

Written evidence Mrs Liz Harvie (ACU0014)

I will be specifically referring to these 2 points in my evidence:

How the experience of being adopted at 8 weeks old has impacted me as a child of an unmarried mother born in 1974

For me, being separated from my genetic/birth mother and family and being adopted has had lasting consequences and has affected me my entire life – and still today, 47 years later. The social taboo and stigma of being an unmarried, young mother back in 1974 was, as I understand, so great, that these women were vilified, treated like second rate citizens and shown no respect or empathy and left with little or no choice but to have their babies taken away from them.

What I wish to convey to this inquiry is that maternal separation, particularly coerced/forced maternal separation is TRAUMA. And much of this trauma is preverbal, meaning that the baby felt the separation with every cell and fibre of its body and brain. A baby lives inside the body of its mother for 9 months. The baby hears its mother voice, its mothers heartbeat, it knows her laugh, the rhythmic sway of her body when she walks. A mother and unborn baby have an undeniable soul connection. And when you take a baby from its natural mother, it knows. And no other mother will do – she doesn't smell right, she doesn't sound right and they mother and baby may be vastly different, as in my case, which only adds to the trauma. Adoption may sound well-meaning and a happy ending for a childless couple, but for the birth mother, it is a cruel, torturous act and for the baby, it causes a primal wound, which is unrecognised by society.

When you grow up as an adoptee, you have no genetic mirror of who you are. So you create a false sense of self. You try to fit and blend in with a family who doesn't look like you, who does not act like you, but yet you feel obliged to be like in some way. This is very confusing to an adoptee. I had a deep sense of loss and grief and was always curious and had a deep yearning to find my birth mother, which I did aged 28. It was the missing piece of the jigsaw for me. I also found my birth father. To see their faces, their flesh, their characters standing before me blew me away and I struggle to put into words how it made me feel – the sense of awe was almost too much! I am still in happy reunion with my birth mother and father. In fact, we appeared recently on the BBC news, on a short piece by Duncan Kennedy on the practise of Forced Adoptions. We are a rare triad in that we are all in happy contact with each other.

How the lack of recognition of the impact of adoption practises between 1949 and 1976 has affected me as a 1974 adoptee

Adoption has always been presented as a “gift” – adoptees are told they are “special” because they were “chosen”. I find this offensive – I was taken from my birth mother. I had no choice in the matter. I was placed with an adoptive family and given no follow up support throughout my childhood. No government body was concerned for my welfare or mental health. I had nobody, no organisation, to turn to for help as I tried to process the feelings I had surrounding my adoption. I almost felt like I had no right to feel what I was feeling. I felt that I should be grateful for being adopted into a comfortably off, well-meaning family. I knew no other other adoptees growing up. There was one other family we knew as a child,

but it was never spoken about – always swept under the carpet by society. I was just expected to get on with it, I felt.

In conclusion, it is my hope that ALL of the people who have been impacted by Forced Adoptions between 1949 and 1976 are finally given the respect and acknowledgment that they deserve. That their pain and trauma is seen and validated. An government apology will always come to late, but it is very welcome and would certainly help us all to heal.

Thank you for accepting my evidence.

Mrs Liz Harvie

11/10/2021