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The Committee members,  
Parliamentary Enquiry into forced adoptions  
Parliament House, W.A  
4 Harvest Terrace,  
Perth W.A 6005

### **Forced adoption in Western Australia between 1939 and 1980.**

Dear and honorable Members,

I thank the Committee for the conduct of this enquiry. I write as a family member, and observer of some of the processes and outcomes of the practice.

As a child of approximately 11 years of age when my sister fell pregnant with her first child at the age of approximately 18. At the time I was blissfully unaware, and remained so for many years- until I was approximately 23 years old. Given my immaturity I did not take much notice of her growing size ( it was played down) and was given a perfunctory explanation at the time of her confinement – She was *“having her ears cleaned out”*.

We were of British stock, and I guess you just didn't *talk* about “those things” then. I knew and loved the father – who later married her. They went on to have another 2 children - but the stresses and relational cost of that experience would rise up from time to time in the ensuing years.

I later learned of the grief that his parents endured, having been of a strong family culture. I understand they would have taken the child themselves and I am sure this pain endured with them to the end of their days. With the release of records, contact was made, and hopes of reconciliation rose, however it was not all “beer and skittles” as they say, and the psychological dynamics were difficult to navigate.

It was saddening to learn that her son, and my nephew - endured a toxic upbringing – and I sensed a part of the significant betrayal she endured when learning of the efforts and structures of those who facilitated the ‘adoption’ made to subvert her efforts to connect.

It was further damaging to learn that in fact she had the option to change her mind and take possession (is that the right word?) of the child – a “cooling off” period. It astounds me that In the time of the “Psychedelic revolution” Haight Ashbury and “All You Need Is Love” – young mothers were subjected to this most unloving and pernicious practice of forced adoption.

It must be acknowledged that her parents – MY parents were complicit in this travesty. I see it not as a fault of government, but a sociological condition – and it was facilitated by the *denial of information and resources* for the relinquishing parents.

Fifty years later – an I have adult children of my own – I have at times had reason to fear the loss of one – the sense of failure I endured – and I ask any of you who may be mothers, think about it. Think about being made to have no choice – but render the very soul you body has nurtured, protected and fed, with every fibre of your nature, the hormones, the physiological changes that have taken place to ready for delivery.

Unfortunately, the pressures brought to bear were from the selfishness of others – supported by the thinking of the day – overlaid with paternalistic attitudes.

The outcomes are as varied as the participants – however there is one word which heals – *Sorry*.

It's not a singular delivery, but a practice. It's a tough one and doesn't exactly roll off the tongue first up but practiced well- it's amazingly easy. Sorry – see .. I said it again.

Sorry to the mothers. Sorry to the subject children, and sorry to the dads as well. Sorry, that we were weak, and inconsiderate. Sorry, that you were trampled upon.