

15/06/2023

My name is Kathleen Drusilla Maczkowiack known as Kathy. I was born and raised in South Australia. I am a mother who lost her first-born baby to forced adoption in February 1965. The adoption occurred in Western Australia.

I went to a party in May 1964 where there were many young people and alcohol was laid on despite many being underage. I got very drunk and was sexually assaulted by an acquaintance and discovered weeks later I was pregnant. I was in denial for months and went about my life as if nothing had happened. I did have a boyfriend (he was not the father) who was from Western Australia, and he returned to WA around September 1964. By October 1964 I was desperate when I realised, I couldn't hide my pregnancy much longer. I didn't have anyone who I could tell or call on for support. I made the decision to travel to Western Australia hoping my boyfriend might help me, he knew nothing of pregnancy. I asked a friend who was younger than I was (I was 18 years old) to travel with me.

We arrived in Perth by rail on a Sunday where we were met by my boyfriend and two other men. My boyfriend was not the same man I knew in Adelaide. He was foul mouthed and scary as were the other two, he realised I was pregnant, but he didn't know he was not the father. I didn't tell him as I was afraid of him and his friends. I never saw him again after they drove us to our accommodation.

We ran out of money within a few days, and I had to seek assistance from welfare agencies. We were referred to St Vincent de Paul who arranged for us to stay in a shelter in West Perth. We stayed for three months. We felt safe at this place.

I had not had any ante natal care and was around seven months pregnant when I attended the King Edward Memorial Hospital in Subiaco. I was sent to the Almoner who interrogated me, humiliated me: and insisted my baby would be adopted. I knew after this visit to the Almoner I would have a difficult time keeping my baby.

I attended the KEMH on four occasions prior to the birth of my baby.

I went to the hospital when I was in labour.

After I was examined, I was put in a room by myself when I was left for hours to labour alone. I was frightened and scared. Later I was taken to another room where I gave birth to my daughter. I was put in stirrups with a sheet covering the stirrups, thus preventing me from seeing my baby after her birth. My baby was taken from the delivery room immediately after her birth by two nurses. I was left alone with a doctor. Neither of these people spoke to me, it was as if I didn't exist. [REDACTED] I felt violated, humiliated, and further shamed.

I was taken to a ward where I requested to see my baby. The request was refused. I was distressed and crying and went looking for my baby several times and each time I was taken back to my room without seeing her. The next day I remember a woman who visited me and who put more pressure on me to have my baby adopted. I never asked for my baby to be adopted. I wanted to raise my child myself. Later that day I was moved from the hospital and taken to the Kensington annexe of the hospital. I was driven from the KEMH to the annexe, but I believed I was taken a long way around as it seemed a long way away from KEMH. It was decades later I discovered the annexe was in the

same suburb as the KEMH. I believe this deception was to prevent me from trying to see my child. I remember very little of my time in Kensington, was it because I was drugged, I don't know.

I was discharged from hospital after around six days, and I went to work at the Western Australian Egg Board a job I had arranged prior to giving birth. I had also moved into accommodation in a boarding house in the city.

When my baby was twelve days old, I went to the adoptions department in the city and saw a woman named [REDACTED] and requested to have my baby given to me. She refused, saying "nonsense your baby has been placed" (decades later I discovered she was still in the KEMH). [REDACTED] then, after knowing me for about 10 minutes took me across the road to the court house where papers were given to the witness, (a court official) and I signed. I was distressed, nothing was read to me, and a copy was never given to me. There was no support of legal person for me despite being a minor. My mother, [REDACTED] was sent papers to sign but she refused. She did not want my baby to be adopted. This was devastating and I knew then I would not see my baby. Years later I got the Supreme Court affidavit done by [REDACTED] and found she lied under oath.

I left Perth a few weeks later and returned to Adelaide. I was devastated, heartbroken and traumatized. I pretended like nothing had happened as most people did not know I was pregnant. To have a baby out of wedlock was the worse thing which could happen to a woman, so I hid my shame for decades.

I married late in 1965 but the marriage ended shortly after I had a miscarriage six months after the marriage.

I then had a twenty year relationship with an abusive man. I had two children from that relationship. I was terrified of losing my children as I was not married to the father. But I had a Mrs. in front of my name, and I believe this prevented my children from being taken from me. My children had to live with a traumatized grieving mother, a mother who could not talk of her distress, loss, and trauma.

I thought of my baby every day, was she ok, was she loved, the fear of not knowing only increased the trauma.

In 1987 I was contacted by the adoptions department informing me my daughter wanted contact. I was ecstatic and welcomed contact. My other children did not know about the adoption, and they had to be told. Luckily, they were supportive. Weeks later I received a photo of my now adult daughter. I still weep when I think about that day, it was amazing. It was 22 years since her birth and for the first time I saw her in a photo.

We met for the first time in Western Australia in 1989 and again in 1992. It was lovely to have her and her family in my life.

We never had any counselling at the time and gradually we drifted apart and had little contact over the years. I didn't want this to happen but had learned to live with my loss and was grateful I had met her and her family.

In 2019 things changed and my daughter is now in my life. We see each other every few months and catch up with and phone calls. Our relationship is very supportive, and I love her dearly. I feel sad I missed a lot of her life and could not be around for her.

I could have cared for my child myself. *I had a job and a place to live.* The only assistance I required was childcare.

The KEMH' treatment of me was poor, inhumane, illegal, unethical, lacking any compassion or kindness and punitive. I felt dehumanized, powerless, and worthless. I would like to have all my records but have only been given very little. I want to know what was written about me.

The adoption department, treatment of me especially [REDACTED] was unconscionable. Her treatment of me was punitive, dehumanizing, illegal and unethical.

The legal system's treatment was also illegal and unethical.

My pain at the loss of my firstborn is ongoing, every day I live with this loss. The pain never ends. The more contact I have with my daughter the more loss I feel. I wasn't there for her first steps, first smile, first steps, first day at school. I could go on and on. Heartbreaking losses.

Three years ago: I joined a group of mothers who had lost children to adoption. This group has been therapeutic and supportive.