had smashing rocks with blockbusters. We never had any schooling. We did not

have any reading. We were not allowed to read. We were not allowed to write. Everything, including pens and paper, was contraband. There was no schooling.

CHAIR—I have seen the *Stateline* program, and there has been a reunion of girls from Parramatta.

Ms Robb—Yes.

CHAIR—You have mentioned suicides and the lack of education. To your knowledge, did a number of those girls, now ladies, fall foul of the law? We have read in quite a few submissions of the number of 'homies' who end up in jail. Do you know whether any of the ladies with whom you went to Parramatta or Hay got on the wrong side of the law?

Ms Robb—Some did, yes. But there were a lot who did not. A lot of that came about because we were angry and did not know what to do. We were just put out and put back into our homes and they said, 'See you later; see you next time.'

CHAIR—What happened when you turned 16?

Ms Robb—Just pushed out the door.

CHAIR—Were you given any money at all to go?

Ms Robb—No money.

CHAIR—Were you found a job?

Ms Robb—No. We got nothing.

CHAIR—Were you found any accommodation?

Ms Robb—No. We were sent back to our parents. The ones that had parents were sent back to them. Nothing was straightened out in our families. There was no help for our families, no-one to say, 'Okay. This is what is happening here. Why is there domestic violence? Why is this person getting bashed?' There was none of that. We were just taken, put in there, taken out and put back into the place that we came from—and therefore we ran away again. I was pleased every time I got picked up, because I was scared on the streets. Even though Parramatta and Hay were hell, we were safe. We were safe from what was out on the streets, and we had each other. We knew nothing else, because we were never taught anything else.

Senator KNOWLES—Your story is just one of many tragic stories that in particular Senator Murray and I—because we have been on previous inquiries—have heard over many years. I find the trauma that people go through is just heartbreaking, and then there is the fact that you did not have any after-care. What do you see could be done today to help you? I do not think the slate will ever be wiped clean. You will probably never be able to turn around and say, 'That's a thing of the past, and we just move on.' What do think could be done in a practical sense to help you now, at your age, for the rest of your life?

Ms Robb—We should have support.

Senator KNOWLES—What form do you see that support taking?

Ms Robb—Counselling from someone that knows, not someone that is doing it by the book. That just does not work.

Senator KNOWLES—Have you had any counselling in the past by someone who does know or, as you say, someone who does it by the book?

Ms Robb—Over the years, on and off, yes. But moneywise it is too much, and you get so far. With counselling, you walk out and think, 'Great. I feel fine,' and it just starts to roll out. You have to pull the plug; you cannot keep going.

Senator KNOWLES—Which sort of counselling did you have then? Was it from someone who knows or from someone who was doing it by the book?

Ms Robb—Psychologists.

Senator KNOWLES—I think the point that you make is a very valid point, from our past experience—that is, it is nothing against the counsellors and psychologists and so forth who are trying to do a good job. But there is nothing like someone who knows and understands the background of what people have gone through, which, unfortunately, is in many cases vastly different from other forms of abuse. Would you see that as the single most important thing for you and other people like you—to be able to have access to someone—

Ms Robb—That they can talk to.

Senator KNOWLES—without immense costs being incurred?

Ms Robb—Yes.

Senator KNOWLES—Is there anything else you see that would be of benefit to you to be able to move on and be happier in your life?

Ms Robb—Yes, something needs to be done about it—some people need to be brought to justice.

Senator KNOWLES—You have obviously had this traumatic part of your life, but conversely a part of your life has been very successful—

Ms Robb—Yes.

Senator KNOWLES—because you have told us about your three children who are all gainfully employed. By anyone's measure that is a huge success.

Ms Robb—It is.

Senator KNOWLES—How did you put all that trauma behind you and say, 'Right, I'm going to make a success of this and I'm going to make a success of these children'? What life skills, which you obviously were not caught in Parramatta and Hay, did you get to be able to make such a success of your own family?

Ms Robb—I was a carer. I have always been a carer, and I was not about to see my kids go through what I did. I loved my kids and I just wanted to make something of my life. I was not going to have kids and let them go through what I went through.

Senator KNOWLES—So, in a funny, weird sense, what you experienced ended up almost as a plus for them because you made sure there was—

Ms Robb—It was a hard experience for it to be a plus.

Senator KNOWLES—I do not think anyone would want to be in those shoes to learn the plus, but it did end up a plus for them, in many respects, didn't it?

Ms Robb—Yes.

Senator KNOWLES—So, a plus?

Ms Robb—No, there was no plus. My daughter is 34 and she has only just found out who I really am. We have had a good, loving relationship but it took all those years for her to find out why I was insecure—why I was regimental, why I was scared about what was happening to them in their lives.

Senator KNOWLES—I do not want to be misunderstood by saying that there are pluses in what you have gone through. There is absolutely no—

Ms Robb—The strength that I—

Senator KNOWLES—Certain comments are coming from observers, but if people want to go back and read *Hansard* and see the contribution that I have made on this subject I do not think anyone would question where I stand on this particular subject. There is no question that I am trying to say that anything that was dished out to people in institutional care was warranted. It is disgraceful, it is disgusting and the reason I am here today is to try to find solutions. It would be helpful if we could all work towards that goal. That is why I am seeking your assistance in trying to achieve that end. I think you have been particularly helpful to the committee in trying to achieve that, and I thank you for it.

Ms Robb—Thanks.

CHAIR—The evidence that we have received so far shows that people who have gone through institutions have had some real difficulties with raising children and getting close to their own children. Their experiences have been that no-one has been close to them at all. I think that is where Senator Knowles is coming from.

Ms Robb—Hay made me strong because I was never going to let them break my spirit. If I had, I would be in a psychiatric centre or dead today.

Senator MURRAY—Ms Robb, would you tell me a little about Parramatta Girls Home. Was it all girls there and what ages were they?

Ms Robb—They were 11 years to 18 years.

Senator MURRAY—Would you have an idea of how many were there?

Ms Robb—About 160 at a time.

Senator MURRAY—Were there women staff, or were they all men?

Ms Robb—No, there were women staff and men.

Senator MURRAY—In your written submission and in your verbal submission you have concentrated on the men and the things that were done to you. Where were the women staff in all this?

Ms Robb—The women were around, but they did not do anything. They saw a lot. There were a few nasty women there too—cruel women. I never, ever got hit by a woman. But the men had their places: they had shower blocks, they had isolation, they had their offices. They did it in front of muster. We were made examples of in front of everyone.

Senator MURRAY—In your submission you say:

I could barely lift my head. I was so sore I was in agony—busted lips, black eyes, bruised, teeth missing.

The women staff would have seen that.

Ms Robb—But that was their job.

Senator MURRAY—What did they do about it?

Ms Robb—Nothing. The odd one felt sorry for you, but that was their job. They knew what happened, but they kept their jobs.

Senator MURRAY—The reason I ask you this question, and you probably know it but I will say it anyway, is that violent assault of a girl in that institution was against the law at that time. Therefore, I want to know if anyone on the staff, and I would presume that with 100 girls there would be at least 10 staff, ever reported anything to the police or the authorities.

Ms Robb—I know one woman that I met up with after I got out of Parramatta. I was invited around to her place; she was lovely. She left, and the reason she left was that she could not handle seeing what was happening. But she still did not speak out. I backtracked and went to Hay about 15 years ago, or it could be longer. I saw someone there who was an officer. I got

invited into his home because I was one of the girls. He was a good officer, but it was his job. What happened there happened. That was the way it was written. That was the way it was run. He was from Hay and that was his job, but he did not like what happened.

Senator MURRAY—Did inspectors come during your time there?

Ms Robb—Yes, they did. But if you look at the photos that were taken at Parramatta, that was all glorified.

Senator MURRAY—Say somebody like you had been bashed and had black eyes and bruised lips and so on, would they hide such a person from the inspector? How was the physical treatment concealed?

Ms Robb—The only time that anyone came in there was when someone was going to Hay. I was in isolation when I got bashed, and I did not see anyone. I saw the officers that came up to me, but I never saw anyone higher than that from outside. Until I tried to abscond, I never saw anyone. I was not ready to go to Hay then. What they put me through was just torture. But they never sent me to Hay after I got my teeth busted. It was not until I tried to abscond, and then they came in. But, no, no-one saw me except the officers, female and male, and some of the girls.

Senator MURRAY—In your submission you record something which I think must come out of your file—some remarks by a consultant psychiatrist. Were you interviewed by a psychiatrist whilst you were there?

Ms Robb—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—And did you report to him or her what was happening?

Ms Robb—The psychiatrist who was there that interviewed us was the criminal who put us on Largactil.

Senator MURRAY—But you mentioned things like being assaulted. What I want to get out of you is whether anybody in authority was ever told by either the girls or the staff about these dreadful things that were happening.

Ms Robb—I could not answer that.

Senator MURRAY—But did you tell anyone?

Ms Robb—No, I did not tell anyone—because they were people who were there all the time. They had to know what was happening; they did know what was happening. Why go and say anything and get a bashing for it?

Senator MURRAY—Did you tell your mother what had happened to you when you left the institution?

Ms Robb—No, I was told to forget it and get on with it. That is what I have been told all my life.

Senator MURRAY—The institution in Hay that you talked about, was that for males and females or just females?

Ms Robb—There were 10 females at a time. We stood six-foot apart and had no eye contact. It was a military drill.

Senator MURRAY—How many were in the place altogether?

Ms Robb—Ten was the most that they would take.

Senator MURRAY—So it was literally a jail, a prison?

Ms Robb—It was a prison.

Senator MURRAY—The question that often comes to us is why it is some years after these events that, eventually, people to whom this has occurred start to deal with it or face up to it. What age were you when you realised you needed counselling when you wanted to deal with the trauma of your past? When did it finally come home to you that you wanted to have your say and to get it out of you?

Ms Robb—When I was working up north with home care. I had cervical surgery and was taking heaps of painkillers. I did not want to know about anything. Then I went off the painkillers and that sent me into turmoil. I was sent to a psychologist.

Senator MURRAY—What age were you?

Ms Robb—It was back in 1992. So I was about 40.

Senator MURRAY—Before then had you been conscious of needing to deal with these issues? The reason I ask you this question is related to Senator Knowles's question—because there are people in care right now who may well be being treated in a manner which is going to result in these problems. There may be different circumstances, but there may be the same results. If you are going to devise systems, you need to know how you can get at them and at what age you are likely to be able to be successful. We can only get an understanding from personal experiences such as yours.

Ms Robb—I pushed mine back all the time because I had my children. I believe that when you get into counselling you have to be free of everything to be able to do it. If you have other things there, like children, you cannot do it. It is hard. You have to pull yourself together because they do not want to know about it. When stuff starts rolling out you just have to let it out and there has to be a right time for it to flow. You cannot go and do counselling or talk and then walk away from it. That is what is happening with us now. We had the reunion and all of this is just there. It is just flowing. Then you have to pull up.

Senator MURRAY—Senator Hutchins mentioned the various effects of those experiences on individuals. Do not answer this question if you find it difficult, but one of the things we are constantly told is that as a result of being treated like this—and sometimes, as in your case, as a result of a difficult childhood—people have difficulties with relationships.

Ms Robb—Definitely.

Senator MURRAY—You have three children. What happened to your husband? What was that environment like for you?

Ms Robb—When I had my children, when I got out of Parramatta, I think I had seven months to go before I turned 18. I fell pregnant; I had a baby and it was taken off me. It was taken off me by welfare when it was born. I was lied to there. I just wanted something of my own; something that no-one could take off me. I met this guy, got married and had my first child and my second child. He turned out to be very violent, so I walked out of it with my third child, a two-year-old, and I reared those kids by myself. I have been in one relationship since—and no, we are not good relationship people.

Senator MURRAY—Was your later relationship a better one than your first?

Ms Robb—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—Again, I ask you this question deliberately. Many people tell us that they start their relationships with people who are unsuitable for them—people who are violent or who are reminders, if you like, of their past. Was that true in your situation?

Ms Robb—Yes, that was true in mine.

Senator MURRAY—If you have contact with other girls from Parramatta: would it be true for many of them as well?

Ms Robb—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—So it repeats the cycle?

Ms Robb—Yes. It is hard to break that cycle for some. For some, it is just not on so you stay by yourself—you are safe by yourself.

Senator MURRAY—Thank you, Ms Robb.

Senator MOORE—I have only one question; there are so many one could ask. I noticed how you discussed these issues with your family; you said that you took your daughter back with you to one place where you had been. I am interested to know how you raised what you were going through and the process that you have chosen to take, in terms of becoming more public and writing a story. In your submission, you said you had written it at least five times, just to work through it. What did you say to your family about where you are, what has led you to this position and what you can do now and into the future?

Ms Robb—My children are really supportive and they know this is something I have to do. They are supporting me; they know this has to come out—it has to come out of me and it has to be heard. So I am lucky there; I have the support. But they do not know everything. My daughter never wanted to acknowledge it over the years, and I never pushed it in her face, but she came to the reunion and it was the best thing for her to see.

I have a lot of family who support me. My mum did not know. She said for years if anything came up, even about my baby, 'Put it behind you; get on with it.' I have been told by different people this time, 'Do this, but put it behind you; move on.' Well, I moved on. I moved on for years. But I have heard heaps of sad stories and cruel stories from other girls. We used to talk in Parramatta but not like we do now. We did not really see the anger there, because we were not allowed the anger. As we get older we are angry and we are hurt. My family support me. I have got three good kids.

Senator MOORE—And they have read your submission?

Ms Robb—I have read it out to practise on them; yes, they have heard it. But there were a few things in there—when I talked on *Stateline* I felt so bad about saying my father was violent that I rang my brother up and said, 'I shouldn't have done that because that was my father and he has great-grandkids and grandkids.' But then again the way it was put to me was: 'It's out now. You needed to say that to be able to carry it right through. You could not hold that back. Then you look at my kids. They had a violent father and as they got older they saw Poppy as their Poppy. They did not see that violence; we did.

CHAIR—Ms Robb, thank you very much for coming along and sharing part of your life with us today. I imagine it must have been difficult for you. We will certainly be taking note of what you have said as we prepare our report. Ms McGuire, thank you for coming along and helping.

[10.02 a.m.]

FORMOSA, Mrs Bette (Private capacity)

VERNON, Mr Lindsay Leith (Private capacity)

VERNON, Ms Pamella Gwendolyn (Private capacity)

VERNON, Ms Yvonne Fay (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome. You are appearing today in a private capacity and your comments will be on the public record. The committee prefers evidence to be heard in public but evidence may also be taken in camera. I understand that you have received information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses and evidence. The committee has before it your submissions. I now invite you to make an opening presentation to be followed by questions from the committee.

Ms P. Vernon—I understand that each of us is going to speak for a short time, and then we will take questions. I was placed in Dalmar Children's Home, a Wesley-Methodist home, in 1951 at the age of five. I was in the home—and I am speaking for myself now, not my siblings—because my mother had died in childbirth having twins. The twins survived. It was our father's second marriage. His first wife died similarly to my mother. Those children from the first marriage were teenagers or older when our mother died. We were put into Dalmar. My issues are probably very similar to those of the previous speaker and are about abuse et cetera but my main issue, for which I really need answers and I am receiving therapy for at present, and have done so a number of times throughout my life, relates to the issue of being placed in a home. My siblings, Yvonne and Leith, as I know him, were placed in the home at the same time. The twins that survived our mother's death were adopted by the superintendent of the home we grew up in.

It is only in the last four months that some of the truth has come out about that although the truth, as I understood it, was that our father told us that he felt they had been illegally adopted because he thought he was signing endowment papers when they were taken from him at the hospital. The death of his second wife—and our mother was only 26 years old at the time—resulted in him having mental health issues. That was the first I heard that our twins, a sister and a brother, had been adopted. He came up to the home and told us that the little babies up on the verandah were our brother and sister. My issue is that for years we grew up with the knowledge that our brother and sister were in the superintendent's home. They were in very close proximity to us on a day-to-day basis. However, we were not allowed to acknowledge them as brother and sister. A thing that has been a reoccurring mental health problem for me is that my identity was taken away from me. My sister the twin grew up identical to me in looks and is so today even with the obese weight. She was called my name. The issue around that was that I was too frightened to even respond to that openly. I just took it all on board.

In my childlike mind I deduced that I could not be the sister; I must be the mother—I must have done something wrong and given them up or whatever. That came out in therapy when I was 28 with a well-known health professional, a psychiatrist. But the real issues for me in the

home were around the fact that my older sister, who was a few years older than me, knew the truth and she never ever let anybody forget it and, as a result, she was brutalised on a daily basis—locked away under stairwells and not allowed out until she admitted that they were not her brother and sister. As a result, the one thing I did not want was to be brutalised like that. I hated being hit; I hated any form of physical violence, so I basically learned very early on to conform.

My brother and I were always told what a bad seed our sister was. They vilified her regularly, took us aside and said she was filth from Redfern, that she knew too much when she came, that our mother was a prostitute—all really bad stuff which is not true, as we have since found out—and that our father was a drunk and a no hoper. I do not remember much of the love that we had before we went to the home, but if I had anything but love I think I would have remembered it, and I do not remember anything. My sister remembers a lot and has told me of late since we have been reunited. It is only six years now that we have been reunited. She has helped me with that.

It is interesting when we look at the issues I had in the home—and I heard the question that was asked earlier, 'Have you benefited from any aspect of the home?' It is interesting because on one side, emotionally, I have been stunted, definitely. I have issues around that. However, it is only in my therapy in this last week that I have come up with the understanding that going to school at the home was an escape for me. There was recognition for something you did well, and it seemed to be a place apart from the home that was a lot safer than being in the home. I got some photos off a disk which were of our reunion on the weekend and I could see that the things I was involved in at the school were things where I got a pat on the back.

So, on one side, I have lived my life in what I call emotional deformity. I had therapy. When I was 28 I married into the Greek community. I say the Greek community because my husband is Greek and it was a wonderful experience to be accepted by Greek people because they are very hospitable. I was taught how to cook, how to care for myself, how to clean. But, on the other hand, I am hypervigilant, I am hyperdiligent and I am obsessive compulsive with cleanliness. My grandchildren and my children joke about Mr Sheen and Domestos growing out of my fingertips. I have had enlightenment just recently through therapy of why that is so. It is because the only way I ever got any recognition as a child was to prove myself and to reach and strive for perfection. If anybody has been involved in 12-step programs they will know that it is a classic case of addictive behaviour to be obsessive compulsive.

I am a compulsive overeater. I medicate with food. I also medicate with water. That was why I had therapy at 28. All my husband ever wanted to do was make me happy, but I would be out in a storm at 10 o'clock at night hosing my patio and fernery to make sure there was not a skerrick of sand or whatever out there. The children at the school my children went to used to line up of a Friday night outside the house. I designed the home in Queens Park in Bondi Junction so that I could empty it out—except for the bedrooms, which were carpeted—every Saturday. I would empty out the whole house into the back patio area and soap it all up inside. I had quarry tiles wall to wall and even around the wall so that the children could come in, soap it all up and slide through my house. Then we would hose it out. It is pitiful, really, but we laugh about that now.

A few months back we went and opened our files at Dalmar. Up until recently we were led to believe that they were burnt in a fire. About six years ago we got access to a few things from a

file, where we saw letters—loving letters—our father had written that we never saw. We got a few reports and things like that, but it was said that everything else was destroyed by a fire in the walk-in safe. It would have been hard to ignite a fire there. I believe that was generic. Being a part of CLAN today, I know that was something a lot of people had been told. We went back to the home recently. In writing this submission we did a writers workshop and I must admit that, as a high achiever, for the last six months I have not been able to work. I have had to pass on my work to others. I have been debilitated with pain. I have had it all these years.

My sister was called Camilla Sandra. Our mother, three days before she died in hospital, called her Camilla Sandra. Why did they call her my name? My whole identity has been one of fear, shame, guilt—guilt for turning my back on my sister because I believed everything they told me, and I just never wanted to get into trouble like she did. I never wanted to be abused like that. Every morning or every night the superintendent would get on the stage and read out who had to report for the canings, but they went further than canings. It was physical abuse. It was really bad; it was brutal. I had this dilemma of wondering: why didn't anybody speak up? I have heard that mentioned. Everybody knew. Even the brother in the twins, Colin—and today he responds to us as a family—has said that he was also told about our sister and that her vilification went on to them as well. They were told: 'You keep away from her. She's bad. She's a bad seed of the family. She's filth. She's trouble.' They believed it too. The shame of that alienation is something I am coming to terms with now.

I just cannot understand how we were put into a church home and yet did not once get a visit from a welfare person. Unlike our previous speaker, I love the faith. I love the Jesus stories. I used to pray to Jesus all the time to let me see my little baby brother. Up until recently I did not think about this, but I am doing this story and I went back with this writers workshop and felt all the pain I felt as a child listening to babies crying in the baby home and knowing my brother was there. Up until we went to the home my sister and I used to change his nappy and feed him, and I was not allowed access—just as from day one I was not allowed access to my sister. She was kept from me. We used to find ways around that. But after a while I did reject her. After having gone through the throes of legalities like adopting children and everything else, how is it that the Wesley Dalmar did not know about this?

Two years ago two sisters came back for the old boys and girls reunion. They were not actually sisters but we called them that; they were staff members. The first thing they did was come over to my sister and me and say, 'Last night all we did was talk about the Vernon family'—they had come up from Adelaide—'and how horrifying the whole situation was with your brothers and sisters, with Leith being adopted out a number of times and with what happened to Yvonne.' There seemed to be a strategy—a conscious strategy that everybody just kept secret about—that as a family we were to be split up. I said to them, 'Why didn't you say anything?' They said, 'We couldn't because we were threatened with our pay being docked or with losing our job.' One sister let somebody watch Betty Cuthbert run in the Olympic Games on the babies home television—we were not allowed to watch TV—and, because of that, the babies home sister, who was the most beautiful sister, was sacked. The staff knew that there were also repercussions for them. They were petrified of the man. That period of time was like a 14-year window in Dalmar. Before and after that superintendent was there, they did not suffer to the same extent.

All that is talked about by anybody coming back for old boys and girls reunions is the brutality. Up until the last old boys and girls reunion, nobody ever had the courage to say anything. I stood up this time. I had already had a meeting with Wesley Dalmar. They had empathised with us and they have some strategies that we still have to go through. But I got up and told them about this hearing and about CLAN, how we are helping each other, and invited them to come along. I said, 'Some of you, especially before this superintendent came, had fond memories of this home, this institution; but I have to tell you that in the case of the Vernons we did not and we suffered day-to-day mental abuse about our family in growing up this way.' I had the courage to say that.

But do you know what happened afterwards? One of the perpetrators of the brutality at the home who keeps turning up every year at reunions—she even says, 'Oh they're my boys' and so on, and the boys hate her—said to a group afterwards, 'You'd think she'd be over all of this by now.' My therapist said, 'Well, maybe we could get her to come in and see the hundreds of people I see every day as clients and she can help them get over it too; if she has the secret, she can tell them how to get over it.'

Regarding my obsessive-compulsive behaviour, I have had some breakthroughs with therapy but cost is an issue. I have 16 weeks of therapy; after that I go into a much higher bracket. I need to get some sort of support because I am not going to be working until I sort all of this out; I cannot. Once again I have a water fetish. I have put on 35 kilos in about six months. I have started binge eating again, and that is what I am getting help for. Five months ago, for what was probably the fourth time, I was suicidal. During a number of my depressive episodes I have been suicidal; this time it was acute. The St Vincent's health team were part of my support team helping me at that time.

I am past that now, I must admit. I am a part of the CLAN group. We are a self-help group. We are not trying to berate anyone or cause shame or problems for the providers of health and care, like those at Wesley Dalmar. We are trying to bridge the gap with them. They are advisory to us—without voting rights, of course. We are trying to work with them, but we want to be able to help our own. We are children of the state. I want to get over this; I want to be over it already.

I have grandchildren. My youngest granddaughters taught me how to cuddle. My youngest son, who is 35, has taught me how to love. That has been only of late because he has gone through his own trauma with substance addiction. When we are together, every few hours he insists that we touch. He puts everything down and says, 'Come on, we've got to touch.' I can't touch my siblings. My children grew up with everything they needed—all the opportunities—but I could not touch. That is a big area of shame for me today and I am working on that as well.

I believe that there is a solution here. I believe that we need lots of funding so that we can help ourselves and not go to our past providers, whose intentions are well served today but who are still baffled by what happened, especially in that 14-year time frame in Dalmar. They are shocked to think that that went on without anybody knowing about it. We can help ourselves. Already, with a $5 fee and our two founders—I am part of that inaugural group, the ACWA advisory group—we have helped many hundreds of people and many more are coming. We have got a web site where people can talk to us.

The government, and in our case Wesley, are answerable as to 'Why?' There has to be some form of redress with this. We have to get some answers and a public apology. The government needs to apologise for not fulfilling its duty of care in making sure about and policing these institutions, because they were not policed. This man was a God unto himself. The staff were petrified of him. From the abuse that took place—and I am not to mention names, but I have to tell you—two of my dearest friends committed suicide. One was a gentle loving girl who wanted to be a ballet dancer and the other was from a family of about six. They were brutalised. They were on the list all the time—there were about 10 or 15 on that list—and committed suicide as a result of being in that home. There were not 15 suicides, but 15 were targeted regularly for beatings. He had a set against those on the list. We all know who they were. We can all recite that list of names.

Thank goodness I was not one for the beatings, but I was targeted as a pet of his. That brought me a lot of problems from the sister who was on my cottage. I was petted by him. He used to cuddle me, pet me and give me the best clothes and everything else. Perhaps it was from his having a guilty conscious; I do not know. The sister on my cottage used to steal my jumpers and blazers and things so that in the winter at school I had nothing warm to wear, because she was against the fact that I was petted. So there were pets in the home and there were the ones who copped it. I have to tell you: my sister was one who truly copped it. My brother, in the attempts that were made to split our family up, was fostered out. He has his own story, which is horrendous on a number of accounts. That came from the attempts that were made just to split us up as a family.

For what happened to us under the auspices of the Wesleyan Church and under the auspices of the government, we really need answers and an apology. I am inclined to take it even further, because of the ongoing mental abuse that we have suffered. In our case it is not hearsay—that is, we are saying it happened but there is no documentation. I have to tell you that it is documented. There is even our father's signature from when he signed the endowment papers, which he thought was crossed out a number of times. I went to legitimise myself. My parents were married a year after I was born. Reg Watson, the Deputy Registrar General, allowed me access. In those days it was not appropriate to get files. He took me in, showed me the files and photocopied them. When I said to him that I was going to live in America and that I wanted to be legitimised, he said, 'I think you can do that, even though your parents are dead.' I was the first child in an Australian court, the Supreme Court, to legitimise herself. You can say that is neurotic as well—my hypervigilance and hyperdiligence. I do not know, but I did it. He gave me support. He was a wonderful man. He encouraged me to get into scouting, which I did. I was in 2nd Coogee for 11 years as a cub leader, fostering others. I could go on, but I would like others to have an opportunity to speak.

There are solutions. I will help you with the solutions. I would like to be a part of the solution because I want to get over it. I am now working through it in therapy where I respond appropriately. I am responding to my sister now where we are being honest with each other. We are actually connecting—a connection we never had until these last few years.

So, in spite of this man, we are becoming a family. I spoke at my youngest son's wedding—and a dear friend of mine is in the audience today. We had a family there, the extended Greek family, who are all proud of us, even though they know of the trials and tribulations that we have had. Nothing is going to stop us, but somebody has got to answer. Somebody has got to give us

answers. We have got to come up with a solution. It is not you but us who have to be a part of that solution. Two years ago we had a mental health conference on family separation. That is where health professionals became aware of what we are about. We are going to have another one on the first Monday and Tuesday of November this year for homies and wards of the state. We educate health professionals and government people as to our plight and our needs. We are going to go to all of the trouble of doing that. I am a part of organising that. Whereas I have given everything else up, I am going to do the events management for that, and I am going to delight in it just like I did in the mental health conference.

As our previous speaker said, it is painful to come here. We can only scratch around and give you a few things that are really our plight today. But there is an answer, and we have a voice and it is not going away. The state government of Queensland know that. The past providers know that. There are a few in the government that I put on high pedestals. I will not pull the pedestals out from underneath those who have spoken for us. Do you think with that sort of support from someone who is becoming very high profile today and who places family above all else that I will not get a voice with him as well? I tell you, I will. I am not going away.

I am learning how to get angry because I have never been angry and my therapist has told me to. Two times in this last week I got angry. I will not hurt anyone with my anger, because I am not a nasty, hurtful person, but I need to get angry. You cannot justify what happened to us as a family. The government and Wesley Dalmar can give an official apology and, because of lost opportunities, other types of compensation too, maybe. I do not know, but I am not ruling anything out. I could not get an education. People say I am highly intelligent. My sister is a professor of history and politics, and that has all come because of illness. Only of late has she become a mature age student. I am so proud of my brother. The Vernons are not going away, no matter how hard they tried to split us up as a family. It is morally corrupt to do that. Now I will be able to go and write on my sheets, 'I got angry today and I was okay.'

Mr Vernon—What can I say after that? My story is a little different to Pam's, because of the complexities of what she was discussing with you about the fact that our brother and sister were adopted by the superintendent of the home. What transpired from that, from my point of view, was that I was for many years constantly belted and chastised about my family and how bad they were. I went to Dalmar as a two-year-old child. On leaving Dalmar, I was about 14 going on 15 and I went to work, but in that part of my life at Dalmar I was constantly moved around. The story itself is basically—and I have a very strong opinion on this—the reason I was moved around was definitely to split up our family as such and to get me away from Yvonne, because, like Yvonne, I was a pretty strong sort of kid, always fighting and always trying to fight for my rights. In turn, I took some horrific beatings for it.

The first placement I went to was at Young. It was a working farm, and that is exactly what it was. I was eight years of age. I worked like a man, basically seven days a week. If anybody has lived on a farm and understands the workings of a very productive farm, you will understand what I am talking about. The work was from sun-up till sundown. We droved. We were on the road a fair bit. This particular organisation had two properties. At the age of eight, I helped build a shearing shed—nailed it all together, spacing the timbers and nailing all the floors together—and then eventually they stocked that farm with animals. We used to do that by way of droving the sheep and the cattle along the normal roadways.

In doing that we lived under the stars. It did not matter whether it was raining or sunny; we just lived under the stars. If it was raining you just put some sacks over yourself of a night and woke up in the morning freezing cold. We did that in the dead of winter. These men were very hard men. They came back from the war and they had their ways of dealing with young boys in terms of making us work. At the end of each season—and I was only there for a couple of seasons—they used to clean out the silos. They used to lift us into the oat bins on half-hour shifts and we would have to get into the bottom of these oat bins and scrape them out. We would be lowered in by rope. There was no way out. There was just a little entrance at the end. One of the other kids would be out there with a bag, bagging all the excess oats up. When they put oats in a silo to keep them they also put in all this toxic shit—white herbicide and all that stuff. Anybody who has dealt with oats will know that oats are very itchy. When we got out of those oat bins we used to head straight to the nearest dam. Down the hill was a dam as you came into the entrance. We used to head straight there through a barbed wire fence and straight into the dam trying to get some relief from the constant itch. From that experience I ended up getting very bad hands. I got pus-filled blisters all over my hands. With oats it is like getting a splinter in your hands and leaving it—it festers up eventually and the splinter goes. It is the same principle here. Basically we worked. That is what we did.

I went to school. The education I received there was that I went occasionally to school for examinations. Through my management experience in a particular position I held with Colonial Mutual I was privileged to meet a gentleman—and he is still a good friend—whose father was the headmaster of that school at Young. He was absolutely amazed at where I had got to, for want of a better word, compared with where I was at that particular time. He said, 'I remember you coming in once; you sat down and we gave you the exam paper; all you did was put a cross on the bottom and that was it.' My basic education was nothing. I got nothing at Dalmar apart from when I was back in the home. In the periods that I was in Dalmar they used to send us to Carlingford. I was very dysfunctional at school. I could not concentrate, mainly because you were constantly on edge about what was going to happen each day.

Going back to the home itself, I went to what we used to call Cole Cottage when I got old enough. As older boys we were given chores. You always had chores to do at the home anyway but we were given jobs to do. We would be woken up at around 5 o'clock each morning, summer and winter, and we would be filed through the hallway into the showers. We had to have 10 seconds under the cold shower. That was deemed to be good for your nerves. I do not know how they could come up with some classic like that but that is what it was. I really think the truth of that was that we had to light furnaces and the furnaces were not lit in time for us to have a morning wakeup refreshment, so they just held us under a shower. They used to hold you there for 10 seconds and count out the 10 seconds. If you tried to get out you were shoved back under there for extra time. I can tell you that Carlingford in the winter was extremely cold.

I am not sticking to my notes, because you have copies, which give you an understanding of where I am coming from. I want to elaborate a little bit further on the sort of treatment we received. As my sister said, she never got the treatment that I or my elder sister got there. From the time that I left junior boys and went into the older boys' cottage, the person who was put in charge to look after me was a very cruel person and should never have been allowed to be in charge of bringing up or supervising any children at all. She was a cruel lady. From a ladies' point of view, she had absolutely no heart. If she belted you, she belted you; and believe you me, you carry welts and pain for a long time after.

You were accused very indiscriminately of all sorts of things. At one stage I was accused of sexually tampering with my other sister, who was the adopted one, under the cottages. You could go under the cottages through a manhole. I protested profusely on that occasion and said, 'Listen, she is my sister. First and foremost, I would never, ever lay a hand on her in any shape or form.' But for that I took punishment for at least a month. The punishments were hidings and ones that denigrated my family—my parents, my father and my mother. It was constant for at least 10 years that I can remember: 'Your mother's no good; your father's a drunk and you will never become anything in your life.' I can truthfully say to you here today that I have proven that wrong. I have been a businessman and I have been successful—but it is success that in no way came out of that institution. I carry the scars from there. I carry them right to this day, at 55 going on 56 years of age.

I have had three relationships with women. With the first lady, we never married but we lived together as de facto. It never worked. I could never bring myself to be in harmony, to be able to touch people and to have a normal sexual relationship. Even to this day, I can tell you it is not normal. I do not have that. I have a very loving wife who is very understanding of this. I have started taking treatment; it has only been for a short period of time. In my life I looked at things differently to the girls. They could not quite understand me, I suppose. They use to say to me, 'How can you be so heartless and not even think about the past?' I kept my life that busy that I did not think about the past, up until recent times. But there does come a time in your life where you have to deal with the past to be able to move forward. That is where I am coming from now. For years I said, 'No. I live for tomorrow, not for the past.' So I stuck it out of my head. I worked diligently. I was uneducated but I reached senior management within an insurance organisation, excelled very well and eventually came to own my own companies. But I just put my head into the sand and worked hard. That was my way around coping with this situation.

My second marriage was to a lady. We never had children. I have never had natural children although, as time goes on, I feel that I would have liked to have had. But in my current wife's situation, I have been blessed with a big family. The family are very understanding. I have two wonderful daughters. I have had the privilege of being able to come in at a certain age in their lives and be a father. From that point of view, I am blessed. With respect to the institutional life, I am only starting to realise that I do need to deal with it now for me to have a better quality of life in the future.

When I left Dalmar, first-up I was a very angry man. I could have gone either way. I could have gone to this side of the law or that side of the law. There was a choice I had to make. I finally got out of Dalmar because I took a hand to the person who was beating me for many years, and I could have killed her. I can tell you that straight. But it did not happen that way, thank God. I was quickly removed and put into a Baptist hostel at Lewisham, where I had to go and make a life for myself. With respect to whether I received any monetary thing when I left Dalmar, I had nothing. For the first time in my life, I had to report to a welfare officer, for at least a year or a year and half, while I was working. I worked for a company called Cole and Harding. The Cole family, although they were Church of England, were very embedded into the Methodist system. The cottages that I lived in were donated by George Cole, the grandfather. I was fortunate to get that job. There was a gentleman who used to do our boot repairs at the home, Max Sperway, and Max got me the job there. He was my only contact with Dalmar after I left there. He used to come in to buy his footwear. He was a TPI soldier. Occasionally, he used to sneak my other sister in to see me so that we could try to have some sort of bonding. I do not

know what his relationship was with the superintendent of the home but there was a strong bonding there. I am not sure whether it was family, but the Sperways were very much a part of the Dalmar way of life.

The cruelty that I saw dished out in this institution, not just to me but to others, spurred me on to try to find some of my other brothers and sisters—as I called them—whom I was there with. A couple of years ago I met up with Kenny, a good friend of mine in the home. It totally devastated me to find that he was an alcoholic. Unfortunately, he is totally dysfunctional. I am saddened for a lot of the people who possibly did not have the genes that we had—that strong commitment to try to get ahead and make the best of what you have got. It saddens me to think that a lot of them did not have that in them to be able to move forward and have better lives. It is for that reason that I sit here today. I think we can make a difference to their lives. What you see in this room is a very small proportion of people out there who have gone through these institutions and suffered at the hands of these terrible people. It is hard for people in our age group—when I say 'our age group', I mean people like you in your age group, who were not around then or who were little kids then—to comprehend that things like that could have ever happened.

In my life when the occasion has come up—and I have had the privilege sometimes to speak on occasions about my youth—people have been absolutely horrified to think that this would go on. There was disbelief. Whilst I look at the previous speaker and think of the horrific life that she had as opposed to mine—and mine has been a playground compared to hers—still I had a pretty tough time. I think that is about all I really want to add to that.

Ms Y. Vernon—I am Yvonne Vernon. What I would like to reiterate first off to the committee, to everybody here and to anybody else who may be interested is that my sister, my brother and I did not come from an abused home. We were put in Dalmar because our mother died in childbirth—with twins—at 27 and our father was absolutely heartbroken. He ended up in Cullen Park mental home for two weeks after the funeral of my mother. For five months he was unable to cope with us. My mother died and the twins were born in September 1950. We ended up in Dalmar in January 1951, approximately five months later.

I was there the night my mother died, and I was there with the superintendent of Dalmar Children's Home and a Methodist minister who had phoned him. I did not know at the time who he was, but when my father came out from my mother dying and told me that I had to be mother now—that the twins and the other two children were mine and that I would have to help him look after them—I took that on literally. Also, I was there when they knelt in front of my father with the papers they were carrying and berated my father about not being able to look after two newborn babes and said that this person and his wife would take them until my father could get on his feet—blah, blah, blah. I was there; I remember. I was nearly nine years of age. That was 5 September 1950 and I turned nine on the 22nd. I had already been mother of the two little ones for a year.

I never expected that we would end up with the twins or in Dalmar. In fact, my father did not expect we would ever end up anywhere else. He wanted to look after us. But our father was a Peter Pan. He was a loving man. Everybody in Redfern—even the old ones who are still there today—knows of the Vernons, the Moxons. They know that they are intertwined families, they know of Harrington James and they know of my mother, Doreen Miriam. They also know that we were a loving family. I remember loving our home. I remember the kissing and the cuddling.

When our mother was about to have the twins , laying in the bed at home before the birth, I remember her having us in the bed with her and me laying across her knees. The children slept with her. It was a loving family. We had nothing; we were poor. We had a dirt floor for the kitchen, but you could see your face in it because our old grandmother used to polish it. It was a legacy of hers that it was polished.

I was mother. When we got to Dalmar at 8 o'clock on 27 January 1951 and that man walked into the office, I knew who he was. Our father had taken us there with some friends who had a car. We had already been booked in from the Central Methodist Mission and we arrived at 8 o'clock. My father was in trouble because we were late. However, he had taken us up to Carlingford to the hills overlooking the city and we looked at the lights. He told us they were fairy lights and that one day he was going to take us away, that we were going to have a farm and a pony and the fairy lights and all of this. He was a Peter Pan but a loving man. Yes, he was a drinker but he was never violent.

So I recognised this particular superintendent as soon as he walked in the door. I told him that he had my twins. For this big-mouthed, little nine-year-old—this powerless nine-year-old child—that was the end of it; my fate was sealed and so was my family's because he had to keep the secret. You have read the submission; I think I have explained it very well in the submission that he had to keep the secret. Because I would not shut up, from the time I was there from nine years of age until the time I was 15 I had no social contacts.

I must say—and I correct my sister—that I never admitted that the twins were not mine, ever. That is the one thing I cling to. My honour was that they were. I do not care what he called me and I do not care what he did to me but he could never make me shut up that they were not my brother and sister. I told everybody. After the first year I was there I never had a holiday and I never had social contact because I told everybody. I would be taken back to the home from a Methodist family that could not believe what I was saying. I told people about his abuse. I told people what he was doing. I told everybody who would listen. I even told the school. The school was wonderful but they did not do anything. Nobody did anything, except one family—the Langhams—that did take me on holidays must have gone to the Central Methodist Mission, because I got a beating and was punished for a week under the stairs and in that cupboard. The Central Methodist Mission, as it was known then, had obviously talked to him and he knew that I had told the Langhams. So somebody was told but nothing was ever done.

I was not a bad child. No matter what you might hear, I was not a bad child. In fact, I lived in books. I found books. We were not allowed to have books. They were all in crates up in the tower. Their main administration was in a gothic building and there was a tower. All the donated books were kept up there in boxes. Guess who found them? I did. I lived in those books. I was reading James Joyce's *Ulysses* at 15. I did not know what it was about but I was reading it. I was reading everything in that place. Reading became my lifelong passion. From then on I lived in those books.

But I had to cope. I had to have a win every day so that I could take the beatings and the cupboard under the stairs. I could take it all if I had a little win. One of those wins and a way I coped was that we had chores to do, but I would do those chores in my own time. I never got a staff member to come and pass it. I would just walk off when I had finished it. Fair enough, I had a very recalcitrant streak but I never spoke back. I did what I was told but I did it in my own

time. So I had my wins. I built up my coping mechanisms very strongly and I never cried. He never got one tear from me. This was a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly thing until I was 13½. This went on—these beatings and the cupboard—and I took it. I took it every day. Every child from Dalmar—150-odd of them—would remember what I went through. Some of the others of that core—what we used to call the 'hate team'—were just as bad. He hated us, but I took it.

This is something I did not want to talk about in public but I am going to because I am fed up with protecting family and I am fed up with protecting people who are involved in this or knew about it or whatever. At 13½ I was given my first brassiere because I had overnight developed a bust line which you would not believe for a four-foot-11 person. I was running with this brassiere on across the grass to go to the dining room. I was running late for the evening meal. He saw me, hauled me into the office and accused me of stuffing things down my front.

He made me take off my brassiere and show him that I had breasts. That began systematic sexual abuse that went on until I was 15—sexual abuse that started in his office a few nights later. This monster refers to psychology. Can you imagine? You go to a home. You are in an emotionally sterile, stunted environment. There is no affection. You are not allowed to touch your siblings or your friends. There is no kissing, no touching, no nothing—just berating and punishment. You do not know what for, but you had to have done something. He is yelling at you about your family all the time and the rottenness of it—how you are the bad seed of the Redfern family, how you are going to end up in the gutter, how you are going to be a prostitute like your mother. My mother, I might add, was never a prostitute. She worked in the boot factory at Redfern for years, even when she was pregnant.

So he started sexually abusing me. The night it happened he beat me and then he sat in that swivel chair at the roll-top desk with his overalls on and the big belt with the buckle that he used on everybody. He put his head in his hands and said, 'I don't want to do this to you anymore. I want you to be a good girl. Come over here.' They were the first kind words I had had for 4½ years. I went to him, and I let him do whatever he wanted to do to me from then on. He even moved me, at 14, from the girls' dormitory up to a staff room—on the pretext that I could study there because I was doing well at school—so that he could have access to me. This is the man who got my twins, who did this to my family.

I was threatened that, if I told anybody, he would send me to Parramatta Girls Home. Everybody knew what it was like. If we knew, why didn't anyone else know? It was the bogeyman of the fifties, sixties and seventies for children in care. He was going to take these two away and have them adopted and I would never know where they were. At 15 I ran away. I was on the streets for 17 months. I do not know how I lived. Various people would take me home and I would give them sex. I would lie there because it was a warm bed—it was something. It was better than being where I was and having him come up every night. I loved rain—even today I love rain—because he never came when it rained; he used to stay in his home across the driveway.

Nobody cared. They say they did not know. Yet I refused to do work. I refused to go to Sunday school. I refused to go to church. I went against everything, and he let me get away with it. Why didn't somebody question that? I could not tell, but couldn't somebody pick up on the fact that I did what I liked? He gave me money to go into Eastwood to buy clothing and underwear. He

gave me money to buy books. Where was I getting all this stuff from? Nobody questioned it, and nobody came from Central Methodist Mission.

They came once a year. We had Big Day, but I was never in it. I was always on punishment and I would have bruises. I had a big mouth—like no other child. They were told only to answer 'yes' or 'no' to questions. The committee from Central Methodist Mission would come up at Open Day and the children would sing on the stage. Then the committee would walk around the cottage for five minutes. The children would line up in that cottage and the committee would pat them on the head and ask them, 'Are you happy?' or 'Do you know who is giving you the roof over your head?' or 'Do you know who is supplying the food that you eat?' The children would say 'Yes' and 'Yes'—and the committee would move on.

Then they would have afternoon tea and leave. That was once a year. Never in all the time that I was at Dalmar—or, I believe, in the whole 14 years from 1949, when he was the superintendent—did anyone ever come from the welfare department. And we were wards of the state. Where were they? This is the country of the fair go, a democratic nation state, and I believe there is no basis for a government and a church organisation to pass the buck between each other. The state says, 'We put them into church organisations; we thought they'd be all right.' And the church says, 'We didn't know; we employed those people.' Well, tough luck, because somebody had a duty of care and somebody ignored it.

Therefore it is my intention to call on the church organisations, including Wesley—which I think is going to give us the solution of conflict resolution: listen to us, debate it and then ignore it—and on the state government department, DOCS, and its predecessor—which was the child welfare commission or whatever; it is still their responsibility—to admit it. I am calling on every church organisation that had children in care—and they know now what happened to them—to stand up, take responsibility, admit what happened and start making some recompense. I ask them to admit it, accept it happened and start taking responsibility. We expect it of our politicians; we expect it of our parliamentary system—there are checks and balances everywhere along the line—so let us expect it now from our state government and from our church organisations. All churches that had children in their care should stand up and take responsibility. I do not care if they do not say sorry but they should pay for what needs to be paid for. They should start giving out money for counselling and give to the organisations that are helping these people. That is all I am going to say. One more thing: I am not yelling at you, because I am grateful that you are there looking at me and listening; it is not you, personally.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mrs Formosa—I was in Dalmar with Pamella, Leith and Yvonne although I do not remember much about Yvonne because she was in the tower by then. I have given you my submission and you have it in front of you but I would like to make a comment about life in institutional care. Life in institutional care in Dalmar was very sterile and it was all about order and control. Life there was more than conformity; it demanded total submission. That is what it asked of us: total submission.

Life was full of absences. To give you an idea, while I was there I never painted a picture. I never had a friend to visit; I never visited a friend. I never had privacy. I never lay on the grass and watched the sky. I never bought a milkshake at the milk bar. I never had my hair cut at the

hairdressers. I never made a telephone call, I never turned on a radio and I never chose a TV program. I never borrowed a book from the library. I never went to a restaurant. I never had a new pair of shoes. I never wore ironed clothes. I never said no. I never had a special meal or treat just for me. I never stayed up late; I never slept in. I never mucked around. I never drank a soft drink. I never had a pet. I never got dirty. I never picked flowers. I was never told I was beautiful. I never had a lunch box. I never played with my siblings. I never knew what a virgin was. I never had a dictionary; I never knew how to spell. I never knew how to be good. I never broke the code of silence and I never really was a child.

When I left the home I was marked for exploitation. As you can see, I was very naive. Within the first year after leaving Dalmar I was gang raped. I still went to the same school and I still mixed with the same kids, but I was marked—I was marked as a 'home' child. Because I could not speak to anyone—my mother had just got remarried and all us kids were at home—it was very, very stressful. I could not speak to my mother about it and, because I never told, it happened again and again and again—multiple times. I was hunted like a dog.

When I was 17 I had to leave, for my own survival. It took a long, long time to look after myself, to find my way in the world. I have the most wonderful husband and the most terrific kids. Listening to people today and to things that have happened, I think that I was a very good parent somehow or other. One of my children was nominated for Young Australian of the Year for her work with street kids. Two years later she was asked if she would consider nomination again for her work as a convener in the juvenile justice system. My other daughter is an ambulance officer, a very caring girl with a beautiful personality. I also have a child that I adopted out before I married. That girl likes to work with her hands, the same as one of my other daughters. Her partner is a builder and she often helps him on site and things like that. She is also a competitive sailor and she often delivers boats, sailing up and down the coast.

I am very proud of my family, but I still live with anxiety for the absences and the losses that I have had. I find it very difficult to make friends. I find it very difficult to keep friends. But I do have a wonderful, wonderful husband who is very supporting and I know how to love. Dalmar never, ever cheated me of that.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Can I clarify something with the Vernon family: are both of your twins still alive?

Ms Y. Vernon—Yes.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Do you have a relationship with them?

Mr Vernon—With one: the brother. The sister, no.

Ms P. Vernon—The sister Pam is twice the size of me, and I am obese. I reached out to her for many years. When her marriage failed I offered help, but she did not seek me out, so I just left it at that. I have heard from a deacon of the church that she is very confused. That is something that maybe the Wesley Dalmar people can help us reconcile.

Mr Vernon—You need to understand, as I have been talking about the brother Colin, that there is only an association with him now. I have had an on-and-off association with Colin but

nothing really like a family situation. There were periods when 10 years would go by and there would be no communication at all. But in the last four or five years I have grown to have a fairly sustained relationship with Colin. It is not one of brothers as most people would know. Colin has flirted with death a bit; he is a big fellow. He had a major heart problem a couple of years ago when he nearly passed on. He has come to a realisation. His words to me were: 'I really want to try to connect with you in what little time I've got left'—because he does have a lot of medical conditions.

Ms P. Vernon—He is a lovely boy.

Mr Vernon—As for our family as such, we do not cuddle. I have a job to do that even with my own family—my wife and my children. I have started to learn to do that over the years. The answer to that is one, yes, but not the other. I had a meal with the sister whom I call Pam as well and my brother about a year ago before he left to go to England for a trip. It was a touch-base situation, to see whether we could spark up a relationship. It has not come to any fruition.

Senator HUMPHRIES—They have obviously had a relationship with the people that adopted them different from the one that you have experienced. Has that complicated your relationship with them?

Ms Y. Vernon—Yes.

Mr Vernon—I do not believe it has. As I was saying, my brother has been fortunate to sit in on the preamble to my kick-off therapy, which I had early last year. He sat in on some of that. He has been very supportive of me in that situation. He is the one who has driven me to seek further help and has encouraged me to try to have a better marital relationship, a more physical relationship, with my wife. As I said, I do not have with Margaret the normal situations that men have with their wives. She is very understanding of that, and I commend her for that. In a lot of cases a marriage like that would not normally last. My previous marriage did not, and it was the lack of that sort of companionship that drove us apart. My previous wife was a tremendous lady but unfortunately I could not fulfil the role of a husband; hence, the marriage perished.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Having poor relations with partners, spouses and children is a typical experience, based on the evidence that we have heard. I particularly commend Mrs Formosa for obviously having had the power to overcome her own background to have good relations, particularly with her children. You mentioned the contact you have had with the Wesley Central Mission to have some kind of discussion about the future. Has that been just between your family and them?

Ms Y. Vernon—Just with our family.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Why did that happen? Did you approach them?

Ms Y. Vernon—No. Pamella and I went up. At Wesley Dalmar there is an administration block where they now do a lot of their outreach work from. We were very fortunate in having a social worker there, Karen, who was updating the files and getting them all in order. We went up to look at our files when we were told there were some things in our files. Admittedly, there is very little. We have not seen the day books, but that is another issue. When we went up to see

Karen, there was in my file a particular letter—which was in a series of a few correspondences—that absolutely shocked me. Back then, my one thought was to get Leith. I thought Pam would be all right. Being a young girl, I did not know. When I was 18 I married solely and purely to get my brother. I explained to the man that loved me, the poor thing, that I was incapable of having any sort of relationship—sexual or anything. I cannot touch. I have never had children. I do not have relationships in that sense. He agreed that he would help me get my brother. He cared enough for me to help me do that. By then the superintendent who is in question here was dead. I applied to get my brother through the welfare and through Dalmar. The next superintendent was very supportive of me doing that. He was not the ogre that the first one was. He was not the best either, but at least he supported that, and he allowed me to come and see my brother.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Do you mean the twin, not Mr Vernon here?

Ms Y. Vernon—No, my brother here. The twins I had to let go. I had cried enough. But I had to get Leith. I always promised Leith that I would get him. The welfare evidently agreed, after investigation, that I could have my brother. I contacted the Central Methodist Mission to find out what the result was. I was told that I was refused. Yet the copies of the letters that went to Dalmar said that I could have him, and I did not know that. That is when my life took an even worse turn. I have had four suicide attempts. I have always had this with me. I have always lived with what happened. I have no suppressed memories or anything. It is with me today.

My family and I came together only six years ago. Before that time I had been totally alone. I had a nervous breakdown in 1989 when it was all surfacing. You can only put it away for so long, and then you have got to address it and have some resolution and conclusion. Then it came, and I had four years of analysis with the University of Wollongong's clinical psychologist. When we went to Dalmar that day, I lost it. I had not cried for years, but I lost it that day when I read that. My life would have been different if I had had my brother and my sister in it, but I did not. By then I did not know where Pam was, and Leith had gone. We were divided not just by space and time but by mental games that were played on all of us, and by brainwashing. My sister and brother can never relate to me as a sister. They remember me a little bit as a mother, but I was not their mother. I cannot be their sister—there is too much water under the bridge. We cannot have a family that is not emotionally stunted. We are three separate dysfunctional people. As a family we are trying very hard to get it together. It is going to take a lot of effort and a lot of will.

When we went to Dalmar that day and I lost it, I said things. I was angry. I said, 'Well, what I want is a meeting with Wesley. I want a meeting with the Wesley board. I want them to know about this. I want this, this and that. I want counselling for Leith and Pam,' because I knew they had just started their own. They cannot afford it—you can only afford so much. When the cost of counselling runs to hundreds of dollars a week, it is too much. Pam and I arranged that day, and Karen was very supportive in that. She arranged the meeting. It was not with the board; it was with the general manager and the Dalmar social workers who were there working within the building, which is not a children's home anymore.

Ms P. Vernon—It was a good meeting.

Ms Y. Vernon—It was a good meeting because we were listened to. It was only at middle management level, but it was a good meeting; they listened. We were set aside two hours and we

took five or six hours to get through all of this. They listened, and they were very touched—genuinely touched—and shocked. I think they were like stunned mullets when we finished, because we were. The general manager, Wayne, asked us what we wanted him to do from there on. Our request was for ongoing counselling for Pam and Leith. I think, after today, I am going to have to get some too and go back and do some revision work. We want that paid for by Wesley—not six treatments or six times; we want it ongoing until it is finished. You cannot put a price on this. Secondly we asked for the board to be informed by Wayne, but we want a meeting with them.

Ms P. Vernon—And we want advocacy as well for people to speak.

Ms Y. Vernon—We want them to say how they feel about it. What do they think is a solution? As Pam says, she wants to be part of a solution. I want closure. I want closure for all the children at Dalmar that went through this.

Ms P. Vernon—You want the opportunity for other Dalmar people to talk as well. They are agreeable to that—to having a forum where others can come in and speak.

Ms Y. Vernon—I am a cynic. I am known at the University of Wollongong as Yvonne 'show me the holes in the hands' Vernon. I am very cynical; that is part of my nature. That is what I got from Dalmar. I do not believe anything unless I can see it in absolute proof. When I see the proof of that meeting then I will be grateful for it, but I am not holding my breath. If I have to take legal action to get counselling alone, I will do it. I do know that there are people in the social welfare area of Dalmar involved with their new outreach services and whatever it is they do now who are very supportive of us. That is how the meeting came about. I was under the impression that we were going to have a meeting after January 5, when the board came back after Christmas. Now I believe it is not the 15th—I do not know where that date came from—but it will be some time in February. I am assuming that that is what is going to happen. The suggestion was made to us that day as well that we could have a meeting, a social justice meeting, with one of the perpetrators of this—the woman that my brother was talking about who was in charge of Cole Cottage; she is one of the ones who has an awful reputation for violence and torture—where we could confront her and she could talk to us, just three of us.

Mr Vernon—There was discussion on that; I do not know how far it is going to go.

Ms Y. Vernon—There was discussion on that, but I do not think she will to agree to it.

Mr Vernon—I would like to add something as well. I think the question we are asking as a family, and I talk for all our family—my twin brother and sister as well—is: how could a situation arise, even back in that period, where our brother and sister could have been adopted into the same institution area as we were?

Ms Y. Vernon—They were there first and you were second.

Mr Vernon—Hold on, sis. This is what I am coming to terms with: how that could possibly have taken place. If I had my brother sitting alongside me today, apart from his height and the fact that he is a solid boy, you would think we were twins.

CHAIR—What is his surname?

Mr Vernon—His surname is Stewart. If you put the two Pams together, you would swear they were twins. So there was no hiding that fact as we grew older. I used to run around the corner and people would say, 'Colin', and I would say, 'No, I'm Leith.' And they would say, 'Oh, I thought you were Colin.' As we grew older, there was no hiding the fact that we were all siblings. The difference was that they lived there and we lived here, and we were not allowed the contact as such.

Ms Y. Vernon—May I just qualify something there. That only happened as the twins got older, when their features came out more and you could see that they had become more Vernon. It did not happen in the first five to six years that we were there.

Ms P. Vernon—It happened.

Ms Y. Vernon—No, it did not, Pam.

Ms P. Vernon—When they were little, they both had turtle-ringed glasses.

Ms Y. Vernon—That may be so, but they were not mixing when they were little.

Mr Vernon—There was only one way you could identify Colin from me in those days, and it is on the Dalmar film. Even the older girls and boys who have seen that video looked at it and said, 'Is that Leith? No. It's Colin, because Colin always sucked his thumb,' and that is how you could identify the two of us.

The question that I put to you or to the powers that be is: how could that have ever eventuated? How could a scenario like that, which led to the victimisation of my family for a number of years while we were in the institution and which was over and above the normal hand-outs that kids got in that institution, occur? Most of the kids that I was brought up with took as much as I got. I was separated and shifted around. I failed to mention earlier that I also went to another placement in Woy Woy. The documents that I picked up from Dalmar have led me to believe that there was something sinister going on with that Woy Woy placement too. There are two letters in that document—one was a week earlier than the other. The first one said, 'When can we adopt Leith? We're thinking we would like to push this further and adopt him,' and then a week later a letter goes back to the superintendent of the home saying, 'No, we are sending him back because he treats my wife like a sister—and he's in agreement to that.'

I am working through that at the moment. That is why I state in that report to you that we do not know what is locked in the back of my head on that. I know I used to belt a dog around very viciously at the back of the shed. I was so cruel to that dog that it haunts me to this day. I had tendencies like that and when I left Dalmar I was so angry. I could get in a fight, couldn't I? I could jump a counter and belt somebody up.

Ms P. Vernon—You did.

Mr Vernon—I would do that. I would have no hesitation to do it.

Ms Y. Vernon—You tried to cut Julie's landlord out of a commission—and you got the commission.

Mr Vernon—I took him out in the street and gave him a hiding, and I got the commission out of him—it was going to be one way or the other. What I am saying is that I still deal with anger, but I do not know what is locked inside of me yet. We are trying to work through that at the moment. I left that open in the submission because I have vivid memories of certain things that went on there, but I do not believe that you should accuse unless you are fully aware of what went on.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Ms P. Vernon—How did this slip through the system?

Ms Y. Vernon—They do not know. That is what they are trying to find out.

Ms P. Vernon—Would you like to know?

CHAIR—We appreciate your frankness and how difficult it has been for all of you to come here today and share your lives with us. Once we hear from and read the submissions of various people, we will draw our own conclusions. The inquiry has been a long time coming. Is there anything else you would like to say?

Mrs Formosa—There is just one other thing. Dalmar was one of the very few places that took families. The Vernons have discussed their family situation. I have absolutely no contact with my own siblings. I find that my youngest brother and sister are very destructive. I have another younger brother, Michael. He was in the same cottage as Leith. He was locked in the cupboards and all of that type of thing. From the age of 14 he has been a drug addict. I have not heard from him for the last four years, and I am just thinking now of putting him down as a missing person. The family has just disintegrated. There is absolutely nothing there, and I think each of us in our own way feels so isolated and alone. I have a wonderful family and a wonderful husband, who has a very large Maltese family. I am like Pamella in that; we both chose something from the opposite end. The family was just broken by this man, by this place. It was horrendous.

CHAIR—Thank you very much.

[11.45 a.m.]

DOUGLAS, Mr Stephen Anthony (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Just so there is no confusion about this hearing, I am the chairman of this committee and I ask the other members of the committee whether they want to ask questions. This is not a public forum; it is for the committee members to ask questions. If you want to speak and you are not on the speaking list at the moment, you will be given the opportunity at the end of the day if there is time. I welcome Mr Stephen Douglas. You are appearing today in a private capacity and your comments will be on the public record. The committee prefers evidence to be heard in public, but evidence may also be taken in camera. I understand you have received information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses and evidence. Is that correct?

Mr Douglas—That is correct.

CHAIR—The committee has before it your submission. I now invite you to make an opening presentation to be followed by questions from the committee.

Mr Douglas—I was two at children's homes. One was at Davidson Road, Concord. I was there in 1960-61. To my knowledge that was run by the Church of England. Then I was at the Dalwood Children's Home over at Seaforth from 1962 until about 1964. I am not really clear on all the dates, times or figures. I was only very young. I was born in Crown Street Women's Hospital in February 1954. I was raised in Croydon until the age of five. The only memory I have of my mother, father and younger brother of 12 months being together is my mother hanging onto my brother and me while Dad was smashing up the house. All we really learnt as young siblings until the age of five when mum ran for her life was just destruction and violence.

Theoretically, that was normal living. It was normal to be destructive and it was ingrained in me from a baby that violence and destruction were normal. I did not know anything else. When mum shot through, she ran for her life. She was getting bashed every night by my father. He got in some housekeepers. Some of them did not stay around very long. I think dad then was a bit of a womaniser and probably directed inappropriate behaviour towards them. I certainly did not know much about boundaries. We were then put into a children's home over at Concord. I do not know how that came about but I witnessed a lot of violence there. Numerous times I witnessed the carers physically belting boys and girls to the ground for speaking out of turn or opening their mouths. I do not remember very much about it except we only got bathed once a week. All the boys lined up and we all got bathed in the same bathwater. The meals were pretty stark as well—bread and lard and stale cakes.

There is something I had forgotten about but my brother drew my attention to it: when we had breakfast in the morning we had little alloy plates with little holes in them so the soggy porridge would run all over the wooden benches that we used to sit on. We did not have very good nurturing or care. We eventually complained to my father that the home was pretty lousy—we were pretty unhealthy there and got body sores and what have you—and he eventually pulled us out.

As far as education was concerned, we used to walk around to the Concord school on Concord Road and whatever the other road is, but there was never any homework or anyone to show us any duty of care in educating us. All I really learnt there, I suppose, was to shut my mouth, shut down, shut up and not own my feelings. Even as a young bloke, I remember my father saying, 'Shut the fuck up or I'll give you something to cry about.' I copped a lot of horrific floggings at his hands. He obviously was not in a position to raise a family. My mother was only 17 when she had me. They were a couple of kids. Apparently they got married because of me.

In between Concord and Dalwood, one of the housekeepers or carers that we had was a woman my father found in a pub, I think. Looking back, I did not know it then but she was an alcoholic. She used to walk around the house half the time in the nuddy. I remember going to school as a little kid and saying that she had fallen down the steps and broken her bum because she had straps on her bum. Looking back as an adult, I can see they were suspender belts. She would walk around the house in suspender belts and they were crossed—I did not know; I was just a little kid. She used to fondle us and play with us and sexually abuse us. It was almost as though it were normal. I would complain but dad never really believed us. Even when I asked him much later in life, he said, 'What do you want me to do about it? I said, 'Nothing, Dad; just acknowledge it.'

From there we went over to Dalwood Children's Home. That home was much better as far as personal hygiene and food were concerned but there were a lot of horrific bashings and floggings there as well. I want to say for the record that in my submission I referred to one of the matrons over there—Matron Gammel—as a 'fucking bitch', but I was mistaking her for another woman. She was actually okay. Her husband was very cruel. Today, as an adult, I can look back and say that he was definitely an alcoholic, and we copped a lot of horrific floggings at his hand. I witnessed a lot of terrible floggings that frightened the shit out of me. I was too scared even to open my mouth.

I remember one night—though I cannot remember how or why it happened—when I was taken from the upstairs dormitory downstairs to the main foyer. It was very late at night and the carer stood to one side and smiled as Mr Gammel kicked me across the floor and flogged me with a strap. While I was on the ground in a foetal position he kept kicking me. That was some of the abuse that I was subject to at that children's home. I grew up with a lot of anger. As the gentleman said earlier: if I could have got my hands on him in later life, I would be in jail today because I would have literally killed him; I wanted to tear his throat out. I was taught to shut down, shut up and have no feelings. Even when we got out of Dalwood—we were still only quite young—the floggings continued from my father. We went without. We had no furniture, no food—nothing. We basically looked after ourselves.

I lived in Croydon and we got a lot of solace out of playing in a stormwater canal. That was our little hideaway. I have always been someone who has lived in a fantasy world. I remember seeing *Alice in Wonderland* and *Pinocchio*. They were real for me, and I used to live in that sort of stuff. My whole life has been lived in fantasy. I eventually got into a lot of drinking and drug use as I got older. I have had 22 years of drinking and drug addiction, a lot of unhealthy relationships, a lot of crime—a bit of car stealing, bar room brawling and running around with a chip on my shoulder. I had a very poor education and have found it very hard to fit into society. It was almost like it was the normal way to be.

I was only 16 when my father took me to the pub. I was raised in a public bar with that male chauvinist bullshit that goes on in most public bars. I grew up thinking that was normal and it kept me segregated from a lot of people. I have had a lot of emotional baggage and a lot of anger. But I get very blase sometimes and I just go, 'Stiff shit. So what?' and I stick it behind me. I think it does not worry me but it does. It comes up subconsciously and I act inappropriately. I never learned appropriate communication skills. I never learned how to love. I never learned how to have any boundaries. I was always on the back foot, trying to fit in. So what I did was run around being someone else instead of me. I had all these different facades.

Through my drinking and drugging, I have been married and divorced and had other relationships and a kiddie here and a kiddie there. I suppose, looking back, I was looking for someone to love me or just to have a mother. I was certainly in no position to be a father. I was never a father. I do not have a good education and find it hard to express myself. Sometimes I get frustrated and just want to swear. I never had any living skills to be the successful father that society expects you to be—with the shiny house, the boat on the trailer, mummy at home cooking the meal and kids rushing up to you at the gate, where people say, 'Isn't he successful? He's got a new car and he's going to work.' None of that was ever in my life. It is what I have always strived for, but I did not know how to go about getting it.

It was not until June 1992 that the shit finally hit the fan. I got very suicidal and the police were called in to remove me from my home—I had smashed the house to pieces. My poor little children were very frightened and I found myself in Alcoholics Anonymous. It is something I am proud of today. I have abstained from alcohol and drugs for over 11½ years, one day at a time and, quite frankly, it has been the best thing that has ever happened to me in my life. Since being sober I have had a couple of suicide attempts. It gets very hard sometimes, but I have made some big inroads, because I want change in my life. I have been exposed to people like Pia Mellody and John Bradshaw, who are therapists who have come from damaged backgrounds, and I have worked very hard on my sobriety. Being able to start getting counselling and therapy has helped me. Some of the therapists out there in society should not even be in business, because they have got all this smart arse education from a book and a university. They have never been abused and do not come from a disadvantaged background. But some of them are very good. I try very hard not to be judgmental. I believe in a God of my own understanding today that I communicate to. Prior to coming into AA and in my addiction and all my madness, I thought it was very weak to believe in a God. I thought only girls or queers would believe in God. Today it is my strength.

In 1999 I had another emotional breakdown and my childhood was thrown up in my face, and I could not hide any longer in sick sexual relationships. I found myself at South Pacific Private Hospital, where I did a week's work on a program called Changes. That is where I was exposed to John Bradshaw and Pia Mellody. It is through that that I have been able to forgive everyone. I am not here on a witch-hunt. I just want to get on with my life and forgive and forget. I do not even know what I want now; I just know I want to have some serenity between the ears and a chance at a normal life. I have a couple of children I very rarely see. My ex-missus is still a very twisted bitch. I said to her, 'Maybe you should go to Al Anon,' and she said: 'You're the fucking alcoholic. You go to your AA. I don't fucking need Al Anon.' I thought, 'Listen to yourself.' But I cannot change her. It is sad. I would like to have a nice, normal family with the little trinkets and doilies. I would like a nice little normal family, but I am incapable of achieving that.

I do not feel I have a lot to say because I have gone over it just so many times. I have been in a lot of therapy. There is a woman, who can remain nameless, whom I see at Parramatta sometimes and she is brilliant. She is very good and she does not cost very much money, so if people want to speak to me afterwards about that they are welcome to. She is very well qualified and fully understands the root of addiction in childhood abuse. It is probably through seeing her that I have done most of my growing up.

As far as my mother is concerned, she came back into my life just before I got sober. It was very messy, very angry; it was very dysfunctional. It was not until I had my own breakdown in 1999 and dealt with my childhood that I realised that she was only doing the best she could. Right from a very young age, when mum left, dad said to us, 'She's a bitch; she left you for dead.' She did not stand a chance. She could not even come back and defend herself. Today I have a reasonable relationship with my mother. She lives in Melbourne. It is still a bit dysfunctional but it is better than what we had before.

I cannot communicate with my father, and my brother is still out in addiction. He is still out there sniffing coke and drinking piss and is very immature in his behaviour. He is only 12 months younger than me, and I am 50 next week. I cannot talk to my father about any of this. As a matter of fact, when I told him on the phone the other night that I was coming here today, he started coughing over the phone conversation, so I just said, 'See you later, Dad,' and hung up. When I told my mother, she said: 'Get back to me and let me know how it goes. I wish you well with it.' At least I can speak to my mother about what has happened in my past.

I suppose all I ever really wanted was a bit of validation, a bit of unconditional love and a chance in life. Since being sober I have started to educate myself. I am currently studying the certificate IV in alcohol and other drugs and intend going to university after I complete the certificate. I am in my second year and I hope to work in the drug and alcohol field. I have done a lot of growing up and a lot of educating myself over the last 10 or 11 years, but prior to that it was all slash and burn. It was just getting pissed, getting stoned, running around being violent and talking tough, and I had sick sexual behaviours. It was very unhappy, it was very dysfunctional and it was very disorientating.

Quite frankly, if I had not found AA I would not be here today. They say in AA to make it anonymous but it saved my bacon and it is something I think should be promoted more. There are a lot of people in Alcoholics Anonymous who come from the same background as me and other people here who have not had the chance to heal themselves. A lot of my friends in the years that I have been going to AA have, unfortunately, taken their lives. They come from backgrounds like the one I come from. People do not believe you; they think you are bullshitting when you tell them what happens. When I told someone about the flogging I copped when he kicked me across the floor, they thought I was exaggerating. They thought, 'That didn't happen.' It effing did happen, and I cannot change it. All I can do is accept what has happened with it, deal with it and try and move on with my life. I am grateful for the chance to speak today. I do not have much else to say except thanks for listening, because no-one else ever did.

CHAIR—Thanks, Mr Douglas.

Senator MURRAY—In many respects the senators here are just people. But we are also in our public lives legislators and policy makers. The purpose of hearings like these is to try and get

policies and programs out of governments which will make things better. One of the lessons out of all these things is that if you hurt a child you end up with hurt adults, for decades. The social and economic costs are huge. They are personal, but when you multiply it as you have just outlined—to the people who are at Alcoholics Anonymous, to the people with failed relationships, to the people in jails and so on—it is a big deal. I want to know about your own background, because there is a generational effect. Things happen to your folks, they then happen to you, they then happen to the children that follow and so on. Do you know anything about your own parents' background? Did they come from disadvantage?

Mr Douglas—Yes. We are victims of victims. My father lost his mother just before I was born, and he was very close to her. He reached out to get solace from that by having a relationship with my mother. My mother comes from an adopted background, and she had her own personal issues. She still does; she still carries anger today. I have tried to get her to AA and other programs, but she just shuts down. She is in her late 60s.

Senator MURRAY—You are a person who dealt with your own issues, faced up to them and tried to get them into some kind of shape and meaning. From what you have just said, they had their own issues. Did they ever go to therapy or seek psychiatric help?

Mr Douglas—My father would not. He is too arrogant, or ignorant. My mother did go to Alcoholics Anonymous a couple of times. Other than that, no. They come from a background where you do not show your feelings and emotions—that is what I have been led to believe.

Senator MURRAY—As you know from your own life experience, arrogance and ignorance are about being tough talking, and are sometimes just a defence.

Mr Douglas—I agree. Spot on.

Senator MURRAY—In fact often I think it is the main reason that people are like that. Knowing what you have put yourself through—both your mum and dad would know that you have gone to AA and really made an effort to get yourself square—has not made them realise they need help too?

Mr Douglas—It is probably why they do not communicate to me. My father does not. He squirms. He knows what happened, but how is he going to look at anything at his age? He is too busy having the best camcorder, the biggest swimming pool or the biggest car—competing with the Joneses. He does not look at bloody emotional stuff. Everything to him is materialistic: how shiny your wallet is. You do not effing worry about how you feel emotionally.

Senator MURRAY—Let me explain to you the particular reason I am asking this question. Senator Knowles began the questioning earlier today by asking the witnesses what solutions they could think of and what they needed, but the problem we are likely to face as a committee is that the number of institutionalised children is going to run into hundreds of thousands. The number of disadvantaged people who create these problems, or who have experienced these problems, is very large. You can provide services for people who want those services because they will use them. Do you have any ideas about how we can reach the people who need those services but will not access them? The mums and dads of this world who are part of the chain—like your

mum and dad—would probably benefit from services to help them get their perceptions and relationships right. How do we reach people who will not accept that which would help them?

Mr Douglas—Maybe there could be a program set up: an advertising campaign about Centrelink, welfare agencies or institutions for damaged people. There could even be a campaign on television. It seems that a lot of people want to sweep this sort of thing under the mat and pretend it does not go on, but people could be made aware of it. The people who should have the access to this help should feel as if they are not going to be violated and that it is okay to feel the way they feel rather than being told not to feel that way. If they feel that there is non-judgmental help available maybe that would be one way of reaching them. There are too many people in places—I will not mention any names—who want to put conditions on everything. They say, 'We will help you but you must do this.' It all comes back to bloody conditions and rules. We had all those rules and conditions as kids. But that is one possibility.

Senator MURRAY—I do not know enough about the organisation but I get the impression that that is the AA's approach: there is no judgment. You come in on your terms, not theirs.

Mr Douglas—There are no rules or bosses. It is an anonymous program. It is non-religious; it is open to all creeds in life.

Senator MURRAY—How did you hear about AA? Was it advertised, was it pub talk, or what?

Mr Douglas—I was living in Green Valley at the time with my ex-missus in a housing commission home that had the walls punched out of it because of my violence. I had bleeding ulcers and I was seeing the doctor at Green Valley, Dr T. Tann. He is still there. He knows a little bit about AA and he sent a member of AA around to my house to 12-step me—in other words, carry the message to me: 'Hey, you've got a problem. Do you want to go to a meeting?' I was pissed off that he sent a member of AA around to my house. I thought: 'How dare you send someone from AA around to my house. I'm not an alcoholic; I'm just a bit sick from the piss.' That was the madness of my philosophy.

If I look back today I can see that the reason I am here as a sober member with a belief in my own heart of a higher power that I call God—a god of my own understanding; not some bloke with a long cloak and a long beard running around with a cross—is because that man sent a member of AA around to my house. But it did not come easy and it has taken a lot of therapy, a lot of crying, a lot of writing and a lot of looking at myself and saying: 'Stephen, what do you want? Do you want to wind up in the gutter or do you want a new way of life?' But it is hard when you have a head full of emotional problems. That is what I am trying to solve.

Senator MURRAY—You have given me some insights as you talk. You said earlier—and we have had other evidence about this—that some therapists are hopeless because they cannot connect, they do not have any background, and others are excellent.

Mr Douglas—Yes, some are very good.

Senator MURRAY—It seems, from what I know, that many health professionals—therapists, counsellors, doctors and so on—are not attuned to and do not understand the nature of

disadvantage and of abuse and the consequences. You talked earlier about advertising. Do you think it is better for advertising to be targeted at those who are contacted by people who are in trouble?

Mr Douglas—Correct.

Senator MURRAY—If you are a drunk with ulcers, you end up at the doctor. If you have a mental breakdown you end up with a doctor. That is the most common contact point, isn't it?

Mr Douglas—Maybe he is a drunk with ulcers because he had a dysfunctional childhood, and they do not put the two together; they just say that he is a drunk and his childhood has got nothing to do with it. Some people just do not know because they have not lived it. I do not expect people who have not lived it to understand. They might have some insight from a meeting like this, but they will not have any true feeling of what it is like unless they have come from that background. I assume that; I could be wrong. I am only giving you my opinion.

Senator MURRAY—That is what I want to hear.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Douglas.

[12.19 p.m.]

HUGHES, Miss Dianne Patricia (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome. You are appearing today in a private capacity, and your comments will be on the public record. The committee prefers evidence to be heard in public, but evidence may also be taken in camera. I understand that you have received information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses and evidence. Is that correct?

Miss Hughes—Yes.

CHAIR—The committee has before it your submission. I now invite you to make an opening presentation, to be followed by questions from the committee.

Miss Hughes—At the age of nine years I, along with my seven brothers and sisters, was taken into care by the child welfare department. I was taken to Bidura depot at Glebe, where children were sorted out as to where they were going to be placed. At the time I was taken my father was in and out of jail and my mother really did not want to surrender us, but she had no other support so she had no choice but to surrender us to the child welfare department. When I was taken into Bidura children's depot we were sorted out, and my brothers and sisters every other day would leave one or two at a time. I would be told that they would be brought back, but they never returned.

Whilst I was in Bidura, I was internally examined for venereal disease at the age of nine years. I have a doctor's report on my file, which I obtained a few years ago when the Privacy Act changed. I was placed with my grandmother because at the age of nine years the child welfare department stamped my file to say that I was unplaceable for fostering because I was dull and misbehaved and wet the bed. My natural grandmother took me for a period of time. My natural mother also took me after a period of time. Whilst I was in care with my mother, who was doing a live-in job, I was not very happy and I ran away. The child welfare department intervened again and took me back to Bidura, where I was internally examined again. To quote the report: 'The girl Hughes is still a virgin.'

I was then placed at Linnwood Hall at Guildford, which was run at the time by Mrs Daphne Davies. She was a very cruel woman. We had an isolation room which was boarded up at the window. It had a mattress on the floor, a metal potty and a doggy door in the bottom of a reinforced metal door for meals to be passed through three times a day. We were placed in 24-hour solitary confinement for trivial things at the age of 11, 12 or 13. Also, we were placed in that institution not because we had hurt anybody, robbed anybody or committed any crime. We were there as children because of the misfortune that we had had prior to getting there.

The child welfare department took us to protect us and to give us a better chance in life. Prior to child welfare taking me at nine years old, I do not remember my mother hitting me, beating me or locking me in isolation. I do not remember being unhappy at nine years old while growing up in a Housing Commission house at Granville. I remember being hungry. I remember not having what other children around me had, but my mother was not cruel to me. Child welfare

placed me in Linnwood Hall because I was not happy being with my mother with her de facto, live-in job. Whilst I was in Linnwood Hall, we scrubbed, we cooked, we mended; we did everything but be normal children. We were not protected and we were not given any emotional stability whatsoever. The problems that we had prior to getting there were not addressed. We were given more problems when we got there.

Mrs Davies, who ran the Linnwood Hall girls home at Guildford, apparently did not break any rules according the child welfare department. The child welfare department knew that Mrs Davies had the isolation room and that she was locking children in there for 24-hour periods. The light switch was on the outside of the room. You had nothing to do but look at a wall for 24 hours at the age of 12. If somebody could explain to me how you are going to get an emotionally balanced, stable human being to come out into society and be a productive member, I would like to have that answer. Mrs Davies did nothing but humiliate you, degrade you and put you down.

You were never allowed to be a 12-year-old or 13-year-old child who did your hair and made yourself look nice. Mrs Davies classified me and labelled me as 'the glamour girl Hughes'. My own children laugh about that. If you were not tidy and did not take care of yourself you were in trouble. If you did take care of yourself you were in trouble also. You were told when to go to bed, when to get up, when to eat and when not to eat. When you had your menstrual cycle you were given cloth nappies to wear. When changing those cloth nappies girls had to show them, soiled, to an officer and line up in front of half-a-dozen basins to wash them out before they were put in a bucket and taken up to a laundry to be boiled. You had no privacy. Children at the age of 12 or 13 are going through puberty and need privacy, respect, nurturing and somebody to talk to about what they are experiencing—not to be humiliated and embarrassed.

I ran away quite frequently from Mrs Davies. I was brought back on several occasions. I have a doctor's report in my file that states that whilst I was in Linnwood Hall I was seeing a psychologist for my misbehaviour and my frequent menstrual cycle, which the psychologist said was psychosomatic. I confided in the psychologist that I had been sexually abused prior to being taken into care—it was not in care that I was sexually abused—so the psychologist referred me on to a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist said that I was intellectually handicapped, that I would prove to be a behaviour management problem in the future and that no further action would be taken. So after I confided in somebody what had happened to me, nobody did anything about it anyway. We go back to the fact that the child welfare department took me originally to protect me, to give me a better chance. That did not happen.

As I was continually running away from Linnwood Hall they placed me in Ormond, where again at the hands of the child welfare department I was subjected to scrubbing floors and concrete courtyards, never laughing, never talking—never doing anything that normal children do. When I was 14 years and nine months old they told me I deserved another chance in the community. What had I done to the community? At 14 years and nine months I was told I was allowed to go. I did not have anywhere to go, so they found me a room, gave me a job and let me go. I did not know how to catch a bus, I did not know how to read a timetable, I did not know how to interact with other people; but it was okay for me to go out into the community and be productive and a taxpayer. I find that very difficult to understand. If I were to take my child at the age of 12 and lock her in isolation, I would be criminally charged.

How did the child welfare department get away with what it handed down to children? The officers who ran the institutions had their own families, their own houses and their rents and bills to pay. It was a job to them. The child welfare department itself is answerable for what it passed down. The child welfare department knew that Linnwood Hall and Ormond had isolation rooms. It knew that we were not attending school five days a week like normal children. It knew how these institutions ran but it did not care. I feel today, and have done for many years, that I would have been better off left in the Housing Commission house at Granville. The child welfare department paid seven foster parents allowances to take children into foster care, and I know that all of my brothers and sisters who were fostered suffered their own problems with those people. Why didn't the child welfare department give half of that allowance for seven children to my own mother, who did not want to surrender her children, so that she could keep us together?

Would it have mattered whether we walked the streets of Granville collecting rags to buy half a loaf of bread? Would it have been any worse than what the child welfare department gave me and my brothers and sisters? I have a sister who lives in Newcastle who has mental issues because of what happened to her at the hands of the child welfare department. She recently confided to me that while in care she was raped by a carer at one of the institutions. She is not able to speak out because of her mental issues. I would like to know what the child welfare department did for children such as me. They failed in everything that they claimed they stood for.

That really is about all I have to say about what happened to me. They released me into society with no support. I was to report once a fortnight to Barbara Burgess of the child welfare department at Newtown. That consisted of 'Hello, Dianne. How are you?' 'Good, thank you.' 'You're still living at the same address and still working at the same job? That's good.' She would push her pen and mark off 'Dianne Hughes has reported in and so everything's great.'

Nobody in any institution ever asked, 'How are you today?' With everything that has been going down lately regarding all of this, I woke up the other morning at 4 a.m. and for some unknown reason thought: 'Why can't I remember ever celebrating a birthday? Why can't I remember anybody in care ever saying, "It's the girl Hughes's birthday today"? Why can't I remember ever hearing anybody say, "It's the girl Smith's birthday today; we'll bake a cake and have it tonight"?'

Mrs Davies ran her institution, her home for girls, like it was some Nazi concentration camp. If you spoke to another child, she would think you were up to something; you were conspiring to do something. You had nothing to look forward to. You got excited about nothing except the thought of how you could abscond in the future. When we did abscond, we did not do anything criminal. We would walk the pipelines of Marylands and Guildford. Through reading the file—and I did not need to read it to remember this—I was reminded that we would abscond from the institution for two or three hours and, because we were just naive children, would walk along the pipelines, and they would come and get us and take us back. We were children, not criminals; you have so many children who are out in society trying to be productive members. I would like the child welfare department to answer my questions.

CHAIR—Thank you, Miss Hughes. In your submission you talk about toothbrushes.

Miss Hughes—That is correct.

CHAIR—That is a relevant point you make: they must have gone through a lot of toothbrushes.

Miss Hughes—Our recreation periods were spent scrubbing, mending, cooking and sewing. We were not educated; we were sent to school two days a week. We were given punishment for trivial things, minute things. We did not assault officers. We did not smash up institutions. It was for rolling your eyes and tutting and ah-ing, as you yourself would have experienced if you have children; I am sure they roll their eyes at you. You would be given a toothbrush to scrub cement courtyards. Why did the child welfare department not query why these institutions were ordering so many toothbrushes? We must have been cleaning our teeth for quite some time every day to warrant that many toothbrushes; or were they donated and they just needed to get rid of them?

We were questioned about why we rolled our eyes. We were asked, 'What are you looking like that for?' We were questioned about why we were running away. Why wasn't anybody in the department answerable for their actions? We are always being questioned. We are always being asked to explain and to try to help people like you understand. What can we help you to understand? We do not understand ourselves—and might I add, without being offensive, you are the educated ones. We are the uneducated, so how can we make you understand?

Senator MURRAY—Mrs Davies, by her name, appears to have been married.

Miss Hughes—No, she was not, to my knowledge.

Senator MURRAY—Do you know anything about her and her background?

Miss Hughes—The only thing I know about Mrs Davies, besides the fact that she is deceased now—I found that out last year when I went to the reunion at Linnwood Hall and I was most disappointed about it because I would have liked to have escorted her to isolation—is that apparently, prior to being sent to Linnwood Hall as the superintendent, she worked for the Parramatta men's prison or was in some line of work like that. But she was never married. She resided on the premises most of the time. Occasionally on her rostered days off she would vacate, and we were all very happy about that. But most of the time she was there.

As I said, Mrs Davies did not break any rules or regulations that the child welfare department had in place. But she was a woman; she should have had compassion and humanity for the children in her care. She abused the rules and the rights that child welfare gave her. I am quite sure that if I were running an institution and had children in my care like the children we were, even if an isolation room had been allocated for me to use as a form of punishment, I would use other means. There are other ways of dealing with children rather than locking them in an isolation room. I had three children myself and I did not have an isolation room. My mother, prior to child welfare taking us, had seven children; either she had just had one or she was pregnant. She had no money. She could barely feed us. Her husband was in and out of jail and he battered her. But she did not have an isolation room for us.

Senator MURRAY—How many children were in Linnwood Hall?

Miss Hughes—Thirty to 40; maybe slightly more or slightly less. It all depended on the time.

Senator MURRAY—How many staff?

Miss Hughes—Six officers, roughly, plus Mrs Davies.

Senator MURRAY—Male and female?

Miss Hughes—No, they were all females.

Senator MURRAY—And they all behaved as Mrs Davies did?

Miss Hughes—Yes. After the reunion last year at Guildford, I contacted one of the officers who worked there during my time; she was quite nice. When I spoke to her after the reunion last November she said: 'Dianne, Mrs Davies treated her staff in the same way she treated the children. She was cruel and she was evil.'

Senator MURRAY—You say in your submission you had four brothers and three sisters, that you were the eldest and that you only have contact with one sister. Do you know what has happened as a result of institutionalisation to your other siblings?

Miss Hughes—Do you mean how it has affected their lives?

Senator MURRAY—Yes.

Miss Hughes—We all have chips on our shoulders. We all blame each other. We all have our own emotional baggage. Whatever system we went through, whether fostering or institutions, all of us have endured our own pain; it is different. What has happened to them? As I said, my sister in Newcastle has mental issues. She has been under the care of a psychiatrist for about 15 years. She also spent 12 months in the Rozelle Psychiatric Centre at the age of 16; she was so institutionalised she did not want to leave. She was raped while she was in care. Her psychiatrist today—the same psychiatrist she has been seeing for 15 years—has said that her problems are to do with what happened to her as a child. She wishes that she could have been here today but, as she said to me: 'Dianne, I am not as strong as you. I couldn't do it. I wouldn't last five seconds.'

Senator MURRAY—Is she the worst of the eight of you?

Miss Hughes—I would say so, yes.

Senator HUMPHRIES—I have a question about the experience of other children in these institutions. Do you feel that your story is typical of what happened to all of them, or is your story worse than most others? Did some have better experiences than yours?

Miss Hughes—Since I recently joined CLAN—and until recently I had no idea that it was in existence for people such as me—in the newsletters that I have received from CLAN monthly, the stories that I have read describe experiences far more horrific than those I endured. That is how I feel. I do not feel my story is as bad as theirs. I am fortunate and grateful that I did not end up in Parramatta Girls Home after the stories I have heard and read about of experiences there. I am fortunate that I did not end up in Hay. Sometimes I think I am fortunate that I did not get foster parents, and I thank the department for stamping me 'unplaceable'. The stories that I have

heard here this morning are horrific—more so than mine, I feel. But everybody's pain is just as bad as everybody else's. You cannot get a set of scales and weigh up whether Mary Smith is in worse pain than Dianne Hughes. You do not have a set of scales for emotional pain.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Are the stories of the girls who were with you at Linnwood Hall much the same as yours, or are there variations?

Miss Hughes—When I went to the reunion at Linnwood Hall I heard some that were worse and some that were not as bad as the next girl's. It depended also on whether Mrs Davies liked you. Mrs Davies had a top dormitory and a bottom dormitory. The top dormitory was for privileged girls who bowed and scraped to Mrs Davies. Girls who had a big mouth, such as me, and would not be told what to do got put into the bottom dormitory. Mrs Davies would single out the girls that she did not like.

Senator HUMPHRIES—You said that other officers at this institution were much the same as Mrs Davies—perhaps not quite as bad but of a similar character.

Miss Hughes—The officers who worked under Mrs Davies were told what to do. They valued their jobs, I would imagine, and they needed their money to feed their own children so that their children did not end up where we were. They did what they were told.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Have you spoken to some of those women since you were there?

Miss Hughes—I have spoken to one lady who was in Linnwood Hall while I was there. She is now 80 years old. I told her about the publicity and everything that is happening regarding children in care, and she said that Mrs Davies was an evil woman and she treated her officers in the same way she treated her girls.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Do you think in your case there may have been or there may still be some value in confronting those people, if they are still alive, and discussing with them what happened to you and to other girls, why it happened and what they felt about it at the time? Would there be any value in having some kind of resolution through discussion with them?

Miss Hughes—Last year when I went to the reunion at Linnwood Hall—that was the first one I had attended—I was hoping and praying that Mrs Davies would be there because I wanted to confront her. Maybe momentarily I would have felt good if I could have placed her in isolation—maybe, as I said, momentarily. I cannot understand how anybody, let alone a woman, could carry out such punishment, even if she were allowed to use that isolation room.

You cannot put a child in that kind of room and expect that it is going to come out and be well behaved. It is going to want to run away. Then you are putting children before a court and charging them with being uncontrollable. You are labelling them when they should not be labelled, and then you are passing them on to another institution that is bigger and better than that of Mrs Davies.

Senator KNOWLES—Miss Hughes, I would just like you to trace for us your success with your own family and, given what you have been through, how you managed that.

Miss Hughes—I have three children. I have two daughters. One is 31 and one is 29. One is living in the States at the moment. She went over there 18 months ago for a holiday, but she married whilst over there. She achieved her HSC and so did her sister, who is in Canada. My son was a bit wayward and he did not achieve his HSC. My three children are productive members of society. They are taxpayers. They have never been involved in any criminal activity. They are drug free. They are not perfect. The success in my life would be my three children. They have travelled. They have done things and have had the opportunity to do things that I have not had. That is probably my success—the success of my three children. I did not want them to have to scrub and clean to make a living. I wanted them to have a little bit more than what I had. There were no isolation rooms. They did not have to show me their soiled menstrual pad. They were allowed to laugh, and they were allowed to be normal children.

Senator KNOWLES—Do you still have a very good relationship with all three?

Miss Hughes—I have a very good relationship with all three children, probably a little bit better with my girls than with my son.

CHAIR—Thank you, Miss Hughes.

[12.50 p.m.]

LOHSE, Mrs Verneta (Private capacity)

WITCHARD, Mrs Diana Edith (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome. You are appearing today in a private capacity and your comments will be on the public record. The committee prefers evidence to be heard in public, but evidence may also be taken in camera. I understand that you have received information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses and evidence. Is that correct?

Mrs Lohse—Yes.

Mrs Witchard—Yes.

CHAIR—The committee has before it your submissions. I now invite you to make an opening presentation to be followed by questions from the committee.

Mrs Lohse—Diana and I and my other sisters and brothers lived in Balmain in a little one-bedroom house. Six children slept in one room and my mum and dad slept in the front room. Our father used to drink all the time and come home and bash up our mother. She always had black eyes. When she was pregnant with other sisters and brothers, he kicked her in the stomach; he kicked her down the back stairs and she lost the children. There were 12 of us altogether. The house was very small. We had a set of double bunks. Two sisters and I slept on the top bunk, my two little brothers slept on the bottom bunk and our eldest sister, who has passed away, slept in a single bed on her own.

Dad was always coming home drunk and bashing my mother. Welfare came quite a few times to my Mum and were saying that something had to be done about us children because we were not going to school, because we had no shoes and we did not have much to eat, because he was always at the pub. The six of us used to go down to the pub and torment the shit out of him in front of his mates because his mates all thought he was the top man down there. We used to scream outside the hotel for him to give us some money so we could go and get some food.

Then the six of us all got diphtheria and we all ended up in Prince Henry hospital at La Perouse. We were separated there. Diana and I were in one ward and the others were in other wards. We were in there for about three months, getting needles every day. We could not walk or do anything. Our youngest brother was in there for nearly 12 months, as he was very ill. My mum used to come out there on the tram—there was only the tram that used to go out to La Perouse—and visit us. Diana and I used to crawl out of bed, because we could not walk. I used to pinch everybody's fruit, because I did not have any. We had nothing to speak of. We did not have much to eat, even in there. You could not eat much anyway because your throat was really sore.

After that we came out of the hospital and—from what I can gather, because I was so young—Welfare got onto my mother about us all living in that one bedroom. There was a copper

downstairs and also a chip-heater, from which we used to get our hot water. We used to light the chip-heater, but there was a lot of sludge down there. There were no tiles or anything, just dirt. Maybe we got diphtheria there; I do not know. My father used to bring home drunken mates and we used to have to sit on their lap. My Mum saw all of this and, as we were getting older—I think Diana was about 10 or 11—I think she realised that she had to do something for us so she put us into an orphanage—Mater Dei Orphanage, at Camden. On my first day there—and excuse me if I have to swear, because my Mum and Dad used to swear and fight all the time—

CHAIR—That has not worried anybody else.

Senator MURRAY—It is the first time we have heard it, though!

Mrs Lohse—My mum left us at Central Railway Station. She could not take us up because she was too upset. So my eldest sister—who had just turned 14 at the time; she did not go into the home—got on the train with us. My mum was on the platform and I was screaming out to her, 'Please do not leave us.' We all huddled in the corner of the train, hanging on to each other. We went up to the home. It took a long time because we had to get two or three trains in those days. We had to change at Lidcombe and Campbelltown, and then we got out at Camden.

My eldest sister, who was 14, took us up to the home, and the Mother Superior came out. We had one bag between us—three children. The taxi stayed there and the Mother Superior said to my sister: 'You'd better go now. The taxi is there to take you back to the station.' The three of us just stood there, hanging on to each other, and waved our sister goodbye. Then we were taken over to the children's side and shown where the dressing room was, and we got a little cupboard. She threw out all our clothes. She said that they were no good, that they had a shop upstairs where we could get second-hand clothes. So we went up there and got some clothes. Then we were told to go outside, around this verandah. This nun came out of the children's kitchen. She said: 'Here's three new girls. Can you go down to that shed and bring up some wood for the fire?' They were fuel stoves then. So the three of us went down to the shed. I looked at it—I am only four feet eight inches tall now, so you can imagine what I was like then and I was only eight-years-old—and I turned around and said, 'I'm not effing carrying them; they're effing big logs.' With that the nun came rushing down. She pulled my hair. She punched me in the middle of the back. I thought, 'God, what've I done wrong?' Then she took me up to the kitchen. She put liquid soap in my mouth. She got a scrubbing brush and pulled my tongue out and scrubbed it and scrubbed it until it was bleeding. That was my first day there.

There were 165 girls when we went there, and I was about 8½ years old. I am sorry if I have to read this a little bit. My two little brothers went to another home at Baulkham Hills. My youngest brother was four years old. And this haunts me: I never saw him after that. He drowned when he was 10 years old and I never saw him after that. In my mind I only remember him as a little four-year-old. He went with some people for holidays and he drowned down at Bobbin Head.

When I was first there and was getting belted, I ran away. I was only there a couple of days. The police caught me. I come from Balmain, and I did not know much about the countryside. So I went to a farmhouse and I said, 'I fell out of the back of a truck.' All I wanted to do was go home to Balmain. Of course the married couple there called the police. So I went back to the home. I was pulled out in front of all 165 girls—I was only eight years old—and they belted me

and belted me to make an example of me. Then they put me in a cell underneath the nuns' convent—it was a really old place—and they locked me in there for two days with just water and bread.

We were always told that we were no good, that we were scum from Balmain and would never be any good. They would tells us, 'Your mother's no good; your father's no good. They didn't want you, that's why you're here. Nobody wants you and you'll never make anything of yourselves.' When you get that drummed into your head all the time, you start believing it.

My mum used to come up as much as she could, because you were only allowed to have visitors once a month. One Sunday she was coming up and she missed the train, so she got up there about five o'clock in the afternoon. You were only allowed visitors till four. Mother Superior told her to get back in the taxi and that she was not allowed to see us. All we could do was wave her goodbye again. The only time my father came up there to see us, he was drunk and with a couple of mates. What do you think he did? He bashed my mother up in front of us. Dianne went up and got the Mother Superior. She came down and ordered him off the premises and said he wasn't to come back there again—thank Christ for that.

It was only lately that I ran into a young man who grew up with us. My mother took him in too: his mother and father were alcoholics. When he was about 2½ years old he used to sit on the steps, just in a nappy, if he had that. So my mum used to take him home with us. We would all bring him home. Anyway, she used to give him whatever we had, which was bread and dripping or whatever. I saw him the other day and he said to me, 'You know, Verneta, your two brothers ran away from Baulkham Hills.' And I said, 'Did they?' He said, 'Yes, I remember they asked me to go with them, but they were all so little. I was too scared. I didn't go.' He said that when they caught them and they came back, they locked them in two cupboards—one in one cupboard and one in the other. They got all the kids together and told them that this is what they were going to do to any other child that ran away. They opened up the doors, and there were my two little brothers huddled, one in one cupboard and one in the other. By the way, this boy was with my brother when he drowned. We have never blamed him—never, ever. It was just something that happened with kids. We still keep in contact with him.

My biggest argument is that after three years in that home they changed it to a school for mentally retarded children. They placed everybody else somewhere and they left eight girls there, including my two sisters and girls whose names I know off by heart, but I won't mention them because we are not supposed to or something. We never went to school after that—that was it. I only went to fourth and fifth grade. That is as far as I went: no high school, nothing. All I did was look after these kids. We had 10 charges each—mentally retarded kids. We had to look after them. Some wore nappies, some wore irons on their legs. That was not their fault, but we were only children ourselves. Who could you tell? You could not tell anyone, because there was no-one there to tell—you were right out in the country, you never saw anyone. The nuns were very, very cruel, always bashing you and pulling your ears.

My biggest argument is over not getting any education. With education you can make a better life for yourself. We have had it very hard. We have tried to make the best we can. Thank you, dear Lord—he has looked after us. We have beautiful children who are now starting to look after us. They are very kind and loving. When you are brought up in these places it is very hard to give love.

If you don't mind me saying this, I will say this in the best words I can: when I was 11, Diane was nine and she already had her period. I was so scared. I thought something had happened to me, because we didn't know anything about periods or anything like that. I went to one of the big girls and said, 'I'm bleeding.' She said, 'Don't worry, this happens. Go and see Sister Matil.' I went and saw Sister Matil. She gave me these hand towels and she said, 'You've gotta do this and you've gotta do that, and make sure they're washed and there are no stains—they've gotta be pure white.' She didn't say where to put them, why you got them—nothing. So when these little retarded kids got theirs, we had to wash all their towels and look after them. It is just unbelievable.

These religious places looking after these dear, darling little children preach to you all about God, all about mortal sins. What mortal sins had we committed? Fair dinkum, they would stand there while you were having a shower and watch you all the time, but it was a mortal sin for us to look at each other. They tell you that it is a mortal sin to look at anyone naked. Once I went for holidays with an aunty, and my uncle walked around naked. I nearly died. I got back to the home and went to confession: 'Father, I saw my uncle. I didn't want to look, but he walked past me naked'; 'Say six Hail Marys and ask God to forgive you', and all this. Honestly, if I didn't have a good sense of humour and my sister, I don't think I would be on this earth today.

My specific reason for being here is that I am uneducated and that has made my life hell. It made my children's life hell because I had to work and leave them. I had no grandparents or parents to look after them. It has been a very hard road. All my life I have asked, 'Why?' Why were we left there to look after these mentally retarded kids? That is my biggest argument. I made sure my kids had a good education, that is for sure, and they have turned out all right—thank you Lord. I am not against religion. I pray. I talk to God. How I do after what we have been through I do not know. It is just the way it is. I thank you for listening to me and I hope you understand how I feel.

I have to tell you that when my brother died they came and picked me up at the home, took me to the funeral and then took me straight back and left me there. No-one came near me. I just went round the back verandah and cried my eyes out because I hadn't seen him for so many years. I will give my sister a chance to talk now. Thank you very much for listening to me.

Mrs Witchard—You have all heard my sister speak; mine is all the same kind of story. My argument is that I have not had any education. I cannot put anything on paper. I went to tech for six years to try to help myself, and they found out that I am dyslexic. I had one teacher, and the government took her off me. So I did not go back to tech anymore, because I thought, 'I can't go any further.' But all I did in the home was cleaning, washing, ironing and chopping wood. I went into class for catechism. It has been a really hard road. I have had to get jobs that do not need reading. They were hard jobs that you work hard at. I had a bad time with my husband. I got into trouble because I gave him *Whiskas* on toast for tea because he called me a 'fucking idiot'. It is funny now, but it was not then. He said, 'You're no good. You come from the wrong place.' I said, 'I come from good stock.'

It has been very hard for us. We have good personalities. Why were we left there with mentally retarded children? Why? I do not know, but I hope to God that before I go it will be fixed. Thank you.

Mrs Lohse—I would like to say something else. A couple of years ago, Diana and I met these beautiful friends that are here today supporting us. We went back to the home. It is still a school for mentally retarded children. One of the nuns who was there when we were there was still there. I went up to her and we were talking. Seeing the place, I started getting angry and I said to her, 'I just can't believe that we were left here.' I was crying and she was crying with us—she may have made out she was compassionate, who knows—and I said to her, 'Why were we left here when the other kids went to other homes or to foster parents when they changed it over?' She said, 'I don't know, Verneta. I was only here for 12 months'—she was in charge of reallocating other kids to other places—'and I was supposed to come back and do the rest of the girls, but they transferred me to somewhere else down the South Coast. That's all I know of it.' I just said, 'I can't believe that they just left us here.' Thank you.

Mrs Witchard—I would like to say something else too. I am still having trouble asking people to put me on the right buses and on the right trains. They put me on the wrong buses and the wrong trains, and it takes me all day to get home. I am still getting help. I go to banks, but they will not help me. I go to the housing commission, but they will not help me; they send me to the Salvation Army to fill forms out. I cannot fill them out. My sister cannot do it all the time for me, because she is not always with me.

Mrs Lohse—I am not that good at it anyway.

Mrs Witchard—They are always passing the buck. There is always some for everybody else. This is just to fill out a form.

Senator KNOWLES—How do you think those problems could be resolved to assist you?

Mrs Witchard—The lady from where I went to TAFE rang me last year to ask me to go back to tech, and I told her I was all teched out. I had a one-to-one teacher for three years, because they could not get me into a classroom because I had never been into a classroom. She tried to explain to me that they were all the same, that they were all like me, but I just could not face them knowing that I could not read. Eventually they got me into TAFE at Randwick, and they could not find out why I could not read. I should have been able to read something in six years. Then they found out I was dyslexic and they gave me a one-to-one teacher away from the class on my own for three hours a day.

Senator KNOWLES—Did that help?

Mrs Witchard—I still did not have her long enough.

Senator KNOWLES—Do you think that, if you did have that type of assistance on an ongoing basis—

Mrs Witchard—I think so, because I got my licence by memory and by trying to remember things.

Senator KNOWLES—You drive?

Mrs Witchard—Yes.

Senator KNOWLES—Can you read road signs?

Mrs Witchard—No, not all. Some I do. It is too quick in a car. When you are driving you cannot stop and say, 'A-e-i-o,' if you know what I mean. It is too quick. I go by memory. If somebody tells me a street, I never forget it and I know that is the street I have to go down.

Senator KNOWLES—Sometimes reading the road signs is like trying to read a book while you are driving, isn't it? Is there a way in which you think you could be assisted with your problems? What about if you had, say, one-on-one assistance with learning to read better? Has any work been done with your dyslexia?

Mrs Witchard—Only the time I had with her in the last six months I was at TAFE. I had her for six months.

Mrs Lohse—Once a week.

Mrs Witchard—Yes.

Senator KNOWLES—In the meantime, is there a way in which you think you could be assisted with form filling and so forth in banks or various other places where everyone wants you to endlessly fill out forms?

Mrs Witchard—I asked them and they said, 'We're not allowed to do that.' I said that my sister was there. She said: 'That form is not filled out. You have to fill it out.' I said: 'I can't read. Can you do it for me?' She said, 'We're not allowed to do that.'

Senator KNOWLES—Have you ever asked to speak to the manager?

Mrs Lohse—I did.

Mrs Witchard—Yes, she did.

Mrs Lohse—She threw it back to me and she said, 'You can fill it out for her.' I said: 'No, I'm not going to. That's part of your job.' She said: 'No, it's not. We're not allowed to do it, Madam.' I said, 'Look, go and get the manager for me, please.' I stick up for her because I know what she's feeling.

Mrs Witchard—I do not answer phones.

Mrs Lohse—No, she does not answer the phone.

Mrs Witchard—I have to see people face to face to talk to them. I cannot answer the phone. I do not like to be anywhere I do not know. There was an incident at Christmas time. When Verneta dropped me at the airport we had a big drama there. It is like a mirror maze. I cannot read the signs to go here or there. She was told to go, but I wanted her to come in and put me in the line.

Mrs Lohse—Because she cannot read, she cannot read which line she is supposed to be in. I said to the security guy, 'Please, she can't read or write. Can't I just go in there?' My car was there. He said, 'No, Madam, you're not allowed to park there.' I said, 'Yes, but this is different. She can't read or write. She'll get on the wrong bloody plane.' Anyway, he would not let me. He rang security and asked them if we were allowed to. Then he said, 'She can't speak English,' so that is how much he listened to me. So he let my grandson, who is 14, take her in—not me. My grandson was allowed to go in and get her on the right plane, in the right line and everything.

Senator KNOWLES—I can understand that for security reasons these days you cannot leave a vehicle there.

Mrs Lohse—Yes, I do understand that.

Senator KNOWLES—But they should have been able to direct you to the car park where you could have left your vehicle and been relaxed about it.

Mrs Lohse—That is right. It would have only taken five minutes. All I had to do was get her in the line where she was supposed to go.

Mrs Witchard—Once I get to the line I tell them that I cannot read. They are really good. They take me right down where I have to go. It is just dropping me off. It makes me so sick. I am so worried about getting on this plane.

Senator KNOWLES—What was the end of the story with the bank manager? Did you ever uncover the bank manager?

Mrs Lohse—Yes, he came over. I said to him, 'My sister can't read or write and she needs somebody to help her fill out this form.' He said, 'We're not allowed to.' I said, 'Where's the help for her? You will help ethnic people. Why can't you help my sister?' Because I was singing out and making a racket, he got us in the corner. It was just to get rid of us, that is for sure, but he ended up doing it for her. He said, 'Why can't you do it?' I said, 'No, I refuse to do it.' Why should I? I am doing my best with Diana as much as I possibly can. I am not that good myself. I only went to fifth grade but at least I can read and write. I am not a good speller.

Senator KNOWLES—Would you like to have the opportunity to have further education?

Mrs Lohse—I went to tech for four years at Randwick. Rita, who works there, rang me up. She was in charge of the tutor Diana had. She asked me if I would like to go and do a computer course. I said, 'Yes, I would. I'd love that.' But I know her little methods. That is how she got Diana in the class. I said, 'Come on, Di. Why won't you do it with me? You can sit next to me. I will help you. Let's have a go.' She said, 'Yeah, all right.' So I rang Rita back and said, 'Diana and I will come and have a go at it.' I ended up being there for four years. It is impossible to fit five years of schooling into a short period of time. I nearly had a nervous breakdown, it was so hard. But I hacked it out and did the best I could.

Senator KNOWLES—That is what I am saying: would you benefit from some of the basics even now, at your stage in life—and maybe along with your sister, if the two of you were able to have access to that type of facility, or do you think, 'Hang it. It is too late'?

Mrs Lohse—I think we have already done it. I admit I am a lot better than I was. At least I can read a magazine. I have got better since I have been reading to her over the last couple of years.

Senator MURRAY—In a way this is a silly question, because I think I know the answer. There must be heaps of people like yourselves without sufficient education but certainly with enough smarts to be educated. How do we reach them? If we drop pamphlets around to houses or write to people, they will not be able to read what we send them. Do you know what I mean?

Mrs Lohse—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—One of the things that the child migrant community did for themselves was to get a couple of houses going—one in Perth and one in Victoria in Melbourne. Former child migrants gather there. It is really a socialising place, but it is also a source of information. I presume the best way to get in contact with people who cannot read and write, who want to be better educated or who want services is through those kinds of central bodies to which people will go. Would you think that is right?

Mrs Lohse—Our other sister, Raelene, is in between Diana and I. We won an award because the three of us were at tech together. We ended up talking our other sister into going too, because she is not educated either. She was doing reading, writing and spelling—all the low class ones. Because we won the award we were in the *Southern Courier,* at Maroubra, where we live. Then the *Sunday Telegraph* came out and we were on the second page in that. What we were trying to tell people then—this is five or six years ago; I have the paper—was that tech is there to help people like us. We were saying that we were in our fifties and we were going back to tech to try and learn to read, write and spell.

Senator MURRAY—And you want to be able to go somewhere where you are not going to be embarrassed. Is that right?

Mrs Lohse—Yes; well, I don't care about that now.

Senator MURRAY—But Diana does.

Mrs Lohse—Diana does, terribly.

Senator MURRAY—I think most people would. Again, if we are recommending better remedial education for mature adults—because that is what you are talking about—would you think the best way to communicate that service is through something like tech, or through something like the organisations that are developing to meet the needs of people who have been through institutions?

Mrs Lohse—I think that would be a wonderful idea.

Senator MURRAY—That is the better way to go?

Mrs Lohse—Yes, I think that would be a wonderful idea. Since we have been with CLAN, everybody is talking and we are not ashamed because we have all come from different walks of

life. Things have happened in different ways but we still communicate and we understand each other. Before, we never talked about it. You could get a house, like you said, and set up teachers there. Of course people will be up to different stages of education—I went to fourth and fifth class; you might get somebody like Diane—but you could have classes there with skilled teachers who know how to teach these sorts of people.

Senator MURRAY—Would you object if the service was voluntary, using retired teachers and people who have a bit of time on their hands and can do that? What sort of people are you most comfortable with? A lot of teachers are very young. Does it matter that you are taught by a younger person?

Mrs Lohse—I do not think they understand, because they read everything out of books. Like that other person said, unless you have lived it you cannot understand. That young man who was going to tech and learning to do something with his life: you need to get somebody like him in there that understands why you have not got the education. He has his diploma and that, but he has lived it. He is going to come across to us better and we are going to feel more comfortable with him.

Senator MURRAY—Let me restate what I think my understanding is. What was said earlier about therapists and counsellors is that basically people do not respond well to freshly educated kids straight out of school or people who do not have some kind of connection or understanding of the background. That would mean to me that they want mature people who have experience. Are you saying the same thing for people who would provide educational services? Do you want mature people who understand the experiences you have come from?

Mrs Lohse—How are they going to understand if they have not lived it?

Senator MURRAY—I suspect there are a quite a few teachers in the world who have come out of institutions.

Mrs Lohse—Well, if you can get them, love, I will be the first one there!

CHAIR—There being no further questions, thank you very much, ladies.

Mrs Lohse—Thank you very much for listening to us.

CHAIR—It was our pleasure.

[1.28 p.m.]

FRASER, Ms Georgina Margaret (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome. You are appearing today in a private capacity and your comments will be on the public record. The committee prefers evidence to be heard in public, but evidence may also be taken in camera. I understand that you have received information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses and evidence. Is that correct?

Ms Fraser—Yes.

CHAIR—The committee has before it your submission. I now invite you to make an opening presentation to be followed by questions from the committee.

Ms Fraser—Does that mean I cannot say any of the people's names?

CHAIR—Just be cautious.

Ms Fraser—Right. I was in St Catherine's Orphanage in Brooklyn from the age of three. I was there for 12 years. It is on the Hawkesbury River. I do feel for all these people here today, I must say. My heart goes out to them because, like that lady said, unless you have been in our shoes and experienced what we have, you only hear our words, you do not feel our pain. I have been to hell, and there is nothing I fear on this earth because I have been there. When I die it will be sweet relief. I am only here because I have the most treasured, beautiful child. Other than that I do not care much for anybody.

I had 12 years in St Catherine's Orphanage. It is terrible really, when you think of it, how days just go into days, months into months and years into years. I am not sure how many children there were; it was quite a big orphanage. I would say that there would have been 150 children there—maybe a bit more—going from age three up to 18. While I was there my father visited twice and I saw my mother once. We went for holidays—at holiday times we were sent to foster parents, and I often wonder whether these people were ever checked out, really and truly.

It did seem long, long years of wasted time there. You were not even prepared with education. I see evidence of that all the way through here today. Thank God I am not alone. Being a member of Care Leavers of Australia I have found, through the paper we get, that I am not alone. I have struggled alone all my life but listening to everyone else I can see they have had to struggle with the same thing, of lack of education. It is very, very hard. I was listening to those last two ladies. I have the same problem with filling out forms but you just get on with it.

They only kept you at Brooklyn until you were 12 years old. You could not stay on up to the age of 18 so I went through numerous foster homes. I will give you an example of what happened to me when I was about nine. I know the name of the carer and where they live and everything. He was married, with a daughter. He offered me firecrackers—as many as I wanted—if I let him touch me. Thank God I knew what right and wrong was. I am very rebellious. Even though I am uneducated I was a very rebellious child, so I said I would tell but I

lived in the fear, every time I went there, of being touched. Who would I tell, and who would listen anyhow?

At the other foster home I went to, out at Maroubra, there were continual bashings. I was smashed in the face, with my head against the wall. I was kicked in the stomach. I could not understand how you could be sent back to these places. Nothing was ever questioned. Who did you have to tell? Who was there to listen to you? You are little and they are big. What can you do, except take it? After being in the Catholic home, which was appalling anyhow—the welts from the canings on your legs and hands would last for two to three days—you learned to live with it. You just shut up. You accepted it: you really tuned out and turned off. You would shut off your emotions and everything. That is the only way you could deal with it. You were a non-identity. You were nobody, nothing and no-one. You never spoke up; you never said anything—you would have just got a smashing or a belting, so you were quiet.

From there I went to Bidura girls home—another incredible experience. That was a state home. When this happened to me I was 12 years old. If any of you have children put that in your mind—age 12. Virginity tests were done on us. I had no idea about anything in life. I was held down while my body was violated by a doctor to see if I was a virgin. What did it matter? This is appalling. I would not want to have the government of that day, the church groups and social leaders in front of me because I would like to shoot them.

My only Australian hero in anything is Ned Kelly, because he went out there and just bloody shot them down, and that is what I would like to do to them. What were those men and women, those nuns in that orphanage, those people in those state homes, doing? These are children we are talking about. I work with children. I work with special needs children. I cannot understand, when you look at a child, how people can be that cruel. I do not know. And this is not that long ago. I am 53 years old. We are not talking about centuries ago. This is not that long ago.

I did run away once from Bidura because I have never experienced anything like it. I lived on the streets for a week and, being the little one, the two older girls looked after me. Only through growing up have I realised what they did to protect me—because I was little, I was left alone—but, God love them, to this day I never saw them again. We were all sent before the courts as being in moral danger. I went off to another orphanage up in Newcastle and I never saw the two girls again. One was so badly beaten and raped. I was little, so I was left alone. I often wonder about them. I do not know. We all went to the courts.

You say: 'Georgina, you're 53 now. Why can't you let go?' Some of my friends say, 'Why can't you let bygones be bygones and put a closure on it?' How do you put a closure to the very essence of what you are and of where you came from? For example, I was working at a school. I liked any sort of education—anything that would prove me, anything that would let me give back to the kids so I could feel I was giving more than 100 per cent. Off I went, as happy as Larry. I did not realise the address till I drove up there. This is only seven years ago, by the way. People say: 'You people are looking back. Why can't you people move on? Move on.' As I drove up, I realised it was the children's court where I had been sentenced. I sat in my car and thought, 'How on earth am I going to get over there?'

I went to the corner shop and had a coffee. I thought: 'Come on, Georgie, you've got to get in there. The lectures are starting. You're going to be late.' I crossed the road and every part of me

was shaking. I went in and there was a lady, Elizabeth, who used to come round to the schools. I said: 'I don't know if I can stay for these lectures. I was one of these children that came through here that was bashed. The very place makes me sick. I want to run out of here screaming.' She made me a cup of tea. She said, 'Georgina, I hate to tell you, but the lectures are in some of the courthouses.' You would not believe it: it was where I was sentenced. I had to sit there for a whole day for these lectures. I tell you, I was a nervous wreck. By the time I got to my car, I had to get someone else to pick me up, because I shook and was in shock for the rest of the day. I thank my boss, but I was too embarrassed to tell him that I had been one of the children and why I did not want to go back for further education there. It was just too traumatic that they were using the children's court to give these lectures for the school.

By the time I was about 13, they put me out at Vaucluse. I worked as a domestic from seven in the morning until seven at night, and I slept under the stairs. I never had much schooling myself. Their two children went off to school, and I scrubbed the top, the bottom, two bathrooms, five bedrooms and two lounge rooms of their two-storey house. I ate my dinner alone in the kitchen, and I had a sliding thing where I put the food through for them. I ate all my meals alone. I slept downstairs. When they went to their property, I slept out on the verandah at night; I was not in the house.

I worked from seven in the morning until seven at night. I was with these people from age 13 to 18. I call it slave labour myself; I was never paid a wage. I lived in three blue uniforms. So if you are looking at the ages here, I did not have a childhood and I did not even have any teen years. I had no pretty dresses, no parties, no nothing. I spent many lonely days there. Thank God there was a dog, Mandy—at least I had some sort of companionship. That was something I had. I changed sheets, did the linen, cleaned the house, scrubbed the things, did the cooking and did the ironing. That was my life from age 13 to 18. There was a lot of isolation. The children went to school. She had bridge parties and things like that where I had to serve the drinks, serve the food and wash up. All I did was work.

I looked at the paper. I can read fluently, but I cannot spell and I do not know my times tables, but it has never stopped me working. I worked 17 years for Village Roadshow. I put my head up proud. I put my daughter through private schooling. My daughter now is at university, and has many degrees and a business. She is going on. I am so proud. Education is power to me. Knowledge is power. It opens doors; it opens everything.

I love the arts with a passion. My church is the art gallery and the beautiful park. To think all these things were hidden from me—my favourite artist, Kandinsky, the beautiful things I love and poetry. I was robbed. I cannot believe it. I will not be robbed now, because I went in there and found it for myself because I love the arts with a passion. My daughter was brought up with a camera. She went on to get awards with her photography, with her business and then with her education. I worked hard and I feel proud. I did not need to be able to write or spell. I had to be good with people in my job, and I was. I loved my bosses, I liked the people I worked with and I stayed with them for many years to give my daughter that private education, which means everything. If you are educated, the doors are open, your world is opened. Books and poetry are wonderful things. I do read.

I was reading the newspaper the other week, and I do associate with and relate to these people. Here in this newspaper it talks about $50 million in stolen wages. I feel I can relate to them

because I worked from age 13 to 18 for no wages, for nothing, isolated out there at Vaucluse. People say, 'You've got to move on.' I know that myself. I do move on; I work. My solace in life is to get out and work until I drop, and that is what I do. I have done 10-hour shifts, where I do 10 hours for four days and have the other days off. I just work. To me, when you work you can go to this lovely gallery, you can buy this beautiful poetry book or you can do an extra course with the special kids. I am looking at one at the moment I want to do with special needs kids, so I can go on further. I have half finished my auslan course. I am deaf in one ear.

I am nervous and upset. You hear my words, and the words of these men and women here today, but I do not know if you really feel our pain or if you really know where we have come from, where we have been and how very hard it has been for us. I ask for education for these men and women who still cannot read or write or spell, and for counselling. There must some good counsellors, surely. We get a lot of bad counsellors and a lot of good teachers—there is good and bad in everything. There must be some out there—you can talk to people like those last two ladies—that could understand or connect or relate and if it was in a house people would go there, or whatever. I think these men and women deserve it and I am one of them. I am afraid I am very tough. I am crying here today but I am one hell of a tough woman. I have gotten out there and I have just worked. I put my daughter through school and she is the most gorgeous person. I only have one child. My marriage was for 17 years but my husband—we were two workaholics married to each other, and he travelled the world—is married to his job but we are still good friends. We were married for 17 years and we consequently have the most beautiful daughter, Elizabeth. We are so proud, and I am so proud she had a private education, went to university and had all the wonderful things that children, men and women should have.

As for us, I do not know. We have this wonderful thing that should have been here a long time ago for these men and women here. That last lady cannot even read to get on a bus. Do people have any understanding of how that must be? You cannot even get on a bus because you do not know how to read. When I left Vaucluse at 18—I know the names of these people; we are not allowed to say who, and it is in my file anyway—do you know not one welfare person or anybody came out? I went with these three girls and flatted. I did not even know how to get a bus. I used to walk up Bondi Road. I did not know how to manage money; I just knew I had that job and I had to hang on to it. That job was my freedom: 'If I work hard and show up every day, I'll have that job and it means I can pay my rent. It means I can eat. It means everything.' It meant my freedom. I was out of those places—it just meant freedom. But when you are not shown the outside world how do you react to it? Thank goodness for the three girls I was with. I thought: 'This is what we do. Each night one of us can cook. I can learn quickly,' and I knew what was expected of me. Thank God that to this day they are still my friends. I was 18 then and now I am 53, so it is quite amazing.

I was very scared. I did not have any experience of how to function in the outside world—in a normal society after being institutionalised for so long—or how to act like a regular person. I had no birthdays and no pretty dresses. Nothing you could ever do on this committee today—although I hope you do something for these men and women—will ever give me back my childhood, my teen years. But I like who I am and I like who I became. I like my morals and my principles and my ethics because I live by them. I am proud, and Elizabeth, my darling, be proud of me. I do hope you help us. I think we deserve education, I think we deserve counselling and I think these men and women are pretty remarkable people. Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you, Ms Fraser.

Ms Fraser—I do have some things written here but I am not going to go on and on; I will just talk human rights. We are all human beings and no matter what colour, religion or nationality we should all be treated the same. I have a lot written down but I will not say any more. I am just glad to be here and to be a part of CLAN and to be with people who are like me. We are getting on with our lives. I think I am just glad to be alive. Some of my friends are dead—they have suicided—and I am here for my daughter, and for me. Thank you.

CHAIR—Ms Fraser, we have heard in the hearings we have had throughout the country, and read from the submissions we have been provided with, that a number of people who were raised in institutions went straight out of the institutions into a relationship and married life. Then in their 30s and early 40s they started to question what happened to them. Is that what happened to you or did you start earlier than that?

Ms Fraser—No, I handled it much earlier because I was with these foster parents and I was told that my father had just been killed in a hit-and-run. I was 12. I basically turned off. My father was the only sort of love I had ever known. He had visited me in the orphanages and he was really the only hope or the only thing of any sort that I had. It was like I just turned off. I shut down. I was sobbing at his grave. They just took me back to the foster parents; nothing was said. I cannot put it into words. You just live to survive. You do not know what is going to happen to you the next day. Are you going to be in this orphanage or go to that foster parent? There is uncertainty in everything. I always had my bag packed because I thought I was just moving along. You just go to the next place. You do not know what is going to happen. You do not know whether you will get bashed there. You live in a state of fear and terror. I said to a friend the other day: 'I can't smile. I have never smiled.' She said that when you do not smile you lose the muscles. I never knew as a child or a teenager to smile. I very rarely smile. I do not have much to smile about, actually.

Yes, I questioned it a long time ago. I turned off when my father was killed. I found out only last year that my mother had died. They handed me the death certificate. I am still dealing with that. I saw her four times when I was in the orphanage. She had remarried. I have a sister who was in another orphanage but I have seen her only twice in my life. She is much older than me. I do not know her. Her name is Shirley. That is about all I know. She was in one orphanage and I was in this other one. We both had the same mother. I found out last year that my mother was dead. They handed me the death certificate at the births, deaths and marriages office. I am still dealing with that but you have to move on. Everyone has to deal with their grief in their own way, as we have to. I deal with it by just getting on with it. I do not think about this every day, but sometimes it is like every day—there is Father's Day and Mother's Day, which everyone takes for granted. I never had a nice Dad to hug or a Mum to kiss or special times when my daughter was born. I never had any parents at my wedding or for the birth of my beautiful daughter. All these treasured things, the most important things in your life, I had nobody there. I had just me and my husband and his family. I am very lucky that I have such a beautiful daughter. I know I keep repeating it but she is a treasure and the apple of my eye, and an absolute joy in my heart, and I have the good man I did marry from a good family. We are still friends. We had this treasured beautiful person. Thank God she got a good private education and now she is on to university. She is a remarkable woman.

I questioned this a long time ago and it does hit you. As you get older, to my age, you do look back because you think of all the things you have missed. Men and women like me look back and realise the extent of what they have lost. Everyone takes for granted a mum, a dad, a good family and to be centred and focused. We do not have any of that. We are as scattered as peahens, as you can imagine. How can we help it? We are emotional cripples. I just hope that these men and women can get help. I know that work is the only way for me to deal with things: throw yourself into work, forget about it, give it 100 per cent. I just do not know what else to say; that is all I can say.

CHAIR—Thank you for that.

Senator MURRAY—Ms Fraser, did St Catherine's Orphanage have both boys and girls?

Ms Fraser—It was just girls.

Senator MURRAY—How many?

Ms Fraser—I think there were probably about 150. It was quite a big orphanage on the Hawkesbury River.

Senator MURRAY—What about the Bidura Girls State Orphanage?

Ms Fraser—The Bidura girls home was a state home that was in Glebe.

Senator MURRAY—How many were there?

Ms Fraser—I am not sure because I was only there for a while and then I ran away. I was not there long enough. I was there for about a month. It was like a place where people went through, waiting to be placed in other orphanages or into foster homes. There was no schooling or that; you just got up—it was all regimented. When I was there, looking at the dormitories, I think there were not that many; there looked to be only about 100 to me. It did not look like many. It was where people went while they were waiting. I had come from a foster home to there and was waiting to be placed in another orphanage. From Bidura I ended going up to Newcastle orphanage, and then I went to work as a domestic.

Senator MURRAY—How many were at Newcastle?

Ms Fraser—I am not sure; it was much bigger than Bidura. To be honest with you, Senator Murray, I could not say.

Senator MURRAY—A couple of hundred, or more than a hundred?

Ms Fraser—More than a hundred.

Senator MURRAY—We ask these questions about how many people were in individual institutions because it is very hard to get a picture as to the numbers of people affected by this vile treatment. It just helps form the picture. Let us turn to the question of education. You heard the responses from the earlier witnesses. Is there anything you can add to the questions and

answers they gave about the sorts of services that could be provided to improve the education of people who were disadvantaged, who did not get an education, who are mature adults from an institutional background?

Ms Fraser—I do not know what you are going to do, Senator Murray, but I hope it will be something. That poor lady cannot even get a bus. At least I can read. I cannot spell properly.

Senator MURRAY—Would you go to tech?

Ms Fraser—I go to tech regardless. Many years ago when I was young I put myself into Dover Heights to learn how to read. I did it myself so that I could read. I read fluently but I cannot add up or spell. In the work I was doing for 17 years, as I kept my job that long there, I had to be good with people and have people skills. Thank goodness I like all sorts of people and I am good with people. I went on further to contract work, looking after a girl with epilepsy. I put myself through tech two nights a week to get my teachers aide—special needs—certificate. I put myself through TAFE again to get my first aid certificate. Then I put myself through TAFE again to get further. I will get there. I will never be an academic, but at least I will be able to read, write and spell.

It must be awful for that lady who was here just a moment ago, and many like her, who cannot even write their names when they have to fill out forms. I have been through that, when you have to fill something out and you think you cannot spell something, but I always found little ways around it or made a joke of it. But it is very embarrassing. Let's face it, every day there are forms that you have to fill in. My daughter helps me sometimes if I need help, but I force myself; I am that sort of person. I do not know, Senator Murray, but these men and women desperately need to read, write and spell. I do not write off counselling. I think that if you can get it out of you, face the devil and move on, it is a better thing than keeping it inside you, where it festers into cancer or ulcers or into other behavioural patterns, like drinking or whatever else people do. In my life, I have always faced things front on. I think if you can face it and get through it, you are a better person for it. But everyone has different ways of dealing with things. Some people would like one on one, I suppose. Some people are better in a classroom situation, where they feel they are not so singled out. I do not know how we are going to address that. But I think that education is a really big issue. I could not help my daughter with her homework. She went to a private school and you can imagine the high standard. I could not help her at all. I could not help her one little bit with her homework. As a parent, I could not help her one bit.

Senator MURRAY—Ms Fraser, with respect to your background, were you and your sister placed in orphanages because of a broken home?

Ms Fraser—I have never known. On my mother's death certificate, it looked like she drank. It had 'cirrhosis of the liver'. I do not know. I know that she was a very beautiful woman. I saw her three times. I know that she married twice. I do not really know my sister. I have only met her twice. Her name is Shirley.

Senator MURRAY—And your father; do you know anything about his background?

Ms Fraser—My dad was from a big family, I believe. My dad used to come up and do the gardens in the orphanage there, so he could visit me. When he visited me, he would do landscape

gardening. He used to do all the rockeries and it was good because he could visit me. While he did work for the nuns in the orphanage—he did all the landscape gardening—I could see my dad and my dad would visit me. He was the only love I ever knew in my life as a child. When he died, it was so devastating because it was as though all hope and everything had gone and that was it. I just died with him. I shut my emotions. I did not cry. I never cried for years. I remember the foster parents who used to bash me. Do you know what? It is amazing how you can be a person sitting there, flesh and blood, and you do not feel it. You can be hit and punched and you are so traumatised and tuned out to it all. I do not know, Senator Murray. I only met her twice. I do not know why we were put in different orphanages.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Ms Fraser.

Proceedings suspended from 2.04 p.m. to 2.39 p.m.

KELLY, Mrs Cheryl Anne (Private Capacity)

CHAIR—I call the committee to order. I welcome Mrs Cheryl Kelly and her husband. You are appearing today in a private capacity and your comments will be on the public record. The committee prefers evidence to be heard in public but evidence may also be taken in camera. I understand that you have received information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses and evidence. Is that correct?

Mrs Kelly—Yes, I have.

CHAIR—The committee has before it your submission. I now invite you to make an opening presentation to be followed by questions from the committee.

Mrs Kelly—I will ask you to bear with me—I read faster than my mouth works.

CHAIR—Bear in mind that we do have a copy of your submission so you do not need to read out. We have all read it.

Mrs Kelly—I entered care originally at 18 months. I separated from my siblings and was given to the people whom I would come to know and love as my parents. After seven years an adoption consent was obtained from my birth mother. DOCS used this document to blackmail my foster parents into informing me of my unnatural status within my family, refusing to allow the adoption to proceed until full disclosure. My parents objected strenuously to this as they knew me well and knew that this information, given without the security of a completed adoption, would absolutely destroy me. They were right; I became extremely difficult to manage, placing great strain on my family. It was at this time that DOCS realised that they had lost my signed adoption consent forms. Despite the clear guidelines of the Adoption Act 1965 they decided to obtain a second set of papers from my birth mother. On advice of the then RDO of Mudgee, my birth mother was advised not to sign the consent forms and to attempt to have me restored to her care. For some reason—despite my birth mother's living situation being far from ideal, my objections and those of my parents—within three weeks I was restored to her care.

Approximately 10 days after the restoration, having endured continuous snipes and punishment from my birth mother for my 'snobby attitude', I was raped by a family member and I ran away. I slept in a cane field with snakes and spiders until a school friend's mum took me in. I stayed there until I was returned to Sydney. I was told that I would be returning to my family and fully expected to see them waiting for me at the airport. I was greeted instead by a district officer and taken immediately to Minali Remand Centre. To say that I was confused and hurt does not begin to cover what I was feeling. I was sent to live at Raith on 20 November 1979, aged nine years and seven months, and entered probably the most difficult period of my life—difficult because from that moment until I ran away from Raith eight years later I had to learn to become invisible and totally emotionally self-sufficient. On that first day there had been some confusion about what my name was—they think they were confused! I had my birth certificate waved in my face while the manager yelled at me, 'This is the name you were born with so this is your name. Now get out of my office.'

I had spent the majority of my life being loved, adored and perhaps a little overindulged and suddenly all of that had been taken away—even my name. I endured eight years of insidious and soul-destroying emotional abuse. I felt like I was being punished for destroying my family. It is not so much what happened, but the way it made me feel. My foster mother visited and phoned me religiously never once missing a visit, despite the fact that every single trip would leave her traumatised to the point where she had to bring someone with her to drive home because she cried all the way. My dad was hurt so deeply that today, almost 25 years later, he still keeps me at arm's-length emotionally. I cannot say I blame him; to him I represent nothing but pain and trouble. My brothers find it difficult to talk to me because they do not know me any more. My feelings for them have not changed; I still love them all dearly. I feel like I am watching my family from outside a fishbowl—able to see their family life but never able to actually touch it or be part of it. Needless to say, all of this has left its mark on me. I now have children of my own to whom I can offer nothing in the way of family. I do not know how to parent them properly. I am mildly agoraphobic and suffer an anxiety disorder that prevents me from travelling on public transport. I have nightmares about my time at Raith and find that my everyday dealings are coloured by my past.

I have suffered and still battle an eating disorder. I have terrible trouble making and keeping friends, as most people are intimidated or put off by my distrust of them. I cannot get my driver's licence because I am terrified that I will fail the test. To me, a failure like that subconsciously represents a major life change. I cannot hold down a job because I feel that making a simple mistake at work could have life-changing effects. Logically I know that this is not the case, but I am helpless to fight these demons and I am terrified that at any moment my life will once again be changed forever.

I have had to enlist the help of my 14-year-old daughter to teach me how to hug and love my children. In the back of my mind there is a voice that tells me that children do not get hugs, that it is dangerous to hug children and that DOCS are just waiting for me to slip up so they can take my children from me and destroy my life yet again. I have yet to even contemplate dealing with the sexual abuse. I cannot even sue DOCS, despite having in my possession written admissions to the loss of the papers, because it took me so long to find my feet in the world and to become strong enough to reopen this wound and deal with it. I find myself out of time, and I am apparently not mentally disturbed enough to have the statute set aside—at least, that is how I appear on the outside.

There is one more voice I would like you to hear. I live with this voice every day—and I am going to lose it when I do this. My name is Susan Margaret Moore. I am nine years old. I live inside Cheryl, tucked away so I cannot be hurt again. She is me and I am her. I love and miss my family a lot. No-one listened to me and my life was torn apart. I hope you will listen now and do something to help put right the things that were so wrong. I will skip the next bit and I will go to questions.

CHAIR—Thank you. How many children do you have?

Mrs Kelly—Four.

CHAIR—How old are they?

Mrs Kelly—I have four girls, aged 14, eight—sorry, 14, 10, eight and six. I cannot believe I forgot one.

CHAIR—You say in your submission:

I find I have immense problems today with parenting.

Mrs Kelly—Yes.

CHAIR—Do you want to expand on what that means to you?

Mrs Kelly—It is particularly in the discipline area. For parenting my children up until the age of nine, the age up until which I was parented properly, I have methods using my foster parents as an example and know what is acceptable and what is not. After the age of nine my only example is the abuse that I suffered at the children's home. I find myself not knowing how to deal with my children now. How do you discipline children? How do you deal with them when they are rude? I cannot do to them what was done to me; it is not right. So I have no idea what I am doing.

CHAIR—What does that practically mean? Does it mean that the kids have got away with things? Do you get your husband to deal with it?

Mrs Kelly—It means that I defer to my husband a lot because he had something of a normal upbringing. I defer to his judgment. I find myself unable to deal with situations if he is not there.

CHAIR—Have you sought counselling?

Mrs Kelly—Yes, I have.

CHAIR—How long have you—

Mrs Kelly—For 18 months.

CHAIR—For the last 18 months?

Mrs Kelly—No. Actually, I stopped counselling when my last daughter was born.

CHAIR—How long have you been in counselling, then?

Mrs Kelly—I had been in counselling for 18 months, but that was six years ago. They wanted to move to the next phase, which was dealing with the sexual abuse, and I am just not ready to do that.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Senator KNOWLES—You say that you finished your counselling when your last child was born. Have you done anything about parenting classes or sought advice from an external source, even though your husband is obviously a huge support to you?

Mrs Kelly—I have actually sought advice from a friend of mine who was in a similar situation, having four daughters of similar ages and having come from a large family, a well respected family in Melbourne. We spend six to seven hours a day on the phone, two or three times a week, talking about parenting issues. Other than that, I am a little frightened to go to an authority figure, such as someone at parent effectiveness training or something like that.

Senator KNOWLES—Why are you afraid of that?

Mrs Kelly—I am frightened to admit that I am having trouble, because in my mind that opens the door for doctors to come and get them.

Senator KNOWLES—But you have admitted that you have trouble.

Mrs Kelly—Yes.

Senator KNOWLES—And the children are still with you and they are now getting older—

Mrs Kelly—And they help me.

Senator KNOWLES—Yes, they are helping you. Maybe the fear is well founded but do you feel that in the right circumstance you would be able to actually go and speak to somebody about your parenting skills? You say to them you really just want to get better; you do not have to admit anything.

Mrs Kelly—If I could have some kind of guarantee that they were not going to take away my children or take action that could lead to my children being taken away, then perhaps that would be possible. I am just terrified.

Senator KNOWLES—I can understand why. Yet, when one looks at it in another light at the chance of those children being taken away from a loving family, as is your situation where your husband is obviously, as I say, very supportive, you would certainly hope that would not happen today.

Mrs Kelly—One would have thought, looking at the situation of my family too, that there was no absolutely need to have taken us away—but they did.

Senator KNOWLES—Honestly, one would have hoped that that would not have ever happened. But if that is a real problem to you and if there is a way in which that can be addressed—it is a bit like the literacy and numeracy thing—do you think that would help you?

Mrs Kelly—Possibly, with support. To my way of thinking, the government took on the role of my parent. Being a parent now, I say there is not a hope that I would chuck my kid out on the day it turned 18 and say, 'That's it. I'm finished with you.' I would be around to help them with their children, so why isn't the government there to help me with mine? I cannot ring you in the

middle of the night, when my baby has been screaming for the last six hours, and say, 'I need to get away for a day. Could you take my baby?' I have nothing.

Senator KNOWLES—You say you have difficulty in forming relationships and friendships. Why do you think that is?

Mrs Kelly—My husband actually said once that I have very high expectations of people and that is perhaps why I have trouble. I have thought about that and I have realised that I only have one expectation of people: I expect them to hurt me. That is it.

Senator KNOWLES—You also said that—what was the phrase you used about a lot of your friendships not lasting?

Mrs Kelly—I have difficulty making friendships because people find it difficult to deal with my distrustful attitude.

Senator KNOWLES—Yes, that is right; it was your distrustful attitude.

Mrs Kelly—I do not trust people.

Senator KNOWLES—So even people outside 'authority'—

Mrs Kelly—Every single person on the face of the planet has the potential to hurt me and hurt me badly, so I do not trust anyone.

Senator KNOWLES—Was it part of your counselling to try to enhance your belief in people?

Mrs Kelly—The counselling was actually instigated because I was having terrible trouble with an anxiety disorder. Even going to the bus stop in the morning with my children to put them on the bus was enough to give me a panic attack.

Senator KNOWLES—Because you thought they would never come back?

Mrs Kelly—I think that is probably tied in with it, yes. So that is how I ended up in counselling. Within the first two or three sessions it completely left that sphere and entered into me and the mess I am in inside.

Senator KNOWLES—If you have counselling provided to deal with the ongoing issues excluding the sexual abuse, would that still be helpful for you?

Mrs Kelly—If it was free and freely available, yes. I do not see why I should have to struggle to pay for counselling when I did not do this to myself.

Senator KNOWLES—Do you think that you would be able to look the sexual abuse thing in the face in that circumstance?

Mrs Kelly—Yes. It was a really tragic time to be trying to look at dealing with the sexual abuse when I had just given birth to my last child. That was certainly not an area I wanted to open while I had a child that demanded my every moment. When you open a wound like that, you need to be able to dedicate all of your time and all of your energy to yourself. I could not do that, so I did not open it—it was safer not to.

Senator HUMPHRIES—I just wanted to ask you what value, if any, you would place on some kind of formal apology from DOCS or other organisations that mistreated you.

Mrs Kelly—I do not know that you can apologise. A piece of paper is not going to do it. You cannot give me back my childhood and you cannot give me back my parents, and just saying sorry does not quite cut it. Really, the reason that all of this ended up happening to me was a stupid clerical error. To my way of thinking, if this had been a medical mistake, I could sue but, because it was a clerical error and because it took me so long to get normal after it, I am out of time. I do not have any rights. I do not think that is fair. A written apology and the ability to sue, perhaps.

Now, before anyone says, 'Will money fix it?', no, money will not fix it. I am always going to live with this and my children will always live with this. Their children will live with it too—to a smaller degree, I grant you, but it does carry on. To be able to sue, for me, represents the ability to give myself financial stability so that my children never have to worry about having their home taken away from them and the ability for me to stand on my own two feet without relying on him.

Senator MURRAY—When people get hurt in accidents—industrial or motor—and are incapacitated, they go to court and they can get large payouts. Commonly the payout is calculated to enable people to pay for specialist medical care and being properly looked after. It is not compensation in the sense that you are getting a reward of money; it is money that is going to be used for essential services. In my mind, people who have been through your situation and the other people we have heard as witnesses are in need of essential services, because what was done to them was not their fault. If you were able to have continual availability of free services for your particular needs, would that affect your view of compensation at all?

Mrs Kelly—To a degree, yes. It would be nice for me and my children to be able to draw on those services as we need. But, from a financial aspect, if we are discussing what the money would be used for, it would provide for my children the stability of family—a family home, whatever—that I cannot provide them because that was taken from me. Had things worked out differently, I would have my family, I would have support and my children would have somewhere to be and somewhere to go if something happened to me. As it stands, they do not have anything. I am placing a lot of emphasis, perhaps, on bricks and mortar.

Senator MURRAY—Let me see if I am getting my interpretation right. Are you saying you will not fear DOCS taking away your kids if you have—

Mrs Kelly—They know I can provide for them.

Senator MURRAY—money, because they do not take kids from people with money? Is that what you are saying?

Mrs Kelly—No, I am not saying that at all. But I know that, if I can provide for them properly, there is less of a chance that they will be taken or split up in the event of my death.

Senator MURRAY—But you and your husband provide for them properly now, don't you?

Mrs Kelly—I cannot work.

Senator MURRAY—But you have a house; he has a job.

Mrs Kelly—At the moment, yes. That could be gone tomorrow, and that could be enough to set a spiral in motion that could have me lose my children.

Senator MURRAY—And that is the central fear in your life.

Mrs Kelly—That is very much the fear in my life. I am not a criminal type but, God help me, if someone tries to take my kids, I will kill them.

Senator MURRAY—I can understand that. Listening to you personally, as opposed to your children, therapy and counselling needs to be continually available. There is question of how it is provided. You tell us that you are a person who fears open spaces, getting on buses and that sort of thing. In other words, the service would have to be accessible to you or near you. Do you think that the counselling service needs to be available as a home visit service rather than a service that you go to?

Mrs Kelly—Yes, I do. There are many reasons for that. In my personal case, transport is but one of them. Babysitting is a huge issue. We are talking about people who have got no-one to leave their children with. What do we do with our children while we are in counselling?

Senator MURRAY—I must stress that we cannot jump ahead of ourselves because we are still hearing evidence, but let us assume the committee recommended to the government that much more money is needed in the mental health area to provide more specialised therapy and counselling for these people. It would not suit your needs if it was simply available in a centralised situation like a hospital.

Mrs Kelly—No, I do not think so.

Senator MURRAY—You would need a home care service.

Mrs Kelly—We did have enormous problems when we did the counselling. My husband was then in the Air Force. We would have to organise a special meeting with the mental health service so that I could turn up on a Thursday night after hours because I had to wait for him to come home from work so he could have the children while I had counselling. I could not get there during the day; it had to be done at night.

Senator MURRAY—Something you said in response to Senator Humphries struck home with something that an earlier witness had said—that is, it is easiest to deal with these things once the children are grown up and you have time to devote to yourself. In your case, when the children are old enough they will not be able to be taken away from you. That is true.

Mrs Kelly—It is safe to open it up then.

Senator MURRAY—Do you think your anxiety will naturally diminish then—

Mrs Kelly—No.

Senator MURRAY—or are you going to remain a very anxious grandmother?

Mrs Kelly—More than likely. By the time I get to that stage it will have become the habit of a lifetime. It is very hard to break those kinds of habits.

Senator MURRAY—What assistance do you need now? What would you say to the committee are the few things that would help you in your personal situation? What would you answer?

Mrs Kelly—If I were to be rude?

Senator MURRAY—You can be as rude as you like. Other people have.

Mrs Kelly—I would say, 'Give me back my family.' I know it is impossible.

Senator MURRAY—Are you talking about your foster family?

Mrs Kelly—Yes, I am.

Senator MURRAY—Have you made an effort to contact them?

Mrs Kelly—Yes, we are in constant contact. They would have been here today but there is a parliamentary luncheon for surveyors and that is where they are.

Senator MURRAY—What you are saying is not rude. It is just impossible, isn't it?

Mrs Kelly—It is impossible and perhaps a tad cheeky.

Senator MURRAY—Now give me a serious answer. I know that matters to you, but give me something we can bite on.

Mrs Kelly—I think counselling should be freely available, without any means testing or hurdles to jump, and there should be parenting support. CLAN has been doing a fabulous job, as much as it can without professionals. We are basically just a whole heap of people who have suffered the same thing and can relate to each other. But just knowing that that is there if I need it is helpful.

Senator MURRAY—The Child Migrants Trust gave a very clear message to this committee in another inquiry. They said, essentially, that people from a particular environment and background with experiences they each could understand were best serviced from within a specialised organisation which dealt in that exclusively. The Child Migrants Trust is managed

and run by people who are professionally trained social workers who have chosen to devote themselves to that area. CLAN, as you know, is not that kind of organisation. CLAN is an organisation of ordinary folk. It is not run by professional health workers. If the committee were to consider recommending the provision of services through an organisation like CLAN, would you see that as being a one-stop shop with a social worker, a counsellor, a parenting person and an educational person—with all those services being able to be found through there? How would you see it for yourself?

Mrs Kelly—I think that would be a fabulous idea.

Senator MURRAY—How would you use that?

Mrs Kelly—I would make use of the parent effectiveness training or the parent support and I would make use of the counselling. I would also make use of the other members; it is nice to have a shoulder to cry on.

Senator MURRAY—A kind of central, one-stop shop?

Mrs Kelly—Pretty much.

Senator MURRAY—But you would not go to it, would you?

Mrs Kelly—I would not be able to on my own. If I could organise to be taken then yes, I could go.

Senator MURRAY—Or for people to come out.

Mrs Kelly—Or for people to come to me, yes.

Senator MOORE—I want to follow up from Senator Knowles and Senator Murray. Senator Knowles asked about your concern over using existing parent effectiveness skills training and you told us about this very deep fear you have that there would always be this threat, if you were to use that. Senator Murray was saying that if that kind of support were offered under the umbrella of an organisation which already had gained your trust, that would give you the opening. Is that right?

Mrs Kelly—Provided there was some kind of guarantee that they would not be going to DOCS or putting into place anything that could end up taking my children.

Senator MOORE—So it would have to be under the auspices of an organisation that you could feel comfortable with and from which you felt no threat?

Mrs Kelly—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—Can I just follow that up with you. A very important precondition that many child migrants—not all—laid down for the services they wanted was that it was not the government, because they did not trust them anymore, and it was not the churches, because they did not trust them anymore. Some do trust the churches and go back there, and some do trust the

government and go to the government health services, but a lot of them just want to deal with an independent agency. To give the example again, CLAN is very independent. In your circumstances, does it matter if it is church or charity based or government based, or does it need to be a CLAN type place for trust to be there?

Mrs Kelly—I have actually ended up going back to a government agency, which was called North-West Medical Health or something like that. I was lucky that I could establish a rapport with the counsellor I had. I did make clear to him that I was terrified that any report that he wrote could be taken and used to take my kids. Church agencies are not relevant to me. I was in a state home so I have no problem with the church—in fact, I hate to say this but I actually owe the church a lot because it was them that made the difference to me through my attending a Catholic school. That is what made the difference with me, so I feel I owe the church. They never abused me; they never did anything wrong—they actually made me who I am. So I have no problem going to church, and I swallowed my fear and went to the government. I guess it depends how desperate you are.

Senator MURRAY—Just to explore it a little more, what was clear from the child migrants inquiry is that people wanted choice. The answers were different from the witnesses: some wanted very good government services, some liked the idea of the church who had harmed them actually helping them and others wanted something very independent. Would that seem a sensible proposition?

Mrs Kelly—The only thing I could suggest for that range of choice to be affordable would be something similar to a Medicare card, where we could go to the practitioner of our choice and have the services billed that way. It is a thought.

Senator KNOWLES—I have one question, Mrs Kelly, and please tell me to mind my own business if you choose not to answer. What was the trigger that made you trust your husband and take him into your life when you put up the shield to keep everyone else out?

Mrs Kelly—You have already heard this. The fact is that I do not. I do not trust him. I trust that he will provide and I trust that he will look after our children, but I do not trust him at all. I do not trust anyone. In fact, there are times when I do not even trust myself. It is a very odd relationship.

Senator KNOWLES—Thank you.

Senator MURRAY—It sounds to me as if he is a very good man.

Mrs Kelly—He is pretty good. I trained him well!

CHAIR—Thanks very much, Mr and Mrs Kelly.

[3.11 p.m.]

CAVE, Ms Janette Mary (Private capacity)

McLEARY, Mr William (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome. You both are appearing today in a private capacity and your comments will be on the public record. The committee prefers evidence to be heard in public but evidence may also be taken in camera. I understand that you have received information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses and evidence. Is that correct?

Ms Cave—Yes.

CHAIR—The committee has before it your submission. I now invite you to make an opening presentation, to be followed by questions from the committee.

Ms Cave—First, can I say thank you for having this inquiry. There are hundreds of thousands of people who will be grateful, especially if it comes to something. My name is Jan Cave and I am the person who wrote the book—even though it is written in the name of Kate Shayler—I submitted with other documents. I wanted to tell you that the reason I had to choose a pen name is that my brother at the age of 53 is still so ashamed of and traumatised by being in an institution that he does not want anybody to know that that is his situation. His wife found out and he is extremely angry that she knows about it. That is why I have to write using a pen name. My brother cannot even talk about the happy family we came from before we went to live in the institution, because he is still so upset about it.

Since my book was released, I have been contacted by many other children from homes and children of children from homes, explaining that they now understand what is wrong with their parents, what their parents went through and so on. Because I have already put a submission from the book in to the committee, I would just like to summarise some points that should be evident in the book anyway and then talk about how life was after the institution and the effects that it had on me and finally say something about files.

The first point I would like to make about being in care is that children were given no help in dealing with the trauma that sent them to the home in the first place. For example, my mother had died. She was the centre of my universe and nobody tried to explain that, comfort me or help me come to terms with that. In my mind, I always understood as I was growing up that my mother would come back one day. I knew the word ‘dead’ had applied to her but I did not understand exactly what dead meant. Given all the stories of all the people who have talked today and of those who are too scared to talk, there is a lot of hurt that has never been dealt with and that we need to come to terms with, and it is probably coming out in our middle age or our old age.

Another problem in care was that the buildings we grew up in were unsuitable. They were architecturally marvellous castles, but growing up in huge cold empty spaces that did not resemble family homes at all was quite traumatising in itself for little children. When we go back

to these places as adults we get very tearful and emotional because the rooms are not as huge as we felt they were because we stood alone as four-year-old children in those rooms.

The adult to child ratio was inappropriate for individual care. We all lost any sense of ourselves as people who mattered to anyone. My partner, Dave, who is here today, grew up in Burnside too and he lost his individuality to the point where he was known by a number, not a name. He still tells people he is number 247 when he meets them—not all the time. Losing a sense of self has enormous implications for people as adults, especially when they were not prepared for the world that they had to go and present that self to—involving jobs, social relationships, the works.

As everybody here today has illustrated, the staff were often totally unsuitable for the jobs that they were given, so there were beatings and children being dragged about by their ears. We used to feel quite proud if our scabs had healed up under our ears, because it meant that we had managed to dodge the matron for long enough for the splits under there to heal.

My friend Bill McLeary also grew up in the institution that I grew up in and there was cruelty to the boys in the boys' home. Bill had a friend whom he used to walk about with, with his hand around his shoulder. They were good mates. Boys do that, don't they? It is perfectly normal but Bill's house parent was homophobic and he thought that this meant that Bill and his friend were up to no good and so Bill and his friend were forced to fight each other physically until one of them knocked the other one unconscious. Bill won—

Mr McLeary—I don't think anyone won.

Ms Cave—Bill only won the fight, but, as Bill says, nobody won anything. I do not believe there is any excuse for that sort of cruelty. I lived in the home next door to the administration office where the superintendent lived and if he had turned around in his leather swivel chair and looked out the window he could have seen beatings and abuse going on just about any time he turned around. There was a matron who hit girls with the bristle end of scrubbing brushes and dragged girls around by the soft part under their arms—the bit that you try to get rid of when you are middle aged. Unsuitable staff was a huge issue, as everyone else's story tells too.

For me personally and also, I suspect, for a lot of other women—and, probably, men—staff were not trained to deal with disclosures of sexual abuse. As I describe in the book, I was abused by my father on a visiting day and systematically abused after that and I played out a disclosure but the staff did not know how to deal with that and did not believe that it had happened. I was labelled a filthy little wretch and no other children were allowed to play with me, because it might be contagious. Because I was four or five years old, I believed them, and that is how I grew up thinking of myself. I tried to be a very good girl at all times so that I could stay out of trouble, so that people would not see this filthy little wretch that was under this very good, well-behaved girl. Staff should have been trained to deal with sexual abuse when it was disclosed. I cannot speak about sexual abuse by staff, because it did not happen to me, but I will speak for people who have written to me and whom I have met at reunions at the institution. They have told me that boys were sexually abused at Burnside and girls were too. My brother told me that he was not sexually abused but he knew never to be in the bathroom alone with the housemaster and he knew never to turn his back if he was not clothed.

Nothing at Burnside modelled normal family life or human relationships. It was two women looking after 30 children. I cannot speak for boys in that respect, but we never saw normal human relationships happening. That has enormous implications for people going out into the real world and, as other people have said, it has enormous implications for parenting. The poor adult-child ratio meant that if we chose to we could be horrible bullies. There is research about bullying coming out now. We bullied each other. I think we were playing out our anger and frustration and trying to make other kids in the home feel less powerful than us. A lot of bullying went on.

I had a letter from the child of a girl I used to bully fearsomely—I am ashamed of it now. She said that her mother had all sorts of problems because of her upbringing in Burnside. I think that a lot of it was because we bullied her. There was never a staff member about and we could easily find a place to go and bully her. There was no staff member there to intervene and say, 'That's not the way you behave.' We were only behaving in the way they behaved to us. We were always told to be grateful for the care that we were given and that we were so lucky to be there, blah, blah, blah. 'Ungrateful wretch' is a term that I heard regularly.

As other people today have said, work was our main pastime. We did not have childhood fun and games—maybe 10 minutes, before tea was ready or something—and we did not really have a childhood. We learnt lots of silly rituals like standing outside the dining room holding out our hands to make sure that our nails were clean and our hair was combed. We began to wonder if we would be able to digest food if our hair was not tidy.

I read in your terms of reference that you are also looking at unsafe practices. In the work that we did continually there were many unsafe practices. One of these was the practice of sitting on the second floor windowsill of the castles cleaning the outside windows of the staff bedrooms and not being allowed to get down off the window ledge until they were perfectly clean. I was terrified of heights, but we were forced to do that kind of thing. Boys drove tractors around the farm and sometimes pinched them and drove them to other places.

We cleaned out grease traps from the kitchen sink. I did not realise that not everybody does that until a man came to my house. He came to clean out the grease traps and put all this protective stuff on—gloves and a mask—so he would not get germs from the grease. I asked him why he was putting on all that stuff, and he told me why. As girls we had to lift up big bags of coal and empty them into coal bins. We were covered in coal dust and breathing it in and so on. We had to chop up wood and pumpkins, and girls used to regularly chop bits off their fingers. Those were some of the unsafe practices.

I have to say that not everything was bad. During my time at Burnside they evaluated what they were doing and made some very significant changes. I think that I have benefited from those changes, although I was also damaged from the time I spent there before those changes were made. We were well fed, we were clothed and we always had a roof over our heads. Our basic medical, dental and optical needs were catered for. We were forced to go to school regularly, so we do not have the problems with education that some of the child welfare adults have now, and I am really thankful for that. The main thing I am thankful for is that Burnside had the courage to look at itself honestly and change. Obviously a lot of other institutions and government agencies needed to do that but did not.

Moving on to the subject of trying to be an adult in the real world, after I left Burnside, as other speakers have said about themselves, I was totally unprepared. I did not know how to use a phone, pay a bus fare or find out how you got from A to B on a bus or train or whatever. More to the point, I think, is that I did not know that I had the right to ask anybody for anything. I thought that I just had to always take a backstage role in the world and cope by myself and that I was not worthy of anybody's attention or help. In that context, Burnside sent me to my father, who tried to start abusing me again, and I think if they had dealt with the disclosure that I made when I was five years old it would have been quite different.

So I did not know that I had any right to control what happened to my body. I did not know how to say no to my father, so I resorted to physical violence and pushed him. I do not feel good about that today. I still struggle with feeling that my body is my own. I think I am very overprotective about it now, but if people back then when I was a teenager wanted to grope me in the train or whatever I would just take it because I did not know how to deal with it and I was not sure that I had the right to say, 'Get your bloody hands off me!' I still believed that I was a worthless, filthy wretch as well and that I had to keep up this image of, 'I am a perfectly well-behaved and gorgeous person,' so that nobody would understand what I was like inside. That affected relationships too, because I thought that all offers of friendship were just people being nice to me because I was so filthy and pathetic.

When I moved from one house to another I did not keep in touch with people, because I thought it would be a relief for them not to have to keep being nice to me anymore. So I lost friendships that could have been quite helpful and important. I had a social worker attached to me, but she died and she was not replaced by anybody, so there was no help coming from Burnside. I became suicidal and if I had known the right way to do it I would have. I went to throw myself under a bus but the bus driver smiled at me, so I could not do it. I just went home. I needed to find other ways of doing myself in. Then I realised that I did not want to die; I just did not want to be alive anymore. I think if I had met people who were selling drugs or alcohol or anything I would have gone down that road. But I did not meet any such people, fortunately.

People who have left Burnside and whom I have met since my book has been published have told me that boys who left Burnside had a park in Sydney where they used to meet and do drugs and alcohol to help them cope with life outside. That was straight after they left. They got into petty crime and many were arrested and served jail sentences for petty crime. Some are now alcoholics. Some have found communities that show them the love that they always deserved, and they are doing well. Some just vanish into the ether. I have struggled with depression in my adult life. This is not a commercial but it will appear to be one: I have written a sequel to *The Long Way Home* and it deals with a lot of the issues that I am trying to talk about now—and trying not to talk about as well. When I was writing that book and reliving my younger adult life, I went into a deep depression and had to go on—what do you call them?—antidepressants. They help you be coordinated and remember words.

The story of my adult life is a cautionary tale to all people who are suggesting psychologists may be the answer. I went to a male psychologist and, because of what I had learnt in my childhood, I was abused by the psychologist. So I think we need to be very careful about what standards we require of health workers. I will not say any more about that, but we need to be careful about which workers we use. I have had issues with depression. My friend, Bill McLeary, has had problems with social phobia that are directly related to his experience at

Burnside. That has meant that it is very hard for Bill to be in public and not get incredibly nervous and shake and so on. Bill also takes medication and he is happy to answer any questions that you might want to ask him—aren't you?

Mr McLeary—Yes.

Ms Cave—I have nearly finished. A lot of people have written to me about getting their lives together since they were in institutions. I always used to say, 'Why don't you write and get your file?' The psychologist I saw told me that I needed ego strengthening. Normally people get a good sense of who they are by their family stories, photos and so on. So he said, 'Why don't you get your file from Burnside? That will help you get a better sense of who you are and strengthen the ego, blah, blah, blah?' So I wrote to get my file. Getting my file was a devastating experience because of the paucity of information in the file. I had been a teacher for 20 years and I wrote more each year about every single child I taught than was written in the file covering 12 years of my life that I got from Burnside. So I do not think that files should be sent to people who have no support.

One of the people who have written to me—and I will finish with this—is a man called David. He was one of the people who responded to my book. He said, 'You know, I can hardly remember anything about my life in Burnside, but I know whatever there is is horrible and scary and I really do not know whether I want to remember.' So I said, 'Why don't you write and get your file?' He did, and I have his permission to read out to the committee what he wrote. You may want to put your fingers in your ears. He wrote:

So sorry to have taken so long to answer your letter as I have been waiting for my file to arrive from Burnside. Boy, what a farce and such a load of rubbish—164 pages of nothing but letters to and from my mother and the administration at Burnside. Nearly four months of anguished waiting for some form of information that would enlighten me about the lost 10 years there, but nothing. I have enclosed a copy of my reply to them. Boy, have a look at the title this bird in their office has given herself and then sends me a load of crap.

So he had 167 pages that only told him bad things about the one person in the world whom he loved and who loved him. He is a man who cannot talk about his experiences. I was encouraging him to write a submission to this inquiry but he is too traumatised. In another letter he says that he has thought long and hard about making a submission to this inquiry but he gets so traumatised just thinking about his childhood that he cannot. So I am pleased to be able to pass on that he too was a traumatised man. In his letter he said:

Christ, I am 63 years of age and all this hurt and crap is really coming out from somewhere deep inside my mind and lately I find myself getting very upset and crying over various things on the news.

Then he talks about the Governor-General who behaved so inappropriately about child abuse. He will never write his story—partly because he is only partly literate and partly because he believes that leaving sleeping dogs lie is the way to deal with your past. Obviously it is not, because it is starting to disturb him and upset him. He also says that he does not want to be part of this inquiry because if there is a change of government it will all come to nothing and then he would wonder why he bothered in the first place. So I really want to urge you to make this inquiry come to something and not do nothing.

CHAIR—Thank you, Ms Cave. Mr McLeary, do you want to say anything at this stage?

Mr McLeary—I cannot add anything, except to say that it all happened. Every type of abuse happened in Burnside. There was one time when I put my arm around my little mate. We used to play walking in each other's shadow. That is all it was: just walking in each other's shadow. It was a way of having physical contact. We were mates. We always stood in line together to get our tooth powder and we were in beds next to each other. To survive, you had to have a good mate. Because we were such good mates this bastard put us in the ring and we just had to knock the shit out of each other. I went back there looking for that guy and, if I could get him, I would knock his bloody head off, I tell you that.

Fortunately, I looked this guy up. I have a lovely lady now, who I live with. I have been through a bad marriage, through my fault. At Burnside an awful lot of shit happened—believe me, every type of abuse. For the slightest little thing you did you were made to go up to the dormitory, to your bed. You were made to put on your pyjama pants—I was anyway—and lie over the bed, ready for the punishment. You knew it was coming, but the only thing was that it took about six or seven hours sometimes to come. Then you would hear him walking up the bloody steps and down the bloody hall. He would have a double razor strop like this, and he took pleasure in belting your arse. We took pleasure in not trying to cry. The only satisfaction we got out of it was that we had a black and blue arse. It was a badge of honour in the bathrooms. You would get that for the slightest little thing.

You could not go to the toilet. You had to put your hand up. You could not speak. You had to stand there and say grace. Jan says the food was good or it was okay. It was shit when I was there. We grew our own vegetables. There was bloody stringy pumpkin, broad beans and broccoli. You might think that is all right today, but it was shit, believe me. If you did not eat it then, you got it the next bloody meal. If you threw it up in your plate, you had to eat it there and then. I stood there one day wanting to go to the toilet. They would not acknowledge me, and then they said grace and then I was sick. I have got diarrhoea running down my leg. Then I got thrashed because I have shit myself and they have got to clean it up.

My sister, who was my guardian, used to come and see me. They had visiting days once a month and you were allowed out every three months. She used to bring me up some lollies and chocolate cake with cream or whatever. When she saw the look on my face—we never got any of that sort of thing—she just gave the whole lot to me. She said, 'Here, love, take it.' I just wolfed half of it down. That night I went back and I was as sick as a dog. I did not realise this until I read my files: they were going off about my sister feeding me the wrong foods, because I would end up throwing it up.

The other thing I got from my files was about my father. Okay, he was a drunk; but he used to pay 25 shillings a week, up to 30 bob a week, for me in there. It cost nothing to feed me, believe me, because the food we had was crap and we grew it ourselves. It was just a slave labour sort of thing. From the time you got up in the morning you would go out and sweep all the paths. In the freezing cold winter you had bare feet. I never knew what a jumper was. You would be out there crying in the frost where no-one could see you, and then you would have to come up and polish the dormitory floors, and some arsehole would walk along with a dirty big tin of polish and just go splat, splat, splat with it. That used to piss us off because he would put it on so thick. You had to come through and rub it in and then the other teams behind would rub it off. It was just slave

labour. They were Nazis—that is all they were—and they destroyed my bloody life. In my life now, if any boss so much as looks at me the wrong way, I will knock their bloody head off, because I have got so much anger.

Ms Cave—Lucky he is his own boss now.

Mr McLeary—I have social phobia. One in 50 people has it. I cannot bloody control myself. I cannot go and have a cup of coffee. I shake like hell. It has affected all my career moves right through life. I cannot do anything. I threw a job in recently. In the new modern age we are using computers now, and I cannot even use a mouse because my hand shakes that much. I had all the credentials in the world, but I could not do it. So everyone else went ahead of me, and they did not understand what was going on. Then you get angry.

Senator KNOWLES—What sort of work have you been doing, Mr McLeary?

Mr McLeary—I am a carpenter. This was a government institution and we suddenly had to start using computers. With the new modern age, if you do not use a computer you are left for dead. You heard earlier on how people are uneducated or did not have the right education. If you feel that way, someone can put a computer in front of you and you cannot even log on. Then I got up, and they told me, 'You'll have training and everything.' I said, 'If and when I pass this thing, will I get my pay rise backdated like everyone else?' They said, 'Oh no, we can't do that.' I just said to the boss, 'You guys are just dumb and stupid,' and walked out. I ended up doing my job over it. I am a bloody good carpenter, too. What the hell, if you are good with your hands, has it got to do with your bloody education? I feel really bitter about it all. It affects everything. If affects your whole life—your kids, your marriage. It shits you off.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Ms Cave, you might have heard the expression earlier this afternoon 'victims of victims'. Do you have a feeling that the people who perpetrated these things, to you and other children in the place that you were in, were themselves victims of abusive childhoods? Do you have any evidence of that or any feeling about that?

Ms Cave—I think it is quite a dangerous question, because victims do not necessarily perpetrate abuse. We did not know any staff member as a human being. They were just matrons who never talked personally. So I would not have any idea at all if they were abused. People here in Burnside who before the war knew the most abusive matron I came across—who is dead now, thank goodness—said that she was a lovely person, and do not believe what my generation of Burnside children say about her. There was nothing lovely about her at all. Whether the war affected her, I do not know. As I said, we did not know them as human beings.

Senator HUMPHRIES—You do not have any view about whether they may have had mental illness, or were simply psychopathic? I am trying to work it out. Was it the nature of the institution, perhaps, that attracted certain sorts of people to it? Why do people behave like this in these settings? That is the question I am trying to get to.

Ms Cave—I think there are a lot of answers to that. There were some psychopaths there and some mentally disturbed people. There were certainly alcoholic people. Burnside itself now acknowledge that they employed people who were unemployable anywhere else. The wages were so low that people educated in child welfare would not work there. I think there was a

whole range of people, but I also think—and I also hope everybody in this room can hear me say this—that does not excuse cruelty. It was a pretty awful job to have to do: two women looking after 30 children. I was a teacher for 20 years and I had 25 children, and I just adored three o'clock when they all went home. I loved them to bits during the day but when they went home I was really glad. But the matrons there never got rid of us; they were on duty 24 hours a day. I want to reiterate that that does not excuse any cruelty that was perpetrated on powerless children. I will leave it at that. Does that answer the question?

Senator HUMPHRIES—As much as it can be answered, yes. Thank you. It seems to me that you have had a cathartic experience by writing the books you have written. You have been able to tell your story and I assume there is a feeling of a weight being taken off your shoulders by virtue of you doing that. Obviously, not everybody can write a book about what happened to them. These hearings are an opportunity for people to tell their story in the space of half an hour or whatever it might be. Do you think there is any other way this committee could recommend for people to tell their stories in a public way, any other forum or opportunity that we should suggest should be provided for them so that they might have the cathartic experience that you have had with your books?

Ms Cave—Yes. I did cry heaps writing both of my books. I heard one of the witnesses earlier today talking about a writing course and I think if CLAN could organise more of those that would help. I think there is a big need in the whole of our society for people to hear each other's stories, not just homes kids but particularly homes kids. I think it would be excellent if the CLAN network could have a series of locations across states, across the country, where maybe Senator Murray's idea of the house with the various facilities and services in them could come about. If 'telling your story' could be one of the rooms in that house, it would be pretty fantastic. I do not think that writing your story has any more validity as a method of catharsis than telling your story does, so I think it would be a great idea if there was some facility where people could tell their stories uninterrupted—where there was just a Senate committee and they had to sit there and listen, where you could say whatever you needed to say and not be interrupted.

Senator MURRAY—Ms Cave, although I do not know a great deal about it there is a program through the National Archives which is an oral history program. Elsewhere in the world, for communities or societies or groups that have been through great trauma, there have been oral history programs developed to assist and to keep a record. One of the best known is, believe it or not, by Stephen Spielberg, who has put together the Holocaust oral history record. I think it is based at Colorado in America. We are looking for things that we can do to help people. Would you think a government oral history program, which is a little different from telling your story to us or to someone in a house, would be a useful addition to the sorts of things we are looking at?

Ms Cave—Yes, I do. I think it would be wonderful. I thought you were going to recommend a truth and reconciliation commission—but there is another story! I think an oral history reservoir would be pretty fantastic. I do not need to do it myself because I have done a written one but I am sure that most people here would want their stories recorded somewhere.

Senator MURRAY—The thing that the committee has remarked upon elsewhere is that people out of institutions often put themselves down but if you listen to them they are highly articulate. They can tell a story and convey emotion very well. In the same way deaf people's

other senses lift up, if you have not been educated in one way your other senses improve. I think oral history is a very good medium.

Ms Cave—I would like to answer a question that you asked somebody else. For getting to people who do not read, television is a wonderful medium. If you do open any programs you should just hang the expense and advertise them on television, because I think most people watch television. The man who wrote these letters to me says that he watches television all night sometimes when he cannot sleep.

Senator MURRAY—That is a very interesting idea. I am glad you have put it on the record. Again I do not understand much about it, but what I understand is that television will be changed so that there will be so many channels that you could in fact dedicate a channel to special work of this sort. That is an interesting idea, thank you. You raised the idea—which I think was also raised indirectly by someone earlier today—of a truth and reconciliation commission, which essentially puts victims in the same room as their assailants and tries to find a path out of it. The best one I know of is the South African one. Are you recommending such a mechanism?

Ms Cave—Yes, except that in my case all the perpetrators are dead and I think a lot of others would be. But there would need to be appropriate support people there—not just a free-for-all.

Senator MURRAY—Would it help if, even if the perpetrators are dead, the institutions were there—so if it was a government institution somebody from the government was there or if it was a church institution somebody from the church was there.

Ms Cave—Yes, I think so, if they were prepared to acknowledge the abuses that happened. I would not want to be in a room with an organisation that said, as some people have, 'That's how they dealt with children back then.' I would not want to be in a room with people saying that. If they were prepared to say, 'Abuses happened and we are sorry for them; you never deserved to be treated like that,' that would be fine, but not a denial thing.

Senator MURRAY—From your two memories, how many children were at Burnside at the time you were there?

Mr McLeary—I actually left Burnside about the time when Jan came in. I did not know Jan until later.

Senator MURRAY—How many children were there, by your memory?

Mr McLeary—Very roughly, there were about a dozen homes with about 30 or 40 kids in each home—something like that.

Ms Cave—Yes. There were 500 children in Burnside at any one time but not all in one building; they were in about 12 different buildings. The little kids homes had 30 children with three staff and the older kids homes had 30 children with two staff. In each case one of the staff members was the cook and so was not actually involved much in care. There was one boys home that for some reason had 50 boys and two staff.

Senator MURRAY—Was it your experience that, as we have heard elsewhere, in the same large institution some children would get out of it much better than others—some children were better treated than others; they were not necessarily pets but just did not have as harsh or as difficult a time as some other children did? Or was it universally bad for everybody?

Mr McLeary—I can only speak for the boys home that I was in or for most of the boys homes. I think they had it slightly worse than the girls. I am not sure but I think we were all brutalised fairly well the same. We did not have any favourites. You could try to suck up to one of them, which I did once. I learnt not to, because there were about 35 boys there so whatever you did you were just institutionalised—you could try to get on with a bloke but it was just not going to work. It was them and us, us and them.

Senator MURRAY—Mr McLeary, you mentioned that you had a bad marriage and it was your fault. Do you have kids from that marriage?

Mr McLeary—I have three children from that marriage. I had another child but he died.

Senator MURRAY—How are the three kids?

Mr McLeary—My eldest boy is about 35. I have a girl who is 23 and another boy who is about 27.

Senator MURRAY—Were they detrimentally affected by your behaviour?

Mr McLeary—Probably. I have one son who is a schizophrenic. I do not know whether that is hereditary or what. He did all sorts of drugs and my daughter did drugs as well at the age of 12.

Senator MURRAY—Do your kids know why you are an angry man? Have you helped them understand that if you gave them problems what the cause was? You would have heard from Senator Humphries asking his questions that people like to know why. Sometimes you never know why but sometimes you do. Do they understand that your difficult times made you a difficult father?

Mr McLeary—I tried to talk to my eldest boy once. We just happened to be having a beer. He lives in Darwin so our paths only cross physically every few years. We had a good heart-to-heart and he told me a few unpleasant truths about myself. Then I opened up and told him what had happened to me. It does not excuse anything, but he was basically having a go at my anger. It was my anger that really broke up my marriage.

Senator MURRAY—Have you had counselling for your anger?

Mr McLeary—I did at the time, yes.

Senator MURRAY—Did it help you?

Mr McLeary—It probably did at the time.

Senator MURRAY—Does it need to be ongoing?

Mr McLeary—I have had some really good counselling just recently. I have not been for about six months or so—maybe 12 months; something like that—but I went to a very good doctor. It was he who told me what was wrong with me. In other words, he diagnosed what my phobia is and why this has been happening. I had just always thought, 'It is just stupid me,' but at least I have a title to what is wrong with me. I did not even know social phobia existed.

Senator MURRAY—There is cause and effect. Have you hurt a lot of people in your life through your anger, do you think?

Mr McLeary—As a teenager I got into a few fights, but I think a lot of teenagers do. I used to take out my anger on the sporting field and things like that or in a physical way. I have to do something physical. I find it very hard to relax now. I admire someone like Jan. She is my hero. The only reason I met Jan was through reading her book. I contacted her through CLAN and fortunately she made contact with me. I was just so proud of her. I have always shut up and taken whatever is dished out to me but at that time I said, 'I am going to stand up.' I said to Jan, 'I'll go over the top with you and with whatever you say,' because I know what went on at Burnside. It was actually worse. Jan had it a bit easier because she came a little bit later, but it was not easy by any means. If you can imagine it, you would go into the dining room and there was a bench maybe not quite as long as these tables. There were timber forms. You had to stand there for about 10 minutes and say grace. Everything was about grace and prayers.

Then you would sit down to this bloody crap. Do you like tripe? You get that every Friday night with that white sauce they put on it. It was crap. Okay, we had something to eat but we were eating off this bare board and out of these pewter spoons and crap, and you have this table over there, a beautiful round table with lovely crisp tablecloths, silver serviette rings—can you imagine this?—knives and forks that are beautiful. These staff members are having bacon and eggs for breakfast. We did not know what an egg was. They would have scones and cream and beautiful cutlery and plates. Everything was beautiful for them and we would just sit there drooling at this stuff. To this day I whip up cream and I wolf it down.

Senator MURRAY—You still have not learnt that it makes you sick, have you?

Mr McLeary—No. There are simple little things like butter. My missus could not understand it. She understands now because she has spoken to other people. I make my toast and you have to leave it cold. Then you get the butter out and it just has to be right so you can spread it. And you are going to see that butter. No-one is going to stop me having butter in my life. I'll die of a bloody coronary but that is the sort of thing. These tablecloths were just too good for you.

Interjector—The answer is yes, he has a lot of anger. That is your answer. Yes, his marriage collapsed because of it. Yes, we do not need to hear any more stories of bread and butter. The answer is unreservedly yes.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Ms Cave—I would like to go back to your question about equal or unequal treatment in each of the homes. I did not give you the girls answer.

Senator MURRAY—We are not here to pry. Many people who have been in institutions get irritated at being labelled and/or thought to have come out the same way with the same problems and social effects and so on. Bear in mind that a lot of the people who come to us with submissions are those who have had the worst experiences. We need to know when writing our report how to put the balance. Were there good staff members? Were there kids who came out all right? Were there success stories? That is why we ask, because we have to give a balanced report.

Ms Cave—I just wanted to tell you that in the girls home there was unequal treatment. There were pets and pariahs. My sister was beaten regularly and her eardrum was punctured in a beating. Then she lost hearing in that ear so she was in more trouble because she could not hear instructions and demands. Then she would be beaten again for not obeying rules and so on. We were protected a bit because our father demanded accountability from the staff. If we said anything had happened he would go and ask them what it was about. They would have to explain themselves to him. After he had done that we would often get a beating for pimping on them. There was unequal treatment. There was the occasional kind staff member but because the child to staff ratio was so ridiculous, kindness was spread fairly thinly.

Mr McLeary—I can only remember one nice matron there and she did not last that long, actually. We walked all over her, I suppose, because there were so many of us. I can recall only one. They were usually misfits or something. They were there only for their own good. They were just there to get the good food.

We were just a different class of people. That is why to this day we have inferiority complexes. You just shuffled forward. You were in a line and you were A, B, C—whatever your name was. You came down the line and you just shuffled forward, shuffled forward. As I say, if you did show any compassion, if you had a good mate or whatever, they would try to split you up. You had 40 other kids around and you had to knock your best mate's head off. I felt so upset. I ended up contacting him years later, because he left the home not long after that and went with his dad, but I always had that guilt because I had knocked his head off. This master encouraged it, and the only reason you did it was because it was the survival of the fittest. You had to survive, and you had to have a good mate to survive the bloody place. It was just us against them. It was a badge of honour. I cried a lot there, but there were other kids that did not. They were the heroes.

Senator KNOWLES—Ms Cave, earlier you made a comment in relation to the letter from your friend who expressed doubt as to the outcome of an inquiry like this, particularly if the government were to change. Having sat on a previous inquiry where there was a mix of all parties, similar to this one, I want to reassure all of you, but particularly the gentleman who expressed that view, that we made it our business to draw a unanimous report. The recommendations were absolutely and utterly unanimous from every committee member. I do not see anything in this committee, which once again has a mixture of members from government, opposition and Democrats, that would prevent that goal being achieved again. This issue is far too important to play politics with, and I do not think that is in the interests of anyone—you, us or anyone else. If you would be kind enough to convey that to the gentleman who expressed that, it might give him a smidgeon of hope that, in the end, whatever recommendations we bring down will be for whatever government is in office at that time and

beyond. As you know, much of what is being discussed today does not actually relate to the federal government; it relates to state governments.

Ms Cave—Thank you. That is good to hear. His letter just reflects the distrust and cynicism that lots of homes kids have for people in authority.

Senator KNOWLES—That is understandable.

Ms Cave—I will pass that on, thank you.

Senator KNOWLES—Thank you, Ms Cave.

CHAIR—Thank you for coming today, Ms Cave and Mr McLeary.

[4.10 p.m.]

DOUGHTY, Mr Ralph (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Doughty. You are appearing today in a private capacity, and your comments will be on the public record. The committee prefers evidence to be held in public, but evidence may also be taken in camera. I understand that you have received information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses in evidence. Is that correct?

Mr Doughty—Correct.

CHAIR—The committee has before it your submission. I now invite you to make an opening presentation, to be followed by questions from the committee.

Mr Doughty—I am pleased that this inquiry has been set up and is taking evidence from former children of institutions run by churches, by private organisations and by the states of the Commonwealth. Not reflecting upon you five people personally, I personally do not hold any great expectations that this committee will achieve any real improvement on what is presently in existence. Children will be born. A small number will grow to have fruitful and contented lives. Others will grow to have very successful, ambitious and fulfilling lives. The majority will amble along, grow and deal with many of the ups and downs in life, with varying degrees of success and failure. However, many will not be allowed to participate in a normal life. These children are tossed into a cauldron of fear, hate, abuse, slavery and lifelong torment. From the cauldron some will emerge, and forever remain, damaged. They will achieve to varying degrees and be able to contribute to the community. The majority will not be so fortunate, and will be a liability to themselves and to the community.

My considered opinion is that these places of incarceration were concentration camps, and the people working in these concentration camps were our guards. I was a prisoner of the Salvation Army. I consider that I was used as a slave, deprived of freedom of movement, many times deprived of warmth and shelter, many times deprived of water and food, and consistently subjected to physical and mental torture. I was denied all contacts with my family. I never had a visitor to the home. I was—every boy was—repeatedly told in their sermons, 'The sins of your fathers are upon your heads.' I can still remember it: 'The sins of your fathers are upon your heads, and those sins will not be washed away until the expiration of your children and their children's children and one thereafter.' They would say, 'The Lord is great and merciful, so let us all now sing his praises by singing a song,' and off we would sing.

The organisations responsible for the crimes against their children should be publicly named. The numerous crimes perpetrated by these organisations should be widely made known. All persons who committed or who were party to the committing of these criminal acts against children should be made known to the public. The people who committed these crimes should be criminally charged where appropriate, and a jail sentence made mandatory. The organisation should be criminally charged along the same lines as the criminal organisations of Germany and Japan at the end of World War II. The individuals who worked for, or who were a part of, these organisations should be criminally investigated and, where necessary, charged. The persons who

guarded the children should be treated and charged along the same lines as the Japanese and Korean guards of our prisoners of war.

The state and federal governments are responsible for allowing criminal acts to take place against the children who are in institutional care. It is the state and Commonwealth governments which enact the appropriate legislation. It is the responsibility of the state and Commonwealth governments to ensure the legislation is enforced. It is the responsibility of the state and Commonwealth governments to ensure that their servants do their jobs properly. It is the responsibility of the state and Commonwealth governments to take action against any servant who does not do his job properly. It is the responsibility of the state and Commonwealth governments to prosecute the offenders and protect the children. Has this been done? No.

The governments have been aware of the bad situation existing in child care. The governments hand the children to these criminal organisations and promptly wipe their hands of the children. The operators of the institutions can do whatever they wish with the children. You will read in the submissions of the former inmates that the children were used to satisfy the sexual desires of priests, nuns, officers, warders, foster parents and the friends of these people. You will read of rapes, bashings, torture, starvation and deprivation of movement—and the list can go on and on. What action was taken against the perpetrators? Virtually none. What action was taken to protect the child? None.

Churches' commercial laundries needed labour. Where did they get this labour? 'Yes, the little girls will do that labour. It does not matter that they are aged five, eight, 10 or 12 years, or that they should be attending school. Who knows; who cares? The labour is free and if one child falls too sick or is injured there is another one to take their place. In addition, the cash received for the work is not taxable to these organisations and will swell the already laden coffers of the churches. The priests, the bishops and the cardinals will be pleased.'

The state governments put some of the children into their own institutions and promptly wiped their hands of the children. How did the state employees act? They raped and they sodomised the girls. They sodomised the boys. They forced the children to perform acts upon them. Were these offences reported? Some were. What happened? The victims were punished for reporting the offence. Sometimes the person who received the report hopped in for his or her fair share. The offenders had no action taken against them. These state employees, guards of these child prisoners, bashed, tormented and humiliated the little children with impunity.

These criminals knew that other public servants would take no action, or would ensure that their crimes were covered up. The people that worked in the system may attempt to claim that they were also victims of the system and that, at worst, they may have at times been neglectful. If an individual or group makes an attempt at such a claim, the claim must be rejected vigorously and all must be made to answer for their criminal acts. The concentration camp guards in World War II attempted such a move, but it was quickly knocked on the head. The workers in these institutions and the members of the organisations who ran these institutions all knew of the criminal activity and were all willing and active participants. With the Salvation Army, the trainees were sent forth to learn the system. They came to the home where I was and they participated in it willingly and with the encouragement of their seniors. I could go on and on, but I will not; you should be able to see what I am saying.

The various governments failed to carry out their duty of care for their children and gave open slather to the churches and other organisations with prisoners in their custody. The statute of limitations should not apply to any act which adversely affects a child whilst that child was in an institution or was in care. The perpetrators of these crimes should not be able to hide behind the statute. No child should be taken before a court and have a charge of neglect or lack of support levied against them. This type of court is a place where criminals, not little children, are charged.

The child is not a criminal because they have no food. The child is not a criminal because their parents are not married or do not have the financial means to support their child. It is like laying a charge against a person who has been assaulted because he failed to protect himself, or laying a charge against a person who has been robbed whilst walking along the street because he failed to keep his hands in his pockets and hold on to his money. There is no difference. 'Ridiculous', you may venture to say. If you read one of the submissions, you will see where a little girl was taken before a magistrate. The magistrate said to her, words to the effect, 'You've been here before the court on a number of occasions. Let us see. We will send you to'—he named the institution—'and see how that works out for you.' How it worked out was devastating for the little girl, as stated in her submission. I am sure that the magistrate would have known that. What did it matter to him? His day would soon be over and he would go home to a house where a decent meal and a comfortable bed would be available whereas, for the little girl, who knows?

A register of offenders—the guards—should be set up. This list should be referred to before employment is given to people where children are involved. All institutions should be regularly inspected and monitored and children should be interviewed without a guard being present. The interview should be taped and nothing that is stated should be off the record. Free quality legal assistance should be given to any person who wishes to take action on a criminal basis against any of these perpetrators. Free quality legal assistance should be given to any person who wishes to claim compensation. I will make a few other comments now.

Every year I ring up the Salvation Army and I ask them about this guy: 'Is he still alive?' He is elderly now. They say, 'Yes, he's still alive.' Last year I rang. This guy parades around on Sundays you will see him marching on Anzac Day with his decorations. Last year I rang and this lady said to me, 'You rang last year.' I said, 'Yes, and I rang the year before, too.' She said, 'Why do you ring?' I said, 'I want to know whether he is still alive. When you tell me that he's dead, we're going to hold a little ceremony.' She said to me, 'That's nice. What will the ceremony be?' I said, 'Me and a couple of the boys who were in that orphanage will take it in turn to piss on his grave.'

When you are in these institutions—I was there for 10 years—you become institutionalised. It came that they told me that they had found a place for me to stay—that when I had finished my exams I could leave. The day came. They gave me a port, a little port. It had a pair of pyjamas in it and a toothbrush. I started to walk away. Would you believe: I nearly turned around to ask them if I could stay!

Events come to mind. When I left the orphanage I went to work in an auto-electrician's place. The poor guy who owned the place, his son had been killed in a car crash. He could not accept that, poor man. His name was Mr Lee. He was good. I used to feel sorry for him. But I decided that I had to educate myself, so I went to tech and I did accountancy. My accountancy teacher was a good man. One day he said to me, 'Ralph, you're going to improve yourself.' 'Well,

there's nothing against being an auto-electrician,' I said to him. 'But,' he said, 'they're not training you.' I said, 'I know that—I have to go to tech. They're training me to do the office work. I don't want to do the office work.' He said, 'No. I've got an interview for you at the bank.' A bank? I knew that banks existed, but I did not really know what a bank was. So he organised this interview.

I saw the manager of the bank. It was the ES&A Bank: it is now part of the ANZ conglomerate. The manager of the bank made arrangements, and he sent me to Sydney for an interview with the hierarchy down there. I can still see them. They were good people. They asked me, 'Where's your birth certificate?' 'Birth certificate? I haven't got one.' They said to me, 'Have you saved up any money?' I said, 'Yeah, I've got a few pounds.' They said, 'You have to lodge your bond—you have to lodge your bond of £500.' I said, 'I don't have £500. I'll save it up though, if you give me a job.'

Anyway, they were good. I finished the interview. The bank had paid my fare down from Goulburn. I went back to Goulburn. Then I was asked to come to the bank—Mr Daniels it was, in Sydney—and the manager at the bank said to me, 'Ralph, the bank manager has been in touch with London and they're giving you a job.' I said, 'I haven't got £500.' He said, 'They said it doesn't matter. You're the first one in the bank that is allowed in without a bond. There's one thing you must not do: you mustn't pinch any money.' I said, 'I won't; I promise.'

CHAIR—Would you get paid a redundancy?

Senator MURRAY—You didn't need the £500.

Mr Doughty—At any rate I stayed in the bank, and later on I got to be an executive in the bank. I was the youngest executive in the bank, and then they transferred me. They were going to transfer me after about two years, and the manager wrote to them—I read the letter—and said, 'Don't transfer him yet. He's just moved into a house.' They were good people. There was a cousin of mine, Gwen. Her family took me in. I was living with them, and they treated me as one of their own. I used to feel guilty because they had their own little children and there was me imposing upon them. They were good; they were very good. I love Gwen, who is a mother now. The bank cancelled that transfer. But later on I was transferred to Sydney, and I went to the branch department.

If you were in the branch department and you went out to a bank, you were treated like a little god. You could tell the bank manager what was expected of him. There was me, in my 20s, able to do that. I was still doing accountancy, and they said to me, 'One day you will most likely be our general manager.' Life went on, and then one day I had a little girl. I said to my wife, 'Before we can get a decent salary I have to be about 50 years of age, Shirl. I can't wait 50 years to have my little girl educated. We have to give the bank away.' My cousin had contacted me and asked me if I would give the bank away and help him with running his butchering business. He told me how much money he would pay. I told the bank I had to go because I could not live on the money they were paying me. I could not advance.

The bank was so good. They said to me, 'Ralph, we'll send you out to Broken Hill as a security officer.' To go to Broken Hill meant that my salary would have been approximately doubled, because out there in those days I think you only paid 10 per cent tax. I would have been

the third officer. I do not know how many were on staff out there. They were big branches. They had all the mines. I was to be the third officer of about 150 staff. They had a big staff in those days. They had to pay the mines and everything like that. But I said to Mr Lacks, 'I can't. I have to go. I would love to.' He said, 'I'm going to Queensland. I'm taking over as the state manager up there. You can come with me. You've got a good future in the bank.' I said, 'Mr Lacks, I really appreciate that, but I can't.' He said, 'Right. Go for 12 months. Leave us for 12 months and then, if you want to, you can come back.' But I left and I stayed away.

I eventually went out butchering on my own. I learnt the butchering trade. I had the biggest butchering show in Canberra. I used to supply the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and Parliament House—all of those. I had a big staff. There were up to 15 butchers and six girls. Whilst I was there I used to put on chaps who were absolutely useless, but they needed a helping hand. Some of them were drunks. I had one chap who was getting drunker and drunker in the shop as the day went on one day. I used to have different sections in the shop. I had a front counter and I had the work area. He was in the work area. We could not make out how he was getting drunker and drunker. So I had to follow him out, and I followed him out to the toilet. Where was the bugger getting his grog? He had it hidden in the toilet cistern. Eventually alcohol got the better of that poor guy.

I got to know Clarrie Hermes, the chief magistrate in Canberra. He was a good man. A couple of times he rang me up and said, 'Ralph, I've got a boy who needs a little bit of help; he's got no money.' Mr Hermes knew that I could put him on as I had a big business. So at some stage I would put these kids on for a little while. They would get a bit of pocket money and then move on. One day Mr Hermes said to me, 'I've got a boy who was in an orphanage.' His name was Peter Foster. Peter came to me, and I asked him, 'Where were you?' He said, 'I was in the Gill Home at Goulburn.' 'You were there, Peter?' 'Yeah, I was there.' 'What happened?' 'Oh, they used to bash us.' 'Where have you been since then? 'In jail.' I said, 'What did you go to jail for?' He said, 'I felt more comfortable in jail. I couldn't handle the outside world.' So I put him on.

One day Peter came to me and said, 'Ralph, I have to go.' I said, 'Where are you going?' He said, 'I have to go back to jail.' I said, 'You're kidding.' He said, 'No, I have to. Here I have to get out of bed and come to work. Before I come to work I have to find some food to feed myself with. At the end of the day when I finish working with you, I go home to this place I've got; it's one room. Then, after I've found some food and fed myself, I go to bed. In the morning I get up again and have to come here. In jail you don't have to do that. In jail they get you out of bed, tell you what to do and feed you. You've got your mates all around you. You don't have to worry.' I looked at him and said, 'Peter, what are you going to do?' He said, 'I'll just go and steal something and wait for the police to arrive.' I said, 'You're a dope.' He said, 'No. I'll feel more comfortable, Ralph. I've got no life. I'll do that.' I said, 'Where are you going to do it? Don't do it in Mr Hermes' area in Canberra.' He said, 'No. I'll go over the border and do it in Queanbeyan.' I said, 'All right; off you go.' Off he went. The last I heard, Peter was in jail, and I suppose he still is.

On another occasion I had just come out of the bank and was about to cross the road to get the mail; I was the junior. A prison truck from the jail at Goulburn pulled up at Belmore Park; it was carrying a load of wood. I just looked at it and in the next minute the wood started to fall off. I thought, 'This is blooming funny.' Up through the wood came a guy. In the prison they had stacked the wood around him, and he thought he had reached his destination and was making his

escape. He jumped down off the truck. I was a sticky beak so I walked over. They grabbed him. As he was lying down there, I looked at him—'Jimmy.' He looked up and said, 'Ralph.' 'What the hell are you doing, Jimmy?' He said, 'Don't worry, Ralph. It's better out there than here.' I thought, 'You poor bastard.' He was written up in the paper. To me, that was an amusing thing. For him—I suppose he spent the rest of his life in jail.

In my business—it is a good business—I work seven days a week. I am now at Artarmon in Sydney. My customers say to me, 'You should take some time off, Ralph.' I say, 'I'll take some time off when I'm six feet under.' I say to some of them, 'I like you people. I just feel comfortable working. I have been working since I was eight years of age. Here I am now; I am 71 and still working. But my customers are good. They are going to get a shock when they find out—some of them know a little bit—that I just wasn't an ordinary person, but they will be good to me. I will go back and tell them that I am selling the shop. I am too tired. It is too draining. It is too emotional. I cannot say any more. You can ask me any questions you like. As I say, it has been painful.

There is just one more thing. Senator Murray, I wrote this down and it is not against you; I am so pleased that you are where you are. You mentioned a 'balanced report'. I ask you: what is a balanced report? The Salvation Army have boycotted this inquiry. They are not going to send someone along. After I left the orphanage, I decided that, if I wanted a question answered, I would go to the top. So this time I went to the top. I rang London. The general who is in charge there is Larson. I have rung a couple of times, asking whether he would give me a phone call because I would be attending an inquiry into their institutions. But I have not had a phone call back from him. I expected one, but they will not respond. I rang the Salvation Army in Sydney. The girl there told me that she had spoken to a guy whose name was Strong—that is what I was told. 'What we will do is of no concern to you,' was their response. Anyway, you just question me and we will see how we handle it. I might be able to help.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Doughty. Are you a member of the Salvation Army?

Mr Doughty—Me a member of the Salvation Army? The answer to that is that I have never been a member of the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army attracts a certain type of person. The people who go to institutions are not overly educated—that is my first point—and they are aggressive. They think that marching around in a uniform is something great. I have marched around in uniforms; I have marched since I was eight years of age. I have been in the Air Force and the Army. I do not march on Anzac Days now. I was in a band—it is in here—and I left. No, I do not want to march with them.

CHAIR—In your submission you say that one of your mates contacted the Goulburn police. Would you run through that for us?

Mr Doughty—When I say that they contacted the Goulburn police, the boys used to abscond or run away from the orphanages and the police would capture them. The police would then give them a hiding and deliver them back to the home. The Salvation Army officers in the home would then give the boys a hiding. That is the way it was. The police knew what was going on up there, but they did absolutely nothing.

Senator MURRAY—How many kids were in the Salvation Army's Gill home?

Mr Doughty—There were 80, and there were another 120 across the road in the St John's Boys Home. Last night I was trying to write this out. My children have taught me how to scroll down what I think is called a web site—mine is 282. This time I scrolled down a little further and saw 'Cremen' and 'New South Wales', so I thought I would see what that was about. Cremen—I do not know him—was in the St John's Boys Home across the road from us. The 120 St John's boys and the 80 Salvation Army boys across the road—that makes 200—used to fight. We used to sneak out of the homes and go down to the creek and a couple of boys would organise a fight. After having a flaming fight with these boys, we would sneak back to the home. Those in charge of the homes would never let the two groups associate. I wish we had been allowed to associate; we would have made some good friends.

Not all the Catholic boys went to school; they had a dairy and the kids had to work there. Sometimes on our way to school we would see them—we would be going off to school in Bourke Street, because that is where the technical school was where we would do woodwork and that—and we would end up having a rock fight. Our bags or haversacks would be loaded up with rocks. As we ran along the creek the St John's boys would run along the top and we would have these flaming rock fights. We would come to a big tunnel and disappear into that and they would go off to where they had to go. But before we went off we would say to them, 'Half past three.' That would mean that at half past three we would be back again and they would be ready, and that was when the rock fight was to continue. I got damaged in one rock fight.

Cremen spoke about his treatment in that orphanage. This poor kid—he was eight years old when he first went into that home—was one of the boys who had to work full-time in this flaming dairy. Those kids had to bring the cows past the Salvation Army Boys Home and put them in a holding paddock. In the orphanage I had a mate called Bob Smith. When we got a bit older—I must contact this boy somehow or other and tell him I am sorry—we would have little piles of rocks and, as they would bring the cows past, we would throw them at the cows. The cows would go everywhere. These poor little kids would chase the cows and we would throw rocks at them. The kids would yell at us, 'We'll catch you; we'll get you when we come back.' Cremen wrote all about this in his story. I must find him. That is how many boys were there: 80, and across the road 120.

Senator MURRAY—You talk about the statute of limitations. In a criminal court, as you would know, the measure of proof is 'beyond reasonable doubt' and that is a very high threshold. Even so, over the years many innocent people have been jailed and many guilty people have got off. Also, there is great difficulty in addressing matters from many years ago. There is the alternative of civil law, which has a balance of probabilities approach, which is a lower threshold. But many people do not have the money to take matters to law and, even if they do have the money, they do not necessarily have the right framework. But there is a mechanism in law called representative action.

Mr Doughty—I will write it down.

Senator MURRAY—That is where another body will do it for you.

Mr Doughty—That is a good idea.

Senator MURRAY—For instance, the ACCC—that is the competition body—or ASIC, which is the corporations body, can take up representative actions in certain very carefully defined circumstances. I ask you this question: do you think the committee needs to consider recommending to government a mechanism whereby an independently resourced and funded body would be able for selected—probably test—cases to take up representative action for people who were harmed in the manner many witnesses have outlined? Or are you talking to us about a much more general right, available to everybody?

Mr Doughty—Financed by you people?

Senator MURRAY—It would be financed by you, the taxpayer.

Mr Doughty—This is true, but do not forget the money that it costs now because of inaction. I suppose you have done economics. There is a term in economics called the multiplier effect. If you lodge $100 with a bank, how many times can that be lent out? Seven. So, to reduce the number of times it can be lent, the Reserve Bank takes a certain amount of money out of all deposits. The multiplier effect on the harm done to the children in these institutions is enormous. It goes from one to one to one to grandchildren and great-grandchildren—and the income lost along the way is enormous too.

When I went to primary school, I came first in every class in every subject. And then I went up to high school and I go to 1A—1A is French and Latin and so on; Maths 1, Maths 2 and all that stuff. I go in there and this teacher says to me, 'What is your address?' I said, 'The Salvation Army Gill Home.' I put this in that report of mine, that submission. They said to me, 'You can't come in here.' 'Why?' 'This is only for persons who will eventually go to university. Home boys can't go to university.' So I went back to 1C. After that I lost a lot of interest in education. But later on when Mr Whitlam came in—and I will be grateful to him until my dying day—he gave us the opportunity to go back to university. So I went to university. I got my Bachelor of Business degree. I am a CPA. I also did real estate; I got my real estate agent's licence, my stock and station agent's licence and my business agent's licence. I did advanced taxation law. After I got my business degree I did advanced company law. But I still stayed a butcher, because I liked it.

Senator MURRAY—Mr Doughty, I need a specific answer. Let me put my question to you this way. On page 26 of your submission you made this recommendation, No. 1:

> The Statute of Limitations should not be available as a defence for any action taken by a person who was an inmate in an institution.

The committee will consider that—and, I must stress, the committee has not come to a view. It is very difficult, we know from experience, for the federal Senate to make a recommendation that the government get the states to change their laws, and the statutes of limitations essentially cover state criminal law, although there are circumstances where federal criminal law will apply. Many arguments will be raised against adjusting the statute of limitations, because it is protection for people.

Mr Doughty—This is true.

Senator MURRAY—It is a very fundamental right. However, it might be easier for the committee to recommend a representative action process which would be available to a few, not to many. What you are suggesting here is a right that would be available to everybody. What a representative action process does is make the right available only to a few on a test case basis.

Mr Doughty—What you are saying—

Senator MURRAY—That is why I am asking—

Mr Doughty—I will give you the answer.

Senator MURRAY—I am asking if you are firm about us going your route, or would you like to see a more limited route?

Mr Doughty—What I am saying—and you mentioned representative action—is that you can do both. You said that the ultimate power given to a government is that it can enact laws and when those laws fall into a problem area you can then look to the United Nations or someone like that, or to how a foreign law relates to Australia. You can encompass what you are trying to get at within the ambit of one of those—I cannot explain it much better just now because I have not given much thought to that—and you can get around it. When a criminal act has been committed against children, the statute of limitations does not apply. That is broadly what I am saying. What you said is a very good idea: I did not know about representative action, otherwise I would have been able to talk to you about it; I would have looked up what the law about it is. That is good—there are two points.

Senator MURRAY—It is an idea, and I must stress that the committee has not considered the idea. I just wanted to know your opinion on it.

Mr Doughty—I would really like you to consider it. There was another point on page 20. What was the other thing?

Senator MURRAY—That covers what I wanted to know.

Mr Doughty—The Salvation Army has now said that they are not bound by the statute of limitations. I saw that in a program on *Four Corners*. I am going to test them on it.

Senator MURRAY—I cannot speak for them, but of course any person who is accused could either take advantage of the statute of limitations or set it aside. If they are accused, they could say, 'We're happy to go to court on it.' That is always possible. I do not know if that is what they meant.

Mr Doughty—After that *Four Corners* program—and it was a good program—I rang the presenter at the ABC and asked, 'Why didn't you cover the Gill home in Goulburn?' One reason was that what they got out of the Gill home was too vicious. They covered children in the other institutions that were vicious. It is most likely that they will do a special program on the Gill home. After I left the Gill home, I rang the Salvation Army—it was long after, and I have a big mouth too, like some of the others—and they said, 'It's all changed. This doesn't go on anymore.' I scrolled through and I saw a boy's name—Walsh—and he had been in the Gill

home. He went through the same blooming things that I did, like them sticking the cane up your bum and all that type of stuff—and, yes, it hurts. The ladies will not mind me saying this, but when you are a boy and you are growing up you are virile. When you get out of bed in the morning the old fella is standing up, and they hit it with a bloody cane. That hurts. He left there in 1968 and, would you believe, they were still doing it, so they lied to me when they said, 'It's changed.' Once, three Salvation Army guys came to see me and the very first thing they said to me was, 'Let's pray.' I said to them, 'You bloody idiots—pray for what?' Anyway, we had a bit of a discussion and that did not go far. I cannot say much more.

There is another point, on page 26, that I think you should address—this counselling business. It is all right in certain respects, but basically it is dangerous. It causes more harm. You can see what has gone on in America. It raises the whole thing again and stirs everybody up. To me, it does not do any good—and, remember, these counsellors are given the jobs by the institutions who perpetrated the crimes. Also, about these psychiatrists, I saw a submission where one boy calls them 'rat tamers'. These chaps get a lot of their income from these institutions, so do you think they are going to write a report that is not going to be of benefit to the institutions who committed the crimes? The answer is no. The more compliant they are to the institutions, the more work they will get. They will be put on a list of compliant psychiatrists—'Give him more work.' That is why I do not trust them. I have taken up a lot of time; there are other people to talk. I had better leave it there.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Doughty, for coming and sharing that with us. We have three more witnesses and I believe we have this room only until six o'clock. It is not something we have control over.

[5.02 p.m.]

VICHA, Ms Elizabeth (Private capacity)

CHAIR—You are appearing today in a private capacity and your comments will be on the public record. The committee prefers evidence to be heard in public, but evidence may also be taken in camera. I understand that you have received information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses and evidence. Is that correct?

Ms Vicha—Yes.

CHAIR—The committee has before it your submission, and I invite you to make an opening presentation, to be followed by questions from the committee.

Ms Vicha—I was in care from the ages of roughly five to 18. I lived in Minali twice, at Phillip House, which is at Kariong, and then later at Saint Catherine's at Brooklyn, as well as with various foster placements after my mother died. I would also like to address the fact that there was no need for me to ever have been in care. My Aunty Joan had applied to adopt me and the reason the government refused her was because she was too old—in her 40s—and they felt that the government could give me a more stable environment and the only reason she wanted to adopt me was that I was her sister's daughter. My Aunty Joan still lives at the same address she did then. As for her only wanting me because I was her sister's daughter, what other reason should there be? As far as her being too old, how could a woman in her 40s not be allowed to adopt her own niece while a man in his 60s was allowed to run a home full of children at Phillip House?

I would also like to say: please do not be deceived by my age. For me to be here today I spent every day working on myself and the effects that my childhood has had on me. I have to date sacrificed having a family because I would not want my children to be infected by the actions of the adults in my childhood. I am also here for some of the other children who lived in Phillip House, who to this day are still my friends but are not here because they still hold themselves accountable and think that they deserved what happened to them. I would also like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to put my story forward. From what I have heard today, I am honoured to be amongst such courageous and wonderful human beings. Thank you.

Senator KNOWLES—The problems you have described in your submission are replicated so many times over. You say you have decided not to have children for fear that they would be infected by what the adults did in your life.

Ms Vicha—It is not that I have given up on having children, it is just that I would like to deal with this first. That dream is not lost yet: it is so that I do not pass it on.

Senator KNOWLES—How do you want to deal with it now? If you still feel that there are gaps, if you had a wish list and a blackboard that you could write everything on right here and now, what would be the things that you would want?

Ms Vicha—I studied counselling with the aim of helping myself. I did it through Harcourt Learning Direct, where you just write away. I think that counselling is extremely important. While you are doing work with psychiatrists and psychologists, you absolutely need to be fully supported—I mean financially—and you need to be in a safe environment like your own home. With the way I have done it, I have had to work and work on myself. There are days that you cannot get out of bed. Unfortunately, I work in a casual job where if I do not work, I do not get paid. If I have a really bad week, I might only work three days in that week; therefore, my pay is less, but my bills do not change. I think it is an individual thing as well. As a result of us living in such undesirable circumstances, the effects are still the same: you grow up with self-hatred and self-loathing. There is also degradation; you do not feel like a valid member for society—in fact, you are only taught to hate yourself and that you are not worth anything. It varies individually but, for me, learning counselling gave me the tools to ask myself the questions. You find that things come up that you never knew were there. I guess that is my answer to that: it is very individual but overall I think counselling is good and if people do choose to go that way then they need to be fully supported.

Senator KNOWLES—I am trying to refresh my memory, having read your submission. Do you still have contact with your aunt?

Ms Vicha—Yes, absolutely.

Senator KNOWLES—So she is still a very important person in your life?

Ms Vicha—She is 74 years of age.

Senator KNOWLES—What sort of contact did you have with her during those shocking years and immediately after?

Ms Vicha—Whenever I was in a family she was not allowed to contact me. When I was at Phillip House it was periodic—Christmas holidays and things like that—but as I got older it became more frequent. We are in contact regularly.

Senator KNOWLES—Are you still in counselling at all?

Ms Vicha—No, I am working at the moment and still working on myself; then I will probably go back and do some. I am at the stage at the moment where I am still dealing with a lot of anxiety within myself. I am teaching myself how to actually give something of myself, rather than being locked behind that wall. I find whatever material I can read or see to educate myself.

Senator KNOWLES—What type of counselling did you have before?

Ms Vicha—I did not have counselling; I studied it.

Senator KNOWLES—I understood that you had studied it, but I did not really understand that you had not had any formal counselling. Do you see that as being part of your future?

Ms Vicha—I would definitely love to go on and do psychology, but it is a financial thing. It is a fairly long course. I do not consider myself to be a counsellor. Although I have done the

course, I only did it for myself. If I were to help other people, I would probably need further education and training.

Senator KNOWLES—How about you being the recipient instead of the giver?

Ms Vicha—One day. That is something else I am trying to learn.

Senator MURRAY—This is the usual question from me: how many were there at Phillip House, Gosford?

Ms Vicha—There were 24: 12 boys and 12 girls.

Senator MURRAY—How did you hear about the inquiry?

Ms Vicha—A friend of mine in Coffs Harbour was watching the program and rang me. She rang *Four Corners* and got the details for CLAN and I rang them.

Senator MURRAY—What was your motive for giving us your submission?

Ms Vicha—It was very much on the basis that Phillip House, although not as horrific as some homes have been, was extremely mental and horrible. As I said, I have got friends who were at Phillip House who still blame themselves and who are in that perpetual cycle. They do not hold down jobs and they are transient. Fortunately, I did get an education. If that is my fortune then I will come forward for people who cannot come forward, as well as for myself. It is for closure as well. We are all after a little bit of justice, because what happened was wrong. You may not be able to prove a lot of it in a court of law but what happened was very wrong.

Senator MURRAY—Do you find that if you speak to people who have never been in institutions they do not believe you?

Ms Vicha—When I was younger people did not comprehend, for one, what I was saying. They do not want to call you a liar, but they go, 'Yeah.' Closer friends that I have had over the years have gone, 'I would have no idea that you came from that background.' That is not by accident. I have done all this for myself so that I could be so much more detached from it, so I could no longer identify with it.

Senator MURRAY—That is one of the problems that we have in our public lives. Because so many institutional people have done what you have done—they have got on with their lives, tried to detach themselves and so on—and because it is not spoken about and not talked about, there is a lack of understanding and knowledge in the general community. Somebody does not put up their hand in their factory and say, 'By the way, I was beaten up as a kid in this institution.'

Ms Vicha—There is not a lot of room for it in this society either. There are no concessions made. You still have to go out there and make a living. You still have to do this and that. There are no concessions. Quite often people are having a hard enough time just trying to cope with everyday life, so they do not speak about it—or when they do it is only to very close, trusted friends. When you build up your trust, you go, 'This is what happened.'

I have found that that has been the case with a couple of ex-boyfriends. I have said to them, 'Please inform your parents that my parents have passed away,' because I am really blunt when people ask me that question. They will go, 'What do your parents do?', and I will go, 'They're dead.' To avoid that uncomfortableness I go, 'Can you say to them that they have passed away.' Those questions come up to you in life all the time: 'What do your parents do?', 'What do you do?', and so on. You have to somehow diplomatically answer the questions without making the other person feel really uncomfortable.

Just yesterday I was leaving work and one of my fellow workers was talking about the Boy Charlton swimming pool at the Domain. He said, 'Have you heard of it?' I said, 'I have, actually.' They were all standing there waiting for me to finish the rest of the sentence. After a really long and uncomfortable silence I said, 'That's where my father hanged himself.' These things come up and you cannot avoid them. It is really hard.

Senator MURRAY—It is one way of getting somebody's attention, I am sure.

Senator MOORE—Ms Vicha, you said that you had to get others to have a look at your file through DOCS and there was the unfortunate incident of the broken photocopier. When you actually saw your file, did it provide you with information you did not have before? Or was it, as some people have found, a disappointment?

Ms Vicha—It did. I had no idea of the actual story, and a lot of the reports I had no idea of. It also gave me a sense of where I had come from. When I read it I was crying because it felt like a story that I was reading, and I did not totally relate it to myself. It was part of my journey to search and find out if I was really the bad person that everybody said I was. It essentially confirmed that there are some people who should not be social workers or in the system. On the other hand, it did show that there were compassionate people there. To my surprise, most of my file was made up of documents of when I got clothes, because we used to go to what they called 'ward stores'. You would go there once every summer for the pair of socks, the pair of shoes; that was most of my file.

Senator MOORE—There was a degree of documentation in the file?

Ms Vicha—Yes.

Senator MOORE—One of the reasons I am asking is that documentation is always an issue in inquiries like this. You are of the next generation of people and I wondered whether there was a difference in the actual recording processes.

Ms Vicha—There was literally no documentation of when I was in Phillip House. I think that, after, they stopped going to ward stores. It sort of diminished. It was just, 'She's here', and there was no real file. There were always constant reports that I was aggressive or angry or on a diet or something like that. There were psychiatrist reports about how I had distrust of adults and needed to have my trust in adults in restored, but nothing was ever followed up. That was it. It was almost as if as soon as they knew what it was, they left it. There were little bits and pieces. It was helpful to me because the only source I had had from them so that I could find out about my mother and my father was my aunt. It was a different source to go to so that I could try to put the pieces together of who I was and who my family was.

ACTING CHAIR (Senator Knowles)—As there are no further questions, Ms Vicha, thank you very much for taking the time to be with us today. It is very much appreciated.

[5.20 p.m.]

CARTER, Mr Kenneth John (Private capacity)

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome. You are appearing today in a private capacity and your comments will be on the public record. The committee prefers evidence to be heard in public but evidence may also be taken in camera. I understand that you have received information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses and evidence.

Mr Carter—That is correct.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you. The committee has before it your submission. I now invite you to make any additional comments you would like to make. Then the committee members may ask you questions.

Mr Carter—I have been sitting here all day listening to the others. I had in mind what to say but a lot of others have said it, especially Ralph. I was in a Salvation Army boys home in Box Hill and in the state institution Turana. I became a ward of the state when I was about two months old. I remained there until I was 18 years of age.

ACTING CHAIR—Mr Carter, would you prefer it if we just asked you some questions? Would that be easier for you?

Mr Carter—No. I will get through it. There was a family of five of us. I never knew my family until I was 35 years of age. My wife's mother saw an article in the paper. Her name, Marlene, was mentioned. I knew I had a sister Marlene. I did not know of Frank. Rex committed suicide at the age of 18, when he left the institution. I became the system; I thought the system. I tabled this as evidence on Box Hill Boys Home. I have a copy and I want the committee to have it. They can view what they say about me. I am a very strong businessman. I have been very successful in business. I am illiterate. I cannot read or write. That is a handicap. I work around that. I have good people, over 40 people, who work for me. I bury what has happened.

It is so painful—the cruelty of everything. But life goes on and what has kept me alive and kept me on the track is business. You were always taught to work hard in this lucky country and you are rewarded. That has been for me. The war began when the war ended, and it has been one hell of a war. In what Ralph said he has taken the words out of my mouth and I want it to get on record as such. There are some cruel sadistic people out there and all I can say to fix the problem is balances and checks. If there are going to be these institutions, if there are going to be kids under state care then no one person should be left with children on their own. There must be three or four people so they can keep an eye on the adults. That is what needs to be done. There are always going to be penal systems.

I was sent back to Turana from Box Hill Boys Home as an uncontrollable child. I was there as a baby and when I was five or six years of age they sent me to the Box Hill Boys Home and then I was sent back as an uncontrollable child because I fought the system and I fought the bastards. I went back to Turana and had more of the same medicine, but not as bad as it was at the

Salvation Army home. I was locked in dark rooms for three or four days without food—just water. They would open the door, the light would come in and the cup was put on the floor and the door shut. I remembered when I went back to Turana that when I was about four I had been put into a room. After all those years I recognised that room and that toilet block.

Why? Why did they separate us? I did not even know my birthday until I was 12 years of age. Somebody sent me a card. It was handed to me. I said, 'Is this my birthday?' The reply was, 'You dickhead, what do you think it is?' They call them boys homes, institutions, orphanages, penal systems, correctional services, or whatever but they were nothing more than concentration camps. As hard as I have been in business and successful—done things that most people have not done in life—it still rips the guts from me. I am sorry.

The welfare department sent some people out to Box Hill Boys Home. Sangster said, 'Any youse blokes talk about how I run this outfit 'ere, you'll get more of the same.' I told everything to the welfare officer. It was all written down. But nothing was ever done. I used to wet the bed. I got six of the best every morning. Then I had to run across to the toilet block—about 600 metres—naked and was put in the cold shower. If I did not get under it they put the fire hose on me and sent me to school in nappies.

Thank God I have a family and they are supportive. I could never get close to my boys and show a bit of love. But they certainly do with me. Education for me is too late. I am too busy cutting deals. They can have their education; they can have their reading and writing, because the one thing I know is that I have made it. I am more determined than ever.

I have come here in the hope that this never happens again. No-one deserves this—no-one. I hope that everyone out there in that world gets that message. How best to deal with getting the message out was talked about. Do you know how I learnt? I know the political system; I know the Constitution; I know about both houses of parliament. I would have been a Prime Minister, make no mistake about it—I would have. But back in 1975 democracy was thrown out the door, so I went with it. I understand the system; I understand what it stands for; I understand everything.

I learnt everything via the electronic media: watching current affairs and all the documentaries—stuff like that. That is how I learnt. Yes, I might be handicapped, but I got around it in another way. That is how I have survived. To this day, I would not even know your names. I know 'senator'; I know 'Senate'. But I do not know your last names because I cannot read. But if you did not know me and I was talking business you would never know it. That is how I have survived. As I lost in one area, I gained in another. And I gained a wealth of information.

I have never reacted in this way. I have spoken briefly to my wife about things but I have never opened up as I have opened up to the inquiry today because I feel ashamed of myself. If you are treated like a dog, you become one. I left the institution and I wanted to go back. I kept going back. Read this report and what the psychiatrist says, that I am mentally disabled: 'I believe that Ken has been institutionalised for so long he's become the system. But perhaps if we place him in another environment somewhere he could work out all right.' All the reports are there. My mother, who I never knew until I was 35 years of age, had been in and out of mental

institutions and given electric shock treatments. The old man was an alcoholic. But not once did either of them come and see me.

At Turana I walked backwards and forwards in the wire cages like a lion wondering: 'Who am I? Somebody must know me; I come from somewhere.' I was waiting for the magic visit that never happened. I do not think there were a lot of orphanages with a lot of people who were like me, where I was born into the system, because I was in Coolabah and Quamby and all those other sections when I came across from the baby section. They never had places to place us in proper care so I went straight into the penal system, and most of the kids used to get visits and stuff like that.

Another thing: these sadists, paedophiles—whatever you call them—aim for the ones they know never get visits because they know that the other kids will talk to their parents and that sort of thing. They were as cunning as foxes. But one thing I do know: a man—his name was Mr Flower—came out and took reports and it fell on deaf ears. That is all I can say.

Senator HUMPHRIES—On that last point you made about Mr Flower and his interviews: he was from a child welfare agency, presumably?

Mr Carter—Correct.

Senator HUMPHRIES—How often did he visit you when you were in Box Hill?

Mr Carter—On a couple of occasions, but I believe it was because there were allegations made. He went to the school, which was on the premises—they were in-house in both institutions. He interviewed us and I thought, 'Right, we've got this bastard,' but, no.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Do you recall how old you were at the time you spoke to Mr Flower the first time?

Mr Carter—Probably eight or nine.

Senator HUMPHRIES—And other children spoke to him about the same problem at the same time?

Mr Carter—Absolutely. I think he went right through the whole school and collected information.

Senator HUMPHRIES—How many children do you know of who were victims of Mr Sangster?

Mr Carter—How long is a piece of string?

Senator HUMPHRIES—There were quite a few?

Mr Carter—Yes.

Senator HUMPHRIES—You know that they spoke to this person from child welfare but you did not see Mr Sangster moved on?

Mr Carter—No. It is a long time ago. I am 58. It is going back a long time.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Have there been reunions and things like that at Box Hill?

Mr Carter—No. The only section that is there now is the old place, plus the dining room where we used to have our meals. It is like a retirement village. One day I would like to go back to Turana.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Do you have contacts with any other children who were there?

Mr Carter—No, no-one. Let me tell you one thing: this story is told and there will be a lot of people who know. That institution probably housed 150. Turana would have housed 300 or 400. The reason why I held back for so long is that when you look at these institutions—the Catholics, the nuns, the Protestants, whatever—you see that they have all had a bad history, but the Salvation Army has always come out squeaky clean, hasn't it? Think about it. But I tell you, it happened there. I used to see things about the Salvation Army and I just shut up about it. But I know from the bottom of my heart that there were at least 160 kids there, and I tell you what: if a few of them were alive today they would tell the same story. I believe that Sangster went on to another institution and then they belted the crap out of him—and that was good. I heard that, but I cannot be sure of it.

Senator HUMPHRIES—You are a member of CLAN, I assume?

Mr Carter—Yes.

Senator HUMPHRIES—I assume that, at meetings of CLAN, you have heard other people talk about their involvement in counselling. I understood you to be saying in your evidence that you did not believe that counselling was an appropriate choice for you.

Mr Carter—I do not think so.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Are there other people in CLAN who have spoken to you about this and discussed their experience of counselling with you?

Mr Carter—Not as yet. I have only recently found CLAN. Once again, that was through my sister reading an article in the paper. I have to thank CLAN and everybody associated with them for the wonderful job they have done.

Senator HUMPHRIES—It is a matter for you, Mr Carter, as to what course you take, but you have obviously taken a very courageous step in coming here today and telling us about what happened to you. It is only fairly recently that you have told your family—your wife—about this.

Mr Carter—Yes. She has always known little bits, but I have never really told her the whole story; just bits and pieces—and certainly not my children.

Senator HUMPHRIES—There is value in telling a story sometimes. Can I just say to you that I think if you thought about telling it to other people in various ways, such as through counselling, you might be surprised as to how well it affects your view about what happened to you in the past and how you have dealt with that.

Mr Carter—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—Twenty-three years ago you met your mother. When did you start the search for family?

Mr Carter—There was an article in the paper about a Marlene Carter marrying a Joe Bugner. Of course, Diane's mother said, 'Gee, that looks a bit like you, Ken.' She was just being superstitious about it. So we rang the *Herald Sun* and they decided—

Senator MURRAY—Let me stop you there in your story, so I understand this. You were then 35. Up until then, had you been worrying or wondering about your family?

Mr Carter—Absolutely—right up until then. I knew of Ralph—he was in Box Hill Boys Home—but I lost contact with him.

Senator MURRAY—So you were very conscious of your need—that is really what I am asking.

Mr Carter—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—And you had to find a mechanism to start it off?

Mr Carter—Yes. I never even knew Frank until I got my whole birth certificate and realised that I had an older brother.

Senator MURRAY—I am asking you about this with a specific purpose in mind. The stolen generation and the child migrants were so separated from their families that the question of identity and finding family is very big with those communities. With the Australian children in institutions who were not Indigenous and were not foreign it is less so, because many of them seem to know where they came from—where their mums and dads were and so on.

Mr Carter—There is nobody in my book.

Senator MURRAY—So I want to ask about this with respect to you, because one of the things the committee can recommend is that the government put resources into enabling people to find lost families, to find who they are and where they come from, to get some sense of connection with the past. You are one of the people before us who obviously had that need, so I wanted to get that clear.

Mr Carter—I still have not found Ralph.

Senator MURRAY—Let me put it straightforwardly to you. The government gave a lot of money to the stolen generation, as a result of the stolen generation reports, for finding family;

and some moneys were given on the child migrant stuff, both from the British government and the Australian government. So it is an area that governments have shown an interest in and an understanding of, and if there was a service which was dedicated to doing it that would help you in finding Ralph, for instance.

Mr Carter—He is the only one left I need to find.

Senator MURRAY—What mechanisms have you used to find him?

Mr Carter—First, I wanted to get hold of his file, and then they put obstacles up: 'If he is alive we can't do it under freedom of information, but if he is dead and you can show us a death certificate we can provide you with information,' and stuff like that. To me it is just bureaucratic bungling all the time and I just get frustrated about it because, as I say, they put me in this situation. I am only asking for one thing of them: to say where Ralph is, if he is still alive. He may well be dead. I do not know.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Carter, for coming along.

[5.47 p.m.]

QUINN, Mr Peter Erwin (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have any comments you wish to make about the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Quinn—I was employed by what is now the Department of Community Services from 1951 to 1992, and from 1975 I held executive rank in the department. I was only approached last week so I have not prepared a formal submission but I have supplied Geraldine with a summary of the evidence that I want to give.

CHAIR—The committee prefers evidence to be heard in public but evidence may also be taken in camera if you consider such evidence to be of a confidential nature. I understand you have been provided with information on parliamentary privilege and the protection of witnesses and evidence. That is correct, isn't it?

Mr Quinn—I understand that what I say is privileged.

CHAIR—I now invite you to make your presentation.

Mr Quinn—One of the reasons I decided to give evidence was that for the last six years I have been pursuing a postgraduate degree at the University of Sydney and a doctoral thesis dealing with the history of the juvenile corrections system from 1905 to 1988. So my remarks relate only to the juvenile corrections system, although I am generally familiar with child welfare homes in New South Wales.

From its inception in 1866, the juvenile corrections system in New South Wales was essentially punitive. Right from the word go it used isolated detention and corporal punishment as punishments. It has been characterised, certainly after 1939, by the use of illegal isolated detention, well beyond the allowable maximum time, under the guise of what was called 'segregation'. Let me explain that in the 1939 act there was a whole part of the act devoted to the punishment of inmates of corrective institutions. The reason for that was that in 1934 there had been a scandalous situation at Yanco, an institution run by the department. The superintendent there, Arthur Parsonage, known as 'the flogging major'—he was not an actual major; he was a major in the cadet corps—was found to have punished boys very excessively.

The 1939 act, which actually took about five years to get written, very closely prescribed what could be done by way of punishment. Apart from some corporal punishment, for boys mainly, isolated detention was limited to an absolute maximum of 72 hours, and that could only be ordered by a magistrate. The normal punishment was 24 hours isolated detention. But, under the guise of what was known as 'segregation', in fact both girls and boys—but mainly girls—were given isolated detention which went for well beyond that, and in some cases for up to three weeks or longer.

Isolated detention was identical to segregation. Both involved being locked in a cell. Most of the cells had steel doors—all the ones that I have seen anyway. Normally you got one decent meal a day, and the rest of the time you got a bread and milk or bread and water. That has never been officially acknowledged; nevertheless, it definitely existed. There is a file in the state records—3/9065.5—which shows numerous cases of segregation in excess of one week. One case I found was 26 days. The departmental file is 52/282/4285.

After 1939 there was also illegal punishment of absconders. Under the 1939 act, absconders were supposed to be dealt with by the courts alone. The reason for that was, again, the Yanco scandal. Although it is not stated overtly in the act, the purpose of it was that, if somebody did run away from an institution, an independent body—for example, a magistrate hearing a charge of absconding—could at least determine whether there had been some good reason for the child to run away. That is contained in section 139(2) of the act.

There had also been inhumane and illegal punishment of boys at Gosford, Yanco and Mittagong. This is well detailed in the report by John McCulloch in 1934: he sat as a delegate of the Public Service Board inquiring into the behaviour of Parsonage at Yanco. There had also been an earlier inquiry, called the Fincham inquiry, in 1923 at Gosford—it was never published in the parliamentary papers, but I have seen a copy of it—after a boy was badly bashed there. But the main problem was at Yanco. What happened there was that boys who misbehaved or ran away were given so-called 'bag room' court martials, in which the other inmates would make a judgment on what had happened. This had also happened at Gosford in 1923. The sentence was that they would fight other boys, sometimes three and four boys in a row, so at the end of the punishment they had had a really good belting. There were also excessive fatigue duties: boys running around the oval at Yanco many, many times in the middle of the hot summer, and they had no hat and were not allowed to wear shoes. All of that is on the public record in the McCulloch inquiry of 1934, which is in the New South Wales parliamentary papers.

The second point I want to make is that the priority for both politicians and officials was not the wellbeing of children but cost cutting and economy. That in my view was essentially because it was believed that there was a delinquent class which was criminal, self-perpetuating, beyond redemption and therefore not worth spending money on. The idea of a delinquent class originated in England, where there were parts of London—places like Seven Dials—where police would not go and where the people who lived there spoke their own language and protected each other from the police. There are many references in parliamentary inquiries in New South Wales in the 1850s to this kind of development, particularly around The Rocks in Sydney.

The evidence for the belief I outline is that, first of all, institutional forms of care persisted because they were cheaper even though they were known to be damaging to children. From the 1880s onwards there was quite a movement against institutional care in New South Wales. Many people advocated the establishment of what was called the family system—or cottage homes. In fact, some were set up at Mittagong. Mittagong is an early example of cottage homes, dating from about 1885. The government and many politicians continued to say that the family system—cottage homes—was the preferred option, but it was never used extensively because it was more expensive.

Another example of this delinquent class theory, if you like, is that both delinquents and non-delinquents were accommodated together in the same institutions. That was not supposed to happen. Originally, when institutions were set up by the state in New South Wales, there were reformatory schools and industrial schools. Reformatory schools were for those who had committed crimes and industrial schools were for those that the courts thought probably were going to commit crimes, but the two were not supposed to be mixed. Almost from the word go they were mixed because both police and magistrates adopted a system where, if somebody came before them charged with an offence, they would dismiss the charge and deal with the child as being in need of care—not in so many words but under the phraseology of the Industrial Schools Act. That persisted really up until 1987 when the new legislation came in.

Under the 1939 act, those who committed crimes could be sent to institutions or be made state wards. Those who had not committed crimes but were regarded as neglected or uncontrollable under the terminology of the act could likewise be made wards or be sent to institutions. If you absconded as a ward you could be sent to an institution. If you were uncontrollable as a ward you could be sent to an institution. Gosford; Yanco; Parramatta; the Shaftesbury Reformatory, a place that operated at South Head, Vaucluse; and Carpentarian Reformatory, better known as Brush Farm; and the ships in the harbour, the *Vernon* and the *Sobraon*, which preceded it, all accommodated delinquents and non-delinquents together.

Boys in particular were sometimes kept well beyond the time when they should have been discharged. In the aftermath of the Yanco inquiry, a new head of the department was appointed. Parsonage, the guy at Yanco, got the sack and subsequently the head of the department, a man named Thomson, also got the sack. A new man, Charles Wood, was appointed. He did an audit of all those in institutions and discharged more than 137 boys. Most of them had been kept long beyond the date when they should have been discharged. Some of them were nearly 20, the discharge age then being 18.

The third point I want to make is that girls were treated far worse than boys. Why was that? In my view, it was because of entrenched Victorian attitudes to fallen women and the view that girls were inherently more difficult to reform than boys. Those attitudes you can see in statements by Henry Parkes, by reformers in England and by a succession of people who were involved in child welfare systems right up to the 1950s, when they were still saying the same thing: girls are more difficult to reform than boys. The evidence for that is, first of all, the very poor accommodation, in buildings repeatedly condemned. For most of the period from 1866—when the first industrial school was established—up until the 1980s, the industrial school at Parramatta was the main place for girls. It had been repeatedly condemned. The first condemnation of it that I could find was in 1855, before it even became a state institution. It was previously a Catholic orphanage. It was condemned in the 1890s. It was condemned by an inquiry into child welfare homes conducted by a man named Mason Allard, who was a royal commissioner, in 1920. It was condemned by McCulloch in 1934; it was condemned by everybody. It was condemned by Mary Tenison Woods, who was a noted reformer who did a survey of institutions in 1934. It did not really close until the 1980s.

The reason for the condemnation was that it was antiquated, a Dickensian institution completely unsuitable for the accommodation of girls and, of course, it was an old barracks style institution, which did not permit any proper classification of girls to separate hardened girls from others. Institutions for girls were always walled, in contrast to those for boys. The only walled

institution for boys was one at Tamworth, and I will say a bit about that later on. All the others were open institutions.

There was obvious discrimination against girls in sentencing patterns. In 1905, when probation became a judicial option for the first time, it was expected that there would be a fall in the number of children in institutions. That certainly happened with boys, but it did not happen with girls. In fact, more girls came into institutional care after 1905, and that pattern remained. Consistently, courts sent a higher percentage of girls to institutions than they gave non-institutional sentences to.

There was greater regimentation in girls' institutions. The theory, which had persisted since things started in the 1860s, was that every moment of the day had to be filled with some useful activity, so at Parramatta, the main place, there was heavy regimentation. When girls were moving from one room to another, all the doors would be locked, so there was the continual regime of unlocking and locking doors as you went from one part of the institution to the other. I have set some of this out in an article that was published in the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* in 1989. I have given particulars to staff of the committee, and you may care to read that at your leisure. It sets out some of the regimentation that took place. It certainly was very oppressive.

There was much more extensive use of isolated detention and segregation than in boys' institutions. There was certainly toleration of unlawful assaults on girls. There are many allegations that girls were bashed. On the ABC's *Stateline* program some time ago girls were also alleging that they were sexually assaulted. I think that the department followed a double standard in relation to this. Superficially, anybody who was caught assaulting a girl would be dealt with under the Public Service Act and there would be an inquiry. My view is that, unofficially, it was permitted as long as you made sure you did not do it in public.

I have been unable to find a single instance of anybody being charged criminally with assaulting an inmate of an institution, even though there was provision in the legislation from 1905. There was specific provision for anybody who ill-treated or assaulted a child in the care of the state. Typically there would be a move towards establishing an inquiry under section 56 of the Public Service Act, but quite often the person would be allowed to resign ahead of the inquiry. It certainly happened in the 1970s when a man named Monaghan was superintendent at Parramatta. One of the girls suffered a broken jaw, and he was allowed to resign. And it happened back in the sixties when it was alleged that another man named Johnston had interfered with a girl, and he and his deputy were allowed to resign.

There was greater resort to imprisonment as punishment for rebellious behaviour. There were two big series of riots at Parramatta, in 1941 and 1961. They went on for months at a time. In 1941 a large number of girls were imprisoned in Long Bay—three months imprisonment was the penalty under the act. At the end of the three months they went back to Parramatta. I cannot remember precisely how many, but my recollection is that more than 20 girls were sent to Long Bay. They actually liked Long Bay because the regime there was less onerous than at Parramatta Girls Industrial School. In 1961 the same thing happened. Riots went on for the best part of seven or eight months, from memory. Thirty or 40 girls, one of them as young as 14, were sent to Long Bay. The same thing did not happen with boys. Boys tended not so much to riot but to abscond, because they were in open institutions.

One of the things wrong with the institutions for girls was that there were male management systems in place. All the superintendents at Parramatta had done their training at Gosford. Gosford was the big institution for boys. At times it held up to 450 boys—I think that was the maximum there. It was a big place. That is where institutional executive staff got their training. Over and above that, some of the superintendents at Parramatta got their training at Tamworth, which was a very hard, harsh place for boys.

That brings me to my fourth point which is that there was unconscionably harsh treatment for both boys and girls at both Tamworth and Hay. Tamworth was set up in 1947 to counter the large-scale absconding that had occurred in the early 1940s from Gosford. At times whole groups of boys absconded from Gosford, and this was an effort to create a place of terror, if you like, to stop boys absconding from Gosford. Tamworth was an old colonial prison. It had cells and you could still see the place at the end of the cell block where people had been hanged. No visitors were allowed. Talking was allowed for only one hour per day. Everything was done at the double. I can remember being there and the boy bringing you a cup of tea would bring it in at the double. Boys were confined in cells. They slept on the floor on coir mats. You can image how pleasant that was, in both summer and winter in Tamworth—particularly in winter. They were under continual surveillance and they were punished for the slightest infringement of rules—usually by 24 hours isolated detention.

There is some doubt in my mind as to whether Tamworth was actually properly constituted. Under the 1939 act institutions were supposed to be either a school or a shelter. It was proclaimed in 1947 as neither; it was proclaimed as an institution. I am not a lawyer but it seems to me that laws relating to the liberty of the subject are usually strictly interpreted. One view could be that everybody who was detained there was illegally detained.

Hay was set up as an exact copy of Tamworth. It was for girls. It followed the 1961 riots at Parramatta and it was an attempt to separate out the more rebellious girls at Parramatta. Hay is way down in the south-west of the state and it was, again, a former colonial prison. There were cell blocks and exactly the same routine—no visitors, and talking for only one hour a day, everything done at the double, continuous surveillance and punishment for the slightest infringement.

The big advantage of Tamworth and Hay was that boys and girls could be transferred there without a court hearing. Even though the act provided for punishments for rebellious behaviour in institutions, that being aired in a court would be somewhat embarrassing. Under this system you simply transferred the boy or the girl to what was in fact a juvenile prison. The girls were transferred at very short notice. They were taken at night and put on the train at Campbelltown. They were taken down by escort and very few possessions were allowed to go with them. It must have been a very harsh thing for them. The regime down there was extremely harsh. That is about all I wanted to say.

CHAIR—Mr Quinn, you were an officer of the child welfare department for nearly 40 years?

Mr Quinn—Yes, 41 years.

CHAIR—I do not know if you have been here all day, but we have heard about a lot of instances where people have been in state institutions, non-state institutions and religious

institutions. They have given a lot of evidence about being physically, emotionally and sexually abused. In that whole 40 years you never heard of any of this?

Mr Quinn—Not in any way that involved me personally doing an investigation of the allegations.

CHAIR—I think you may have been here earlier when we heard about the Flower report.

Mr Quinn—That is in Victoria, as I understand it. There is a very important difference between New South Wales and the other states. When the industrial school system was set up in 1866 Henry Parkes was in full flight. In every other state, governments basically relied on church organisations—probably because they were cheaper. The church would foot some part of the bill and the state would subsidise wards placed in their care. That followed the English system—that was exactly the way it was in England. Most of the industrial schools were run by charities and churches and were subsidised. The original subsidy in the 1860s was six shillings a day, from memory.

There were proposals here in New South Wales that a similar system be set up. Archbishop Polding wanted to set up industrial schools—one for boys and one for girls—on a subsidised basis, subject to state inspection, but Henry Parkes, who was very much a secularist, did not want churches to have any part in the system at all. So the state wards generally—almost exclusively—were not placed in non-government homes in New South Wales. There were some exceptions to that. Occasionally you would find a child who perhaps was blind and if the state did not have proper facilities they would be placed in a home for blind children, but they were very rare exceptions. Largely, New South Wales ran its own homes for state wards, and state wards were not generally placed in non-government care.

CHAIR—What about children who might have been mentally disabled?

Mr Quinn—Intellectually disabled? New South Wales did run some institutions for intellectually disabled children. There was always a percentage—it varied a bit but somewhere around 20 per cent of children in state care were intellectually disabled—so there were homes, like Brush Farm, for example, within the state system. There was also tension between the child welfare department and the health department because the boundaries of who should look after whom were not very clear. Technically, the health department was supposed to look after severely and profoundly disabled children, and there were definitions of those; the child welfare department was supposed to look after moderately disabled children; and the education department was supposed to look after mildly disabled children—in other words, kids who could function in the community. But that did not work out. In fact, a large hospital had to be built at Eastwood, at the back of Brush Farm, for the children that the health department would not take, even though they had a big home at Stockton, where there were similar children.

CHAIR—You mentioned two riots at Parramatta—in 1941 and 1961.

Mr Quinn—Yes.

CHAIR—According to your historical studies, and maybe even while you were there during the second one, were there any internal reports done as to the reasons for those riots?

Mr Quinn—After the 1941 riot the Child Welfare Advisory Council, which was then a very active body, was commissioned by the minister to conduct an investigation into Parramatta Girls Home. That is a published work. It was chaired by Mary Tenison Woods, and two members of the committee actually went there and lived for a week to get a feel for the place. They published a report—it was not published until 1945, because of the wartime restrictions on newsprint and things like that—which gave a pretty negative view of Parramatta Girls Home. The staff there were said to be untrained and there was a lack of innovative thought about the way in which the home should be run. Once again there was criticism of the premises as being antiquated and there was a recommendation that a cottage home system be put in place and the home be closed down.

In 1945, I think it was, the department acquired a large area of land at Thornleigh, with the object of building about a dozen cottages. There was about 50 acres, so it was a fair bit of land. The idea was that you would have girls of different classes in different cottages. However, only two cottages were built in 1945. They functioned as a kind of pre-discharge home for Parramatta. In other words, girls who had already been at Parramatta for quite some time—some of them spent up to three or four years there—and who were approaching the date when they were considered suitable for discharge were transferred to Thornleigh to a less rigorous regime as a prelude to discharge. Some of them actually went out to work from there. But only two places were built. It was not until the 1961 riots that the plan was revived and other cottages were built, but by that time the government had gotten scared and, instead of setting up a cottage home system, it built a series of dormitories surrounded by a wall.

CHAIR—By 'scared' what do you mean?

Mr Quinn—I think they were scared by the adverse publicity generated by the riots. I do not know whether you know Parramatta at all, but it is quite visible from the—

CHAIR—My office is just over there.

Mr Quinn—Fleet Street goes right past it. During the riots, girls were up on the roof. They took off all their clothes, pulled off the tiles and smashed the windows. I think at one stage every window in the whole place was smashed. There were then demonstrations—the Council for Civil Liberties held a demonstration outside the school and so on. There were calls in parliament for a royal commission, which was denied, and a lot of adverse publicity. Thornleigh was the trade-off for that. When the land was bought in 1945, it was remote from Sydney. It was not a closely settled suburb, but by 1961 there were a lot of houses around and so the wall had to be put up.

CHAIR—So was Parramatta under the control of the department of child welfare then?

Mr Quinn—Yes.

CHAIR—Such a major riot would have been a big deal, I imagine, back in 1961 for the department—the officers, the hierarchy and all that.

Mr Quinn—Yes. The superintendent there at the time, a man named Gordon, was about 60. He had a bad heart and he retired. Immediately after the riots, a man named Eric Troy was sent

out and—he is now dead, so I can say this—he was a pretty tough guy. A number of male officers were sent there as well to subdue the riots. Even with that, the riots went on for some months.

CHAIR—In relation to Parramatta, we have had evidence given to us about systematic sexual, physical and emotional abuse which seemed to have gone on from 1961.

Mr Quinn—I would say it was a lot earlier than that.

CHAIR—Yes, but there is a riot in 1961 and the government—or the department—does something. What does it do?

Mr Quinn—You say 41 in 1961 but there were many more riots than that. When the first industrial school was set up at Newcastle, in Watt Street, there were riots there. In fact, it was moved from Newcastle because the citizens of Newcastle objected to the riots. It was then moved to Cockatoo Island, and there were riots there.

Senator KNOWLES—What happened as a consequence of these riots?

Mr Quinn—There were riots all the way through.

Senator KNOWLES—I am sorry to interrupt but we are running very short of time. The thing that disturbs me, Mr Quinn, is that people's conduct was known and they were allowed to get on their horse and ride off into the sunset—in other words, resign—before being dealt with. What I want to know and what I do not understand is why the department did not say, 'Sorry, Sport, you're not allowed to ride off into the sunset. You have to face the full consequences of the law.'

Mr Quinn—I do not know the answer to that question. But it was invariable practice: I have been unable to find a single instance of where anybody was charged with a criminal offence.

Senator KNOWLES—That is right, and that is why I seek your help and advice as to where we could go and how we could try to get information as to why those people were not pursued by the law as it was then and as it is today. It seems as if there is this gaping hole.

Mr Quinn—I would say for the usual reasons: covering up and not wanting publicity. I think they would be the obvious reasons. It is all very well to judge by today's standards but we are talking about 40 years ago, when standards were different.

Senator KNOWLES—What was illegal then is illegal now.

Mr Quinn—Yes, that is true.

Senator KNOWLES—What is illegal now was illegal then.

Mr Quinn—That is true.

Senator KNOWLES—I find it difficult to say that things then were different from now. Abuse of a child is abuse of a child is abuse of a child.

Mr Quinn—That is true but I think you have to see that there were different standards. For example, corporal punishment was much more frequently used up till the middle of the 20th century not only in institutions but in schools and families. You cannot gainsay that. What might appear to be intolerable today in terms of somebody getting a beating might have been the routine in earlier days. We might not like it very much but nevertheless it was part of society.

Senator KNOWLES—I still do not think I understand any of that. People willingly covering up criminality is reprehensible. The other thing that amazes me with the departmental checking that was meant to be going on with these institutions—

Mr Quinn—What institutions are you talking about now?

Senator KNOWLES—Parramatta, Hay, anywhere. They were not getting an education. Once again, I do not understand how that can just be swept under the carpet.

Mr Quinn—Not getting an education?

Senator KNOWLES—And the department giving it a tick.

Mr Quinn—There were schools in all of those institutions—at Gosford, Yanco and Parramatta—which were then run by the education department. They were not then under the control of the child welfare department. The schools that were inside the institutions were run separately.

Senator KNOWLES—But the children's care was meant to be monitored by the welfare department. I would have thought that department would have said, 'Are these children here being not only treated well, fed well, clothed well and everything else but also educated? There is a school here on site—are they going to school? If so, what are their results?' to make sure that this truancy that became self-perpetuating was nipped in the bud. It just does not seem to me as though there was any coordination by the department.

Mr Quinn—Let us take the educational issue first. First of all, most of the children who came into Gosford and Parramatta were educationally retarded. In other words, there had been something lacking in their schooling before they even came. So it was not an easy problem. There were schools there, and some attempt was made at education. Right from the very word go, back in the 1860s, there was what was called a half system. Again, it copied the British system. Kids went to school half the time and learnt other things the rest of the time. For example, on the nautical ships they learnt how to tie ropes, sail boats and all that sort of thing. At Brush Farm, for example, there was the making of clothes, the making of jam tins and things like that. It was a half-and-half system. One of the things about institutions is this: they tend to follow the same things that they have always done. It is very hard to change institutional culture. When I was looking at Parramatta, one of the things I found really frustrating was that there was a seven-day menu cycle. So on every Wednesday of the year you had exactly the same food. That had gone on since, I reckon, the 1880s. It did not change until the 1960s.

Senator KNOWLES—Mr Quinn, I am sorry to interrupt, but we are so short of time that I really must come back to this issue of education. I am bewildered, to say the least, as to why the department in their regular checks did not monitor whether the children were actually being sent to school or not.

Mr Quinn—Sent to school? How do you mean?

Senator KNOWLES—Using the educational facilities that were there.

Mr Quinn—As I understand it—and others may have a different view—those of school age went to school. Those who were above school age—and most of the boys at Gosford and many of the girls at Parramatta would have been above school age—did not go to school. There is some blurring of the edges there.

Senator KNOWLES—There is.

Mr Quinn—Some girls who were older than 15, the school-leaving age, did continue to go to school, and some boys did too. The schools were there. They were run by the education department.

Senator KNOWLES—And people came out illiterate.

Mr Quinn—Yes. It is a good question. In the course of time—I cannot quite remember exactly when it happened; it might have been in the seventies—the education department handed over control of those schools to the child welfare department and its successors. But, before that—and do not quote me on the exact date; it might have been a bit later, at the end of the seventies—the education department schools operated by the education department operated inside the institutions. For example, the Lower Mittagong public school was completely devoted to inmates of the Mittagong training school.

Interjector—No, no.

Mr Quinn—No?

CHAIR—Anyway, that is historical.

Mr Quinn—As I understood it, that was the case. There may have been the odd pupil who did not fit the bill, but most of them were there.

Senator MURRAY—I wonder if I could ask you to put this on notice, Mr Quinn. It might be in your research or your documentation. One of the things the committee is trying to do is establish the scale and the numbers that went through institutions. If you are able to perhaps drop a note to the committee and let us know how many children and young people went through the institutions that you are aware of, like Parramatta, that would be very helpful. If you are not able to provide that—

Mr Quinn—That is a bit of a tall order. From 1887, that is nearly 100 years.

Senator MURRAY—An estimate would help, because I assume there was an average time spent by children there.

Mr Quinn—Most of the time Parramatta operated at an average of about 100 girls. At times, in the late thirties, it dropped down to about 65 and, in the 1960s, when the riots occurred in '61, it was up at about 200.

Senator MURRAY—I wonder if I could ask you—because there is very little time and for us to indulge in a bit of mental maths will not be all that helpful—if you could perhaps give it some thought and consider whether you can give us a good estimate.

Mr Quinn—I will give it some thought, but I do not know that it can be ascertained all that easily without going through 100 annual reports or something like that.

Senator MURRAY—Perhaps if you could respond to us if you are able to and, if you are not able to, let us know where perhaps we could ask questions.

Mr Quinn—Gosford started off with about 120, I think. It reached a maximum of 450 before other places were built.

Senator MURRAY—You know what I am after, so if you could look for that.

Senator HUMPHRIES—I have just one question. You were a district officer from 1959 to 1970 at Grafton. That presumably involved the role of inspecting institutions in the district.

Mr Quinn—Yes.

Senator HUMPHRIES—The evidence that we have had overall is that the inspections of institutions, government and non-government alike, were very ad hoc, desultory and minimal when they occurred.

Mr Quinn—The two institutions that were in that area were a Catholic orphanage at Cowper, run by the Grafton Sisters of Mercy, and the United Protestant Association at Rathgar at South Grafton. But I think you will find, if you look at the act, that licensing was only required if you had children under the age of seven, although I was certainly familiar with both of those places, because I used them. I did not have anywhere to put kids if I picked them up and quite often I used those places to accommodate them overnight while waiting for an escort to take them down to Sydney or something like that. Rathgar was a fairly small place, with maybe about 20 kids. It was the original UPA home—the first of its kind. Cowper was much larger. It was a big barn of a place. There were about 120 kids. I certainly looked through all the dormitories at both of those places. I went over the whole place.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Did you interview children one on one in any of those places?

Mr Quinn—No, because that was not part of the licensing system. I certainly looked at any children under the age of seven. There was another place at Dorrigo too, run by the Presentation nuns. It was almost in the nature of a boarding school. They had children under seven there. I

would have a look at those children and see if they were all right. I would have to admit that there certainly were no one-on-one interviews alone. That was not the practice in those days.

Senator HUMPHRIES—Were you not expected to do that, or was it against departmental regulations?

Mr Quinn—It was not part of the system, as I understood it. But the older children were outside the licensing regimen.

Senator HUMPHRIES—And there was no-one who inspected in respect of them?

Mr Quinn—Not to my knowledge, no. That practice dates from the turn of the century. Licensing was brought in in relation to small children.

CHAIR—I have a final question, Mr Quinn—a historical one. Does the Parramatta site for the girls' home go back to convict days?

Mr Quinn—It was built in 1841 as a Catholic orphanage. The original Catholic orphanage was at Waverley, but it had outgrown its capacity. The Parramatta site is certainly a heritage listed property. Now it is a prison called the Norma Parker Centre, as you are probably aware. The government paid for the construction of the building and quite a few of the salaries at that time. The running costs of the Catholic orphanage, the Protestant orphanage at Rydalmere—or earlier at Liverpool—and the Randwick asylum were quite heavily subsidised by the government. That was pre Henry Parkes's day.

CHAIR—Presumably there were girls there who were the daughters of convicts in 1841?

Mr Quinn—It was supposed to have been built to accommodate the children of the women in the female factory next door. The children had previously lived in the factory with their mothers.

CHAIR—And those women were transported?

Mr Quinn—It was originally run by a committee of lay people. Then it was taken over by the Charity nuns and later on by the Good Samaritan nuns. In 1887 it was discovered that even though the church was supposed to have had title to the land somebody in the church hierarchy had forgotten to apply for title and it still belonged to the Crown. Henry Parkes said, 'Thanks very much, I'll take it back.' And that is exactly what he did; he turfed them out.

Senator MOORE—Mr Quinn, I realise that you are here in a private capacity and that you are now doing an academic study, but your qualifications as an expert in the field go back many years. I am interested to know whether the kinds of issues that have been raised in evidence to the committee today come as any surprise to you, your having worked in the field for so long. You have heard some of the evidence and I know you have read in some of the submissions about the degree of pain and concern that some witnesses have.

Mr Quinn—I have not read any of the submissions, but it came as no surprise to me to see the *Stateline* program on the ABC. I thought that was very consistent with what I had seen. And it is consistent with some of the other works by people who have written about Parramatta Girls

Home. I did see the program about the Salvation Army home at Bexley and that had a ring of truth to it.

Senator MOORE—So they were not things which you had not heard before?

Mr Quinn—The running of children's homes and child welfare have always attracted a certain class of people. It is not always easy to detect such a person at first blush—

Interjector—Unbelievable!

Mr Quinn—I do not think it is. Wherever you have children, it will be an attraction to a certain class of person. Some of them have ended up in non-government church organisations and some of them have ended up in government organisations.

CHAIR—Finally, Mr Quinn, you heard earlier about the report Mr Carter referred to which came from Victoria. In your study for your thesis and also in your practical experience, did the various child welfare agencies throughout the country ever formally or informally meet or formally or informally exchange information on practices relating to how they might approach children in child welfare?

Mr Quinn—I do not think that actually happened until the Association of Child Caring Agencies was formed in the early 1960s, mainly with the object of getting subsidies from the government. They were successful in that. Subsidies had been denied for the best part of 100 years because of sectarianism, which was more entrenched here in New South Wales that in other states. It was not until some of them were facing closure as a result of financial strain that they got together. The first president of the Association of Child Caring Agencies, I think, was the Reverend Cole—a Presbyterian. The secretary was Father McCosker, who was head of the Catholic Welfare Bureau at the time. They got together and formed a united front to get some financial relief. That was the initial impetus that drew them together. I am not aware of anything before that time. There may have been, but I certainly have not come across it.

CHAIR—What about government departments like the department of child welfare in New South Wales and child welfare in Melbourne and Brisbane—did they ever meet?

Mr Quinn—Yes.

CHAIR—From your studies, do you know when they commenced?

Mr Quinn—There were interstate meetings of heads of child welfare departments, but I do not know when they began. Certainly when I first had anything to do with them in the early 1970s they had been going for some years. They used to meet, I think, on an annual basis to compare notes about this and that.

CHAIR—If there are no further questions, thank you very much for coming along today. We wish you success.

[6.49 p.m.]

SHEEDY, Ms Leonie, Secretary, Care Leavers of Australia Network

CHAIR—I welcome Ms Leonie Sheedy.

Ms Sheedy—I am here to represent Ron Pritchard.

CHAIR—Would you like to make a statement on behalf of Mr Pritchard?

Ms Sheedy—Yes, I would. Ron rang me on Sunday and said that he had been invited to speak. Unfortunately, he is not able to attend. He would have dearly loved to have been here but due to ill health he is unable to attend. He has spent the last six days in intensive care. He dictated this statement over the phone and I took the notes:

> The church represents god and yet it covers up all of these child sexual abuse cases. People put their children into these institutions believing that the children would be looked after. The churches and the states neglected their responsibilities. They have known of these abuses for years, because too many people have come forward and a lot of priests and other people have been charged. Many have not been charged and have been moved from place to place. What was done to me was criminal and very, very wrong. Please remember that I was a little boy.

That concludes his statement.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Ms Sheedy. The committee stands adjourned.

Committee adjourned at 6.51 p.m.