

KIMMI 04/12/1973

To whom it may concern.

Today is July 25th, 2023, and this is my 21st attempt at writing my submission.

For the past 4-5 months, I have started to write, and stopped, started again, and stopped, over and over, finding anything, anything at all to distract myself from continuing.

I knew that putting pen to paper was never going to be easy, but I sure did not think it was going to be this hard.

I am 49 years old.

I was born Veronica, on December 4th, 1973.

I am an adoptee.

Now known as Kimmi.

There are now only 6 days until my submission is due. I applied for and received an extension until July 31st. There just is not enough time, and to be honest, I don't think there ever will be.

How can I possibly put over 49 years of emotion, pain and suffering down onto a few pieces of paper?

For me, being an adoptee has not been pleasant.

I still have absolutely no idea who I am.

Multiple times over my 49 years I have searched for my birth mother and father without any luck or real knowledge of where to look. I don't recall having any strong family support in my search. It was left up to me, to which I knew nothing. I tried multiple times over the years to have conversations with my adoptive parents, but I was always shut down, which in turn, gave me more questions, with more answers needed. I never had support from them, my adoption was never really spoken about, it was almost as if it was a taboo subject. For me though, it was the biggest and most important conversation to which I needed to have.

I have never understood why it was so bad to talk about. This is me; this is who I am, I am an adoptee, but I'm not allowed to talk about it? It does not make sense to me. I have always felt like I am someone else's dirty little secret. Isn't my immediate family supposed to support me? Aren't they supposed to care for, and to love me? I don't know what that feels like. I feel like I have always been loved at an arm's length. I've spent my life scrounging for crumbs of love, people pleasing and bending over backwards for others, always searching for any kind of love, attention, or affection.

I have felt alone and abandoned and out of place my entire life. I have learned to push all my feelings down, and block them, not allowing them to surface. I am finding it extremely difficult to put a lifetime of blocked thoughts and feelings onto paper. Growing up, I was not allowed to have feelings. My adoptive parents weren't emotionally available, they were not equipped or had the personal tools to support an adopted child, in the way they needed supporting. How could someone sitting behind a desk, believe that I would be better off being brought up by 2 x 10pound poms, rather than with my natural mother, or with my natural father. How could an aboriginal baby possibly flourish, or understand and learn about her culture? Whether this was due to lack of education or ignorance, or perhaps they just didn't. I don't think I will ever know.

It's a reality I have just accepted, as I just don't feel like I deserve and love or happiness. I have never married, i have spent most of my life on my own, I am hopeless at relationships, I don't know how to connect with others in a healthy way, and I am constantly fearful of abandonment, and I certainly do not believe I am worthy or deserving of happiness. My abandonment issues run very deep.

When trying to write this, I keep asking myself.....

What am I going to write about?

What am I going to say?

Who cares about my submission?

Who cares about what I have to say?

How will my words make a difference?

What's the point in doing this?

Why would anybody be interested in reading this?

In my family, I always came last in the pecking order, and I was always made aware, continuously being reminded of this. I never felt equal, or even a part-of. I was always told that “I can’t” instead of “I can”. I was often humiliated and embarrassed, by my adoptive parents.

I lack confidence, I have very low self-esteem.

I find it extremely difficult to trust people, and to feel safe.

I have been distracting myself from how I truly feel for 49 years.

When I was about 17, I heard about a place called jigsaw that helped adoptees and assisted in reconnecting adoptees with their natural families. I contacted Jigsaw a couple of times over the years, once in my teens and once when I was 19 when I was pregnant myself. The first thing they did is a search to see if anybody was looking for me, and there never was. Which in turn, made me shut down and I would give up. I was so emotionally shut down by the thought of nobody, looking for me, so what was the point of continuing? The whole in my heart just kept getting bigger and bigger.

Why was nobody looking for me?

Why am I so unimportant?

Hardly a day has gone by when I haven’t thought of my birth family. After so many years of wondering, thinking, dreaming, and searching, I finally found my natural mother. I found her myself, through a Facebook group of all places, a search and reconnect group.

It wasn’t a government agency; it wasn’t my adoptive parents helping me.

It was a Facebook group.

It was February 2020.

The only information I had, the only paperwork, was one single piece of paper, with the name my natural mother gave me, my DOB, and the hospital in which I was born. This is all I had. I would spend hours and hours, staring at this piece of paper, a court document, stating my official name change, from Veronica, to Kim.

I have 2 names, but I’m not 2 different people.

This never made sense to me, this document made no sense whatsoever, and no one ever explained it to me, in a way in which I could understand.

It took me 46 years to find my birth mother, 46 long, broken hearted years.

After finding her and meeting her, I have come to the realisation that I now, have opened a can of worms, and have 100s more questions about my history.

I have daydreamed 1000's of times of meeting my mother, and my father and how that would pan out. How it would feel to have them hold me, see me, comfort me, and look at me, the way in which only a parent can.

As I'm writing this, I feel uncomfortable. I'm nervous. I'm anxious. I'm worried. I'm scared. I'm emotional. I am sad. I am happy for doing it, and I'm hurting. My heart is aching and it's hurting. I just want to crawl under a rock and hide away, I want to push all my feelings down deep down as far as I can and just ignore them because when I'm doing that, I'm in my safe place and protecting myself from hurt and feelings.

I must keep reminding myself, that This is my story to tell. These are my feelings. My thoughts. And this is my submission.

When I was born there were no celebrations, no handshakes, no smiles, no laughter no hugs, no hi-fives, no balloons, no flowers, no cheers, no comfort, no congratulations, no cards, no cuddles, no conversations, no family gatherings, no phone calls, no comparing looks, no pride, no joy, no snuggles, no love. There was however bucket loads of guilt, shame, fear, coercion, manipulation, lies, heartbreak, confusion, loneliness, tears, and sadness. There were no grandparents, there was no father, no siblings, no celebration whatsoever. Every single day of every single day of my life I've thought about my birth mother, every single day of every single day of my life I've thought about my birth father. And every single day of every single day of my life I think about loss grief sadness and abandonment. I am empty inside. I am angry. I feel ripped off. I hold heavy resentments to those who decided what was apparently best for me and what path my life was to take. From the moment of conception other people

were making decisions upon where I was meant to be, for my mother and for me.

My natural mother named me Veronica.

My adoptive parents named me Kim.

I am angry. I am sad. I am hurting. I am frustrated. I am worthless. I am unlovable. I am unworthy. I am stupid. I feel insignificant. I feel useless. And right now I feel so overwhelmed I just want to run. I was taken, No I was stolen from my mother without her consent. My birth mother DID NOT SIGN ME AWAY SHE DID NOT SIGN PERMISSION. My birth father did NOT sign any paperwork whatsoever.

I have spent my whole life swimming in a filthy pool of shame and despair.

The former prime minister Gough Whitlam introduced the single mothers parenting payment in October of 1973. I was born in December of 1973. Why wasn't my birth mother informed of this, was there is a chance that she could have cared for me. If she had known? I have never felt that I have made sense and I struggle to find my place in this world, where do I belong?

Adoptees are 4 times more likely to suffer from addiction, mental health, anxiety, depression, and suicide, then non-adoptees. This has been true for me. As an adoptee, I have always been different, I have always felt different. I don't look like my family, I don't think like my family, I don't have my mums' eyes or my dad's nose, I don't walk like him or talk like her. And I certainly don't think like them. We see the world completely differently. We bang heads often. We disagree on almost everything, and I've always struggled with feelings of belonging. I've always felt like an outsider in my own home, I've struggled with my identity, my sense of self-worth.

I have suffered from addiction; I am an addict. I was addicted to methamphetamine for 14 years. I believe my adoption was the rocket fuel for my substance abuse. I have suffered from my addiction. I have suffered from mental illness, PTSD, and bipolar disorder. So many years of my life were wasted, I didn't now any different. I was in a deep, dark, horrible place for years, not ever believing I could recover.

I still to this day, suck my thumb. Whenever I am sad or upset, I lay down, on my side and comfort myself. This is how I've learnt to cope with my emotions, on my own, comforting myself, over and over.

I have always suffered with nightmares and night terrors, where I would wake myself up, in the middle of the night, screaming out for my mum, this still happens regularly, even today.

AS a baby, as a child, as a teen, and as an adult, I have always needed more assurance, more love, more compassion. I remember being told I was adopted, but not really understanding the weight of it. It was said rather matter of factly, straight to the point, and bluntly. I don't think my adoptive parents had any idea on how to have such a conversation effectively. I mean, here you have a married couple, who couldn't have their own kids, they then choose to adopt someone else's baby, but are not educated in any way, on how to have the most important conversation of the child's life?

How was this even allowed to happen?

How could anyone think that I would be better off with 2 complete strangers?

I am constantly struggling to find myself.

I am constantly struggling to find roots.

I am constantly struggling to find my birth family.

I am constantly struggling to find answers to questions.

So here I am, in February 2020, on Rockingham foreshore, coming face to face with my natural mother for the very first time.

It was just her, and I.

The day I finally met my natural mother, is a day I will never, ever forget. I remember it like it was yesterday.

Whilst our relationship started off respectfully and curiously, there was always something missing. I'm still not sure what it is. I think she is still so traumatized by my birth and losing me, that she has herself gone into robot mode to block all her feelings, as the past is just too painful for her to endure. I cannot imagine what it must have been like for her. She has since married and gone on to have 3

more children. I have tried reaching out to them, with only limited response, sadly.

In late 2020 I met with her, and she handed me some of my records which she had received.

This is the first thing she said....

She told me, in no uncertain terms, that the signature on my official adoption papers, the consent papers, were forged. It is not hers.

My birth mother did not sign me away.

She did not give me up willingly.

Her signature was forged. Her signature, which gave consent to giving me up for adoption, was not hers.

Do you have any idea how much this hurts? I can't even begin to put into words how this makes me feel.

How was this allowed to happen?

Our relationship now is a very complicated one. We have had no contact for over 14 months, she is a stranger. Far too much time has now gone by, and I do not believe, that what I've been searching for my whole life, is within reach.

If only I had access to my records earlier

If only I knew where to look

If only I had full 100 % family support

If only my records were open

I have so many more questions now, since I've begun piecing my past family together, and unfortunately, the whole inside me is bigger and my heart is so much heavier.

In March 2020, i found out through a cousin who I had recently found, who my father was.

My natural mother had told me his first name, but not his surname.

I instantly did a Facebook search, and for the first time in my life, I am looking at a photo of my father.

I always knew somewhere, somehow, I was aboriginal. Some of my closest friends are aboriginal, and I always feel like I am home, when I am with them.

Finally, upon looking at my father's profile picture, I started making sense of my history, of myself, for the very first time.

My natural father was an aboriginal elder, [REDACTED], a very well-respected man who was well known and worked tirelessly for his family, and community. My heart was beating out of my chest just looking at this man and stalking his profile. For the very first time I felt a sense of belonging, of family, of culture, my heart was full.

Whilst I was full of happiness and excitement, I was also very aware of what my reception could be. Would I be welcomed? Would he be receptive to me? I didn't know. I prayed and I hoped.

With the help of my cousin, we reached out to my father's sister, who in turn contacted him. He wanted to meet me, but simply asked for some time to speak with his family, which I completely understood, and I said I'll be waiting with my arms and my heart open.

Unfortunately, time was not on our side. Within a few short months, my father suffered a heart attack and passed away.

I did not get the opportunity to meet him.

I did not get the opportunity to hold him.

How can an already broken heart, break again and again?

How is this fair? I am completely devastated. How do I grieve for someone I've never met, but feel so connected to?

In late 2020 I met with one of my father's sisters who was visiting Perth. We met at a hotel on Hay Street. It was wonderful to meet her, and to chat with her about him. His passing has been a massive loss to their family, and their community.

In January 2023, I met with 2 more of my father's sisters. They were lovely and I was really honoured to meet them. I have my father's eyes, and I apparently walk and move just like him. Hearing this warmed my heart.

Identity issues are very real for adoptees, as we are not born blank slates.

I don't fit in with my adoptive family, I am nothing like them.

We don't look the same, we don't think the same, we don't feel the same, we don't view the world the same, and we don't see others the same.

Do you have any idea how it feels to be brought up in a house, with a family to which you hold no connection, and feel completely out of place in every way possible?

Only 3 weeks ago, in June 2023, after a very heated discussion, did my adoptive mother, finally, admit to knowing that I was Aboriginal.

When my parents picked me up from NGALA, there I was, the only female baby, in a room full of baby boys, they told them that I had 'coloured blood'

I cannot believe that she did not tell me this earlier. For 49 years, I have been LOST.

If I had known earlier, could I have found him?

If I had access to my own records, could I have met him earlier?

There are so many more questions to which I need answers.

I have my birth mother's family, I have my birth father's family, and I have my adoptive family.

3 families, and I do NOT FIT in with any of them.

I am constantly struggling to find my place in this world.

Adoptees are constantly juggling 2-3 identities at the same time

I am hopeful that this Inquiry, will bring some peace to everybody involved in forced adoptions. Whole families, mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, cousins, aunties, uncles, have all been ripped apart from the horrific past practices of forced adoptions, and it continues through multiple generations.

The ripple affect will continue for decades.

This is about what happened to me, and how it has impacted me.

I grew up with zero medical information, zero cultural information.

As I'm writing this submission, I feel strongly that my story needs to be told for anyone else who has been affected directly or indirectly by the past practices of forced adoption in Western Australia.

I believe that every single person has the right to their story, to their history. No one else should have the right to stop it.

Every natural mother, and every natural father, has the right to their own babies, and every single baby has the right to their natural mother and father.

It is their right. No one else's.

I would like to see a change in the way we can access our records, the current 8-9 month wait time is completely unacceptable, especially considering this inquiry is happening now. How are we meant to complete our submissions, without access to all our records?

The statute of limitations needs to be lifted for all those affected by the government's past practices of forced adoption.

It's now been over 10 years since the national apology from Julia Gillard, but what has changed?

By keeping our records hidden and unattainable, this only adds to the shame and secrets associated with adoption.

My adoption has taken a huge toll on me, and will no doubt continue to do so for the rest of my life. I always feel like I am 100 steps behind the starting line of life and will always be trying to catch up.

At the age of 19 I too, found myself pregnant and alone. I was luckily enough to have access to the single mother's pension, and I was able to raise my son as best I could. Unfortunately, due to my adoption, I was not able to be the best mother I could be, as I was too traumatised from my own past, and could not mother him the way in which he deserves. I used meth for the first time when my son was around 9 years old. It grabbed a hold of me and would not let go, no matter how hard I tried. My use went through the roof, and this would continue for many many years. I lost everything, more than once, including my son, myself and my sanity. It has taken a lot of hard work, and recovery, to be able to build trust with him, and to rebuild our relationship. We are still a work in progress, and I feel so much shame and guilt myself, for not being able to care for him properly, during my addiction years.

He is now in a healthy, happy relationship and has his own beautiful 3yr old daughter. If I can make up lost time, I will through her, and continue to do everything I can to make up for so much lost time.

It is not my fault I am adopted, I did not do anything wrong.

I am now over 6 years clean and sober, and I feel I am forever making up for so many lost years.

I Would like a lifetime of free counselling for all mothers and babies.

I would like to a lifetime of free access to Ancestry DNA for all mothers and babies.

I would like free top cover health insurance for all mothers and babies.

I would like to see compensation payments /redress for all mothers and babies, for a lifetime of trauma, sadness, broken hearts, pain, and suffering.

I would like to see NGALA being held accountable.

Writing this has been such an emotional roller coaster for me. It has taken a lot of my strength, energy, and my time. I feel drained and kind of empty.

I wish for inner peace, healing, self-love, acceptance, clarity, and healing.

I would like to thank you, for taking the time, to read this.

If you are a fellow adoptee, or a relinquishing mother...**HUGZ**

Kimmi

I have included in my submission, 3 attachments.

First is from my lifelong friend Claire Brooks-Benden

Second is from my Counsellor Leanne Wallace

Third is from Juliet Middleton, a chaplain/friend/support from Fresh Start.

I would also like to offer to be personally interviewed by the committee, to share more of how my adoption has turned my life inside out.

Claire Brooks-Benden

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

To The Judges/ Whom it may concern,

My name is Claire Brooks-Benden, I am a long term friend of Kim Overend.

We met when I was 16 year old student, and Kim was 19 years old and working as an Apprentice Chef, around 1993/1994. We met through mutual friends and became close. She was always like an older Sister to me, and she always looked after me. All our Friend group used drugs and alcohol on a regular basis. Kim used to drink, but not use drugs with us, and was known as a Good worker and a really Good Mum once she had her Son [REDACTED].

I do not recall when Kim first mentioned being adopted, it was something she kept very private, and rarely spoke about. I could see the pain in her eyes. She was also unable to find any information in those early days, which I know caused a lot of pain- the not knowing.

I visited Kims home when she lived with her parents in the 1990's, as well as hear about how she gets treated in the years she has been caring for them recently. I'm sorry to say that whilst her Parents provided her with a roof over her head and the stability that comes with that as she was growing up, she has had very little love and care from her adoptive parents. Her Brother was always favoured, and I remember Kim telling me he had had his own biological parents reach out for contact- he wanted no such thing. This really rocked Kim, as she was desperate to know where she came from, if there was a family out there that wanted her.

As the Carer of her adopted parents, Kim does all the food shopping, cooking, cleaning of the house, as well as take both her Parents to their many Dr's appointments and surgeries due to their ill health, with no Thanks and little assistance. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I moved to the East Coast in 1998 relocating back to the Fremantle area in 2017, where Kim and I resumed our friendship. She had stayed working in Hospitality, but had been introduced to methamphetamine by a partner, and we used drugs together on many occasions. I had young children so I used drugs sporadically, but Kim seemed to have found a drug that really got her addicted. I watched her go from being someone I loved and cared for and trusted in my Home and around my Children, to someone I couldn't recognize or trust. I was devastated to watch this. I actually had to ask her to leave my house, she was very unwell physically, mentally and spiritually due to her drug use. I cried many times believing that she would die in her Addiction, and she almost did on numerous occasions.

During times we were high she would tell me any information on finding her Biological Family, but it seemed so impossible, with many dead ends and roadblocks. I think she was desperate to find another Life where People Loved and cared for her, showed her Respect and appreciated her- don't we all?! During this time she became an unfit Parent, and her Son eventually went to live with her adoptive Parents, whilst Kim just spiraled out of control deeper and deeper into addiction, homelessness and hopelessness.

Somehow, she eventually went into treatment for her drug addiction.

She survived! I know this was an extremely difficult road for her to walk alone, but she did have the support of some truly incredible treatment facility workers- who saw the real Kimmi, some of whom you have affidavits from as well.

We met up again once or twice in her early Recovery years, but I was now the unsafe person, using drugs to cope with an abusive relationship and unresolved past trauma. Kim very graciously helped me when I was desperate to stop using drugs, and took me to my first Narcotics Anonymous meeting, as well as introduced me to some of her Support team, for which I am forever Grateful. I will be four years clean off all drugs at the end of April 2023.

During these last three- four years Kim has found her Birth Mother, and other Family members. This hasn't been an easy or fantastic story either. Obviously it's very complicated for everyone involved, and I know this has caused Kim a lot more pain and suffering. But through all the ups and downs of her home Life, adoptive family finding life, or any other life struggles she has not gone back to old habits. This is a huge feat for anyone.

When she asked me to write this for her, she seemed very hesitant and nervous, I don't think she knows how valuable and Loved she is by her friends.

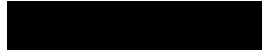
Kim is an exceptionally strong and resilient person who has faced some of the most difficult things a person can face in Life. I feel she has walked her path in Recovery with Grace, and the kind and loving heart she has always had.

Thank you for your time,

Claire Brooks-Benden.



Leanne Wallace



Counselling & Psychotherapy

Leanne Wallace



01/07/2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I began working therapeutically with Kim Overend (DOB- 04/12/1973), when she attended Cyrenian House's Rick Hammersley Therapeutic Community in November 2016. I continue to work with her privately in one-on-one sessions, approximately once a month, since April 2022.

Due to her adoption, and the complex trauma she has experienced in her adoptive family, she has a deep sense of abandonment. Kim has significant attachment deficits; she has difficulty trusting others and feeling safe and secure in a relationship. As a result, she has had difficulties in forming and maintaining healthy relationships, both friendships and romantically. She displays a disorganised attachment style.

Kim continues to work on forming a secure attachment, she exhibits improved distress tolerance and emotional regulation skills. She would benefit from ongoing counselling and self-development work.

Kim displays ongoing emotional and psychological distress as a result of being removed from her birth parents. She has referred to herself a "a dirty little secret", and in part due to her fear of rejection, has faced difficulty when establishing a relationship with her birth mother.

Whilst she was a wanted baby, her mother had no help or support to keep her. Her birth mother was unaware and subsequently, not informed of, the single mother's payment that had recently been established in 1973, and was coerced and sent away to have her baby in secret. Her father was not given a choice.

Her forced adoption has left Kim with a myriad of unresolved and unspoken emotion including grief and loss, shame, disappointment. confusion and curiosity. This has seriously impacted her behaviour and the development of maladaptive thinking styles and coping mechanisms such as addiction disorder and low self-esteem.

Additionally, not feeling wanted in her adoptive family and being subjected to adverse childhood experiences such as abuse and neglect, has impacted Kim's stages of development.

She is still working on feeling safe in present time, accessing her healthy adult and rescripting long held and introjected maladaptive beliefs and thinking. Kim is addressing the immediate issues of substance abuse and continues to work on the underlying issues such as worthlessness, a lack of belonging, unprocessed anger, difficulty asking for help, and a fear of rejection.

She describes with great joy, a sense of belonging, when she reunited with some of the members of her birth family. Kim experiences complicated grief and loss, she grieves the relationships with her biological parents, siblings and extended family and a loss of cultural connection.

Kim is proud of being an Aboriginal person, but we largely learn our culture in our families and communities growing up. Kim was denied a connection to her Aboriginal heritage, as she was lied to about her Aboriginality. This contributes to a deep sense of sadness and loss about missing out on her culture and feeling as though she was "white washed". She also experienced prejudice in her adopted family due to racist attitudes and comments. This has ongoing ramifications on her well-being and mental health. Kim displays low self-esteem, a lack of individuation and identity and will require ongoing support in this area.

If I can be of assistance or you have any further queries, please feel free to contact me.

Yours truly

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Leanne Wallace.

Leanne Wallace

To whom it may concern re Kimmi Overend

My name is Juliet Richardson and I am a chaplain at Fresh Start Recovery Programme in Subiaco. We are a drug and alcohol service. I have had the privilege of knowing Kimmi since July 2016.

When I first met her, she was utterly chaotic internally and externally. She had dreadful anxiety and a life threatening methamphetamine habit. Socially she had no ability to control shocking bad language, aggression and negative interactions. Even her physical movements were clumsy and overdone from years of being totally out of control in every way. She didn't have the capacity to modify these things in different situations as most people even in addiction do. In 15 years of working with addicts, the memory of her pain and massive dysfunction in her early days with us still lingers all these years. She was struggling literally second by second not to go and use drugs to an extent I rarely see, and was in enormous trauma at all times whether she used drugs or abstained. She stayed in our detox house and then our girls' house for some time, not wanting to leave as she finally felt safe for the first time.

Her relationship with her son was terrible, as he couldn't cope with a mother who said she would behave, and then go back to her previous habit which caused her to be simply a huge drama and trauma in his life. He found it was better to not know her at all. The condemnation and failure of this precious relationship was a tremendous agony to Kimmi, and of course to her son.

Kimmi found somehow the grit, strength and determination to recover from her terrible addiction with the help of Fresh Start and other drug and alcohol services, and to slowly heal mentally – a very long and very painful, difficult journey.

Spiritually Kimmi suffered damage. Her investigations into her adoption have led her to the information that her birth mother didn't even sign her over or formally consent to the adoption, which is deeply painful for Kimmi to learn at this age. She is aware of a strong coercion by Catholic agencies on struggling mothers in the past to give up their babies, and that the receiving Catholic family was cared about more than the original family. Kimmi was raised in a Catholic home but found she was very confused about it, taught to be extremely afraid of hell as a child, and suffered much shame and humiliation in church activities.

[REDACTED]. I suspect that Kimmi has lost out badly in the past on a spiritual connection that would have served her extremely helpfully, as so very many other addicts can testify. This is a huge loss and cannot be underestimated, as the comfort, strength and guidance faith offers would naturally have given her light and hope through terrible times over her life. Consequently, she has built a protective strong resistance to the Catholic faith, while being more recently open to protestant Christianity and the way of life it offers

Although we built up a strong relationship quickly, Kimmi took a long time to even tell me she had been adopted. She found it so hard to even acknowledge within herself because it

was and is so painful. She eventually told me in strict confidence, slowly opening up about it in tiny increments, then rapidly slamming the door, saying “That’s enough of that!” in our discussions. Yet she couldn’t stop thinking and hurting about it at all. She said she had asked her adoptive parents many times over many years for help with reconnecting with her birth family. Unfortunately, she was turned away by them, even shunned for mentioning such a thing. This caused a level of anguish that was so deep and raw that Kimmi could no longer bear it clean and sober, so her addiction increased enormously as a result.

One day she told me in great agitation that she had been researching desperately to find her birth family. She had no idea where to start, and received no help through government agencies. She was literally terrified even talking about it. In great fear she would ask me repeatedly not to tell anyone as again the trauma reared its ugly controlling head. The fear of rejection was almost unbearable. Finally, the day came when she told me in utter joy that she had found her birth mother via Facebook! After 46 long years!! She was utterly euphoric as she arranged to meet [REDACTED], and filled with hope for the future with her new family. The meetings went well initially and brought Kimmi a joy she hadn’t known before. But the loss of all the years, the “otherness” of her mother and her from not knowing each other for so many decades, has made it difficult to grow a sustainable relationship. The last time I asked her how it was going with her mother, she just shook her head with a look of great pain on her face.

Her birth father actually died just before she was able to meet him. This grief was a dreadful thing for Kimmi, who spent considerable time trying to get to know him after his death, after missing a life time with him. The loss of this is really impossible for most people to understand and cannot be underestimated.

Another knock on effect of finding her real family I soon started to notice was a considerable break down in Kimmi’s relationship with her adopted parents. Now she is five and a half years into active recovery, she sees them how they are and has shown wisdom and compassion in this, but somehow the massive confusion and attempt to understand her new world with 2 families has created an upheaval in her that has been a real torment, and her relationship with them is now quite messy.

Kimmi rang and came to see me immediately after the Parliamentary Inquiry on 22nd march. She had found it enormously beneficial instantly and knows it will assist her very much in healing, as well as understanding her history and past. She feels this is essential for her to move forward into her future. She spoke of the comfort of being surrounded for the first time ever with other adoptees and relinquishing mothers.

Kimmi’s life story is one of unbearable pain wrapped around a courageous, intelligent, loving, wise, resilient, strong woman. She has lived the life of a cripple but is now somehow finding the resources to try to live the way she was meant to from the start. I am more than privileged to know her and support her journey.

Kind regards

Juliet Richardson, Fresh Start Chaplain