

**From:** Sandra Collins [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** Sunday, 27 June 2021 9:01 PM  
**To:** forcedadoptionsinquiry; isic.assembly@parliament.vic.gov.au  
**Subject:** Fwd: Sandra Collins Story

Hello,

At my request Katherine Murtagh has offered me the opportunity to forward you my story of forced adoption for your investigation.

My name is Sandra May Collins  
[REDACTED]

As far as I'm concerned it is more than time to break the silence and I would like my submission to be published on the Committee's website along with my first name (Sandra).

Here's my Story -

My purpose in telling my story is to reclaim my sense of dignity that was stolen from me. Every step I take towards my healing frees me from my traumatic past.

I was born into a dysfunctional family of origin in the Albury/Wodonga area. Due to war trauma and other mental health issues home was not the safest place to be.

Before I started school I was sent to out-of-home care several times. I was regularly and consistently groomed by my biological father over many years - He used to say "If you don't get them before they're 8 it's too late". I became a survivor of incest and at the age of 13 years and 7 months found myself pregnant. I didn't know how this happened! I was just pleased to have what I thought was love and be someone special to my biological father [REDACTED]

When I found out about sexual intercourse behind the girls toilets at school I felt so much shame. I was an outcast. I had sinned big time. Used goods.

When my pregnancy began to show my biological mother noticed and interrogated me, she wanted to know 'who had got to me'. How could she be so unobservant?! So stuck in denial?!

I had sworn on my life about not saying a word. What had happened to me was deemed all my fault. This was a common societal attitude at the time.

I was drugged and whisked away on a train to somewhere to wait out in hell until it was time to birth my son. Try as I might, I can't recall much of this time due to severe overwhelm and sedation. I do know I was under-nourished and often very cold. I believed I was carrying the devil's child because I had sinned and I knew [REDACTED] was a bad man. There was little to no labour education for me. I thought my baby would pop out of my belly, like how a balloon pops.

During labour I decided if I lived through this agony I wanted to keep my son, run away and start a new life. No such luck. I was told my son had died, yet I heard him cry. I caught a hazy glimpse of him. He was amazingly beautiful and I felt love for him. It was then and there I made a promise to myself to survive and do what I could to make this place a better world to live in. And to find my son and tell him I'm so, so sorry.

I was sent back to the family home, even though I was so young and it was very clear an incest case. The System failed me. I was not protected. My sexual, emotional and mental abuse continued. I was very depressed. My mother was depressed. We both lived in terror of [REDACTED] I lived a life of pretense believing I was having a normal teenagehood. I became a silent presence, a girl whose life force had been ripped out of her. Infact, the whole family played 'happy family' to the outside world.

During high school I tried to numb my pain with some alcohol, but didn't want to follow in [REDACTED] footsteps. I experienced soft drugs, stolen prescription medication from the kitchen cupboard, but fortunately I had the sense not to take it further.

I managed to escape to Melbourne at 19 1/2 years old with a friend. Determined to start a new life and leave all my pain and suffering behind me. By the time I was 21 I was struggling with many emotional issues.

I was hanging around Melbourne Uni day dreaming about being a student and having a happy life when I noticed a sign for Counselling. I took a deep breath and went in. I was at a crossroads. I wanted to live. This was the best decision I ever made for myself. The first steps to finding my voice and breaking the silence.

I have been in therapy more than I have been out of it. I have put an immense amount of effort into healing from severe trauma experiences. I began searching for my son over 20 years ago after my trauma specialist assisted me with recalling enough painful memories to build a picture. My specialist is a good man who helped me save myself.

Amongst other things not relevant to this investigation I realised [REDACTED] my biological father was a pedophile and had many victims. He paid off various people, including some police. His main area of operation was NE Victoria, around Wodonga and just over the border in Albury, NSW.

I have left no stone unturned to search for my son and each time my requests come back with a No. Birth certificates and death certificates from 5 states, state ward information, institutional requests. Sometimes I have made second and third requests to the same organisation. To broaden my search I have requested searches under many possible relatives names and still no results. Overtime I've reached out for support with Jigsaw Qld, PASQ, Vanish and ISS. My DNA is now spread across the world on a handful of sites in the hope my son and I will connect. I must say I have met some truly good souls on my journey and their willingness to connect and offer their assistance is a huge blessing.

Where are our records? It's such a massive mystery..... How can there be an absence of records? Can anyone offer an answer?

For me, this traumatic experience has influenced how I function on a daily basis. Being a birth mother and experiencing a forced adoption, the loss of your own flesh and blood is not something that you get over. I have been on a Disability Pension for years while I struggle to make ends meet and carve out the best life I can under very difficult circumstances.

We must remember [REDACTED] is a part of life too. I gave birth to a beautiful daughter many years ago. I still feel blessed to be able to be part of her life now. As with many other birth mothers who have lost a child, the birth of subsequent children can unleash a lot of hidden memories for a Mum. This is what happened for me and I am thankful for this opportunity to reclaim parts of me that went missing because it has made me whole.

While pregnant with my daughter, I had medical evidence proving I had previously given birth. I confronted [REDACTED] and he laughed at me. I reported him to Queensland Police and due to my own struggles I wasn't able to take him to court.

Even though what happened to me and my son was through no fault of my own at times I still feel some shame, used goods, not good enough. a social isolate. Is there an end? I'm told acceptance brings peace. I may change but my story remains the same.

It is my heartfelt wish that my son has had a much better life than I had, that he was nourished by his adoptive family. I hope he is content and enjoys life. He may have children of his own. If so, I trust he has been able to rise

above his life challenges and be the best father and partner he can be. What a huge achievement that would be to continue to break the intergenerational cycle of abuse.

There are many stories of unsatisfactory reunions. There are some stories of nourishing reunions. Whenever it is Life affords me the gift of meeting my son I will experience some sense of completion. I trust it will be similar for him too. Who knows if we will connect well. There are many difficult conversations to have - how, why and who's my father?

We will both have to dig deep to understand each other's life stories and feelings. I sincerely hope we are able to achieve a good outcome.

I believe everyone deserves the right to know where they came from, it's a basic part of our identity. We may not like what we hear, yet in the long term truth is healing when dealt with appropriately.

To you dear Reader, thank you for witnessing some of my life story.

It is my hope my story will support you on your journey in some way.

Regards,  
Sandra Collins