

**SYDNEY MORNING HERALD
REPORTS: STERILISATION OF
UNWED MOTHERS (1966)**

Submission of Elizabeth Brew to the

Environment and Public Affairs Committee

Western Australian Parliamentary Inquiry

Past forced adoptive policies and

practices 1939 – 1983

SURGERY TO LIMIT UNWED MOTHERS' BABIES



MR. W. A. H. JARVIS

By Graham Gambie

Dozens of unmarried mothers are having operations in one of Sydney's biggest hospitals to make them sterile.

Cited in Elizabeth Brew, 2023, *To have and not to hold: The Commonwealth Marriage of Minors Intervention*, (a compilation of writings by the author circa 2018 - 2023).

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The sterilisation of
unmarried mothers.

The mothers are being advised by medical specialists that it would be in their best interests to have the operation.

A leading Macquarie Street psychiatrist told me about the operations this week.

"I feel that sterilisation is the best thing for some of these women," he said.

"Some of these girls just go on and on having children.

"They have three, four and five children and move from one de-facto relationship to another.

"There must be a limit to the number of children a family structure like this can support.

"The mothers are simply incapable of coping with

poses their child - bearing days are over," the psychiatrist said.

One of Sydney's leading university psychologists who has made a special survey of the problems facing unmarried mothers, told me he knew the operations were being carried out but he had not realised they were being performed on such a large number of girls.

Special clinic

Four out of five of the girls he had interviewed about their operations had said they regretted their decision to be sterilised.

The hospital where the operations are being carried out runs a special clinic for unmarried mothers. Hun-

But another group, suffering from "dis-social personalities," were also being advised to have it.

"This type of girl has little regard for the effects and consequences of her matings," he said.

"But we only perform the operation where we feel the indicators support it."

The psychiatrist said unmarried mothers presented society with a "very big problem" and in his practice he was coming into contact with an increasing number of the girls.

Five children

Social workers were working "night and day" looking after them, helping with their problems and trying to arrange place-

of these women, he said.
"Some of these girls just go on and on having children."

"They have three, four and five children and move from one de-facto relationship to another."

"There must be a limit to the number of children a family structure like this can support."

"The mothers are simply incapable of coping with more children."

The psychiatrist stressed that the girls were told they would not be able to have babies after the operation and the girls' consent was always obtained.

The effects of the operation could be reversed by surgeons if the girls later wanted to have children.

"But we explain to them that to all intents and pur-

being performed on such a large number of girls.

Special clinic

Four out of five of the girls he had interviewed about their operations had said they regretted their decision to be sterilised.

The hospital where the operations are being carried out runs a special clinic for unmarried mothers. Hundreds of these girls have their babies at the hospital every year.

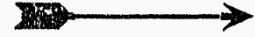
The psychiatrist, who is a consultant at the hospital, said the Pill was prescribed "quite freely" for the girls but some could not be relied on to take it.

Some of the mothers needed the sterilising operation for medical, gynaecological and psychiatric reasons he said.

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MORE UNWED MOTHERS KEEP BABIES

Cited in Elizabeth Brew, 2023, *To have and not to hold: The Commonwealth Marriage of Minors Intervention*, (a compilation of writings by the author circa 2018 - 2023).

Presents entirely new evidence, and expands on the findings of Australian Commonwealth contribution to 'forced adoptions' by the 2012 Senate Inquiry.

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More than one-third of the illegitimate babies born in Australia to day are kept by their mothers—and the number is growing

This will be one of the findings of a five-year survey of unmarried mothers, now drawing to a close at the University of N.S.W.

Mr W. A. Jarvis, a university lecturer in clinical psychology who has interviewed hundreds of unmarried mothers in the course of the survey, said this week, "There is a definite trend for more unmarried mothers to keep their children."

"Three years ago about 35 per cent of unmarried mothers kept their children. A similar study 15 years ago showed that 20 per cent did."

"This increase is in line with overseas trends."

A survey of 1,000 unmarried mothers carried out by Mr Jarvis in 1964 found that 45 per cent kept their children, and 55 per cent had them adopted.

The number of unmarried 30-year-old mothers in N.S.W. dropped from 140 in 1961 to 122 in 1964.

Mr Jarvis said that in some institutions up to 60 per cent of unmarried mothers would decide to keep their babies.

But in other institutions pregnant girls would not be admitted unless they first signed a paper agreeing to have the child adopted.



MR JARVIS . . . he interviewed hundreds of girls.