

[REDACTED]
Sent: 09 October 2025 13:13

To: Mitford, Nick [REDACTED]

Email <cteotrconsultation@niassembly.gov.uk>

Subject: Re: Submission of Evidence: Draft Bill on Truth Recovery and Redress

Hello,

Further to my correspondence below, I just want to make sure that the submission I have made detailing my Mother's experience at [REDACTED] Private Nursing Home, has been accepted and attached to our response to the Call for Evidence Consultation.

I also wanted to make some further comments in response to the ongoing evidence sessions which I have been listening to with interest.

Birth Fathers

While many accounts of birth fathers involve experiences of abandonment, denial of responsibility, or even mistreatment, it is important to acknowledge that not all cases fit this pattern. In some instances — including our own — birth fathers were themselves victims of coercion, pressure, or exclusion. Some were denied information, misled about their rights, or prevented from having any involvement in decisions concerning their child's future. Like birth mothers, these men were ultimately separated from their children, often without consent or understanding, and many endured years of grief and loss akin to bereavement. Although they may not have been admitted to the institutions, they too suffered significant emotional and psychological harm as a result of being marginalised, silenced, and stripped of their parental identity. Recognising this complexity is essential to building a complete and compassionate understanding of the impact of historical adoption practices on all those affected. In our own case, my Mother and Father married just [REDACTED] years following the forced adoption of their son. Despite my Father making several enquiries with social services in attempts to find their son, he was told they could not tell him where his son was and he would never be able to have contact with him. My parents both describe their experience as akin to a 'missing person', unable to find him, never knowing if he was alive or dead.

Private Nursing Homes

Private nursing homes must be included within the scope of the inquiry, as they frequently operated as **de facto Mother and Baby Homes** in their own right. These establishments were not merely transitional spaces or “pathways” to or from the larger, more formally recognised institutions — in many cases, they were the **primary sites** where women experienced the defining and most traumatic aspects of coerced adoption.

Although stays in private nursing homes were often shorter, as the Independent Panel has noted, this brevity did not lessen the harm inflicted. In fact, the experience was often **intense, isolating, and acutely traumatic**, precisely because of the short duration and the heightened emotional and physical vulnerability of the women involved. Many entered these homes at a later stage of pregnancy, with little opportunity to seek independent advice or support. Decisions about their child’s future were frequently made or finalised during this brief but critical period under direct or indirect coercion, mistreatment, manipulation, and misinformation.

Crucially, these homes operated within — and were sustained by — the **same systemic culture of stigma, moral judgement, and institutional control** that characterised the wider adoption and maternity care framework of the time. The mistreatment and coercion that occurred within private nursing homes were not isolated incidents but part of a **broader pattern of systemic neglect and abuse**, in which women’s rights, dignity, and autonomy were routinely disregarded.

Despite fulfilling the same function as state-linked or religious Mother and Baby Homes, these private establishments were **not adequately regulated or monitored by the state**. Government departments had clear responsibilities for licensing, inspection, and oversight of facilities providing maternity and nursing care. The failure to enforce these safeguards allowed private nursing homes to operate with **minimal accountability**, exposing women and infants to mistreatment, coercion, and profound violations of their rights. This represents a serious **breach of the state’s duty of care** and a failure to uphold basic standards of protection and oversight.

Excluding private nursing homes from the inquiry would therefore perpetuate a false distinction between “official” and “unofficial” sites of harm. Many women and children experienced identical patterns of control, coercion, and loss within these private settings as those recognised in larger institutions. To fully uncover the **systemic nature of the mistreatment**, and to ensure justice and acknowledgement for all who suffered within this network of state-tolerated abuse, the inquiry must explicitly include **private nursing homes** within its scope.

State Social Workers

In our case, a state social worker played a central role in the events following my brother's birth. This individual was employed as a state social worker and simultaneously served as a Child Welfare Officer for the [REDACTED] highlighting the overlap between state and religious authorities in adoption arrangements. The interaction between church and state actors in this instance demonstrates how these networks worked together, often operating with shared authority and influence, and in ways that blurred the lines of accountability.

[REDACTED] after my brother's birth, a substantial payment was exchanged between a [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED]. We know this because of a document included in [REDACTED] file, which is a receipt type document of the payment made, but with no reason recorded for the payment. While the precise purpose of the payment is unclear, it appears to have been a kind of act formalising the adoption exchange, linking the private, religious, and state elements of the arrangement. The Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) has confirmed that they find the payment "unusual" but are unable or unwilling to advise what it was for, and they hold no record of receiving it within the financial records of their predecessor authority. It is also unclear what happened to the money after it was received by the social worker, as there is no evidence trail or documentation indicating where the funds were subsequently directed. On the same day that the payment took place, the social worker completed a document referencing the adoption of the child, and there is also a record of a telephone call to another social worker in the [REDACTED] initiating formal adoption arrangements for my brother.

Neither my mother nor my father were informed of the payment, and were completely unaware of it until we received the file from WHSCT in 2022.

This transaction occurred entirely between the [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and may have represented some form of financial contribution or donation tied directly to the formalisation of the adoption.

I have since contacted the [REDACTED], who confirmed that they hold no records relating to this payment and advised that I contact the family of the minister involved to see if they retain any of his papers. I declined to do so, as this would be wholly inappropriate and underscores the continuing lack of institutional accountability regarding this matter.

This matter raises serious concerns about the conduct of state officials and the blurred relationship between church and state actors in adoption processes. The apparent exchange of money in connection with an adoption arrangement — without transparency, record-keeping, or the knowledge of the parents — points to potential ethical and procedural misconduct, coercive adoption practices, and further reinforces the need for inquiry scrutiny of private and domestic settings where such practices

occurred. I would also highlight that **domestic settings should not be excluded from the inquiry's scope**, as the same state social workers were involved in coercive and forced adoption practices in these contexts as well. This demonstrates that abuse and coercion were **not confined to formal institutions**, and underscores the need for **state agencies themselves to be recognised as a category of institution subject to investigation**.

Fostering, Children's Homes, and Systemic State Involvement

The fostering and children's home system must be fully included in the scope of any investigation, as these placements were central to the lives of children affected by coerced and forced adoption. In the case of my brother, his first foster placement was arranged just two days after his birth by the state social worker, who appears to have relied on her own established network of foster carers in the [REDACTED]. While this demonstrates the social worker's operational knowledge of available placements, it also raises questions about oversight, impartiality, and potential conflicts of interest in how foster homes were selected.

According to records from my brother's adoption file, he was moved suddenly from this initial foster home within a week, with no explanation for the transfer. During his first week, he was recorded as suffering from a rash, the cause of which was not identified or investigated. He was then placed in a second foster home, and shortly afterwards transferred to a children's home at [REDACTED]. It was at this children's home that the prospective adoptive parents visited him to decide whether they wanted to adopt him, demonstrating that these placements were being used as a mechanism to facilitate adoption decisions, rather than solely for temporary care or safeguarding.

This sequence of placements highlights the systemic involvement of state social workers and their networks in the orchestration of adoption arrangements. Rapid transfers, the use of children's homes to host prospective adoptive parent visits, and the lack of medical oversight or explanation for health concerns illustrate how vulnerable children were placed within a tightly controlled system designed to prioritise adoption outcomes over their wellbeing. Decisions were made without parental knowledge or consent, and the pattern of transfers shows that these were not isolated incidents but part of a broader, coordinated system linking foster carers, children's homes, social workers, and prospective adoptive parents.

Including both the fostering and children's home systems in any inquiry is therefore essential to understanding the full trajectory of state involvement, the systemic nature of coercive practices, and the failings in safeguarding, transparency, and accountability that affected children during these critical early months of life.

Persons Eligible to Apply for Posthumous Claims

I believe that members of a birth family should be eligible to apply for posthumous claims for their adopted child, brother, or sister. In our case, we were a complete family torn apart by forced adoption. Although my parents married [REDACTED] years after the forced adoption and made repeated efforts to locate their son over the span of almost 30 years, we were denied the right to be a family. To now be denied the ability to apply posthumously feels like a cruel continuation of that injustice — a permanent erasure of our family and a reopening of a wound that has never healed.

As one of [REDACTED] of my brother's birth sisters, we were all close despite being denied the chance of a childhood together. We spoke every day, navigating the challenges and complexities of reunion. He always called us his sisters from the day he first found out about us and tragically, it was only in the last few months before his death that we were finally beginning to find our places within the new family structure, despite having been first reunited in 2001.

In the last years of his life, my brother was estranged from his adoptive family. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] and even [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This cumulative estrangement underscores that we are left with no opportunity to maintain a meaningful connection with him, making the denial of posthumous claims feel like yet a further and permanent loss, compounding the original trauma of the forced adoption.

I also strongly support that the **eligibility for posthumous claims should extend back to 1922**, as any other cut-off date would constitute a further injustice and continue to deny recognition and redress to those families who were affected before more recent legislation.

Victim-Survivors & Experiences from the Protestant Community

I note that the Committee is aware of the relatively low number of victim-survivors from the Protestant community coming forward. There are several factors that may contribute to this. Historically, the public and institutional focus on Mother and Baby Homes and coerced adoptions has been framed primarily as a Catholic issue, which may have discouraged Protestant families from coming forward or believing that their experiences would be recognised. Additionally, Protestant families may have more commonly used private nursing homes rather than the larger, well-known institutions, and these settings have often received less attention in public discourse and investigations. In our own case, I have been advised that there was a connection

between the Presbyterian Church and Bayview Private Nursing Home, indicating that Protestant families were often directed to private nursing homes rather than the larger, more widely recognised Mother and Baby Homes. These factors suggest that the experiences of Protestant families have been systemically under-recognised, and highlight the importance of ensuring that the inquiry and any resulting legislation are inclusive of all communities and institutions where such harms occurred.

Process of Inclusion of Other Institutions

I am also concerned that experiences within other institutions may not be recognised or formally included until the regulations are developed, potentially long after substantial evidence has already been submitted to the Independent Panel. It remains unclear whether the Independent Panel have yet submitted a list of other institutions and experiences for potential inclusion, or when this might occur. Many families and individuals who contributed detailed testimony including substantial evidence from files may continue to live with uncertainty, with no assurance that their experiences will be acknowledged or investigated in a timely manner. This delay risks perpetuating feelings of exclusion and injustice, and underscores the need for a clear and proactive process to ensure all relevant institutions and experiences are considered from the outset, rather than being deferred to a later stage.

I hope that the information I have provided is useful in assisting you with your scrutiny of the draft Bill. I respectfully urge that it be considered in a way that ensures the legislation is inclusive of all families affected, and that it seeks to address the full spectrum of harm and injustice experienced. It is my hope that the Bill can be strengthened to reflect these realities, uphold accountability, and provide meaningful recognition, redress, and justice for all those impacted, including those generationally impacted.

Please note that this information has been provided in my capacity as a representative of my parents, late brother, and family in the Truth Recovery process. I request that it be treated **confidentially** and that it **not be used in any manner that identifies the individuals mentioned**. The information may, however, be cited **anonymously** if required.

Kind Regards,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.