

I am the Mother of a daughter whom I named [REDACTED], born on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 1967 at St Anne's Hospital, Mt Lawley. Her birth registration is dated 14<sup>th</sup> June 1967. Her adoptive parents put a birth notice in the West Australian newspaper [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. She had been named [REDACTED].

General information I was sent in 1989 states [REDACTED] adoption was arranged privately by [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Her adoption Birth Certificate was registered on the 28<sup>th</sup> December 1967. I do not know how many days after her birth [REDACTED] was given to her adoptive parents but she was 5 months old when it was registered.

I don't remember having a discussion about my choices, adoption was my only option.

When I found I was pregnant with [REDACTED] I had just commenced my nursing training at SCGH on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1966. Matron [REDACTED] at SCGH was a very compassionate woman, she was willing to defer my training so I could join the next intake in May 1967 without having to repeat the initial PTS course. At the time I had very little support from my Mother as she was in a new relationship with the man who would become her 3<sup>rd</sup> husband. He was a Catholic and had no sympathy for me. I was only 18 years old which at that time made me a minor. The stigma of being pregnant and unmarried at that time would have played a part. My Mother had become a single parent at 22 years of age when I was 2 years old when my Father joined the navy. Even though she didn't have the stigma of being an unmarried Mother it would have been hard at that time.

At the time I fell pregnant we were living in a rental property. My Mother was working full time, I had been given a job as a carer at Tresillian Hospital, an annex of SCGH, waiting until August to start my nursing and my sister from my Mother's 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage, was 5 years old. It was at that time that I starting going out with [REDACTED] Father. He was a friend of a girl who was boarding with us. We spent a lot of time alone babysitting my sister as my Mother was out with her boyfriend many nights not coming home until very late. As I was wanting someone to love me and from my lived experience sex was one way of showing and being given affection. [REDACTED] Father was from Queensland and on a working holiday. My Mother got him a job to drive a vehicle to a mine site up north and he left before I knew I was pregnant and I had no way of contacting him.

I was taken to a [REDACTED] who was a Catholic and a friend of my Mother's boyfriend. So they all arranged for me to be taken to St Anne's Home for Unmarried Mothers where I lived for about 5 or 6 months. I have very little detailed memory of living at St Anne's. I know we were told from the start that this baby was not ours. I lived in a shared room with [REDACTED]. We made baby blankets and nighties for the nursery. There was a lounge area where we would sit of an evening and lovely gardens to walk around. I don't remember being given any counselling. I also don't remember having any visitors although my sister says she remembers coming to see me. My Father and his parents were not told about my pregnancy.

When I gave birth I remember the Nuns were not at all sympathetic. I felt I was being punished for being wicked. I was given gas but don't know if I was given any sedative drugs. I gave birth on my side with a Nun holding my top leg up and my baby was taken away behind my back so I couldn't see her. I was told I had had a girl. I remember my breasts were bound but I have no other memory of how I was after the

birth or if I was given any sedation. I have a faint recollection that I was told to sign the adoption papers only a few days after giving birth. I don't remember how long I was in hospital before being told to forget all about my baby and what had just happened and to get on with my life. I had been conditioned and constantly told that the baby wasn't mine. I was never told I had 30 days to change my mind. I don't know if my Mother was told that.

There is an unusual twist to my story. My Mother told how a voice "spoke to her" on the day she came to pick me up. She was told not to worry as [REDACTED] have Cheryl's baby. My Mother immediately rang a friend to tell her as a 'witness' to what she 'heard'. She also rang a friend, [REDACTED], in Dowerin where [REDACTED] lived and told her to give our baby a cuddle and a kiss from us. My Mother had been going out with a farmer, [REDACTED], who was a friend of [REDACTED]. I met [REDACTED] when I was 9 years old as he was boarding with [REDACTED]. I also met [REDACTED] and became friends with her nieces. My Mother and [REDACTED] went to their wedding. On the day Mum got this message she told [REDACTED] at St Anne's who told Mum that was rubbish but after Mum insisted it was true she was told never to tell me. She said she couldn't promise that and it has been proven to be true.

I went back to living at the nurses quarters and continued my training. I could not talk to any of the girls as I felt no one could know about what had happened. There was no counselling. The shame and distress of having given birth and giving my baby away was so great I pushed it all to the back of my mind and blocked it out. It was the only way I could cope and I threw myself into nursing. I loved nursing and was able to give of myself caring for my patients and being appreciated as a good person. I would go home on my days off mainly to support my little sister who was stuck in a house with my Mother and her controlling and abusive boyfriend.

As I had such a bad opinion of myself and my mother was not available emotionally I ended up searching for someone to love me. I was introduced to [REDACTED], a school friend's workmate. We started going out and despite what I had been through I was so desperate to be loved I eventually gave in to pressure to have sex. He was talking about getting engaged and as he was a Catholic I sent away for a course on how to become a Catholic. Little did I realise that Protestant girls were fair game for Catholic boys and I was desperate to believe he loved me. It wasn't long before I was passed over for someone else. I realised I was pregnant but felt there was no point in telling [REDACTED] and I was too ashamed to tell anyone and hated myself. I went to Victoria in my holidays to visit my Dad. I was 16 Years old the last time he saw me and I was now 19 years old. My Father and I loved each other but we were strangers. I had intended telling my dad I was pregnant hoping for his support but I was too ashamed and thought he wouldn't love me any more. He also had 5 children to his 2<sup>nd</sup> wife and things were hard enough for him.

On that trip I contracted German Measles and became very ill so the staff Dr put me into hospital. I was asked on admission when my last period was and lied saying 3 weeks ago. I was examined by a Dr and then two Drs came and felt my abdomen, I was 13 weeks pregnant but no one asked if I could be pregnant. I could have had a legal termination because of the probability of birth defects but I was too ashamed to tell anyone. Who knows what else was going through my mind. I started wearing a tight girdle and became an introvert staying in my room hiding. I tried jumping off my dressing table to cause a miscarriage, having very hot baths and even tried to break my waters with a catheter but nothing

worked. I went out to a night club once but felt so uncomfortable I never went again. I stayed in my room and knitted a baby outfit telling my friends it was for a friend. No one guessed. I went home on my days off to be with my sister and would chop wood for Mum as the boyfriend wouldn't. The last 6 weeks of my pregnancy I was at PMH doing my Children's nursing training. I worked on a ward where I had to wear a gown so I could hide my baby bump as well as still wearing the girdle. When I was 81\2 months pregnant my mother insisted on taking me to [REDACTED] as I was looking so bloated she thought I had kidney problems. He examined me and could not believe my Mother had no idea I was pregnant. I can't remember what was decided I should do but I went back to PMH. My next shift was on the general children's ward. I was bathing a child when I had severe stomach pains so had to go off sick. I sat on the toilet for an hour and then realised I was in labour. I rang my mother at work and she came to PMH. By the time she got to me I was in full blown labour. Matron [REDACTED] and the Deputy Matron came and the Deputy Matron delivered my daughter on my bed in the nurse's quarters. I was taken to St Anne's Hospital and they took my baby away. I had torn giving birth and a Dr stitched me up without any local anaesthetic telling me it was what I deserved. I begged to see my baby but was not allowed. On the 2nd day I went and sat outside Sister [REDACTED] office and said I was not moving until they gave me my baby back, I was not going to let them have this one too. My Mother had told [REDACTED], the Father, who did not know I was pregnant, that he became a Father on the day she was born, as she met him when returning to work. To his credit he did come and see me in hospital and met his daughter but he was not interested in having anything to do with us. Matron [REDACTED] came to see me in hospital and told me she could give me 12 weeks off without giving an explanation to the Nurses Board. As I couldn't go home due to my now stepfather I went to live with a friend of my Mother's who had been recently widowed. I helped with her 3 children and around the house. I breast fed my baby for 11 weeks, weaned her and found a couple, who lived near SCGH, who wanted a boarder to help with their mortgage and the wife offered to look after my baby while I worked. I also helped around the house and her children when I wasn't working or studying. This ended up not working out so my Grandparents took us in. It was difficult but I was determined to finish my Nursing Training so we had a future and also to repay the kindness and faith Matron [REDACTED] had in me. I also had a lot to prove to myself and everyone else that I could be a good Mother despite having given [REDACTED] away. I named my 2<sup>nd</sup> daughter [REDACTED], which I did not know, means the Supplanter, 'to take the place of another'. Before I finished my training I met and married my ex-husband. We only knew each other 12 weeks before we married. He felt he was rescuing me. I never told him about [REDACTED] and he never told me about a daughter he fathered who was also adopted out. My Mother had forced me to apply for maintenance for [REDACTED] from her Father. If I didn't agree she said she would disown me. It was a traumatic experience as I had to prove he was the Father when he had not known I was pregnant. The maintenance application was granted. After I was married her Father offered to cover all costs to have my husband adopt [REDACTED] which he was happy to do. That was another traumatic thing to have to go through as we had to prove we were suitable parents. I was so worried they may find a reason to take [REDACTED] away from me. I had lost all trust in people in power after what I had experienced.

My marriage lasted 14 years and we had 3 boys. My husband was unfaithful early in our marriage but I was desperate to prove marriage could work as I had a family history of failed marriages. My history was such that I had built a wall around my feelings and had lost trust in people, especially men. My husband

didn't want me to work after I finished my Nursing Training. I had little control over my life and no money so felt trapped. When we finally ended our marriage after trying marriage counselling four times I finally felt in control of my life. I had suffered for years with a weeping navel which my GP had tried to cure to no avail but when I was back in control of my life my navel stopped weeping. I was also able to open up to face having lost [REDACTED]. My Mother and I started going to Adoption Jigsaw, attending meetings and reading lots of articles about the affect on all parties in the adoption process. I was finally able to remember the names of who had adopted [REDACTED]. My Mother volunteered and helped with tracing, mediations and reunions at Jigsaw for many years. I was having problems with [REDACTED] who was deaf from me having German Measles and rebelling especially as her brothers weren't deaf. I told her about [REDACTED] having been adopted out as I didn't want the same thing to happen to her. She was excited to learn she had a sister and wanted to meet her so she could come to her 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday. I had a copy of the Birth Certificate I signed and as I had the names of her parents I managed to get a copy of her Adoption Birth Certificate which was the proof I needed for [REDACTED] at Adoption Jigsaw to contact [REDACTED]. Her Mother gave [REDACTED] her work number and after [REDACTED] ascertained she knew she was adopted she asked [REDACTED] if she was willing to meet me. [REDACTED] agreed saying she had been going to go on the contact register. A meeting was arranged at Jigsaw which went well although I found it hard to look at the photos she brought of herself growing up, especially the baby photos. We made arrangements for [REDACTED] to come and meet her sister and brothers. As an only child she was happy to get to know them. My husband came to see her as well as he already knew her [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] came to [REDACTED] 21<sup>st</sup> birthday but a close sister relationship [REDACTED] hoped for did not eventuate. It was discovered that a friend of [REDACTED], a girl who lived over the road, was [REDACTED] best friend. We have had spasmodic contact over the years. There was some resentment when [REDACTED] found out about [REDACTED] birth and the fact I had kept her but given [REDACTED] away. I was told once by [REDACTED] Mother, [REDACTED], that it shouldn't matter that I gave up [REDACTED] as I had 4 more children. How wrong she is.

Apart from some one on one counselling I had at Relationships Australia while married, which I stopped when I found it too distressing, I did 12 month Group Therapy with the Institute of Human Development and saw a Psychologist in the Christmas break as all the feelings I was confronting were making me depressed. I felt it helped but when I became distressed over confronting my past I would stop as the feeling of losing complete control and not being able to stop crying frightened me. I also went to Findhorn in Scotland, a Spiritual community, and did another week of group therapy, a Relationship course and an Introduction to Buddhism. None of these directly addressed the issue of losing my baby to adoption, just my dysfunctional life in general.

It is hard to define the lasting impacts being forced to give up my baby has had. I still end up crying any time I allow myself to talk or think about it, even after 56 years. I had a very unsettled life with my Mother and my Father left when I was 2 and lived the rest of his life in Victoria. There was no security.

I am amazed that there was no counselling offered during my pregnancy or after. I was just expected to put the pain, hurt, and sorrow at what I had done away and forget it ever happened. I was supposed to forget the baby I felt growing and moving in my body, that I talked to each day. My only hope was to completely block it out of my mind. Fortunately I had my nursing and my patients I could give my

attention and love to. I don't know what would have happened if I hadn't had that. The guilt is a constant and the loss of watching my baby grow up has been a constant ache.

I attended the Apology on Forced Adoption in the Western Australian Parliament in 2010. I will be forever grateful to David Templeman for raising the issue. This was a very healing and moving day. We were encouraged to write a letter to our child and leave it in a special garden at Government House. Julia Gillard's Apology in Federal Parliament was very powerful and healing. I have a framed copy on display in my home as it means so much. What was done in those years was so cruel and wrong.

I hope this enquiry results in Birth Mothers and Adoptees being able to easily obtain any information relative to them. I also hope it allows those people who have been blocked from accessing information the right to have that information before it is too late as we are all getting older. To not know what has happened to your baby or to not know where you belong would be devastating. If it is found that Church or State institutions made a monetary gain from adoptions thus encouraging the practice they should be made to pay recompence.