

## Inquiry into Responses to Historical Forced Adoptions in Victoria

My name is Elizabeth Edwards

### Part 1 The deception

This is my personal experience of my baby being stolen in the labor ward and then all information which would allow my then husband and myself to reclaim our legal child being withheld.

In 1963 I was Elizabeth Toohey and employed by [REDACTED] as a nursing assistant at what was then registered as Vaucluse hospital Moreland rd Coburg.

I was engaged to be married to William Edwards who was fully employed as a tyre fitter for KL McKenzie Ballarat rd Footscray

I worked on full pay until the day prior to going into labour with our first child, this was my day off.

When I was about to give birth [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were attending me however their voices became distorted, I was to learn this was because they had increased the amount of nitrous oxide so as to render me unconscious for the birth.

When I awoke I had delivered our baby, however she had been removed from the labor ward. It was the 21st November 1963

I requested her, but the doctor replied that "society would forgive one mistake" He then turned on his heel and left the room. I was very *dopey* when the nurse returned, after attending me I was placed on a trolley and transferred from the maternity section to a private room in the Medical/surgical side of the building which was run separately to the maternity wing.

At this time William (Bill) was not informed of the birth of his child he had been with me throughout the pregnancy I stayed at Vaucluse several nights a week the rest of the time we lived together in his bungalow at [REDACTED]

I recall being administered sleeping drugs and relaxants as well as stibestrol, although I was unaware of its insidious side effects in fact I was not informed that it was to dry up my milk.

I slept a lot then on the 22nd November 1963 my parents arrived, then shortly after a tall thin man followed and addressed my parents I was told that Bill would go to jail for carnal knowledge if I did not sign the papers giving consent for our baby to be adopted.

I had turned 18 on the 11th November 1963 and this was a lie

We were aware that my mother wanted *the baby* to be adopted however we thought that she would change her heart when she saw our baby sadly she didnt.

I had not seen my baby I was feeling alarmed for Bill so I signed. (I was to learn many years later that our youngest ***aunt was my mother's child my*** mother went to her grave without telling anyone even her daughter.

We were not aware of our legal rights but [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] the solicitor who took the consent [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and all nursing staff at Vaucluse, also my parents would have been fully aware of how they had breached the adoption act and the rule to the act.

Later Bill told me that during the days after I gave birth to our baby , my parents, in particular my mother bullied him, they even threatened his personal safety if he impregnated me again

.On my 17th birthday the 11th November 1962 both sets of parents had given Bill and I their blessing to our engagement my parents demands were subject to our getting married in the catholic church, and educating our children in catholic schools also baptize our children in the catholic faith. We both agreed to their terms

Our daughter was adopted at 15 months of age, under the 1958 adoption act which stated **all** parents must give consent. Bill did not give his consent he was not asked and he did not give his consent. we had been married 10 Months

When our daughter was three weeks old I received her birth certificate in the mail it recorded her as unnamed baby Toohey illegitimate baby of Elizabeth Toohey , we had not seen her yet we had definitely not registered her, I sat and sobbed for hours. I then told my mother I was going to get our baby back she cajoled me to show compassion to the parents, no one had shown us compassion, my mind was made up. I telephoned the Matron but she told me it was too late, the baby was with its parents. I thought that meant she had been adopted.

This is a point of interest the nursing staff as well as my parents always referred to ***the baby!*** they depersonalized my maternity altogether.

Part 2 of the deception

Bill and I married the following June we had been advised by friends that because I was 18 we could go to court and be given permission to marry in fact we have learned since that we could have done that in any case prior to the birth of our baby girl we were

going to call her Kim Elizabeth

On May 20th [REDACTED] was the parish priest of St Bernard's Catholic church. He was appointed Guardian Ad litem in the proposed adoption of [REDACTED] whom he had baptized on 22nd December 1963. [REDACTED] was being fostered by [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was a police officer working at Dawson st Brunswick in 1963. This was the office name in the Kaye inquiry as crimes incorporated whereby the police offered protection during the illegal abortion period in Australia. [REDACTED] lived at [REDACTED] and they had adopted a boy the previous year they were also members of [REDACTED] parish.

"They had been denied a baby through the normal channels as there was no reason why they could not have their own" [REDACTED] was to tell me later, after [REDACTED] gave birth to two sons.

[REDACTED] failed to contact Bill and myself haven married in the Catholic church at Ringwood we were living at [REDACTED] Coburg. If [REDACTED] had followed the rules to the act he would have found us very easily and found that I had been co-hearsed into signing a consent to adoption He would have known by virtue of the 1961 marriage act that our baby was both of our legitimated baby.

Our baby was no longer **unnamed baby illegitimate child of Elizabeth Toohey** that [REDACTED] were adopting

Sadly and disgracefully our baby [REDACTED] adoption was formalized on 24th April 1965 at that time our third child was on the way

It is my belief that [REDACTED] was made aware of our marriage he applied to be transferred to Port Fairy after the Guardian ad Litem was appointed by the court .

[REDACTED] told [REDACTED] that she was born at the Queen Victoria hospital, it was only when she received her paper work from Dhhs that she was informed that she had been born at Vaucluse. [REDACTED] said to me that was owned by the big [REDACTED] woman. I asked her how she knew of [REDACTED] she replied that [REDACTED] had given her [REDACTED] diary when she was 15 because he wanted her to become a nurse like his niece" "he was always a souvenir boy " I asked if I could see it she agreed, however later it **disappeared**.

In 1990 Bill and I divorced we were both forever negatively impacted by the loss of our first child to people who were creating their reality Meantime I struggled between breakdowns due to the Trauma experienced with the betrayal of the people we are taught to trust most, the fabric of society and the loss of our first born baby that we so dearly wanted and cannot be reunited with today. [REDACTED] has told me she wishes she

could be the baby but she can't, she is an adult with her own history. No one can give me back what should have always been mine, my own family.