

**Submission
No 6**

**INQUIRY INTO REPARATIONS FOR THE STOLEN
GENERATIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Aunty Lindy Lawler

Date received: 24/09/2015

23/09/2015

Stolen Generations Inquiry Committee

Dear Committee

I Aunty Lindy Lawler am writing to you regarding my personal history and my current situation based on being a Stolen Generation Member.

Mandy (aka: Jean Patricia Cooper, my twin) and I (aka: Elsie Rose Cooper) were born on 21st December 1958. We lived at Browns Flat (Silver City) which where humpies made out of tin with our parents until 11th June 1959. On this date we were taken to Ashfield's Infants home and were considered under the control of the Aborigine Welfare Board. Our mother refused to give us up and didn't sign adoption papers. The Board declared her an unfit mother.

From then onwards Mandy and I were moved and placed in many homes and were looked after by many different carers. From 1962 till 1966 we spent blocks of time with a particular foster carer who caused physical and emotional harm/abuse to both Mandy and I. This abuse was part of her physical punishment method. She would call us into the kitchen and tell us to stand in front of the stove. She would hold my right hand over the stove. I would feel the flames and I still remember the screaming. Mandy then experienced the same abuse. As an adult I have attempted to talk bout these experiences yet it still brings me to tears as I can see myself as a young girl experiencing the pain. Now I am afraid of open flames and keep away from gas stoves as this triggers memories, panic attacks and moments when I freeze and have anxiety. I do not wish to name the carer. After the traumatic incidents we were removed and paced at the St Catherine's Orphanage Brooklyn.

We were placed with our foster mother Mrs. Betty Dellit in approx. 1968. She was different. She wasn't nasty, cruel and treated us as equals. Being removed from an Aboriginal family and being placed in a non-Aboriginal homes caused us to grow up disconnected from the Aboriginal community. As young girls Mandy and I didn't even know what Aboriginal people were. We have missed out on family connections and knowing who we are/were related to and were not able to meet grandparents, aunties, uncles and cousins who have since passed away. I live a non-Indigenous life because that is how I was raised. I then raised my children in the same manner.

As a Stolen Generation Member I come to the Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service for Social and emotional counselling. I experience panic attacks and stress due to my history and past experiences. I discuss these experiences and receive support from my Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counsellors. I have been attending this service and have received counselling for over approx. 10 years.

Being a Stolen Generation Member has affected us in so many ways. It is difficult piecing memories together to understand our history and our story. It is like a jigsaw puzzle and I am currently trying to organize a timeline of my story using my Ward file with the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counsellors. I gained access to this file in approx. 2007 and my twin sister Mandy was unable to read this file due to illness. Mandy sadly passed away in 2009. I

am confused as to why and how Mandy and I names were changed from Jean and Elsie to Mandy and Lindy. I am still determined to learn the truth about our past.

I have since learnt what it is to be an aboriginal person. I also have a better understanding of where I've come from and I have contributed to and gained acknowledgement and acceptance from the Indigenous community and Non-Indigenous people. I was named Elder of the year in 2012 and I am highly respected in the Indigenous community and also with Non-Indigenous people.

Kind Regards

Aunty Lindy Lawler

I Erin Fraser am signing on behalf of Aunty Lindy Lawler

Erin Fraser

Social and Emotional Wellbeing Counsellor

Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service