

Submission by Kerina Martin
Inquiry into responses into historical forced adoptions in Victoria
May 2021

My name is Kerina and was born in South Wales 1952 and I was with my mother till I was three years old and I was adopted when I was three In Ballarat Vic . My name was Patricia before I was adopted and my mother was told that the people adopting me were a young couple and it turned out the father was 41 and the mother was 34 they were people who had no idea of children at all .

Kerina do you want to just tell me how your childhood was with having older parents. ? well they were very cruel and I used to have to go out and help my father stack wood and my adopted mother was an alcoholic and I even had to go down to the local hotel with a note and buy Brandy for her and I was only 8 or 9 years old.

The people who adopted me already had another adopted daughter she was six months younger than me but in my adoption papers and my adopted birth certificate there is no mention of this other child. She was treated completely different to me . They had her since she was six weeks old so it was obvious they had built a bond. I knew they weren't my parents as I had spent three years with my mother . One of my adopted mother's sister later told me I cried for a week when they first got me as I wanted my mother.

There were numerous times when I was afraid and I even ran away.

How old were you when this happened Kerina ? I was in primary school I think about 9 or 10 years old.

My adopted father was a wood merchant he would saw and throw the wood onto a truck and I had to stack 6 tons of wood on the truck and then he would go deliver it. He would come back and it would start again . The other girl who was adopted stayed inside and I still wonder why they adopted me and why didn't anyone check up on these people.

I remember when I had to go to high school I had no uniform or shoes . A neighbour in our street took me to buy shoes and socks and a school uniform so I could go to high school . I didn't go to school a lot because I had to help my father. When I was 14 , on the holidays I got a job in a biscuit factory . When it was time to go back to school my mother said I've got you an exemption so you can keep working. I've worked ever since in factories and I regret that I never got to have a proper education ; but I never really had the chance.

When I was 15 I found myself somewhere to board and I packed my bags and I left and I never went back ever again I have never seen those people since.

I was so relieved to be out of that house .

I contacted Jigsaw early 1980s and then VANISH and they helped me get my adoption records. I also had contact with International Social Services and they helped obtain my father's birth certificate from Ireland. Later VANISH helped me obtain my DNA which has resulted in having contacts from relatives in Ireland and America on my fathers side. I couldn't have done this without VANISH's help.

I have been attending the VANISH support group in Ballarat since it started. I look forward to it and make it a priority . Sharing stories and hearing others stories has really helped me. I sometimes feel envious of others who had a loving caring adoption .

I often think if someone else had adopted me I would have had such a different life .. I love music and if I had an education perhaps I could have been a nurse.

Kerina Martin