

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 16/10/2015

Partially Confidential

Story

1. My life before being taken

1. My name is _____ and I was born on _____ 1958. I am a Pitjantjatjara – Yungkuntjara woman, from South Australia. My Nanna was the daughter of _____. I had five siblings, but three brothers passed away.
2. I have vivid memories of my early childhood, living with my parents, walking for miles, hunting for food and sleeping under the stars in country. It was the best going out bush. It was just me and my family around the campfire. My dad had a spear and boomerang and would hunt and we would eat traditional foods. It was the happiest time of my life.

2. My time in Umeewarra

3. When I was about seven I remember my brothers and I being at Umeewarra Mission Children's Home in Port Augusta. It was started by a couple from the Church for Aboriginal people on the sand hills.
4. When the Children's home was first set up the community was extremely hesitant as they did not want them there. However, more workers came along from the Church and the community started to trust them. If the fathers would go out to work on the train (which my father did) or go wood chopping, they'd put us in the Children's Home to be brought up the Christian way. The families really trusted them.
5. While in Umeewarra we used to have barbeques or go camping at Flinder's Range. It was a lot of fun there. I thought it was alright there because the mission was actually on the reserve. It was easy for us kids to walk home to the community.
6. After a while things started to get a little bit weird. The welfare workers started to take kids away from the community.

2. My time in a Children's Home in Adelaide

7. I remember being on a train with mum and dad. We shared a tin of apricots – I loved the taste. We went to this courtroom: I was looking at mum and she was

crying and dad was crying too. I remember thinking "What's going on?" That was the last time I saw dad. The very last time.

8. After that the welfare people took me to a Children's home in North Adelaide. There were about five or six kids there. My youngest brother was about four at the time and I'm pretty sure he was there too. My other brother was sent somewhere else though so we were split up.
9. The Christian mob from Umeewarra didn't agree with the welfare people. They wanted us to stay on the mission so we could be close to our families and our community.
10. Out the back in the neighbour's backyard, I'd notice how happy the family was and I'd wish I was with my own family. I tried to run away a couple of times. I even jumped out of the window from the first level when everyone was sleeping. I could picture myself going up to the Flinders Range going camping out under the stars with my family. Then as I was going I heard this car tooting and it frightened me so I ran back up to the children's home and climbed back up. It wasn't tooting for me, but I thought it was and they were coming to get me.
11. All the kids would go somewhere at Christmas. One year my brother and I went to Kangaroo Island. He went to the city and I was out on a farm so we'd only see each other if there was a family gathering on the beach or something.
12. When I came back I must have told the other kids about Kangaroo Island because we all decided to go and jumped out the window. We started walking to the airport. Not like we had any money. Then this couple picked us up, they took us for food then to the police station. The police took us back to the home, we didn't have tea or anything, and we were punished.
13. We all went to North Adelaide Public School. Every morning, we had to walk to school on our own which took about 15-20 minutes. I remember we used to go together because we'd always have a race to the traffic light to press the button.
14. One day I was walking to school with another little girl. As we rounded the corner, this bloke came along, and he had this hat on, and asked us where the zoo was. I knew, so I told him where to go. He asked, "Can you take me there?", so we started to take him. But on the way he took us in the opposite direction and made us go down the path towards the River Torrens area. We came to a ledge and I saw the tops of the caravans. Somehow, he took the little girl behind the bush. When she came out, she was crying and screaming, and after that, I can't remember nothing, including how I got back to the Children's Home. And yet I remember every other detail of that day right down to how the light played on the leaves in the trees. I believe I was sexually

assaulted and blocked out the memory of exactly what happened as a way of coping with that trauma.

15. Ever since then, I've had feelings of paranoia, anxiety and claustrophobia. I think that's how I got my stutter. I've been thinking maybe there was no other girl...it might have been me. But I'm only trying to work things out. I think it all boils down to that day. How did I come to be there? Because I was taken away from my biological parents. Because they were putting us kids into children's homes.

3. My time in foster homes

16. I was at the Children's Home for a couple of years before I was moved to other foster homes. At one point, my brother and I moved to a foster home in Hilltown.

17. It was one of those places with bad memories. The mother and father were always arguing and shouting. I remember her trying to smash the front window of his truck. Then one time in the kitchen I remember her and her daughter were arguing and then she picked up a knife and chucked it at her daughter, it flew right past me, lucky it missed her.

18. There was one time where my brother and another boy staying there had wet the bed. My brother got a copping from the father. Afterwards, the two boys were having a bath and somehow the father thought that my brother piddled in the bath. He got him out and I watched him hit him with his belt buckle. I'll never forget that.

19. The father was so mean. He said to me as a little kid "go pack your bags and start walking to Adelaide" and I did. I started packing my bags and I was carrying a suitcase. I was half way down the road when one of the kids came riding past and said "dad said you've got to go home." But I believed him when he said to pack my things and walk to Adelaide.

20. When I was about nine I moved to a foster home where things were better. Early on, I used to tell the dad he wasn't a real man. He queried why and I said "because you don't have a red headband." Because in our way if you're a grown man you wear a red headband, so I must have carried that through all the traumatic things and still kept that. That's when things calmed down a bit. I thought they were just like the last lot but it was actually the only house where we had security and love.

21. My foster parents became 'mum' and 'dad' to me. They put me through ballet. I was stuttering a lot at the time, so I didn't say much but I let my ballet do the talking.

4. Moving to Sydney & later life experiences

22. I left my foster house when I was 17 and moved to Sydney on a dance scholarship. This involved all kinds of dancing, not just ballet. I even took part in a six week workshop that involved singing, dancing and acting. But my heart was always in dancing so I continued with that.
23. All I know is that when I was with my biological mum and dad I felt happy, safe and loved. There was a connection to culture because I could speak the language then. But I was taken away from all that. Now, after what's happened, even when I hear kids crying or if any parents hit their kids I start to cry because that triggers it for me.
24. Because of what happened in North Adelaide I was seeing a psychiatrist for twelve years and am now seeing a psychologist. That experience has actually effected my personal life and has caused significant and ongoing distress. It's why I can't get married or have a relationship. It's a big part of why I couldn't look after my daughter. It's why I can't even have a pot plant.

6. What reparations mean to me

25. I would like an apology to both me and my family. I'd also like a family reunion at Uluru with all my extended family who have been scattered around the place.
26. I also want to know what happened. I want someone to tell me: why were we taken away? What happened in the courts? Why was my father crying? I just want to know so I can pass it down to my family. I just want answers.
27. Only looking at NSW isn't good enough when you're talking about something that happened across the nation. There are people living in NSW, like myself, who because of this whole journey of being taken away have found themselves in NSW, or another state. Any solution cannot stay with just the state. It has to be a nationwide solution that addresses these connections.