



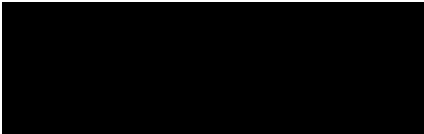
31<sup>st</sup> May 2023

To whom it may concern:

This submission is about my experience as an adoptee.

I give my consent that my submission and name are to be made public.

Ms Denise Jensen



My adoptive name was Denise Bainbridge, I was born in 1952 and relinquished at 6 weeks of age.

My birth mother was [REDACTED] 21yrs of age when she gave birth to me. [REDACTED] had no choice when it came to adoption, her mother disowned her, her father deceased, she lost her nursing career when she confessed to matron that she was pregnant, her boyfriend's [my father] father paid my mother money off and she gave birth to me in a small private hospital in Subiaco. No support, all very secretive.

[REDACTED] never married, no siblings and at the age of 58 had a stroke and not long after was admitted to a nursing home where at a later date had her lower leg amputated. She passed away in 2011, age 79. I believe her sad life was a result of having had to give up her baby and being rejected by society.

My adoptive parents were good parents, they loved me and cared for me. My mother had previously lost 2 babies, one stillborn and gave birth to a live baby who lived 3 days. Although my mother loved me, her love was conditional and I learnt to be good. We often argued and I was often told I was ungrateful, selfish and if it wasn't for them, I would be in an orphanage. Said in the heat of the moment, but no less painful. I was the 'good child' had low self esteem, lack of self worth, did not trust easily. I felt I did not belong anywhere, had a fear of rejection and intimacy. I wanted to be liked and looked for approval and under achieved to ensure I would never be abandoned again. I made sure I was 'average', not too good, not too bad so as not to draw attention to myself. I sabotaged myself at every turn. Never explored my potential, what potential. So unsatisfying and such a waste.

I had 2 failed marriages and a relationship. My outside world was not working and I didn't seem to be able to fix it so then turned to looking at my inner self. I started at Jigsaw where I began to search hoping to discover those parts of me that were missing. My birth certificate was not the original birth certificate, this certificate had my adoptive parents' names and my adoptive name. I had to apply for the original and only when that information was accessible to those involved in the adoption triangle. I then learnt my birth mother's name. My birth father, was not named on the certificate. When these records were opened for adoptees, birth parents and adoptive parents then I was seriously able to begin the search. It took me over 20years of searching, knockbacks, group therapy and psychologists, pain, anguish and turmoil, it affected my whole psyche. The search consumed my life. I was a solo parent and it affected my children growing up.

It wasn't until court records were accessible for adoptees that I found out my birth father's name, [REDACTED] He came from a prominent and wealthy family and [REDACTED] confirmed that he was my father, though he denied this. However he did ask how I was and that he was married with children. He had previously placed a veto on me before I had attempted to communicate with him through children's services. He refused to meet with me. Another rejection.

Finally after several unsuccessful meetings, my birth mother, [REDACTED] consented to meet with me, she was in the nursing home and had been encouraged by a wonderful nurse at the home, who befriended her, took her on outings and to her home to meet her family. Encouraged her to meet me, her grownup daughter. That was when the real healing began and I felt it was a special time for both of us. It wasn't always easy to communicate as she had dysphasia though we managed and had many laughs over muddled words. We had 3 years getting to know each other and I liked her, loved her. [REDACTED] passed away in 2011 she was 79.

My reaction the very first time I met her was, she has my hair, my eyes, my nose. I didn't know this woman however I felt an immediate connection and it was like 'coming home' and for the first time in my life I felt at 'peace'.

I met more of her cousins and friends at the funeral and it was then we started to put the pieces of her life together. They did not know she had had a baby, and it wasn't until they saw the funeral notice from [REDACTED], her daughter. One of her nurse friends was sworn to secrecy, and that secret she kept until the time she met with me, she told no one. I was embraced by [REDACTED] 3 cousins now in their 90's, one since deceased, I love them dearly.

After a tumultuous journey, I have emerged, content, liking myself and at peace, life is good. I have worked hard to get to this place.

In 1952 adoptions were 'closed', sealing an adopted child's original birth certificate, assuring that there was no access to the birth parent, no communication. It was many years later that I was able to access this information. This was a cruel and ignorant practice. We have the right to know, right to information that concerns us, that gives us some identity, of who we are in the world. It's our birth right. Meet ups aren't always successful however I believe it's our right to make that decision and explore that path if we choose and to take it as far as possible.

The law needs to be about protecting the child [pregnancy] the vulnerable and to support mothers to look after their own children, if that's in the best interests of the child.

When I read of this enquiry I knew it was something I had to do for myself no matter how painful the memories. My adoption experience had a huge impact on my life as no doubt it had on others. This is another step to my healing and to validate my experience and to have it acknowledged.

Denise Jensen [Bainbridge]