

Submission 50 – Inquiry into historical forced adoptions in Victoria

Merilyn Susan Carr

19 March 2020

Recorded by Michele Hutchins.

Merilyn: In 1959 I became pregnant. In the September of that year I was put into the St Joseph's Receiving Home in Gratton Street in Carlton. I wasn't a very nice little girl actually, I ran away and they did say they'd told me to leave but I believe that I ran away before they said that to me. They took me back a few days later. When I actually got the paper work or before I got the paper work, the lady at Mackillop Centre said I'd been admitted twice and I thought I had had two babies; that's how shocked I was. But it was because I'd been rather naughty and that. Other than that, I suppose they were alright to me. I can remember wrapping up pies, pasties and sausage rolls in newspaper to give to the homeless. Other than that, I can't remember what job I did in the home.

We had one rather bad experience in the home, a nun died and she was taken out passed my room. I was put into a single room with a toilet. It must have been a nun's room. After I'd come back from running away, I was put into another single room but there was no toilet in it and I used to, we were quite friendly all the girls, and this particular day we were looking out on the lane and we saw a man, a homeless man raping this poor woman in the laneway. It wasn't very nice. Anyway that upset all of us and we kept yelling at him to leave her alone and everything, my mind has just gone blank after that.

I can remember a few of us girls walking to St Vincent's Hospital, we had to go after hours for our medical check-ups. We'd congregate, we would have to go to the bathroom there and give your specimen and everything and come back and we'd see the doctor and walk back to the home again. I was apparently admitted to the Hospital twice. I don't know how I got there, don't know why I was admitted. They kept me in for a few days the first time and sent me home, back to the home. And this is when they made me sign papers, they made me sign a birth certificate they put across

Michele: So this was after your daughter was born of course?

Merilyn: No this wasn't, this was before she was born. I can't find my actual, that's what my daughter gave me. This one I think, then I did get an original one from the Births, Deaths and Marriages but I can't find it at the moment. And it has got the cross on it as well. I was also made to sign adoption papers at the same time

Michele: before she was born?

Merilyn: before she was born. Yes. Because the man said to me, I don't know who the man was, I had no social worker, had nothing; he said to me "what have you called your baby"? and I just looked at him and I said "I haven't had It". "That

doesn't matter – what will you call it?" and I said "well if it's a girl I'll call her Marilyn Susan Jillard" that was all I could think of, that was my name. Never thought about a boy's name nothing like that and they apparently wrote it in there after she was born and even the adoption papers, if I look at them, they've got the, the papers were signed after I'd left the hospital. Now when I was having her, they put me in a room, it was dark and I can remember a doctor, I think it was the doctor, coming in every so often and putting needles up and down my spine. I don't know what they were for. I don't remember being in labour but every time he came in, I can remember it being very dark and I must have been in that room for hours and hours and hours by myself. When I woke up there was no baby. The baby wasn't there. They put me in a room with another lady, it was a two bedroom room I can remember it had no door on it, only had curtains and I can remember a bed side lamp and the woman kept asking me "where's your baby? Where's your husband? Where's your baby?" and anyway, I told them and then they must have decided to discharge me cause I was only in there till the, I think it was the 8<sup>th</sup> of February and I had her on the 5<sup>th</sup>. They sent me home, and that's about all I can remember. I know I was very sick when they sent me home.

Michele: Sick in what way Marilyn?

Marilyn: I suppose mentally but physically ill. Vomiting. I don't know whether I had an infection. It was just awful. No baby, no nothing.

Michele: and home, they sent you home to your Family? Or back to the Mother?

Marilyn: No, No I never went back there again. They sent me home to well, my mother had passed away when I was 11 and there was only dad, dad was a shift worker, and I used to live part time with my grand mother and with my Aunt and they sent me home to my Aunt's place. And this was when I got quite ill. I think I got an infection and of course mentally was a mess. I have since found out a few things that they told me. Sorry, I'm jumping, they told me when I was in the hospital when I was signing these papers that my baby was going to a good catholic family in Sydney and I must of asked, I can remember when I left, I said "I would like to see my baby" and they took me to the nursery, they showed me a baby but I don't know if it was my baby, it could have been anybody's baby. So I had to be satisfied with that. I don't know how I got home, they said that my father come and pick me up but everything's still a blur. I have since found out that the nuns kept my baby in the hospital because one of the nuns that work there, her niece wanted a baby, so they kept her. I have got a letter there from my daughter stating that she had been born and they were keeping her there for a certain amount of days but I don't think they kept her there for the thirty days. Then the adoptive parents came down from NSW and took her back.

Michele: So that was the niece of the Nun?

Marilyn: I beg your pardon?

Michele: That was the niece of the Nun?

Merilyn: Yes, yes. But the thing was she had I think it was three or four boys.

Michele: Already?

Merilyn: yes, and how come she was allowed to take a baby when she already had children.

Michele: Children of her own.

Merilyn: Yes. Yes. I did meet the parents. I gotta say they were nice, but still something there and I found out that my daughter had a baby, she was 15. And her adoptive mother made her give it up. I've met him. Hes a very nice man. He's born in '75, 1975.

Michele: your Grandson?

Merilyn: yes, and yes, she looked for both of us, and yeah. As I say I forgotten a lot, I can't remember.

Michele: I can understand Merilyn. I have a couple of questions that have just come to mind while you've been speaking. How long were you in the home, do you remember?

Merilyn: Yes, I've got the dates, I've got the dates here. I've even put a thing in the paper looking for people that lived in the home, that they can tell me what I did there. Oh dear, where is it? There you go, oh I'm sorry.

Michele: That's ok, so this is your admission date?

Merilyn: Yes.

Michele: Of the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 1959

Merilyn: and that's when they took me back again

Michele: and then you were discharged or this is when you were saying you left on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 11<sup>th</sup> '59.

Merilyn: yeah, that was when I ran away

Michele: Yeah, and then back again on the 5<sup>th</sup>, admission again on the 5<sup>th</sup> of the 11<sup>th</sup> 1959 and then discharged on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 1<sup>st</sup> 1960

Merylin: Yeah

Michele: And your daughter was born on what day?

Merilyn: the 5<sup>th</sup>.

Michele: two days after that. So yeah, right

Merilyn: Ah wait on, I think you better look at it, I think that one might be better, might explain it better.

Michele: and so this is..?

Merilyn: Is that, from Mackillop?

Michele: ... confined to St Vincent's Maternity Girls....[inaudible], I'm not exactly sure but these documents will be lodged with the Commission.

Merilyn: Right.

Michele: Will they?

Merilyn: ah, they can, yeah they can.

Michele: Ok, or copies of them I think they

Merilyn: Yeah.

Michele: I think they, its up to you what you put in that's not clear exactly what that is though to be honest..

Merilyn: ..Maybe I'll

Michele: That's OK, That's Ok Merilyn, we can look at them maybe toward the end. But it's.....what did that say to you?

Merilyn: that my father admitted me on the 11<sup>th</sup> of the ninth, '59. Father, [REDACTED] Mother died of cancer in 1955, Geelong Road, West Footscray [inaudible], due February '60 but I don't think that's right. St Vincent's Maternity and Babe for adoption. Second, eleven, '59 was told to return to father because of trouble she was giving. And Mr [REDACTED] asked the Sister [REDACTED] if she would, if he would, if she would return on the fifth of the eleventh, confinement at St Vincent's Maternity Girl. Discharge to father from Hospital.

Michele: Right, Yep

Merilyn: So...

Michele: And so you've come upon that document in more recent years?

Merilyn: Ah, when I applied for everything from Mackillop family services, they gave me all this.

Michele: Ok

Merilyn: So ah, I had that, and then when I applied for paperwork from NSW, the lies still came.

Michele: Right.

Merilyn: Ahh, I can show you these in a minute.

Michele: Merilyn, can I just check with you for a minute, how old were you when you had your daughter?

Merilyn: I was 15, I was, would have been 16 in 1960, in April 1960. I was 15...

Michele: when you gave birth to her

Merilyn: Yes yeah. Ahh I just wanted to try and show you something here. That's was with Julia Gillard at the ... the...

Michele: Oh wow

Merilyn: That's not my story though but..

Michele: No. But you're in the photograph.

Merilyn: Yeah. Ah right, I got it marked somewhere. Oh gosh, where is it? That's her adoptive, that's her, I have three or four birth certificates for her.

Michele: Goodness, how is that?

Merilyn: I don't know, I've been given them.

Michele: Are they all the same?

Merilyn: Nope.

Michele: They've got different information on them?

Merilyn: Ah, slightly different, but yeah I've had a few but that's what I got from NSW but this is what I wanted to show you. This has come from the NSW

Michele: Family and Community Services

Merilyn: Yes

Michele: NSW Government, and it's a letter to you

Merilyn: Yes.

Michele: and it's dated ..

Merilyn: Now look here...

Michele: there's no date on it. Is there a date on it? It just say's reference number....

Merilyn: Nothing there?

Michele: No, reference number [REDACTED] and the nature of the letter?

Merilyn: telling me who adopted her, born in [REDACTED]. Just born in [REDACTED]

Michele: Far from the case.

Merilyn: The mother was born in [REDACTED] The adoptive mother, and the father was born in [REDACTED]. So there's lies coming again.

Michele: so this documentation about the Birth, ah about the adoptive family has incorrect information.

Merilyn: yep

Michele: ... about where they were born, which you've highlighted. Yep, yep.

Merilyn: And I did a bit of looking up for this man, I've forgotten which one it was now, it might be that one, I've got that one crossed. He was the man as far as I know that signed, was there when I signed these papers in the hospital. And I did find out later on by doing a bit of research, that he was, it sounds a bit silly, but he was up on kidnapping charges in America, for kidnapping his own children. So, ...

Ah well I think it's that one...I'd have to look at the adoption papers to see where...

Michele: OK. You've done quite a lot of investigating.

Merilyn: I have, I have, yes. On these other letters I would like to show you. If I can find them.

Michele: Doctor's report on baby [REDACTED] From the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 1960. Temperament of mother: Placid, worry during pregnancy. What do you think that says Merilyn?

Merilyn: I don't know, I couldn't understand the writing.

Michele: No, something blurry

Merilyn: Normal, normal ...isn't it?

Michele: could be normal worry. Yeah normal worry, Any abnormal feature in mother?

Merilyn: No. family history, now, he's referring to my mother, I'm sure of it. It says: *Girl's mother has been known to me for the past 12 years.* My mother was dead. And I didn't know who the hell he was.

Michele: No, and so this is signed by, this is the doctor's report, signed by a [REDACTED] ...

Merilyn: I'm not sure,

Michele: We're not sure actually, its very hard to read. Ok.

Merilyn: Just seeing if I have the actual one there but...

Michele: ...that you've transcribed it from?

Merilyn: Yeah but, oh, very, very hard.

Michele: Very difficult to read, you've done well to translate that! So it must be quite something to come upon all this way later after the fact.

Merilyn: It was, it was a terrible shock. Yes so, the lies and skull doggery that them rotten people did, it was terrible

Michele: Yes.

Merilyn: I later found out that the name on the birth certificate of one of the witnesses, the lady sister, she was a nun she was the white witch. That I can remember standing behind this man while I was made to sign papers.

Apparently, she was involved with a lot of adoptions at the hospital. Sister [REDACTED] [REDACTED], isn't it?

Michele: Yes, sister [REDACTED] yeah.

Merilyn: Apparently she had been behind a lot of adoptions from the Hospital.

Michele: And this was the certificate, that you were saying, that you were asked to sign before the baby was even born.

Merilyn: Yes.

Michele: You remember she was behind him.

Merilyn: Yes, I can remember a big white witch standing behind him, and yes apparently I was told by one of the ladies at Mackillop Family Services that she was one behind a lot of adoptions at the hospital.

Michele: So Merilyn, you went home after having baby and you went back to your Auntie's place.

Merilyn: Yeah,

Michele: And you were unwell, was anyone there to look after you or do you remember any thing from then?

Merilyn: No, no.

Michele: and then that was,

Merilyn: That was it. I was just – forget about it - nobody spoke about it for thirty odd years I think it was. I'm thinking about, those needles that I had, I'm petrified of needles and its dawned on me that must be why, because of what they did to me. As I say I can't remember any, much. I don't. I don't; know.

Michele: and you said you woke up and the baby was gone.

Merilyn: Yes.

Michele: So does that mean you were asleep when the baby was born?

Merilyn: yes, I wasn't conscious.

Michele: So do you think the needles were an aesthetic of some sort?

Merilyn: I'm not sure whether they were, you know how you can get....

Michele: an epidural?

Merilyn: yeah, I'm not sure whether that is what they were. Or um whether they were to knock me out or to bring on labour. I don't remember labour. They've got there that I was due in February, I can't remember whether well, were they doing that cause they just wanted rid of me, away from the home. Bring the baby on, and I'm gone.

Michele: Prematurely.

Merilyn: Yes, although there is no mention that she is premature. So I don't really know, I don't know why they did it.

Michele: And for you when you got home, life went on, nobody spoke about it.

Merilyn: it had to. The other thing that happened to me after I came home. I was at my house in Geelong Road, police car pulled up out the front. Two policemen got out of it, although I think it was a lady and a man. And they come in and interviewed me. Wanted to know everything.

Michele: This is after you had gotten home?

Merilyn: yes, wanted to know what happened. Somebody had been in touch with the police, whether it was the hospital or what, I don't know, but they asked me everything and I always wondered why there was never a court case

Michele: And this would have been because you were underage at the time

Merilyn: Yes. But there was no other independent adult there. It was just me by myself.

Michele: You were interviewed at home, by the police...

Merilyn: With no other person there.

Michele: By yourself at age sixteen.

Merilyn: Yes well, I would have been sixteen in the April but yeah, yeah. And I always wondered. And until I joined ARMS I asked a few people there did the police get involved. And they said yes, there were court cases. Well there was no court case for me. And then I realised afterwards that was because I had no adult person with me, my dad must have been at work and that was it. So, that's just unbelievable when I think about what has happened and what they did to me. Everything was illegal.

Michele: Yes.

Merilyn: Every damn thing. It's a wonder I'm not around the bend. I think I am half the time but yeah, it's the lies that they've told me. It's awful. I just, wish just in the finish it was just a dream, it never really happened.

Michele: And that was how you managed it?

Merilyn: I think so. But the shame, there's nothing worse than the shame. I still feel ashamed.

Michele: And nobody you were able to speak with about that?

Merilyn: Nobody. I just kept everything bottled up. But just the, I just cannot get over the lies. Its awful. Sixty bloody years ago. She'll never be mine. Never. So awful.

Michele: It's another layer of grief when life moves on.

Merilyn: I haven't spoken to her for three years, actually its gone bad from 2012 when I went, we went up there cause her son was getting married and it's been bad from then. Went there about three years ago, I thought she'd tell me why, what was wrong. She never opened her mouth. She hardly spoke to us. Or spoke to me. And it was just a dread, terrible time so I don't know what I've done.

Michele: So Merilyn, what year did you find her or she find you?

Merilyn: 1991. She was 31. She had looked for me beforehand, she was trying to find me. She told a few lies, said it was for medical reasons, but it wasn't, she was trying to find me. I've got a letter there saying and yeah, they, I don't think she went ahead with it after that. Because they said it would be too complicated. She'd have to get letters from her doctor and things like that about the medical condition.

Michele: What year was that?

Merilyn: '86?

Michele: So in '86 she began her search but then she paused and didn't go further.

Merilyn: Yep.

Michele: and didn't find you until nine years later

Merilyn: 1991.

Michele: Oh sorry.

Merilyn: Yeah, 1991. Yes, so ...

Michele: And then from there, she contacted you? Directly? Herself?

Merilyn: her adoptive mother rang me one night. And I just let out one unholy scream, because the mother said to me: what does the fifth of the first 1960 mean to you? Well I had forgotten her date of birth. I knew it was the fifth but I didn't know whether it was the fifth, the 15<sup>th</sup> or the 25<sup>th</sup>. I couldn't remember and, yes, I said yes. He'd came running out. And it was a conversation and hung up then she called back again and he said: 'I'm answering it this time'

Michele: This is your husband?

Merilyn: yes, my husband. And he thought it might have been a hoax, although he knew about her. My baby. He spoke to the adoptive mother for a while and then the next day, she said I can't get in touch with [REDACTED] she said she'll be in bed, I'll tell her to ring you the next day, tomorrow. And she did.

Michele: [REDACTED] is your daughter?

Merilyn: [REDACTED] is my daughter but she called her [REDACTED] after that nun. And, yes, we met a couple of months after that, we had to go up to [REDACTED] to meet her. She lives up just out of [REDACTED]. It was lovely. It was really good. I met the grandchildren. I met her adoptive parents. I can't say I hated them. They were a very well-off family. The only thing I can disagree with was them making her give up her baby. Which was so wrong of them and I told the mother that. And she said, oh I was too old. She was only fifty something. And I've looked after my grandchildren here and I was in my sixties, you know.

Michele: and perhaps has no appreciation of all the grief that happens for the ...

Merilyn: So its just gone really bad from 2012.

Michele: From '91 to 2012 you have maintained a relationship with your daughter?

Merilyn: Yes. On the phone for a couple of hours, nearly every day.

Michele: really? For how many years do you think?

Merilyn: Right up until about then.

Michele: Wow.

Merilyn: Maybe 12 months before that because she found her father's sister and that's when things turned a bit funny.

Michele: Ok.

Merilyn: Yes, so a couple of hours every day.

Michele: Goodness!

Merilyn: And that's what hurts.

Michele: You really, really got to know one another.

Merilyn: Yes. I was her best friend, I wasn't her mother, I was her best friend. She could tell me anything. That's what she said, she said 'I can tell you anything' but I wasn't her mother. I got really upset. Her boys played soccer. They played in Canberra. And for a couple of year's there I went to Canberra and stayed in a motel with them. And we went to the Archives and the national Library and everything. We got off the bus one day, the tourist bus that the boys come down on, and she said to the bus driver "Oh she spat me out". Oh, I nearly had a heart attack. She said "oh, that's my birth mother, she spat me out". Dear, it was so awful.

Michele: Yes.

Merilyn: She just, I don't know. I kept, I maintained a relationship I didn't say anything to her.

Michele: When was that do you think.

Merilyn: About, maybe 2000 early 2000's I think. Yes, it would be. [REDACTED] got married in 2012 so it would have been early 2000's.

Michele: So you still maintained a relationship for many years but you feel like that was an unveiling of something, in her.

Merilyn: Yes. What can you do? I could never be myself with her. It's hard to explain. I wasn't like I was with my other children. I've got a boy and a girl. I can't, sorry, I couldn't be myself with her. That was taken in 1991 when she came down to our house when we lived in [REDACTED]. She's only ever been down three times. That time, when my daughter married - my daughter asked her to be her bridesmaid, and when my father passed away. I have had to go up there, for twenty odd years, to visit her, she didn't come down.

Michele: Unless it was a very special occasion. And so which, this is a photo of the three children?

Merilyn: That's [REDACTED].

Michele: That's [REDACTED] in the front there.

Merilyn: That's my daughter, and my son, with [REDACTED].

Michele: Right, and the age difference?

Merilyn: [REDACTED] was born in 1962, and [REDACTED] was born in 1967. So, and that is when she found her son and he had to come and visit her. And we had our photo taken.

Michele: Wow. That's an incredible opportunity. A photo of you and your daughter and your grandson. And all three of you separated. Wow. That must be a very precious photo.

Merilyn: It is. He's a lovely man.

Michele: And do you still hear from him?

Merilyn: No. On Facebook, he wasn't doing a lot if I put anything on Facebook for a long while. But now he's on Facebook more. He's putting a tick on it like oh yes, I like it, and I was putting something about adoption on, it could have been me with a photo of Julia Gillard, and he put a heart on it. He's a very nice man. Has

twin boys. And they're 17 or 18. I've never met them, and I don't think [REDACTED] has ever met them either.

Michele: Oh wow.

Merilyn: And that was just the three of us taken around the same time as that first one in 1991.

Michele: right, goodness.

Merilyn: So it's very hard. We had a lovely relationship. But now it's just gone.

Michele: And when you said you couldn't be yourself with her, was that all the way through or was that was from the time that you?

Merilyn: No, all the way through. I think I felt beneath her. I don't know how to put it. She had a good education, and maybe that's what it was, I don't know but I just, just felt beneath her. Not good enough. I don't know, when I think of it, I was good enough.

Michele: Do you mean when you were a young girl and society told you, you weren't good enough? Yeah.

Merilyn: Yeah. I had no guidance. No mother, no grandmother.

Michele: So even now that you can rationally know that that's not true, you still feel it.

Merilyn: yeah, yeah.

Michele: It's a lot of pressure for a young girl isn't it?

Merilyn: It was.

Michele: ...from a very big circle.

Merilyn: It was, yes. And then of course I find it very hard to make friends. I lost my mother and my father got remarried, and the wife didn't want anything to do with me. I lost my baby. I lost my best friend in a car accident and I just can't make friends and I've tried and I lose them.

Michele: Yes. So, investing in your relationship with your daughter was a very big thing, wasn't it?

Merilyn: Yes. I know there's other things that I need to say but I can't get it out.

Michele: That's OK, that's alright Merilyn. I think when you're ready go and maybe get a glass of water; and just, we can come back.

*Pause*

Merilyn: Yes, it was so hard trying to keep a secret. My husband's been very good though because he knew before we got married. He knew all about her, so, he's been very good.

Michele: So you've been married for a very long time?

Merilyn: Yes, 58 years, yeah. I did have to get married. I think I was looking for that baby.

Michele: Yes, and your second child was born two years later.

Merilyn: Yeah. Yes, but I don't know whether I've been a good mother. I don't know. Would you like a coffee?

Michele: No, I'm fine thank you; but you make one if you would like one.

Merilyn: No I'm right. Just gotta make something light.

*Pause*

Michele: How old were you when your father got remarried?

Merilyn: I think I was only 16. I think I'd got, had [REDACTED] in the January and I think he got married in the September of that year. He met my stepmother while I was in the home. Yeah.

Michele: So you came out of the home and your dad had re-partnered

Merilyn: Yes. I'm just trying to think. When dad took me in the February after I'd had [REDACTED], up to Wangaratta to meet [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] never liked me from day one. She pushed me out of the road all the time. I did live with them for a while. Dad bought a farm in [REDACTED] and I did live with them for a while but I couldn't take it any longer and I went back and lived with my Aunty in [REDACTED]; and that was when I met Trevor. We were together for 12 months; 12 months before we got married, I think it was.

Michele: Wow, life was a storm for a few years there!

Merilyn: It was. Yes. Yeah. I've gotta try and get over everything, just block it. That's all I've ever done. Just block things. I mean I can't even remember what happened 12 years ago, let alone ya know, because I just automatically block everything. It's an awful thing but it's all I've been able to do.

Michele: And Merilyn, what sort of support have you received over the years? ARMS is the only...?

Merilyn: Yes. But we have broken away from ARMS, the girls here in Geelong, and we've got a group of our own that we meet once a month, they're all former ARMS girls. I like the girls, we all get on well.

Michele: The ones in Geelong?

Merilyn: Yes, yes. We all get on well. I've just stayed with them.

Michele: How many are in your group?

Merilyn: I'll show you a photo, here we are. There's about nine of us I think? There's a couple, that's Thelma she's the main one.

Michele: there's nine of you but here we've got three, four, five, six, seven of you.

Merilyn: Yes, there is a couple not there.

Michele: And about what year did you, I take it ARMS is your first opportunity really to just be with all of this.

Merilyn: Yes, well this was, we were all part of ARMS.

Michele: And so what year did you find that support.

Merilyn: The December of 2012. After all this happened with [REDACTED]. That was it. I had to have someone and I rang Thelma up but their meetings didn't start until the February of 2013, so I been with them since 2013. They're a lovely lot of girls. I just, I feel uplifted when I go there. I'm not the only one that's...

Michele: That's been through this.

Merilyn: Yes. Yes

Michele: and so it's a safe place for you...

Merilyn: I think so.

Michele...among peers if you like that have had a similar experience.

Merilyn: Yes.

Michele: And you can talk about what you're experiencing.

Merilyn: Yes. I'm the eldest one there but still

Michele: Is it if you like, the first time you've felt really understood with it all?

Merilyn: Yes, yes. They've been really good.

Michele: But no government support?

Merilyn: Nothing.

Michele: And this process, you've got a whole folder of documentation, that you've sourced yourself.

Merilyn: Yes, yes I have.

Michele: When did that begin?

Merilyn: When they, just before – was it before they...I don't know, is there no dates on these? I don't know, I can't remember.

Michele: But it was after your daughter got in touch that you started to compile all the information?

Merilyn: When I joined ARMS, Vanish paid for me to go to Canberra. What year was that, 2013? I went up to Canberra for the apology. It was when, when [REDACTED] sort of went funny with me in 2012 that was it, I thought I'd had enough. I don't know what's wrong. You can't, you haven't told me, I've never asked her. I don't want to cause any more trouble. That was when I started getting everything. When you could get all this paraphernalia and everything. So, it was a shock to find out.

Michele: List of affidavits. Affidavit of [REDACTED] with content of [REDACTED] annexed spawn 18<sup>th</sup> of February 1960 and 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1960. [REDACTED] is?

Merilyn: That must have been him yeah, that was the man that was sitting at the table, made me sign all this paperwork.

Michele: When the lady was behind you? The nun?

Merilyn: Yes, the witch!

Michele: The witch.

Merilyn: I'm sorry.

Michele: But there's no signature on this document?

Merilyn: I thought there was, I thought I'd seen

Michele: ...I can't see...

Merilyn: ....a signature.

Michele: Is this your signature at the top there?

Merilyn: No.

Michele: No. Chief Clerk in equity. There's no actual signature on it.

Merilyn: No. There's the signature there but I wasn't there.

Michele: it's your name. Typed on the document.

Merilyn: Yeah, it's my name. But they've put there on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February well I mean I wasn't there when that was done.

Michele: No, so this is the official adoption process that's happened without your presence.

Merilyn: Yes, yes. I was just going to say, can I tell you how I found out I was pregnant?

Michele: Of course.

Merilyn: I had the girls laughing when I told them. This girl or woman, I can't remember who she was, I can't remember if she was a prostitute or what. But she took me to the venereal disease place in Melbourne, because I couldn't go to my doctor. And I can't remember how I know this person but she took me there, she said "They'll tell you if you're pregnant or not" and I had to wait two weeks and I had to go back and they told me that I was pregnant. I didn't go there for venereal disease or anything but yes. So, I don't know who this woman was, I can't remember but she knew where to go so....

Michele: and then what? That's a very lonely two-week wait.

Merilyn: I know!

Michele: and you would have essentially known, I'm assuming, that ...

Merilyn: I think I probably did and that's why this person, whoever she was, took me there.

Michele: Yes, yes. And do you know how roughly how far along you were?

Merilyn: No, I can't.

Michele: No Idea.

Merilyn: I might have told dad, might've been in the September or the August, I might have told dad. And that was when he took me, well that was when he actually took me, I'm not catholic but he actually took me to a protestant home;

and whoever they were there wanted to know the ins and outs of everything. And being a 14/15 year old, I would not talk. I said, "No! Dad, I'm not going there". And I did know of another girl who had been to St Josephs and I had met her at St Josephs. I had gone there and visited her beforehand. She would've been there, I don't know whether it would have been 1958 or early '59 and that's how I knew about St Joseph's and that. So, Dad took me there. And they took me there. And they decided, the nuns decided that I would have my baby at St Vincent's. I don't know why cause all the girls that were in the home had their babies across the road at the Royal Women's. So I don't know why that was done that way, yes. I'm sort of remembering a few things. Yes. So, as I said before, few girls, we walked to the hospital and yeah.

Michele: You walked to the hospital when you were staying at the home?

Merilyn: Home, yes. We went through where the exhibition building is in Melbourne?

Michele: Oh no, yep. Barely. I wasn't raised in Melbourne

Merilyn: Right. The exhibition buildings were in Carlton. We used to walk through Gratton Street, through the Exhibition buildings, the gardens and then up to St Vincent's.

Michele: Was that to visit other girls you were staying with?

Merilyn: I beg your pardon?

Michele: Was that to visit other girls that you were staying with?

Merilyn: No that was to go to the Doctor.

Michele: Oh yes, your evening appointment.

Merilyn: Yes, yes. As I said before, it was later in the day that we used to go there. And actually when we were in the home we weren't actually confined to the home. I used to catch the bus and go to Footscray.

Michele: For?

Merilyn: to see friends.

Michele: Just an explore.

Merilyn: Yes. And there was a milk bar next door to the home. There was the home here, and then there was the lane and then there was a few old shops there. And then there was this Italian lady that used to run the milk bar and us girls used to go in the milk bar and drink our Coke and have our smokes and what have you. So in that respect it was alright, ya know, because we weren't actually locked in. And that I think later on, some of these girls that are in the

photo there, they were in the same home.; that girl there, and that one there. They were there but they were in there later than me. One was in there, well they were both in the '60s but one was six years later and the other one was seven years later but they were in the home. '66 one was in the home and '68 the other one was in the home, but all things in the home was tightened up by then.

Michele: OK, so a lot stricter for them, they couldn't go out?

Merilyn: No, they couldn't go out but with us we could go out and have our smoke so forth and that, so, yes.

Michele: And Merilyn, the preparation for the birth, there was none?

Merilyn: Nothing.

Michele: Nothing at all?

Merilyn: Nope.

Michele: No Education?

Merilyn: Nope.

Michele: No explanation of what would happen?

Merilyn: Nope. I never ever saw a social worker.

Michele: Right.

Merilyn: I didn't even know there was such a thing until I went with the girls, went to ARMS and they said they had social workers.

Michele: Right.

Merilyn: I didn't. I had nobody. Absolutely nobody.

Michele: So, you'd sort of told your dad you were pregnant.

Merilyn: Yes and I think I got a whack behind the ears.

Michele: OK, arrangements were made.

Merilyn: Yes. Yes.

Michele: Unbeknownst to you almost.

Merilyn: Yes, yes.

Michele: Yes?

Merilyn: Yes, well the arrangements for her to have, for me to have [REDACTED] was not done by me. It was done by the Nuns and my father as far as I can recall.

Michele: OK. So all the adults around you put things into play.

Merilyn: Yes. Yes. The only thing, I said before, I had a say in where I was going. I was not going to that say Methodist or Protestant home

Michele: Yes.

Merilyn: I didn't want to go there. I think they invaded my privacy if you can understand what I mean.

Michele: Yes. Yeah.

Merilyn: I don't think there was any need to know everything.

Michele: No.

Merilyn: ...and that, so yeah. St Josephs and that was it. And then I wasn't a very nice little girl then, so...

Michele: Well you certainly had experienced a pretty difficult childhood to that point, losing your mum.

Merilyn: Yes. I did. Yes.

Michele: That's no small thing at eleven.

Merilyn: Well I mean, my father loved me, I was a very loved child. With mum and dad.

Michele: were you an only child? You were an only child.

Merilyn: Yes, yes. And it wasn't that I was treated awful or anything like that...

Michele: No.

Merilyn:... I wasn't . Just that, poor dad, he put up with a lot. And then sort of being, living with my Grandmother - their old-fashioned ways, and then with my Aunt. I was from pillar to post, I really didn't know where I was.

Michele: And in those times I don't think there was the support around even the grief and loss of your mum.

Merilyn: No, there wasn't. So, yes. It wasn't a very good childhood.

Michele: No.

Merilyn: So, yeah. I can't think of anything.

Michele: That's absolutely fine, we can end now Merilyn, if you like?

Merilyn: Yeah.

Michele: Is there anything that feel that you would have liked to have said or covered? What would be the main things you would want the Inquiry to know about your experience?

Merilyn: Just how I was treated by the hospital, I've never ever had an apology from the hospital. Even though I've been in touch with the hospital. I have had an apology from nobody really, Julia Gillard but that's not a personal apology.

Michele: No.

Merilyn: Nobody's ever said I'm sorry we treated you that way. I think, as I've said, the only way I've coped is by blocking everything. Just thinking it was a dream.

Michele: Yeah.

Merilyn: ... Of course until [REDACTED] found me and then I realised it was true. So yeah.

Michele: So at no point during any of it you felt emotionally met? No.

Merilyn: No. Nobody helped. I was just a poor little girl by myself. I'm sorry.

Michele: No, don't be sorry.

Merilyn: I spose that's all we've ever said is I'm sorry.

Michele: And it shouldn't be you saying you're sorry.

Merilyn: No. It should be them or other people.

Michele: It should be the other way round.

Merilyn: Yeah.

Michele: May I ask were you told by people that you would be able to get on with your life and ...

Merilyn: Yes, yes.

Michele: ...and forget about it.

Merilyn: Yep. Don't worry about it. Forget about it. And I think actually that's what I must have done.

Michele: Took that deeply into....

Merilyn: I feel so guilty that I never ever looked for her.

Michele: Yeah.

Merilyn: Some of the other girls have said 'oh they looked for theirs' and it just makes me feel so awful that I didn't.

Michele: You were so young.

Merilyn: I was.

Michele: You were so young, and when you're that young and someone says to you you'd be able to get on with your life and forget about this; you know, you do internalise those statements from your elders and your....

Merilyn: You Do! Yes. Yes.

Michele: In a way that was you being a good girl wasn't it?

Merilyn: Yeah, yeah. Trying to make amends. And ah, yeah. It doesn't work.

Michele: No, it doesn't work.

Merilyn: No. Nobody cared.

Michele: No. It felt like nobody cared.

Merilyn: Yeah. She was a rotten little girl who got into trouble. Got herself into trouble. She has to pay for it and that's it.

Michele: It was a cruel society back then.

Merilyn: It was! Yeah, everything was.

Michele: It really was. It's a huge thing that you've been through.

Merilyn: It was, yeah.

*Pause*

Merilyn: I think...

Michele: Will we end our interview there?

Merilyn: Pardon?

Michele: Will we end our interview there, Merilyn?

Merilyn: Yes I think so.

Michele: Yeah, OK.

Merilyn: I hope I haven't wasted your time.

Michele: Gosh you've not wasted my time at all. No not at all! Are you satisfied that you said as much as you need to today?

Merilyn: I think so!

Michele: Yeah.

Merilyn: I don't know, I can't...I'll probably think of more when you've gone

Michele: I'm sure you will. Perhaps we can speak to Yuki about some of that?

Merilyn: Yeah.

Michele: Ok well we will stop there for now.

Merilyn: I just feel like I've been by myself. All by myself.

Michele: Yes.

Merilyn: ... for sixty years! It's a bit much.

Michele: Yes, yes.

Merilyn: Anyway, I've survived this far. So...

Michele: Merilyn, can I ask what would you like to see come of this Inquiry.

Merilyn: The way we were treated and the hospital, I wasn't treated very well in the hospital. I think they need to do something about it, I really do. I've been through this mental thing for that long; I think they need to help us out. I think they need to help us out medically. Oh there was lots of things I thought of but I can't remember, it's gone. I think they should look after us if we have to go into a nursing home. That hospital just, they just didn't give a damn about us girls; and I think that they should help us now that we're older, if we need medical care and so forth.

Michele: Counselling and support.

Merilyn: Yes. Yeah. I think so, although it's a bit late now. I'm near the end, of my life. [inaudible] right a wrong.

Michele: I don't think it's too late. It's never too late to try and work through some of the feelings and make peace.

Merilyn: Yeah.

Michele: ... as best as you ever could. Merilyn, just regarding, before we do finish, there was just that question of what you wanted done with your submission.

Merilyn: yeah.

Michele: ... and I'll just get you to verbalise on the tape that you are happy for this to be a public ...

Merilyn: Yes, I am now.

Michele: ... publication on the Committees website...

Merilyn: Yes.

Michele: ..and possibly referred to in the final report.

Merilyn: Yes.

Michele: OK. Well we will end there.

Merilyn: OK.

Michele: ... and I'm sure there will be a possibility to add to it if you need to.

Merilyn: OK, thank you.