

Submission
No 1098

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

To Select Committee on birth trauma

Legislative Council

Parliament of NSW.

Thank you for providing this avenue for, a long overdue, examination of women's birth experience. I will be largely referring to the birth trauma that I experienced more than fifty five years ago in 1968, however, the physical, psychological and spiritual trauma from this experience has continued all the years hence and remains current in my life today. Moreover, my attempts to bring this matter to the attention of authorities, through direct communication or indirectly through the media has never been appropriately addressed and has been dishonestly covered up.

In 1967 I found myself pregnant through lack of sex education and the predatory behaviour of the male involved. Whilst only 18 (19 at the time of birth) I had been working since 14 and therefore had been an Australian taxpayer for close to five years; all this whilst I continued my education and excelled in the school system. When I became pregnant I already had achieved a years tertiary education.

The stress of teenage pregnancy was very intense at this time, due to the level of social stigma. This perhaps was exacerbated in my case as the pregnancy was totally unexpected as I had never had intercourse. Furthermore, I had been sexually abused at three years of age by a neighbour and carried the guilt of this assault.

I came to Sydney from _____ when I was six months pregnant. I booked into _____ Hospital, as a married woman and commenced attending the hospital for regular ant-natal check ups; a service the hospital offered to public patients for a cost of one dollar. (This outpatients section was down the street from the main hospital.) The doctors who examined me at outpatients never usually spoke to me or their other patients. So you just had to assume the pregnancy was progressing well.

Although a minor, I lived an independent life supporting both myself and my then boyfriend on my savings. After some time, my boyfriend obtained employment but wanted to spend the money he earned on unnecessary alterations to his car.

I was totally unaware at that at this time in Australian history that there was an unsatisfied demand for healthy white newborns. That conservative forces within religious bodies and government departments would do all they could, including abduction, to remove newborns from their single mothers in order to allocate them to infertile couples waiting on long adoption waiting lists.

Also at this time I was not alarmed at the mention of adoption as all I knew about it was a movie with Shirley Temple, Curly Top. So adoption meant my child dancing on top of a white grand piano and me happily sharing the moment. I was also an avid consumer of newspapers and other media and the narrative surrounding adoption was always positive. Moreover, there was no reason for me to doubt that I had absolute agency over my own life.

I was seeking child care as my boyfriend, who was verbally abusive, stated he would not financially contribute to my baby's care. I therefore would need to commence work soon after the birth of my child.

After attending _____ Hospitals outpatients for the fourth or fifth time and the ante-natal class afterwards, I ventured upstairs to the hospitals social work department for advice. (It had been suggested to me to do this by a District Officer at the _____ Welfare Department who was clearly not privy to the fact that 'baby hunters' had infiltrated and controlled this major NSW hospital. This Officer had commenced filling out paper work to assist me to gain maintenance from the man who impregnated me. Adoption was never mentioned by this officer.)

So I innocently shared my situation/vulnerability with the _____ social worker who I had been told was there to help me. I had no reason to suspect that my single status would be revealed to anyone. There didn't appear any reason why it would not be kept private.

Relevant to my later treatment is **that I asked to be informed of all assistance that I was entitled to as a single mother.** The social worker sat just sat there looking uncomfortable and did not tell me anything. After she had ascertained my boyfriend had suggested adoption she told me adoptive parents were very 'special people'.

None of the details of adoption were shared with me. If the details of adoption had been shared with me I would have been on high alert as the details would have been not only unacceptable but alarming; eg. That the mother is forever excluded from her child's life; not entitled to information on their child's well being ever, even to be informed of their death. That the practice at _____ with mothers considering adoption and other vulnerable mothers, was to stamp medical files with a secret code UB-. This code stood for 'unmarried baby for adoption'. This code instructed the delivery room staff to cover the mothers face at birth and take the baby from the room. Then to commence drug regime of sedation and stilboestrol (stilboestrol prevents lactation).

As I had shared I wasn't happy living with my boyfriend (due to verbal abuse) the social worker informed me that they had a lovely home I could stay in. I thought this would be the best place for me as I would meet other women in the same predicament. A week or so later I returned with my luggage and clearly stated I've come to stay in the lovely home you told me about. The Social worker said I would have to wait for a lift and took me to up the street to the main hospital and to an area at the back of the hospital referred to as 'waiting patients.' I was illegally detained here for a week or so despite my asking to leave. In response to a request to leave the sister in charge said I was their responsibility now. (Unbeknownst to me the home was _____ where single mothers stayed before and after birth. This was only a few kilometres away and there was a bus to there almost outside _____ door.) It is most likely the day I was taken to waiting patients that my files were stamped with UB-.

So it was here at 'waiting patients' at the back of _____ Hospital that the nightmare began.

I had not consented to my being admitted to hospital. I was waiting for my lift. I was in perfect health although stressed due to my situation and being incarcerated without explanation would contribute to depression.

I had one medical examination at waiting patients and what occurred was without my consent. I was held down by the Sister whilst a doctor digitally raped me apparently to remove my hymen or partial hymen. This induced pain and shock to my body to such an extent that the doctor apologized.

A few days later the Sister told me to have a shower I was going to be induced. I responded that I was not due for another week. She said that doesn't matter. I did not consent to being induced and there was no

medical need for it. This should be labelled both rape and torture. I didn't consent to a pipe being placed inside my body whilst interns looked on. I did not know that induction would result in a much more painful labour than a natural one which is what I had prepared for. But the doctors, led by the late _____, would have.

What I went through was not a normal labour during which the contractions increase in intensity over time; the pain was constant over whelming and horrendous and I had 13 hours of it. Nearly all that time I was in a general ward without access to the gas. No pain relief was given to me. Perhaps in 1968 there was nothing suitable, but why then would you put a young mother through this. Moreover, the stamp of UB- was clearly on my files so the staff would have believed I was not to keep my baby – thus enduring all this without the compensation of a baby at the end.

Finally in the birthing suite, I had been dressed in a gown that resemble a winter nightie, but cut just under the bust with the entire bottom half of my body exposed. The room filled up with dozens of men (likely medical students but I was not informed or asked to consent.) The room was so crowded that the crowd extended out the door. It was like some grotesque nightmare; the pain, the struggle to deliver my baby and all these eyes watching my stark naked body and there was not anything I could do about it.

When my baby was born a pillow was placed on my chest obstructing my view. The only thing I could think of was that the room was so crowded that there wasn't any room for it anywhere else. I pushed the pillow on to the floor to see my child however it was replaced. I was clearly demonstrating I wanted to see my baby. I tried to push the pillow away again and a young nurse seeing my efforts lifted it away but was sternly told to put it back by an older nurse. I went into shock.

This was all illegal as I as a single mother, at this time, was the sole legal guardian of my child. My baby was abducted but I was told it was adoption.

I was removed from the hospital without my consent whilst barely conscious after the birth and the effects of the sedation which had been given to me.

I was taken to a place unknown to me – a hospital annex in _____. This was called _____. At this place all my belongings were removed and hidden from me.

Breaching my privacy the hospital informed the Adoption Section of the Child Welfare Department that I had delivered my child and was at the annex, _____.

According to the official social work and Department of Child Welfare policy at the time any mother considering adoption was to be visited and informed of all the assistance available to her to keep her child such as maintenance from the father, the state financial benefit, temporary foster care and only if all these aides had been refused and she was informed of the psychological effects of adoption were adoption papers to be prepared. The United Nations were also informed that this was the policy in NSW.

So a baby hunter comes to my beside, unsummoned and unannounced, whilst I am still recovering from a horrendous birth and whilst I am also heavily sedated. She describes to me the adoptive parents who were to get my child – this was like stealing to order. I clearly stated that I wanted to keep my child; and as I had done with the hospital social worker again asked about the any assistance available to me. She said she did not know about any assistance and I would not be allowed to leave until I signed a consent. I knew I could not leave as all my belongings including my clothes had been taken and hidden. (Years later

challenging what happened to myself and others at [redacted] a social worker said all we had to do was ring the main hospital and everything would have been put right.) However, I never saw a phone at [redacted] and I'm sure if there was one for the use of patients it would have come to my attention.)

The baby hunter returned again (according to the regulations they had to know you prior to signing a consent.) I refused to sign. I do not remember being given an opportunity to read the adoption papers. She said I would not be allowed to leave until I signed the consent. I still refused to sign. However, when she said I would have 30 days to revoke my consent I signed. I signed, not to adopt out my baby but so I could escape the control of the hospital. In contrast to the convention that parties should be given copies of legal papers they signed I was not given copies of any of the papers. If I had a copy of the papers I signed I would have seen that I could revoke my consent through the Supreme Court of NSW.

I left [redacted] in a very bad way physically and psychologically. I had sustained the usual birthing injuries such as tears to the perineum but also extensive damage to my cervix which was literally hanging down inside my vagina. (The hospital never addressed this injury possibly due to the cost.) I had enormous problems standing or walking. The level of stilboestrol had rendered my skin yellow and I was later to get thrombosis in my legs (decades later breast cancer). Psychologically I was in a state of shock, deep depression, helplessness and lack of entitlement. All agency had been taken from me and I was blindsided and blindsided again. At just turned 19 my brain had not yet acquired an adult structure so I was an adolescent and the trauma was so severe it led to arrested development and PTSD.

I had been waiting for a lift to the 'lovely home' and never knowingly consented to being admitted to the hospital let alone all the atrocities that had been perpetrated on me, particularly the abduction of my child.

As soon as I was released from [redacted] I went back to the hospital with another mother and saw the social worker and asked to see my baby. She was very angry and threw her pen on the desk. Nevertheless, we were taken to see our babies and saw them separately from behind a glass panel. As we were walking up the street to the hospital adoption nursery the social worker came to my side and said she had been talking to the departmental officer that took my consent and said "we have decided that we will not let you keep your baby, unless your mother helps you". This was completely illegal. I was the sole legal guardian of my child. If it was believed that I was an unfit mother there was a legal process to pursue this. However, the baby hunters themselves had described me as having above average intelligence, attractive and well groomed. My medical file shows that I attended all my ante-natal check ups as advised. I also attended the ante natal classes, which included baby care after every ante-natal check up.

Although my background was very disadvantaged you would not know this at first meeting me as I was always well dressed and well spoken. I was well spoken due to discovering the ABC on the radio at a very young age and this exposure meant I learnt to speak like them.

As stated I already had a years tertiary education and had excelled in that year.

My mother would not help me due to having been brain washed by the adoption propaganda. She believed adoption would allow her to get her daughter back minus the problem and I would just go on with my life. Not helping me was the biggest regret of her life. She grieved for her grandchild and whilst

initially annoyed that I had to be medicated to sleep came to accept the enormity of what happened when I spent so much of my twenties in a mental hospital. She understood by then.

At the time I had thought about going to the police but lacked certainty. How, could I know more than the adults around me. As stated I didn't know I could revoke through the Supreme Court. I rang the Adoptions Branch of the Child Welfare within the thirty day revocation period, but they said my son had gone to the adoptive parents and the records (obtained decades later) seem to support that.

The agony of the loss of my child has plagued me all my life. To call it grief is not to do it justice. I've lost other loved ones and recovery from the grief begins after a few weeks. I did the best to "get on with my life" after the abduction of my son but, was incapacitated by shock and pain. I had all the psychiatric treatments that were current in the 1970's; dozens of episodes of electric shocks, insulin shock treatment, deep sleep therapy the latest medication etc. but there was no cure for me.

In the year of my 21st birthday I wrote to the Department and asked for my child back or at least to see him. The Director General responded in a very cold way and did not offer me any assistance.

In 1976 the Frank Walker, the NSW Attorney General was interested in my claims. But the Department of Child Welfare misled the Attorney General and covered up the truth. The staff member at the Department who responded to Frank Walker's inquiries was the late _____, an adoptive mother and herself a baby hunter. So a conflict of interest.

In the early 1980's 14 years after the loss of my son I could still not eat. My health was precarious I was badly anorexic. I wrote to the Department to let them know about my psychological difficulties with the loss of my child but they offered me no assistance.

Working with others within self help groups Adoption Triangle and ARMS we were able to chip away at the secrecy previously characteristic of adoption. The passing of the NSW Adoption Information Act (1990) allowed identifying information between the parties once the child was 18.

I had found the home of my son through the assistance of private detectives when he was 18 and assisted others to find their children. I did not approach him as I believed he was entitled to instigate contact. However, unbeknownst to me he did not know he was adopted.

The adoptive parents only told my son he was adopted when legislation was about to come into effect that would give me legal access to his identity. They did this in order that they could usher him to sign a contact veto. However, I had known where he was for four years and respected his autonomy. I later signed the undertaking, not to contact him in order to gain access to further records. I cannot imagine the trauma to my son to be told he was adopted and then immediately pressed to sign and pay for a veto. As though I was someone to be feared.

Action required

Myself and, some other young mothers, had their babies abducted. It is always adverse if a mother loses her baby to adoption. The risk of psychological repercussions evident. However, clearly a mother not willingly cooperating with adoption is at increased risk of psychological trauma. There was no legal basis for taking our children and it can only be abduction. It was abduction and our emotions responded

accordingly. No different than what we saw last year in the case of . We were not given any assistance afterwards and were left to suffer alone wailing silently day after day, week after week, year after year.

We were treated as slaves and remain so to this day as the cover up continues.

To become unenslaved we need the abduction of our babies to be appropriately addressed as would be expected of a civilized society. This would include the following:

- . perpetrators/ baby hunters to be brought to justice.
- . reimbursement for all expenses acquired for psychological assistance
- . reimbursement for economic loss i.e., our inability to engage with employment at the level we would have otherwise achieved.
- . compensation for pain and suffering so deep it is beyond the understanding of most of the population.

Also compensation for the other wrongs perpetrated on myself and others by the NSW Health Department. Including: torture, rape, illegal detention, degrading and dehumanising treatment, assault; abduction to annexes away from our babies. Drugged without consent. Forced to consume stilboestrol whilst our babies cried for our milk and therefor contributing to our risk of breast cancer by forcing us to consume a known cancerogenic. Failure of the NSW Health Department to inform thousands of NSW women, who took this drug that they are at increased risk of breast cancer and should have regular checks. My breast cancer may have been caught earlier if this had happened.

THANKS

Please do not identify me on the internet. You can refer to me as if you deem it suitable.