

Thursday, 1st July 2021

Parliament of Victoria Public Hearings for the Inquiry into responses to Historical Forced Adoptions Submission.

Karen Linton

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Dear Ministers, sirs and madams,

On the 18th May 2021 I provided evidence to the above Committee in regards to the Forced Adoption of my son in 1975. On completion of my statement, I was asked a question in regards to monetary compensation and my thoughts on this, at the time I was unsure of my answer and since then I have been able to reflect on my response.

I believe monetary compensation is warranted to ensure societal change in attitudes and perceptions would shift to towards women who endured this process. The reason I have stated this belief is when apologies towards people have included monetary compensation then there has been a significant shift in attitudes for example: on completion of the Royal Commission into Child Sexual Assault in Institutions there was an apology from the Prime Minister Scott Morrison and compensation to be paid to the victims. The ensuring pressure on the institutions from the public have created change in policies regarding notification of complaints and the processes around the complaints. This also mobilises the Catholic Church and Pope to openly admit to the failures of the Church towards their young people in the past. This was further highlighted with Cardinal George Pell being charged (and acquitted) on Historical Sexual Assault charges. All of this I believe to be due to the compensation legitimizing the victims' brave statements and highlighting the failings of Institutions to protect the children in their care.

Another example: the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised to the First Nation People in relation to the Stolen Generation and there has been no monetary compensation provided to those who were victims of this practice (similar to the Forced Adoption Policies) and there has been no discernible shift in Society about this practice. Children from First Nation People are still be removed from families and placed with non-family members.

So, for me for change to happen we need to have monetary compensation to ensure these policies are never re-introduced again into Australian Society.

The Forced Adoption of my son has had a profound impact on both his and my lives and in very much a negative way. I was assured my son would go to a good family who had been thoroughly screened and could offer my son a good life. However, this was not the case for my son as his adoptive father is a compulsive gambler and he only provided minimum amounts of money for food, clothing and shelter. When my son's adoptive mother passed away it became worse for my son, they constantly moved as his father did not pay the rent due to the gambling addiction. My son is currently seeking treatment for this and other issues arising from his treatment from his adoptive father.

I was never advised by the medical staff what occurred during the birth of my son other than he as high forceps delivery and I had numerous stitches internally and externally. Subsequent surgeries I have had I have been advised there is extensive scarring in the lower abdomen and pelvic region which they cannot understand. The contempt shown by the medical staff is an example as to what happened to young women during this period.

Lastly, my best friend died hating me because of Forced Adoptions. My friend found when she was 50 years old, she had been adopted and advised not by her adoptive family but her birth mother siblings who contacted her on the death of their mother. My friend could not understand why she had not been told she was adopted when she became an adult. I explained there was so much secrecy surrounding adoption not only for the birth mothers, the adoptive family as well as there was shame in admitting they could not have children. I also explained once you start telling the lie it slowly becomes your truth and becomes more and more difficult to acknowledge the real truth especially has attitudes to Single Mothers have not changed in recent years, they are often portrayed by the media and members of Parliament in a negative light. My friend refused to talk to me or her adoptive mother as she felt betrayed by what had occurred.

I understand that I am probably too late for this submission but since the inquiry I have talked to my son about the long-term ramifications it had on our lives and the poor choices we have made in the past. Both of us have great difficulty with our relationship together, with significant others and our children and sincerely believe the Forced Adoption is the main cause.

Thank for the opportunity I was given the Inquiry and for your time to listen to my story.

Kind regards

Karen Linton