**DATE**

**Your address**

To the HON **insert parliamentarians name here**

I am writing to seek your support in regards to an outstanding matter which is of immense significance and which affects many thousands of Western Australians.

As the mother of a child taken from me at birth and given to strangers to raise in 1968 during the Forced Adoption Era (FAE) my life has been irreversibly shaped by the government policies and practices which denied my daughter her birthright. I along with many other unmarried women were victims of forced adoption and we and our children have been on occasion identified as “The Other Stolen Generation” or “Forgotten Australians.”. The situation was perfectly described in Prime Minister Julia Gillard’s apology for Forced Adoption in 2013, which is attached. I have also attached speech delivered by Adjunct Professor the Honour Nahum Mushin, delivered at Monash University in October 2013 which eloquently summarises the concept of Forced Adoption and the experience of young unmarried mothers.

As you may be aware the forced adoption policies and practices of 1942 to 1985 affected a significant number of mothers and their children. During those decades it has been estimated that approximately 250,000 to 350,000 newborns were forcibly removed from their young and unmarried mothers. Unfortunately, it is impossible to provide clear statistical evidence due to a decade of national data apparently going “missing” during the 1960s. Despite this drawback, we do know that the FAE era peaked in 1972 and during that 12-month period approximately 717 West Australian newborns and almost 10,000 nationally were permanently separated from their mothers through the process of adoption.

Over the years the experience of losing a child to adoption has been revealed as a harrowing one and although it has been defended as an unfortunate result of flawed social and medical policy, it can also appear that a pattern of abusive treatment emerges. What mothers describe about their treatment are not isolated instances with charitable institutions, government departments, atypical doctors and social workers, but rather their experiences reveal systemic violations of human rights. They were subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and this treatment has had lifelong ramifications for the victims, not only in emotional but also very much so in practical, physical terms and the trauma and its effects still continues 50 years, and more, after the event.

What emerges from the stories of mothers is a process of systemic bullying seeking to harm, intimidate and coerce vulnerable unmarried mothers. Bullying is an ongoing and repeated misuse of power in relationships. Bullying can impact on physical, mental and emotional levels. Some of the effects comprise anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, lack of self-esteem, gastric and a plethora of physical issues, relationship issues and addiction to alcohol and drugs, detrimental to academic and vocational achievement. The target of bullying behaviour (in this case the unmarried mother) continues experiencing the consequences of this form of abuse after leaving the location where the abuse occurred.

Following the loss of their child mothers sought what solace they could in the thought that at least their precious sons and daughters were being well cared for, that they would lead happy lives and that all care had been taken in placing them with the “best” people and that due diligence had been done. However, over the years this has been demonstrated to not necessarily be the case. Extensive research has shown that adoptees are at higher risk of depression, experience life long relationship dysfunction, are more vulnerable to PTSD, anxiety disorders and suicide than their non-adoptee counterparts. Symptoms which disconcertingly mirror many of the long-term effects on mothers. The evidence exposes the fact that it is not only the mothers who have lost their children who suffer trauma, but that children who lose their mothers suffer similar symptoms of trauma and grief.

In 2013 the Australian Senate conducted an inquiry int Australia’s forced adoption history. However, the numerous recommendations contained in the report appear to have been forgotten and/or shelved, and at least in Western Australia not a single recommendation has been implemented even though 400 of the submissions received by the inquiry were from Western Australian mothers.

Last year in 2021, the state of Victoria followed Tasmania and NSW by conducting its own parliamentary inquiry into forced adoption. The response from both mothers and adoptees has been considerable with more than 100 submissions, some of which have been written from the Western Australian perspective. Amongst the many recommendations were redress mechanisms, identity reforms for adoptees, personalised apologies, and lifelong quality counselling.

It would seem appropriate that Western Australia should conduct an inquiry into our state’s policies and practices of FAE and it is disappointing that to date no interest has been shown in embarking on such an inquiry. There appears to be little interest or appetite to offer survivors, mothers and children, justice which is so long overdue and outstanding. An inquiry would be a logical step towards achieving such well-deserved justice for parents and adopted adults.

I repeat my initial request for your assistance. Please support the establishment of an inquiry for the many mothers, fathers and their sons and daughters who were so brutally mistreated and who continue to suffer the repercussions today.

Yours sincerely,

**YOUR NAME**