

Beverley Ann Dixon

Submission to the WA Enquiry into Forced Adoption

I AM A FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIAN.

*Please **listen** to me,*

***Believe** me*

***Recognise** me*

*Do not **judge** me.*

*I don't want to feel **confused** or **threatened**.*

I carry the trauma of my childhood all throughout life.

Beverley Ann Dixon

Faye Lorraine Cruse (now Beverley Ann Dixon - nee Witney)

Introduction

I am a 76 year old mother and grandmother, deeply and adversely affected by past adoption practices and welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Forced Adoption Inquiry Western Australia. I wasn't aware that this was occurring hence my late submission. I am hoping that this inquiry will allow survivors of the Forced Adoption Era (FAE) a voice that should be listened to and allow us to explain the end result that we must deal with on a daily basis.

I appreciate that it is not an easy thing to read or listen to, delving into the experiences, histories, and policies of the FAE. It is even harder for those who have had to live through this and now relate it to you. This enquiry should provide another important public record detailing the immense life-long harms inflicted upon thousands of vulnerable young women, their sidelined partners, and their newborn babies. Hopefully other Australian jurisdictions will follow and hold their own formal enquires before time steals away justice from the survivors of FAE.

I write my submission to your inquiry to support both "Mothers" and "Adoptees" many of whom are no longer here to represent themselves. I sincerely support and thank those surviving mothers and adoptees for going forward and ploughing through the public disbelief they have experienced, and telling their stories in the fight for recognition. They have made themselves yet again vulnerable, as they selflessly have faced repeated re-traumatization with every word written or spoken in the decades of their fight for a public formal apology. Unfortunately, much more needs to be done, which shouldn't need to be asked for, but should be obvious.

I also wish to address the inadequacy of the process of adopting our younger son and how I feel he was let down by that process. More about that later on as well.

I regard myself as part of "The Other Stolen Generation".

I have, as part of this process, looked up the definition of the word bastard (Oxford dictionary). It is very confronting:

"Begotten and born out of wedlock. Illegitimate, unrecognized, unauthorized. Not genuine; counterfeit; spurious; debased, adulterated, corrupt."

All this about innocent children who had done nothing wrong, but society made these judgements about us. How would you feel if this was you or your child? Uncomfortable at the very least I would think.

My Journey

I was born Faye Lorraine Cruse daughter of [REDACTED] I was adopted out to a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and was their only child.

This is a placement which should never have occurred. [REDACTED] was a narcissistic, violent woman who within a few short years of my adoption was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic. Her family had a history of mental illness and even a cursory review of the [REDACTED] application would have raised serious concerns.

In spite of the serious nature of her illness and the violent and unsafe circumstances of the home I was left in this environment.

The impacts of this have been ongoing and left me with a deep-seated anger, anxiety and other mental health issues. I live in a constant state of suppressed emotions and have been in regular counselling for over 10 years.

This journey to search for your birth family is not for the faint hearted. It is fraught with danger. You expose yourself and become very vulnerable. If you are contemplating finding your family, you need to think long and hard about the outcomes you would like but be prepared to accept less. It was only in 2010 I commenced seeking my biological family. After all this time, at the most I thought I might get, if I was lucky, was some snippets of medical history and some information about my mother, as to the sort of person she was. This was very important to me as my adopted parents had both died and I had no sense of who I was other than being told I was a wife and mother, but I felt there was much more to me than that.

There are laws governing seeking family and what you are allowed to do legally. I went through an agency called Vanish, they went about this process very carefully and correctly. As the process was carried out interstate there were carefully managed phone sessions with lots of discussion and mediation. I used Vanish (they came highly recommended), as they were based in Melbourne and my journey started there.

I could have used Jigsaw, but we have an adopted son, and Jigsaw conducted a search to find him, and handled it badly. I had no desire to upset, hurt or alienate anyone in the process of finding my biological family. Respect and tact were my way of proceeding through this. Having previously been involved with dealing with the outcome and fallout of our son's process, and of his being damaged by what went on with his father, there was no way I would want to inflict this on others.

I started out by trying to get birth certificates. To do this I needed correct names and birth dates. My biological mother had upped her age on her admission to The Haven where I was born. In using the dates supplied I couldn't find her even though she had an unusual surname. Once I deleted her birth date, I found her very quickly. Then I found that she had died in 1992 and I had half siblings as they all showed up on the death certificate. The next obstacle was the fact that her husband (he died in 2002) and all my half siblings were or had been in the RAAF and the place of living was not freely available.

Later on, I met up with my half-sister and two brothers who supplied me with much of the family history. These days we freely exchange information and, although they are in the eastern states, we talk often.

My Mother's story: [REDACTED]

My mother was the last-born child of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED], her father, was an only child, the son of Cornish miners who came to Australia to work in the goldfields. [REDACTED] married on the [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] had six siblings, one who died, [REDACTED], before her first birthday. The other children ranged from 8 to 2 years old when my mother was born. After my mother was born [REDACTED] her mother died later that year leaving these six young children motherless. [REDACTED] father, over the years, frequently told my mother it was her fault that her mother died. The fact that she had seven children in 11 years obviously had nothing to do with it! Their father was unable to care for them and they were placed in Childrens home. They initially were together at a Methodist Children's home in Cheltenham, Victoria. The boys were relocated to Tally Ho Boys home as they grew older, and once they were old enough, placed on farms, a normal practice at the time. The girls were to be trained as domestics, and placed in service, once old enough.

[REDACTED] removed [REDACTED], my mother, out of the Childrens home before she turned three and took on bringing her up. There was an aunt of my mothers, [REDACTED], who was involved in her upbringing, and later [REDACTED] oldest sister [REDACTED] [REDACTED] also played a role in raising [REDACTED] as well. [REDACTED] certainly appears to have been moved around a lot growing up. The other sisters remained in the children's home till they were old enough to work.

[REDACTED] oldest sister, [REDACTED] after she left the home to start work, boarded at the same house where her father [REDACTED] lived. She had a room inside the house, whilst he had sleepout on the veranda. She was found to be pregnant, but had no boyfriend, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. She ended up at the Salvation Army Unmarried Mothers home, the Haven where she had her daughter [REDACTED] on the

My mother married [REDACTED]. He had arrived in Victoria late 1947, after I had been born. He came to Victoria to join the RAAF. [REDACTED] brothers all were in the RAAF and through them he met [REDACTED]. They had 3 children, [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]. They are all five years apart and [REDACTED] the eldest is four years younger than me.

[REDACTED] husband was in the RAAF. [REDACTED] was apparently an exceptional Instrument fitter/engineer and was awarded an OAM for his work in the RAAF. Their children hold their parents in the highest esteem and have wonderful memories of them both.

My mother died in 1992 at 62 from poor health after a major car accident and her husband died in 2002.

My Story

Faye Lorraine Cruse DOB 26/03/47

No one living in the [REDACTED] family knew about my existence when I started this journey. [REDACTED] had already died back in 1992 and never told her three children about me. Their father never said anything either. She did however allude to my youngest brother that the family was bigger than he knew, not long before she died. He never thought anything about that statement until recently.

At this point I need to point out no one will tell me who were the agency responsible for my forced adoption placement. I have recently asked the Salvation Army representative, [REDACTED], who was most evasive and got no real answer. No apology. The [REDACTED] were active in the Salvation Army, the Salvation Army ran the institution, where my I was born, and their [REDACTED] filled out all the paperwork for my original birth certificate (Second Schedule) and on some of the court papers as she was the witness. Also listed on this document the "Informant" is a [REDACTED], "Authorized Agent" whose address is that of the Haven, [REDACTED]. Clearly the Salvation Army were responsible for arranging the adoption. Under what authority did they do this? Was it a private adoption?

I should also mention I was never told I was adopted and inadvertently found out later on.

I was born at the Haven, where [REDACTED] had her daughter. Who advised her to go there, my guess would have been [REDACTED]? [REDACTED] upped her age when being admitted to 19. I wonder who told her to do this? In copies of [REDACTED] being admitted to the Haven the first date that appears on the Admission Register is the 19/01/47 with pains. Was she in False labor? (Possibly Braxton Hicks?) Nothing else says she was discharged after this. However, she was readmitted on the 06/02/47 with pains again. False labor again? Discharged this time to friends on the 08/02/47. The third admission was on the 15/03/47 and she stayed at the Haven until I was born on the 26/03/47 at 8.30am. She left the Haven on the day I was

handed over to the [REDACTED] 15/05/47.

There are no details as to birth weight, length, whether it was a normal delivery or anything else. Was I, like my half siblings born premature? My birth becomes a nonevent at this point. I am still seeking medical records from the Victorian Health Department, currently, in an effort to find out if any medicine was prescribed at this time. In particular Diethylstilbestrol (DES), a drug frequently prescribed at this time to mothers who may be of risk of miscarrying and was also the drug of choice given to mothers to dry up their breast milk. It was subsequently found to, amongst, other things, to create intergenerational issues with female and male reproductive health. (My half siblings and their children have all had issues which are symptomatic of the consequences associated with this drug)

I don't understand how admission and discharged records can be found but not the relevant medical records. One needs to query is this some sort of coverup? Were there any medical interventions needed? What else should I be told? [REDACTED] had great difficulty having children after me and had many miscarriages. I also have had multiple miscarriages. Is there a link? I had a large growth/cyst like thing surrounding my right ovary surgically removed when I was nearly 17. That's all I know about it. This was done at the Alfred in Melbourne. I had horrendous periods, so bad that when I arrived at sick bay at school, I was issued with two Veganin (pain killers), a hot water bottle and my mother rung to come and get me, taking me out of school for a couple of days each month.

I was given (?) up for adoption to the [REDACTED] on the 15th of May that year. My new parents were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They had been full time Salvation Army officers prior to WWII. He had been a POW and a Padre serving in the Army. They renamed me Beverley Ann [REDACTED]. My father retrained as a PMG Telephone Technician.

One of the reasons I think I was "chosen" was I had been born on [REDACTED] birthday the 26th of March. I never had a birthday whilst she was alive as it was always "What are we doing for my birthday?"

In looking into the paperwork about my adoption I became aware a legal guardian had been appointed, a [REDACTED]. As this is in the court paperwork he must have been appointed by the court, surely? What were his duties? He signed off on my paperwork on the 23/08/49. Was he supposed to have carried out checks as to my welfare? At the time of sign off I wasn't even living with the [REDACTED]. How can this be?

At 15 months (06/1948) I went to live with my aunt and uncle (my adoptive mother's sister). My mother had me removed from their care and placed in the Anglican Darling Street Children's home Malvern, Victoria. When I asked why I was put in a children's

home my mother was shocked that I knew I had been, but I got an honest answer for once, by asking something unexpected, out of the blue. Her reply shocked me. She said I had been with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] but they had gotten too fond of me, so she had me placed in the Children's home instead (quote). God forbid someone was fond of me. Until I had that conversation with her, I had no idea I had been with her sister and brother-in-law prior to being placed in a Children's home. I had a conversation with my aunt when she was in her nineties (she was totally normal) and they never knew why I had been removed from their care. When I told her what my mother had said, her reaction was, yes that would be right as that was what [REDACTED] was like. I noticed from the Anglican children's home records that they got all my immunizations done whilst I was there. I also caught measles whilst I was there.

I have copies of the paperwork from the Darling Street Babies Home supplied by the Anglican Church back on the 16/05/2016. The paperwork is extraordinary hard to decipher. I was admitted on the 15/09/49. I remember being in the home for two reasons. The first one because I fell out of bed and broke my arm. According to the paperwork I went to hospital and was kept in from the 19th to the 22nd. but it doesn't say which month, but I would suggest it was the first week I was there as that's how I remember it. The Nuns were great, no problems there at all. The second is because when my dad came to collect me, he took me to a friend's house where I was entertained by a ventriloquist, Ron Blaskett, and his doll, Jerry Gee. This was a very big deal equivalent to meeting Fat Cat or a local TV idol I would think. I remember holding Jerry's hand and sitting on Ron's other knee. It seems creepy to me now. I think this was when I went home for 6 days over Christmas 1949. When I went home finally, I had been elsewhere for nearly 2 years. I left the home 09/1950. I was three and a half.

I am conflicted about having been handed around relations and a children's home and not being in a proper home with my so-called parents. However, I was probably much safer in these places than in what was supposed to be my forever home.

At this point it seems relevant to explain about my adoptive mother, [REDACTED]

My mother's family had history of mental health issues. They were all members of the Salvation Army (SA). They belonged to the Footscray SA and were very well known there. They had ten children, my mother being the second youngest. Her mother spent the last 16 years of her life in Kew Mental Asylum. All through my childhood mum's sister [REDACTED] was in and out of treatment (never explained what for) and her brother [REDACTED] hung himself in the shed he lived in the back yard of the family home in [REDACTED].

My mother disappeared out our home at various times for treatment for her nerves. That's

what I was told. A lot of this would have been talked about at the SA and I am convinced people in the Army would have known about this. Not all of it, but surely enough for me never to have been placed in her care. It wasn't a big organization back then and people talk. More about the SA later. Mum's remaining family were normal as far as I know. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] were all fine. There was another brother who died in an accident pre WWII. There was another lad who lived with family who wasn't related to them?

We lived at various places around Melbourne. Prahran, Thornbury, West Footscray, Northcote, East Melbourne, and East St Kilda. They were in Prahran when they first got me. I think by the time they got me back they were living at West Footscray.

At this stage I hadn't been back with the [REDACTED] very long and probably didn't realise what I was about to experience and unleash. I know neighbour's broke in / entered the house at West Footscray because I had been left in the house alone in the afternoon and my Mum had gone out. I had heard the car driving down the drive, leaving me locked in my bedroom. I had mumps at the time, and I was supposed to be having an afternoon sleep. Being a kid, I got up and played leapfrog over the shell radiator. My nightie snagged on the radiator, and I ended up with a burnt backside. I started screaming. The neighbours arrived and found me. Of course, I got a huge belting for getting out of bed. This was probably when I was about 4 and yes, I know I shouldn't have gotten out of bed, but she shouldn't have left me. She was furious. I would call it one of her white rage episodes and there were many. What a lifetime of experiences were to come.

The second time was when we lived at [REDACTED]. It was a Tuesday and Mum left me in house in my bedroom when she went to songster practice (choir) early evening. I know I screamed the house down when I realized I was locked in and left on my own. I heard the car driving going out. I assume this had something to do with us moving after these events. I started school whilst we lived in Northcote, I think at Wales Street Primary School. About this time Dad got me a dog. Mum hated it and got rid of it. I was heartbroken. Like many things in my life, anything I got attached to, she got rid of.

When we left Northcote and my parents bought a Cake shop in Victoria Parade, East Melbourne. I attended Collingwood Primary School, which was much rougher than my previous school. Dad baked all the pies before going to his day job. I used to be greeted with a sack of potatoes to peel and lots of dishes when I came home from school frequently. I broke my arm one night when there was a fire in a nearby factory. Dad and I went down a lane alongside the factory and I tripped over either a cobblestone or a fire hose. We were in

serious trouble when we got home as obviously my ability to help with the workload was reduced greatly. Sympathy for my broken arm was nonexistent as all hell broke loose with her. What made it worse later on was the first day I was back at school after the plaster came off was the fact that I was pushed down the stairs and re broke my arm again. Knowing what I do now I don't think it had healed sufficiently to have the cast removed. Any bones I have broken since then has taken nearly twice the normal time to heal (This is one of the many medical quirks I have from my biological family, my biological mother and younger brother have had the same issue). Of course, my mother thought I had deliberately done it and was punished according. Another mega belting. How can she have possibly thought that?

My mother abused me both physically and mentally and my father as well. We both would cop it. I was abused, neglected, locked in wardrobes and bedrooms, and beaten regularly, and left, when small. She must have had shares in a firm that produced wooden spoons, her favorite weapon. That and the slap across my head and face (these days I suffer from Meniere's which is centered in my left ear from which I get vertigo and have subsequent hearing loss. Is this a result of these blows from her right hand?), or legs if she could reach. As I got older this became a wrestling match as I would fight back, but I quickly learnt to pick my battles.

Living with my mother I constantly walked on eggshells. I was on a continuing rollercoaster, never knowing when she would become unreasonable or violent and erupt. I don't ever remember any affection from her. I think I became competition for her husband/dad's affection which then sparked resentment as a consequence. My early recollections are ones of terror and being constantly frightened. I could never switch off, always paying attention to her moods as I was always on the alert for what was coming next. She specialized in dressing me down in public, she loved humiliating me. When I was little, I was fairly compliant but subconsciously I never tuned out. To live in this environment, I had to develop skills to survive, and my problem-solving skills are still highly tuned, so much so that I have usually solved issues before others have even had time to start thinking about them. This is not normal; it never switches off being constantly on the alert. I lived my life in a state of fear, anguish and anxiety, all day every day, constantly thinking ahead to try and anticipate problems and change things, if I can, before they become issues.

By the time we had moved to East St Kilda I was about 9-10. I had learnt to read her moods and would take off. I would run off down to the flats 2 doors down and hide behind the newspapers, stacked under the stairs, until I heard my dad coming home from his second job, about 8.30-9.00 at night. We would go home together to whatever she had done, usually

tearing my bedroom apart, destroying things and dumping everything a big heap to be greeted with verbal, mental, as well as physical abuse. It frequently went into the night and both of us had to go to school and work the following day.

About this time, she branded me with a hot iron on my left arm. I had come home from school not feeling well as if I had flu or something else. I wasn't up to doing the ironing as I could barely stand up. I went to school the next day (Ripponlea PS) and the teacher wanted to know what was under the bandage. There were lots of questions asked and I wouldn't or couldn't answer them!

When I was 11, I got whooping cough and ended up in Fairfield Hospital for about 3 months. I don't remember her visiting but I do remember Dad coming and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They had a news agency, and they would bring me comics. I would treat the comics carefully and they would go back to be sold. I missed a lot of schooling that year and looked like one of the children you see on TV from Ethiopia when I was finally discharged. As a result of my not being at school when the Polio immunizations took place I missed out. I chased down where I could get it done and rode my bike to Caulfield Town Hall (I think) and got it done on my own. Dad had got me a secondhand bike when I was in hospital and done it up. It was a form of freedom to escape the house.

In 1957 my mother again disappeared from the house for a period of time. I was 10 at the time. I was told in 2006 when I was 59 by her GP at Hollywood (he let it slip, deliberately I think) that this was when my mother was diagnosed with being paranoid schizophrenic. And she was narcissistic as well. Why was I sent back into a house to be abused over and over again. I think it was so I could cook wash and clean acting as a "bondmaid" (slave). I did most of the housework and cooking till I left home when I got married, at 21.

The following year I started school at Elsternwick MLC in Year 6. All my remaining schooling was there. I was told I won a scholarship, but I don't remember sitting an exam. I had some catching up to do having missed so much the previous year. I enjoyed being there as there were a couple of teachers took an interest in me particularly once I was in the upper school. A [REDACTED] was the main one and she taught English and History. I still love history to this day and lots of my reading is nonfiction along those lines. I wanted to be a Vet but was told in no uncertain terms that wasn't lady like and to forget it. I was told my options were teaching, nursing, secretary etc. I did go through to year 12 (matric). I loved sport, netball, tennis, athletics and joined choirs and got house colours for these.

[REDACTED] by year 10, had left the school and was teaching at another school but offered

to coach me for free as she knew who was now teaching English and wasn't much good. To do this she had to come to our home. I think that was her aim, to see what was going on. I know she and my mother agreed to disagree. Unfortunately, I wasn't privy to that conversation. I had about six sessions with her when that happened. Mum ended that promptly.

Dad, I think set up places for me to go during school holidays, so I wasn't at her mercy. I think this started when I was about 10. I spent my holidays from then on with Mum's brother [REDACTED] and his wife [REDACTED]. He was a S.A. officer stationed as a chaplain at Puckapunyal an army (military) base two hours north of Melbourne. The other couple that had me during holiday's were friends of Dad's and lived out at Blackburn. They had a lovely garden which [REDACTED] would regularly walk me around getting me to name the plants both common names and botanical ones. I am sure that is where my love of gardens came from. Her husband, [REDACTED], was a real comic. I had a lot to do with these people for a long time and they were loving and kind. Their children were much older and married.

In my early teenage years, we got new neighbors, the [REDACTED]. They lived over the road and had three girls, all younger than me. They must have heard what was going on and they became my bolt hole. I would take so off that fast she had no idea where I went. [REDACTED] never asked any questions nor was critical of my mother but let me know I could come to their house any time day or night and wait for things to cool off. This went on for years till I got married at 21. [REDACTED] offered to make my wedding dress, very complicated and time consuming. It was a plain velvet full length dress with a full-length coat of Guipure lace. This involved making the coat side seams match which she did every night for months. A true labor of love. She also offered me the family tiara, an authentic family heirloom, which I wore to my wedding, however I did decline the very catholic veil. Ironically none of their daughters got to wear the tiara as none of them got married in a church. The tiara, these days, is in Ireland in a museum. The girls never really understood why I appeared at all hours of the day and night, till years later. I still see [REDACTED] every time we go back to Victoria. Unfortunately, the parents have since passed on, but the family are vitally important to me.

In my early teens I would be farmed out for periods of up to 3 months a couple of times a year. My mother would disappear out of the house for treatment, would be my guess, but I was never told what was going on. On one of these occasions, she disappeared from home yet again and I was off to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They lived in North Balwyn a good two hours from my school Elsternwick MLC so that made my days long travelling, but they were great as were my two cousins who had to have me there. They willingly took me in.

At some stage in my childhood, I had decided to be a survivor not a victim. Most of the time I

tried to keep a low profile, do as I was told and be compliant. As I got older and entered teenage years I became more capable of standing up for myself or reading what was coming and run. Often, I would arrive home to find my bedroom totally turned upside down, most times I didn't know why as there didn't necessarily need to be a reason. On these occasions she would then scream at me and dad for the whole night. We would then have to go to work or school the next day.

I was a normal teenager.

All our life the family was heavily involved in the activities of the Salvation Army. This involvement totally dominated life apart from home and school. This involvement consumed all of Sunday in various worship activities, activities during the week through Corps Cadets and Youth Group choir practice etc., and sporting activities via their church run netball association.

I took on various roles at the Army during this time, Sunday school teacher, netball captain, youth group leader, choir member etc. I guess I thought this might help me to be accepted.

However, my life at Malvern S.A. was one of being left out of things. Regularly, I felt excluded, shunned, slighted and generally ostracized. I was never invited to other girls' homes when others were. I have since found out that no wanted to deal with my mother so that left me out in the cold, something at the time was very hurtful as I felt I had done something to warrant being excluded. But couldn't work out what. A few years back, I asked a friend of ours whose parents were our Corps officers what his parents thought about us. He asked them as they were still alive then. They replied that "everyone was scared of my mum and didn't want to deal with her". This left me feeling alienated and resentful as I didn't understand it. Two other girls who also went to the same Corps and were also adopted were treated very differently. Everyone seemed to know I was adopted but I didn't. That hurt when I found out later, they all knew but I had no idea. You can't begin to understand how I felt. This was a church where I should have felt accepted and safe, not constantly judged, and slighted.

Years later after we were married when we were living in Tom Price, we went back to Malvern S.A. to get our son dedicated (christened) by my uncle. Afterwards, one of the ladies came up to me and said, "You are a credit to yourself". I didn't understand at the time. I felt they had all been waiting for me to stuff up all those years before.

I had a father who was just as scared of her as I was. He was a quiet, gentle person and at her mercy as well. DV isn't just done by men, she could have written the manual very easily. Everyone loved dad but that didn't help me one iota.

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I had a blue with my mum in the foyer of our house when I was about 14. It got pretty heated, and I said totally out of the blue "I must be adopted as no one could treat their own child the way you do." she exploded and dragged dad from the back of the house to deny it with her, which he did.

When I started going out with boys, she would answer the door when they arrived and pretend to faint. They wouldn't know what to make of it think it was genuine and leave. After this happened a couple of times, I would just step over her and leave. The boys who asked me out didn't come from our corps but other Army corps. None of the local lads would have been game enough. I seemed to be reasonably sort after which helped my self-confidence and self-esteem greatly.

When I left MLC, after a year working in an advertising agency, I trained to be a teacher. I was initially too young for teachers' college. I did an extra year's training to specialize in teaching the disabled. I loved what I was doing. I worked for the Helping Hand Association. School in Middle Brighton.

I was 19 when I met my future husband. He also belonged to the S.A. and came to Melbourne from Wangaratta to study Engineering. I met him initially when his choir came to our S.A. for a special weekend the previous year in 1966. When he came to Melbourne to live and study, he boarded with an elderly couple in Ormond where we eventually, lived after we married in August 1968. He had migrated with his family from England when he was 9. He had an older brother who had moved to NZ.

A month prior to this ██████████ died. My father was asked to be a pall bearer by mum's brothers. The funeral was Footscray Cemetery on a bleak, wet, freezing day. They carried the coffin in from the Cemetery gates to the grave side for the committal. He should have said no. That night he had a heart attack. He was taken to Hieldburg Repat Hospital. We offered to postpone the wedding, but he wouldn't hear of it. He maintained she would make sure it didn't go ahead if we did postpone it. The wedding went ahead on the last day of term, a Friday. After the service we went straight to the hospital and had our photos taken there. Dad was really happy I was married, and he really liked ██████████. We had the reception that evening and left for our honeymoon the next day. We had hardly arrived at where we were staying in Lakes Entrance when the police arrived. Dad had had a heart attack and

mum had supposedly broken her leg. We set off back to Melbourne the following day as it was too late to drive back that night.

We arrived back to being told off for taking so long to get back. We spent the two weeks school holidays driving from our flat to mums to do shopping, cooking, cleaning, and visiting dad. The only person dad would eat for was me. Once I was back at work, I would cook us a meal, making extra for mum that night, go to work, drop off the meal for mum, pick up [REDACTED] up and then drive to the hospital to see dad and feed him. This was our routine for the next month. Dad died on 28th September.

We stayed the first night at mums. [REDACTED] mum was on holidays and offered to come down and stay with her. We gladly accepted. She stayed till after the funeral. The night before she was to go home my mother accused her of stealing a face washer and attacked her. She left the house found a phone box and rang us to come and get her. Before leaving our flat I spoke to the lady sharing the other side of the house with us and asked her to ring me at my mother's if we weren't back in an hour. I thought that might make it easier for us to leave. She rang and asked to speak to me, but my mother refused to give me the phone, instead wrapped the cord around my neck trying to strangle me. [REDACTED] mum and I wrestled it off my neck and we all promptly left. [REDACTED] mum insisted we had to speak to someone and tell them what had happened. We went to friends, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] place and relayed what had taken place. [REDACTED] had lived at the [REDACTED] (mum and dad were in Queensland on holiday) with me briefly before she got married and understood the situation well.

I was still expected to do mum's shopping, cleaning, prepare meals after all of this. I wouldn't go in the house during the week on my own but went at weekends to do the cleaning. We withdrew slowly from doing this until [REDACTED] said it was okay. She played the victim for as long as she could.

Later that year [REDACTED] and I were invited to an early Christmas lunch at Dads friend's place. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], always held before Christmas so they could have all their adult children and grandchildren all attend. I had been included for many years. As we sat round talking after lunch their eldest daughter asked how we were going with my adoptive mother. I told her about the current behavioural episodes we were trying to deal with and how difficult it was. Her reply stunned us. She suggested that we left her to it and distance ourselves from her as I was adopted and not her child. The conversation went on around us, no one picking up on the fact that this was news to us. We left as soon as practical drove round the corner stopped the car. My reaction was one of absolute relief "yea I am not related to that woman!" we sat stunned hugging each other. We found the nearest

phone box and rang my [REDACTED] I felt that he would know if this was true. He refused to tell me so we told him we would be at his place shortly. We drove from Blackburn to Coburg to see him. He wasn't happy when we arrived still refusing to confirm it. In the end it was after my threat that if he didn't tell us we would confront my mother about it that he finally confirmed it was true. This was on condition that I didn't ever speak to her about it, and I never did.

I don't know who was the most relieved about my being adopted, myself, my husband, or my in-laws. I know how relieved I was.

Around this time, unbeknown to me, she started to accuse my husband [REDACTED] and his friend [REDACTED] of coming into the house moving and stealing things. She contacted the local police and reported this. They placed the house under surveillance and found nothing was going on. Subsequently they rang the school where I worked and told me to get her treatment, or they could have her committed. I had no idea what they were talking about. I rang [REDACTED], and he sorted it out and she had electric shock treatment which I found out about later. This apparently wasn't the first time or last time she had it.

Not long after this she started ringing the school constantly and demanding to speak to me. I was teaching handicapped and disabled children and they couldn't be left unattended. Eventually it cost me my job. Great, as I was the breadwinner whilst [REDACTED] was in the final stage of his engineering degree.

I could go on for ever about all this as I feel justifiably angry about all of this.

As I mentioned earlier, I was never told what was wrong with my mother until 09/04/2006 a year to the day she died. I was then 59 and she was 95. The Doctor at Hollywood Village let it slip (deliberately?). How much better would my life had been and hers if I had been told and made sure she didn't self-administer her medication. I changed this immediately, and for the last twelve months of her life we were able to have normal conversations with her.

When our boys were young, [REDACTED] 10 months and [REDACTED] 3, she came out of hospital and I went over to look after her for six weeks. My uncle, [REDACTED], who put her in the Hieldburg hospital for her mental health issues, requested I came over from Perth to look after her. He could have told me what was going on, instead he concocted a story about a mix-up in her medication. Why did he lie? I was 28. When he packed her off to live in Perth near us why weren't we told then? We were in our mid 30's. I asked but was never stropky enough or nasty or rude, to get an answer. Always being flobbered off. The impact of this on me and my family is continuing to this day. Why? Why????????????????

To whom do I ask these questions. Someone must be able to answer?

A few years back I was able to get my mother's records from Hieldburg Repatriation Hospital through FOI. These fill an A4 folder 7cm thick. They only covered from 1968 onwards as she only went there after Dad had died in 1968 as she no doubt thought if she went there before he died, they would tell dad what was going on. Prior to this she had treatment both privately and at the Alfred. I applied to the Alfred for her records and was told they no longer existed. During this time, she had her medical appointments sent through to a PO box at Balaclava PO. I guess this was due to her paranoia. (I took all of this to my C.P. back in Bunbury and we spent many sessions going through what she was treated with over many years and lots of the episodes that were related in there lined up with what I had related to my C.P.).

All through our married life she has loomed over us as a threatening presence. Whenever we visited her, we never knew what to expect. She moved to WA to be near us when our boys were about 6 and 8. I never let her mind them as I didn't trust her not to mistreat them. We were constantly on edge. She was just nasty and would try playing one of against the other. Our younger son was adopted and has always known that. There was a chance for the subject to be discussed if she needed an opportunity. I honored my promise to [REDACTED] and didn't raise the subject.

She was offered a place at Bethany at Camberwell in Victoria at a S.A. retirement place. She decided to take it as she couldn't get into Hollywood Retirement village over here in W.A. at the time. We were overjoyed at the time. Off she went back to Victoria. She didn't tell us anything till she thought she had sold her house. Suddenly she was leaving but then the sale fell through. I was left to sort that out and sell her furniture and other stuff. I proceeded very carefully. I listed everything down to the last tea towel. She was sent an inventory with what everything sold for and a cheque for it all.

She stayed there for a few years and was then offered a swap with someone from Hollywood in 1990. I had been involved in a head-on collision on my way to work in September that year and was unable to drive. I had fractured vertebrae, a frozen shoulder, whiplash, and RSI. [REDACTED] had finally gone back up to the Kimberley's to work after my accident. The next thing I knew was my mother was coming back to W.A. and she wasn't waiting back in Melbourne till her stuff arrived back here. I was told in no uncertain terms to get her a bed, bedding, towels, frig etc. and organize it pronto. I contacted Hollywood and spoke to them and was assured there was no hurry from them at all. They wanted time to do some work on her room, painting, new carpet etc. They ended up getting her room painted over the weekend and the carpet sorted out for her. I managed to get our next door - neighbour to help me as she had a small van and rounded up the stuff for me. When she

arrived her comment was, "I knew you weren't that badly hurt". I was shuffling around at the time and quite stooped. I couldn't drive for nearly three years.

We visited her regularly, but in fear and trembling. The year our oldest grand daughter was born we had arranged a time to pick her up on Christmas day. Unfortunately, [REDACTED] our disabled granddaughter had woken up that morning with a temperature. We waited whilst we tried to sort that out as we were all going to pick her up. I rang and let her know what the problem was. When we arrived, she was waiting in the foyer for us. As we entered, she let us have it, abusing all of us and had a go at my daughter in law. That was the last straw. I confronted her told her to apologise and said if she didn't, she could stay where she was, and we would leave her there. She reluctantly apologized but not very convincingly. What I didn't know was that was a lady standing behind us taking it all in. She was a lady who had been asked to visit mum regularly and thought mum was nice. This was an eye opener for her. She was shocked and spoke to me outside. She had heard she was difficult but had never seen the other side of my mum. I could go on forever.

After I was told what was wrong with her, I took away her right to self-medicate. During the last 12 months of her life, we could have a reasonable conversation with her. Wouldn't life have been so much better for everyone if I had been told what the problem. The staff at Hollywood really didn't like her at all as she treated them like she did us. She frequently would accuse staff of stealing things from her room. Usually, they had been misplaced by her. The last seven months of her life were spent in the hospital at Hollywood Village. She died quietly in her sleep 09/04/07 at 96 years of age. I don't know how much damage she did to others over her life. Yes, she was mentally ill, but she chose to keep it a secret trashing other along the way. This is the price I have had to pay for patient confidentiality. No thought as to the damage she did to me, my long-suffering husband, and my boys. I have lived with her mentally damaging me all of my life, even after she died it continues.

Every time there is an article in the news about child abuse, adoption and the like I go through triggers, which for the sake of others I internalize. I live in a state of anxiety and constant seething, subdued anger.

After she died, I was given her lock box, containing paperwork, wills etc. there were other things in there as well. An appointment book from the Alfred showing snippets about her treatment pre-1968. There was paperwork to do with dad's death back in 1968. Apparently, he died without a will. She told us, when he died, emphatically he had left me nothing. I hadn't even thought about any of that I was too distraught about his death to even contemplate what he had left me. She weaved her way through all of this to claim all that was in his name. There was paperwork there from the solicitor's she had used. She was

welcome to it as far as we were concerned.

What astounded us most was a will form she had filled in the day before I got married, filled out in her writing, leaving anything of mine to her in the event of me dying. It was supposed to be my will, bequeathing her everything and excluding my new husband. She had for many years previously got me to sign documents blind with her covering all the text above. How does one process this and come to grips with it. The duplicity just staggered us, even knowing what she was like and what she would do to her own advantage. We still have the lock box and the paperwork in it including the counterfeit will of [REDACTED]

During the 1990's she had me sign forms, I didn't know what I was signing. I should have been more circumspect. That ended up with me being questioned by the Taxation Dept. about investments in my name and not paying tax on them when we were running a business. I redirected their inquiries to her. She was furious with me. Ho Hum nothing new in that.

About 20 years ago I rang a friend of ours who attended the Malvern SA at the time we were both teenagers and who now lives in Perth. I asked him to ask his mum why I was ostracised. He came back to me with a very long letter apologising for all the times he set me up to get into trouble. His mum said no one wanted to deal with my mother as they were frightened of her. This left a vulnerable child isolated in a place where I should have been protected and felt wanted and safe.

I had a father who was just as frightened of her as the rest. He was a quiet gentle person and at her mercy as well. DV isn't just done by men, she could have written the manual very easily. Everyone loved dad but that didn't help me one iota.

As you can see, I want and need answers, please as to why I was handed over to the [REDACTED] and left at the mercy of [REDACTED]

My Siblings

After much searching, I found I had 3 half siblings, a sister, and two brothers. My sister was also named [REDACTED] and she could have found it very confronting! I consider myself very fortunate in that my siblings have listened and believed I am their older half-sister. They have been generous with their time in supplying both family history and medical information. Most people that I have met have not had that response and have been further rejected and traumatized.

Our Son's Journey

This will explain why I was so careful with my search.

We adopted our son in WA in May 1973. He had been born in a regional WA town and was transferred to the Hillcrest in Fremantle. He has known from a young age he was adopted.

He was travelling around Australia with his fiancé back in 2000. Whilst he was away, we were processing his mail, paying his bills etc. My husband picked up our mail late on that Friday and opened, inadvertently, a letter addressed to our son. It had a PO Box Address in Subiaco, a phone number, but no letter head and was very generic in its content. Simply asking had he been born in the XXXXXX, Dec 23, 1972, saying they wished to speak to him about family matters. [REDACTED] mum had passed away very recently, and I thought he would think it might be about inheritance. We realised straight away what it was probably was about. Our son always knew he was adopted. My husband was distressed about this invasion into our family whereas I had a slightly different view, naively, as to the person seeking our son.

We rang on the following Monday, it turned out to be Jigsaw, to be soundly abused for opening the letter, and were somewhat taken aback by this. If they wanted our good will and our co-operation this was certainly not the approach to take. After trying to reason with the woman who we spoke with, we duly hung up. Later we went to the Government Dept who could advise us on this. The woman who dealt with us there said not to worry as all would be well. She had an adopted child herself and gone through this and was it great how it all had turned out. We did get lots of pamphlets and other stuff to help us weave our way through the process. What she did point out was that when we were interstate with [REDACTED] job, between 1991-93, the law had changed placing the onus on the adoptee/or parent who had relinquished the child to place a veto in place regarding information. We weren't here then to ask our son what he wanted to do.

Our son was in a North West town and once was settled we went up to give him the paperwork and let him make up his own mind as to what he wanted to do. We said we would support him no matter what he decided. I went through several scenarios with him, mother dying of cancer, mother lost her only other child, maybe she had no children etc.

We left it with him. Curiosity got the better of him eventually and he rang Jigsaw. The woman handling his case was ecstatic as the person seeking to make contact lived in the same town our son was now living in. She promptly gave the phone number to our son and turned them loose. No counselling, nothing other than telling him it was his father who was looking for him. In due course our son rang his biological father and agreed to meet in a park.

Just before this meeting, our son and his partner were in the news agency, when she went white and raced outside. Our son followed her out and asked what was wrong. Her reply surprised him "If that girl behind the counter isn't your sister I would be stunned. She is your twin just go and look at her!" Yes, she was correct in her assumption. Our son was related to half the people in the town. Very confronting.

Our son met his father in the park. They talked for a while and then the father said he had to go back to a meeting. He offered our son a ride back into town which he accepted. On route he stopped at the hospital to drop something off. He suggested our son go in with him as it was hot in the car, which he duly did. His father knocked on the admin door and opened it. He addressed the lady behind the desk with "Mother meet your son". She was shocked, as she had no idea the father was looking for their son. Our son was equally distressed. He reversed out as quickly as he could and walked back into town. This was not what he had expected. His mother had married his father and they had three more children, two girls and a boy. The parents were in the midst of an acrimonious divorce and the kids had all sided with their mother. His father wanted to use our son to influence the kids.

The Father had a full lever arch file on our family, which he showed to our son. It contained a great deal of personal information about our family.

They stayed in the town and worked for some time before returning south when they came and lived with us for four months. He was a mess with all the mind games that occurred during their time in away.

These days he has a tenuous relationship with the other members of the family.

I spoke to Jigsaw in 2015 about all of this at length. I should have done so earlier but we are still dealing with the fallout with our son. The father's motives for searching should have been exposed and many questions asked before proceeding. Eg why was the mother not involved? Mediation and counselling should have been put in place.

We have all, our son, his partner, their children, and ourselves, have been left to deal with the fallout. Would I have been so circumspect if we had not gone through this I would hope so, but who knows?

Prior to getting our son we were checked out, and our home inspected. I don't remember much about that happening so it couldn't have been very invasive. We had only recently moved back to Perth from Tom Price in the months prior to this application. The fact that we belonged to the S.A. probably helped.

Our youngest son came to us from the S.A. Hillcrest Unmarried Mothers home in Fremantle. Back in 1972 we had just shifted to Perth from Tom Price. I had our eldest boy in Tom Price but had had

a series of miscarriages and was told by a gynaecologist that if I became pregnant, I may have to spend most of my time in Hospital. As we had no family here, we thought we would see if we could foster a child and approached a government dept to apply. They offered us a child that had been offered to several families but turned down.

.The catch was he was up for adoption. We thought long and hard about it and decided to go ahead. We went to visit him at Hillcrest and were shown round by the Matron (██████). We had been told that his mother was Australian, and his dad was Chinese. I noted that his breathing was a bit laboured. I asked about it and was told "all Chinese people breathe like that". I was stunned by that comment. I then asked about the rash I had seen under his chin and round his elbows and behind his knees, to be told it was heat rash. Really. At the time there was lots of publicity about babies coming out of Vietnam at the end of the war. (You made front pages if you took one, but not if he was born here, of similar parentage. These children had service men for fathers and Asian mothers. How can you look at a child needing a home and reject him?)

Once our son came home I spent a lot of time trying to sort out his medical issues. He was born ████████ and he came to us in May the following year. He had spent far too long at Hillcrest and as a result had bonding issues and hadn't put on much weight. His birth weight was 7lb and when we got him 5 months later only weighed 8lb. He projectile vomited at every feed. His rash wasn't heat rash nor was his breathing normal. After we had him to our doctor, he was found to have a cow's milk allergy, asthma, and eczema. We got him onto Soyolac (Soya milk substitute) instead of normal formula.

I rang the matron at Hillcrest to inform her what we had found and to ask why they hadn't discovered his allergies. The reply was he would have been fed by different nurses and they would have thought his projectile vomiting was a one-off. I didn't believe that at all.

He started to gain weight. We took him to a specialist and got his allergies sorted out. He had lots of food allergies. I found he was hyperactive (ADHD these days). I spent many hours trying to resolve all this through the library and lots of reading and talking to people. We totally changed the family diet and found this had beneficial outcome for him. Everything we ate I cooked. No preservatives no food colourings and his behaviour improved dramatically. If he went to a birthday party and ate without thinking, we would all have to deal with the outcome. I always sent goodies he could eat and drink. Soft drink was never available at home. All this was time consuming but what a difference it made.

When he was about 10 months old, we had arranged a family holiday over at Rottneest. The day before I had visited a girl friend at home, and she had 2 girls older and a son younger than him. Unbeknown to me the girls were playing with their pocket money on the floor. He must have picked up a 5-cent piece and swallowed it. We headed off to Rotto the following day. By that night his

breathing was a bit rough. We went to the nurses station the following morning and she checked him out and advised us to get back to the mainland and see a doctor, which we did. Our G. P. sent us to Bentley Hospital for an Xray of his chest. After the Xray the radiologist came out and dressed me down in the waiting room. They had found the 5-cent piece in the Xray, fortunately on end, in his trachea. From there it was into PMH through ED and to have him admitted. He was operated on later that night. We went through all [REDACTED] allergies detailing them thoroughly in ED and in the ward and asked that he have mittens on his hands and socks on his feet to stop him scratching his eczema. We waited till he went into surgery and then went home as it was 10 at night. The following morning early, I rang the Hospital to see how he was, only to be told not to come in before 11 but not told why. We promptly got in the car and went to the hospital. When we arrived, they were feeding him custard and ice-cream. Not only that he was scratched raw from end to end. I went ballistic. Not their fault, I was told I should have notified the hospital kitchen about his food allergies and supplied the socks and mittens. We were not impressed.

As a result of the admission to hospital we were then visited by the Gov Dept officers who had arranged for us to have [REDACTED] for adoption. This was their first visit since we had got him. I did mention that I expected to see them regularly after we got him. I mentioned he could have been dead and buried in the back yard and they would never have known. Their reply was that I was never home. I asked when had they called to see us, and they couldn't supply any day, dates, or times when they had come to see us. Nor had they left a card to say they had been around. I said we were out sometimes in the mornings but were always home in the afternoon as the boys had a nap in the afternoons. I was annoyed that they were so slack. I felt they were negligent. Apart from that visit they never came back

- Our son was born in December but not fostered out to us for some 5 months. He had a host of health issues which had not been identified by Hillcrest.
- In those 5 months he had a variety of carers and as a result came to us with serious attachment issues.
- Whilst we were happy to be given a child, it was disappointing to see the process for the selection of adopting parents lacked any sort of rigour or follow up.

Whilst the end result was completely different, the process could equally have resulted in him having a similar experience to myself. Nothing had changed in 26 years.

What do I want from this enquiry:

- Organisations that set up adoption's whether they be religious or otherwise, be held accountable for placing children in inappropriate homes and put at risk.
- I want children to be asked, listened to, believed, and protected. This was never done for me.
- If a child must be adopted, proper intensive checking must be carried out, not just once but over and over to see how family dynamics work. When references are given of course they will be from people who think they are fit to adopt, but are they really fit to adopt. Checks need to be conducted on extended family as well.
- I want the family medical history of mothers of FA children available to their adopted children, when this is requested. This for me and others I know has been a real problem. For me getting this has been a god send.
- I want the medical history of those of us who are older, about the use of the drug DES, as there are great concerns about the intergenerational cancer problems. A lot of the symptoms from this drug are found in my family and I need to advise my half siblings of these. I have been advised that this drug was extensively used between 1939 and 1973, administered once labour began, especially to single mothers to stop lactation. I was born in 1947.
- Free counselling is a must. I have been very fortunate in that Open Place in Victoria have set this up and I have had access to it even though I live interstate. This has been ongoing for the last seven years. There have been times when I need it a lot (as at present with all the things to with adoption, the enquiry etc, currently in the media, that have triggered anxiety and grief over what has occurred). I believe in the eastern states there are Clinical Psychiatrist's who are trained specifically in counselling adoptees. I haven't heard of any over here in WA. All the adoptees I have met who have had to find and pay for their own C.P. counsellors. This is totally wrong.
- We need a DES clinic here in WA for testing. The Royal Woman's Hospital in Melbourne has one and I believe there are others in other states.
- Government departments who need to deal adoption issues must be adequately resourced to ensure information is provided in a timely manner. Waiting just adds to the trauma and frustration.