

Apology Alliance: Mother's Day
11/5/2009

Hi Everyone,

Probably everyone has heard that Bernadette Black was named Barnardo's mother of the year. She had a child 15 years ago as a 16 year old teenager. I saw her interviewed and she spoke of the stigma towards teenage mothers in the mid nineties and how she had been lucky to have the support of her mother but that other teenage mums that she was in a group with had been thrown out of their homes and had no support at all. Interestingly even though Bernadette states these women had no support she never mentions adoption.

As everyone is probably aware after 1982 when hospital and social work staff were warned by the Health Commission that they were breaking the law by denying mothers access to their children at the birth and not allowing us to leave the hospital until we signed consents these barbaric practices stopped completely. CHUMS, Jigsaw and the National Council for Single Mothers and their Children had been speaking out against the practices since 1969 - so there had been curtailment from 1970 onwards. It was women's activism that changed the culture in the adoption industry and even though, as Bernadette explains, societal stigma still existed (and still does) mothers kept their babies. Adoption statistics certainly support that contention. In Crown St, for instance, the highest percentage (64%) of ex-nuptial babies were taken from their mothers in 1968 - after that the percentage declined - so by 1980 it was approx 5%.

These are some of the URLs I found - I did see Bernadette being interviewed where she talked more in depth about the stigma and lack of any supportive material available for teenage mums - if anyone finds that interview could they please forward the URL to me.

<http://au.truveo.com/tassie-mum-mother-of-the-year/id/846035811>

<http://today.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=810691>

<http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/pages/page530.asp>

http://www.themercury.com.au/article/2009/05/08/71671_tasmania-news.html

<http://www.abc.net.au/tasmania/stories/s1782243.htm>

Bernadette is a great activist for single teenage mums and is a great counter to the push by would be adopters for the children of young single mums

The following is an extract from an oral submission given by representatives of an adoptive parents group to Bronwyn Bishop's Inquiry:

"With single motherhood so well supported these days there are many children who in their very best interests should have been placed in adoptive families but instead are

suffering immeasurably because of their presence in dysfunctional environments. «Adoption», having been painted so negatively, is probably not considered by these mothers or, if it is considered, is given bad publicity... especially when there are so many infertile and other generous couples here in Australia. Australian governments particularly should do all they can to reverse this sad trend by raising the profile of «adoption» and making sure that it is a genuine, honourable and esteemed option available to all women faced with an unplanned pregnancy.^{1[1]} The promotion of «adoption» can only be in the best interests of women, children and our society.”

kind regards
Chris

^{1[1]} Does that include married women???