

Senate Inquiry into Forgotten Australians

Committee Hansard – Tue 3rd Feb 2004, Parramatta

C.A. 15 (Page 21)

Ms. Pamela Vernon -

A few months back we went and opened our files at Dalmar. Up until recently we were led to believe that they were burnt in a fire. About six years ago we got access to a few things from a file, where we saw letters—loving letters—our father had written that we never saw. We got a few reports and things like that, but it was said that everything else was destroyed by a fire in the walk-in safe. It would have been hard to ignite a fire there. I believe that was generic. Being a part of CLAN today, I know that was something a lot of people had been told. We went back to

Committee Hansard – Mon 8th Dec 2003, Perth

C.A. 3

Chair (Senator Hutchins), Question to a Ms Davis -

CHAIR—I just wondered whether, being with CLAN, you thought it was a usual experience of records being unable to be found—they are on the top shelf, not the middle shelf—until you persist? We had a bit of evidence in Adelaide.

(Ms Davis did not really answer this – spoke instead about compiling a history of a particular home.)

C.A. 71-72 (Page 77-78)

Ms Mary Pritchett -

Ms Pritchett—Also, this carer wrote love letters to Lee, which she produced to the lady running Bridgewater. Those letters and a report went to head office but, when Lee went to freedom of information and ended up talking to an ex-Bridgewater carer, she found those letters could not be found. We pursued that, but the letters could not be found and the report could not be found. Initially she was told there was a fire; then we were told there was no fire. Freedom of information cannot find those letters and cannot find that report. As for the fact that he was a carer, there is no record of him ever being employed by the department. I will ask Julia Clarke to come forward.

C.A. 79

“Phillip” -

At my hearing, Justice Kennedy asked me about my timing, because the records that the government provided showed that I was only in care for about 11 days. I said: ‘Your honour, that is wrong; there are more documents.’ I explained my time frame; I gave her my version of events. I told her exactly what happened—when I remembered going out of the premises, and the like. She ordered the department to produce its records, so it was held over and we had to come back on another day. When we came back, the department came in with a stack of records—the Bridgewater records that we had been told had been lost or destroyed had mysteriously been found. There was a stack of documents. In the end, they admitted that, yes, I was right; I was in there for that period of time. However, those records have now gone missing again, and I have never been able to see them, even though Justice Kennedy advised the department to produce them in court.

Committee Hansard – Fri 12th Mar 2004

Mr Bernard Brady, a War Orphan who was in a Home run by Legacy -

Senator McLUCAS—With the other issue about accessing of information, you said that Legacy had destroyed all of their records.

[...]

Mr Brady—Yes. I have been advised by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs that the administration files on my sister and I were destroyed the moment I made my first inquiries.

Senator MURRAY—Can I stop you there? The Commonwealth has very precise rules about what can and cannot be done with records, which tie in with the archival rules as well. Do you have anything in writing which says that it destroyed your files?

Mr Brady—I was advised by the person who handed over all the medical files—the 600-odd pages—that this is all there was and that the administration files, the decision-making files of why we were moved from orphan homes and why trustees were removed, reappointed or not appointed were destroyed. He felt that they were destroyed the moment I first started making inquiries, but prior to my filling in the form requesting the files.

Senator MURRAY—When was that?

Mr Brady—That was 1999.

Senator MURRAY—Would you mind if the committee wrote to the department and, using your name, asked whether your files have been destroyed and why, just so we can see what they are doing? Would you mind that?

Mr Brady—No, I do not mind that. Having worked in the Public Service, I am sure that government departments keep an inventory of all files when they are destroyed. What I want to see is a copy of the inventory, which should state what date those files were destroyed on. I would be very happy if you would include that as one of your questions.

Submission 467: Terry Dean

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During the course of this somewhat emotional dilemma, I made mention of my placement in the Box Hill Boys Home, for which my testimony was challenged by my brother and sisters in wanting proof, that I, was in fact, in the care of this institution.

Thinking that this would only be a formality, in applying to the Salvation Army for my records of my stay over the past 7 years, I was appalled, when I received an answer from the Salvation Army that there were no records of my stay in this institution.

It would appear, that if you were a private placement, your records could be destroyed with the excuse being that of the inevitable “the fire in the records department”, which would seem to be a most fortuitous and timely act, in obliterating these documents, in order to lessen the risk of a potential litigant.

I am most angry, to say the least, with the Salvation Army in this area of identity, to think that 7.5 years in my life are unaccountable, and that I did not exist, according to your records, I feel that this pattern of guilt shown by the Salvation Army, is due to the past horrendous events, that your organisation now finds itself embroiled in.

It is rather ironic, that I had to go to one of my Box Hill Boys Home mates, to get an affidavit, declaring that I was in fact in the home at the time, and that he knew me, this indignation I found totally mortifying.

Forced Adoption Senate Inquiry

Committee Hansard – Fri 16th Dec 2011

Mrs Fran Bladel -

Mrs Bladel: And the Salvation Army's evidence was very scanty, very brief. And it was a very elderly gentleman, I think, who came along, and he just came to say, 'Look, our records have all disappeared,' they burnt in a fire or something happened to them, and he could not give us any information. Centacare were more

Submission 59

My original birth certificate shows her name and my name and date of birth, nothing more than a

string of entries "not known". My birth records and the records of the (...) Home were unfortunately "destroyed in a fire" many years ago, making the story of my life and many others incomplete and unavailable.

Submission 190

Hospitals and community service departments all over Australia have had more than ample time to conduct full audits of medical and adoption records since the NSW Health Commission released its directive in 1982. The RBWH has destroyed its medical records and selective flooding has destroyed some pages of social work files held in the same folder and not others. It has always been my impression that any files related to the adoption of children were to be kept in perpetuity.