



<b>SECTION 1</b>
<b>Name</b> Howard, Hikton Edwards
<b>Address</b> [REDACTED]
<b>DOB</b> [REDACTED]
<b>Phone</b> [REDACTED]
<b>Aboriginal nationality (if known)</b> FOR THE PEOPLE
<b>Places and dates of state wardship:</b> MOORBOONIA 1-7-56
<b>Please state if there are any supporting documents attached:</b> State ward records Printed submission Recorded submission.
<b>Do you want this information to remain confidential? (please circle) Y <input checked="" type="radio"/> N</b>
<b>Would you like to give verbal evidence at a public hearing? (please circle) Y <input checked="" type="radio"/> N</b>
<b>Signature</b> [REDACTED]

Howard Edward – Uncle Choc 21/02/2013

**Howard Edwards (Uncle Choc) - 21/02/2013**

**Alister:** I would just like to get the formalities out of the way, could you please just state your name, address and your date of birth

**Howard:** My name is Howard Edwards, I was born [REDACTED] 1948, I live at [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Been living for about 7 years now.

Feeling pretty stable in my life at this time. I have had a long history of being involved with the, what do you call it the Justice department or the institution part of it.

We were taken away we there were six of us taken admitted to care 1<sup>st</sup> July 1956, there was me 4 brothers me sister and myself.

I have a vague memory of living in Moroopna there in the floods um. Got no memory of living there when the Queen coming there or what ever.

Got no kinda remember vaguely at Cummergunja where running freely the water so clear and beautifully clean you can see the fish. I used to – I was ah, I used to walked around allot and did allot of hunting and fishing at the age of 5 -6 years old.

I don't remember the trip down to Melbourne in the police or the court or the "Black Mariah" as what it was called at the time.

**Alister:** How old were you at this Uncle Choc time you first taken?

**Howard:** I was 7 and a half by July 1956.

I am at Tarana, which is on of the reception centre at the time. If you went to different institutions or you went to family groups what you called it– went out and stayed with other family members or you stayed in the institution.

Went to Tarana at first, I was talking bit in lingo – and would ask to go to the toilet and they didn't understand and I would cry and saying.

They would ask 'What's wrong with him?' to my brother and he would say 'He wants to go to the toilet!' There part of me culture, me language. We were taken to the Ballarat Orphanage, on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1956 I was taken to Ballarat Orphanage

**Alister:** How long were you at Turana then Uncle Choc?

**Howard:** So, July, August, September, October, November – so probably about four months. We was held at the Turana while they would look for a place to replace us right, so placement come up at Ballarat Orphanage for us mob.

Connecting Home Limited

**Alister:** Allot of people I have heard have had pretty negative things to say about Turana. What were your experiences like there?

From most of what I have heard it was pretty horrible actually, from people. Do you recall much from that time?

**Howard:** Um, No in July to November I got no memory of Turana. We get to the Ballarat Orphanage, I get in trouble a bit there you know. We went walking up the track one day, and a fella and I was throwing pretending we was throwing spears with sticks and I hit him and I got into big trouble. I throwed this stick it bounced back and hit this young fulla. I got in a bit of trouble. Mum didn't know where we were and was writing to the police and communicating with the police to find out where we were. And um yeah she found out the at we were in Ballarat and she moved down to Ballarat to be with us.

I remember Mum coming and taking us out on visiting day when she could when she was allowed.

There was allot of trouble there – [REDACTED] used to do allot of the backing up for us, he'd do all the fighting apparently. I remember the late [REDACTED] saying you know when [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had left the Ballarat Orphanage she looked after us.

But [REDACTED] yeah he was a – he enjoyed it there – he was a bit older and he just down to the hostel down the road from the Ballarat Orphanage and Mum lived next door to the hostel so she knew where [REDACTED] was. Me sister ran away from Ballarat she ended up back at Turana and was telling Mum that it was much better back at Tarana than was at the Ballarat Orphanage. Yeah so all this trouble we was in Mum would come down and hassle Mr [REDACTED] the Superintendent at the time, yeah she would be forever down there arguing with him, over our treatment.

There is a bit in the paper that I was a good child that I was a bright kid that I had leadership sort of I was a leader in my class.

From the school to the back to the home thing there must have been a bit of um the pastor would be doing things. Um alright so Mum was a real hassle to the Superintendent, because of us getting into trouble and um the four of us became a problem for Mr [REDACTED].

**Alister:** Who is Mr [REDACTED]? Is he the superintendent of the Ballarat Orphanage?

**Howard:** Yeah. Started going onto 12 year old, they say that because the boys and girls mixed together there. They said that I was getting a bit of an eye for the girls so.

Oh my Mum come one time because of the hassle my Mum grabbed us four kids and took us. Mr [REDACTED] said 'Take your kids I don't want nothing to do with them!' he said take the kids, and when mum took us the police came round said to Mum that she has to take us back of give us back to the police or she would be up for abduction or something like that. So were taken back to the Ballarat

Orphanage.

As I was saying I was getting a bit of an eye and we were a problem.

There were two girls there the rest I think. I remember a few black fellas there I really cant remember but I said [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] they were fussed and dressed but I really cant remember. So we were taken back to Tarana the four us young ones, [REDACTED] and meself. From then we went up to hillside somewhere up in the bush to a camp there for about a month and then we were taken to Salvation Army Boys home in Box Hill in 1960-I think it was.

**Alister:** How long were you in the Box Hill Boys Home for? As a teenager?

**Howard:** Yeah Um Near on – in 60 I went to school at the property then I went to the Tech School on Burwood Hwy I went there and got half way through the second form.

At Box Hill one time there – it sort of made me sick I don't know.

There looked like a male person sorta getting this young fulla to give him a head job you know, then I don't know I got know memory after that. But you know this shit went on in institutions.

Went on up at the Ballarat Orphanage this paedophile stuff. Um I ran away from the Box Hill Boys Home on several occasions. Well I started getting I went out and started well I got in trouble once. We went out and we were hungry and robbed a milk bar and got some tucker and another time I think we went around and got money out of the milk bottles one time. I would run away from there and I remember my brother [REDACTED] being whipped this fulla had a strap about 3- 4 foot long thin and thick left welt marks over me brother – I'd go up and get it to stop and then I'd get the whopping then I would run away, and I ran away a couple of times and when I would get back I'd get a hiding off the Salvo's. Um they say said that I started to thief at the school from the canteen, I got into trouble - in the this teacher said 'that I was messing up' I said 'I wasn't' I refused to take the strap off him and so I was sent to the Headmaster's office and refused to take the strap off him and called him a 'Red faced lobster, cunt what ever'. So I went back to Box Hill, so then because I went into trouble I was on probation, what ever. We played sport there – football you know– I could have been a champion football we played Lacross there. First time we got in the competition we won every game except for the grand final. We played Malvern who were a team well organised team. The following year we nearly won every game again. I made the under 16 championship to play at Lacrosse but I was transferred again from Box Hill back to Turana.

And they said Mum got involved – she used to visit us – and visit all the other young there were quite a few Koori kids a cousin [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] he used to think that Mum was his mum. I used to sit up on the fence watching down the street wandering when she was gonna come back, this was at the Ballarat Orphanage I was doing all that. I was separated from me brothers – they thought that it would be a good idea that I would like to do some farming so they sent me up to Kilmany Park up near Sale end. I didn't like it that much there I guess I was missing me brothers missing me family, so I ran away. I went to the Burwood Tech me brothers weren't there and then I went to the Salvo's and me brothers weren't there. I must of got caught and sent back to Turana and then I was sent to the

Salvation Army in Bayswater and working at the piggery and I don't know how long I been working at the piggery and I hear on the radio that me brother got killed. So there is more trauma, being separated from me brother, being separated from me mother from me family from me culture. Trauma upon trauma. Went looking for me brother I couldn't find them and I didn't know where they are and then hear on the radio that me brother get killed.

Well no I first went to the Salvo's up at Bayswater there. The colonel, [REDACTED] there tried to make an exhibition of me 'Alright Edwards start running laps, your not at Turana anymore and start running faster.' So I may have picked up pace a little bit, anyway as I passed him he then picks up a cricket bat and as I pass him he belts me with a cricket bat. I take the bat off him and then his offsider come running in I hit his offsider with the bat. I got locked up in the room in the dark for a couple of days or more. I then end up running away from there.

**Alister:** Uncle Choc with regards to like the, so you mention a few incidents that you get hit with a strap or this that or the other, and also in regards to you mention incidents the regards to the sexual abuse you mentioned before. Is that sort of stuff prevalent all the institutions that you were in? Did kids know about it and not really say anything or you know what I mean? Did sexual abuse happen around the homes and people knew about it but they didn't want to say anything to anyone else?

**Howard:** Yeah that would have been the thing at the time. Who could you really rely on you got know support. You know everyone in there cant be friends you cant all be brothers. They got to be all these things, it was quite prevalent that all these things going on this tuff was happening.

I don't know how people can say to me that yep you have been touched you know. Deep in the back in my mind I believe something had happened all this trauma of blocking out things.

You go in there an innocent young fulla in the boys home, and then you get into trouble and you get to Tarana where they are older and kids are in there for murder some in for rape and some stealing cars.

Going from my culture to white fulla's culture was surely a sick culture I was being bought up in. I'd run away from Salvo's ended up back at Turana.

Yeah there was definitely name calling was called 'Jacky Jacky, Black fella ya Boong ' all that sort of stuff was going on. I ran away a few times probably because of all the hassles.

I'd run away and I was sent down to the high security place – I escaped from there in 1966 sometime me and five, four others. Me and a couple of others were caught that day you know, it was on the news that there was a break out and the police were looking around for us. We went out to St Albans way somewhere out there to see a fullas friend. We went down to the creek for a bit I said 'We better stay here for a bit and they said no we go out this way' and they said 'No we better go in', then there was a road blocked and a car chase and chased us for a bit and the cops went after me probably because I was the biggest and what ever. They caught me first. When we broke out of Turana, all I did was grabbed the keys from the screw I first grabbed at the keys they broke and everyone freaked out and I got and this other screw came running down telling this other bloke up in the office to ring the police. And as he

came running down one of the other fulla's has a table tennis net with this thing hanging down and hit this screw over the head, I opened the door and we jumped the fence. Three of us got caught and we went to Pentridge. So I am going on 17 or I am 17 and I go to Pentridge, and the screws all know who we are and they play this game and strip search me and they ask all these questions and they find out I was one of them fella's who run away from Turana. Three screws would come in and got into me with their baton, this would happen two to three times a week until I went to court. They would always ask for the three volunteers from Tarana to come and scrub the floor of the D division all the blue stone then we would have to go and scrub all the catwalks. This would happen until I went to the other side.

**Alister:** So were you still a 'State Ward' at this time?

**Howard:** Yeah I was still a 'State Ward' at this time.

I got over the other side 12 months in prison and I got picked on by the screws – snowball, jacky jacky yo blacky come here . ██████████ Scottish or Irish big strong bastard he would pick on my quite often. He said 'Alright Edwards to two lapse of this area this little oval area by the time we march down to the gate.'

**Alister:** Uncle Choc you were telling me before the same as Jack Charles that there was some compensation from the Salvo's was that the same for the treatment and the Salvation Army Boys Home? When did all that happen?

**Howard:** A couple of years ago. I didn't have all my proper paperwork like the psychiatric report and some other paperwork because of my memory I forgot to say things. The lawyers talked between each other. The Lawyer felt kinda sad for me to a degree cause of the way that I ended up. The lawyer really wished me luck. She thought it was a culture thing where I couldn't talk to her.

All me culture went all me language all me culture went, everything like that. I have grown up with this white fella – growing up grab them educate them and assimilate them. Young fulla's go from...

They assimilated me in the institutions. You learn how to run away, steal a car, learn how to break into shops then later on in life. Well I go straight from a State School what do ya call the primary school, Box Hill Boys Home, the state school is probably Turana and then I went to College at Pentridge you know 'the college of knowledge' is what they used to say it was. But um because we were picked on everyday in D division. When we got sentenced I was hoping that 'fuck I hope that this doesn't go on' - been picking on me 'Do this! Do that!'. Yeah but they did try it in the beginning but when I got there I knew quite a few people in there because they had been through the institutions you know.

Maybe I cant remember allot of things but I knew that I was good at sports. A few screws that they thought that they would read about me in the paper for football or something.

**Alister:** Its interesting that you say that when you got over to the other side that you knew a lot of people from the institutions, Uncle Jack Charles said the similar thing. That when he first went to jail when he was a similar age 17 – 18 years said that it didn't bother me cause I knew everyone from the Box Hill Boys Home because it was just the next progression, because every one just got into trouble

they never learnt anything, no life skills.

**Howard:** No life skills, not knowing how to treat a woman. I was rapped when I went to Burwood Tech, they said that it was going to be co ed and I was looking forward to being able to mingle, but then they sent me back to Turana then I went straight to prison. I never got any life skills up until I was 18, I didn't know how to communicate with me Mum or women ah feelings you know, yeah you know when I first went to Pentridge in 1966 I got the YOGI – Young Offender Group – you see football was big in prison. I ended up getting the YOGI's into the Grand final with the last kick of the day, I got the YOGI's to be the Grandfinalists. We got extra stuff for winning the grand final. Yeah my sporting skills. I'm kinda getting at, instead of well I got out and there was a continual thing to go back to prison. The second time they sent me back in 1968 they sent me back they could have sent me to an open prison, where I could excel in my sport my life would have been different. If I went to a Country prison they let you go out and play football for the local football teams and if they like you they keep you, you know find you a house find you a job. You these are the other things that I missed out on you know.

**Alister:** So in regards with this inquiry Uncle Choc; what they kinda want to know quite specifically is; you know obviously you have mentioned that you have told us some stories about the abuse, physical and sexual in the homes. But what they are kinda looking at is what was done about it at the time? What's been done about it today? And then what can also be done to rectify the situation in the future? So do you have any thoughts about that? You said before that you couldn't tell anyone about these kinda you know, and that is a pretty common story from everyone. You know with this kinda stuff; Who are you supposed to tell? Or even if you did say anything you would have probably copped a hiding! And you also mentioned that you had some sort of compensation from the Salvo's, but what can we do? What are your thoughts for the recommendations for this inquiry? To move forward you know?

**Howard:** Well Yeah they've got to learn to treat... What can they do about the future..

Well we do need proper direction, proper black fella stuff

Start with the younger ones you know the 12 year olds when they are juvenile get them to know what's good and bad what's right from wrong.

Get them to be strong to speak up about what's happening – its all still happening today

The way forward is to get the government to listen more to the people.

Stop locking us up! They are breaking our young warriors spirit by ah taking them away and putting them into institutions they are taking away our future leaders they are wrecking their lives.

What can be done in the future??....

**Alister:** What about for yourself or for other care leavers that have experienced institutions and abuse in institutions. You received some compensation from the Salvo's do you think it needs to be more compensation or more money to go into, for health or counselling services.

**Howard:** All like that, all like that all money to go into the medical system and money for Healing Camps and Healing Places

I did write to Jenny Macklin – that I would like a Million Dollars for every year that I was involved in the Government system, from 56 – 79 I had no peace!!!!!!

I would like to live a way that I have become accustomed to after I stopped going to prison. I have had a long history drug and alcohol abuse. I would like to work but no one – in later years because you have been in the institutions being in prisons its hard to find a job. Even in the black fella community with the realms of things you get the reputations.

**Alister:** With some of the; you said before of the kids knowing the various abuses that went on in the institutions'. Kids in the institutions knew of the kinds of abuse that were going on. Do you know of any of the perpetrators being caught to court or going to Prison?

**Howard:** Ah No No. Not in that day you know that is going back 40 years or so allot of its been open in that 40 years or, its now coming out more and more. Its gonna come out – and people are gonna need what ever they need to make themselves feel, that they can feel good from what had happened. Some of us want Healing place some of them want healing, some of them want money.