

3.5 Family home

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History

South Australian children in State care have been placed 'on probation' to live with their family under legislation since the 1900s. In the early 1900s, the government felt that placing more children with their families would be a significant cost saving, as it would not be financially responsible for their maintenance.¹ Legislation provided that the children were subject to departmental supervision. Children in State care could also be placed in the family home for other reasons, such as holidays. Today the *Children's Protection Act 1993* permits the Minister to place a child in State care, or allow the child to remain in the care of a guardian, who may be a member of the child's family.

Summary of family home allegations

Thirty-five people told the Inquiry that they were sexually abused while in State care and placed at home. From available records, the Inquiry was able to confirm that 34 were in State care at the time of the alleged sexual abuse; due to the lack of records and/or the actions of the Aborigines Protection Board (1934–63) (see page 14), the Inquiry was not able to determine whether one person was in State care at the time of the alleged abuse.

The sexual abuse included gross indecency, indecent assault and oral, vaginal and anal rape. The alleged perpetrators included fathers, stepfathers, male relatives and the male de facto partners of mothers, as well as outsiders including a doctor, community group leader, community centre worker, regular driver, acquaintances and strangers.

¹ State Children's Council annual report 1908, p. 12.

1940s–60s

Evidence from females

A 12-year-old Aboriginal girl was placed in a government home in the late 1940s, charged with being neglected. Her State ward index card (SWIC) shows that a few weeks later the charge was withdrawn and she was returned to her mother's care. About a year later, aged 14, she was found by a court to be uncontrollable and was placed in State care until age 18. She spent time in various homes and institutions as well as with several foster carers over the next four years. She alleged she was sexually abused in foster care and while living in the family home.

She told the Inquiry she returned home from time to time in the late 1940s and early 1950s to help with domestic duties while her mother was pregnant. She alleged that while she was at home her stepfather repeatedly performed oral sex on her and tried to penetrate her. She recalled trying to tell her mother:

I was sore, and I remember saying to him, to my mother, that he done it, and I remember there being a big argument, and she hit me and my nose started bleeding.

The PIC said both her mother and stepfather accused her of lying. She was disappointed that her mother 'stood by him and she didn't stand by me'. She did not tell anyone else about the abuse for fear of not being believed.

The PIC said she believed she had been in State care at the time of the abuse. After consideration of the departmental records, it is unclear whether the period in State care coincided with the period of abuse.

She also alleged her stepfather abused her as a much younger child and that she reported it to police when she was about seven. She remembered going to the police station because she had 'had enough of being interfered with by my stepfather ... I didn't want to go back home any more'. She did not know what, if anything, happened as a result of this. The Inquiry was advised that there are no police records of such a report.

In addition, the PIC told the Inquiry that in her mid teens a male relative sexually abused her when she ran away to his home to escape an abusing foster parent.

At the time of the Inquiry she had several grandchildren. She said she was concerned that one of them was the target of sexual abuse and that 'history is repeating itself exactly the same way as it did with me with my stepfather'.

An 18-month-old girl was placed in State care in the mid 1930s as a result of being found by a court to be neglected and illegitimate. She had various placements, including in a government cottage home and with numerous foster carers, before being returned to her mother's care in the early 1940s at the age of nine. She alleged her stepfather sexually abused her while she was at home.

The PIC's mother suffered from mental health problems and was admitted to a mental health facility, leaving the PIC and her sibling in the stepfather's care for some months. The PIC recalls sitting in the lounge room with him one day:

Suddenly ... there he was with an erect penis and wanting me to touch it. You know, that was the beginning of it. Then it was ... a little bit more the next time.

She said the abuse continued as she grew older and the stepfather would 'blackmail' her if she didn't cooperate: 'He would say, "We won't go to the pictures this week," because I hadn't come across'. She didn't tell anyone because it had become 'a sort of secret between us'.

Her SWIC indicates she was released from State care when she was 12 but continued to live at home. At 17 she finally revealed the sexual abuse to a woman who had been her foster carer years before. The woman helped the PIC find alternative accommodation and took her to the department, where she disclosed the ongoing abuse. Police did not interview the PIC and to her knowledge nothing was done about the matter. There is no record of a police report or of any criminal charge being laid against the stepfather.

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The PIC told the Inquiry the abuse ‘was always sort of a shadow’ in her relationship with her husband and may have contributed to the eventual break-up of the marriage.

A woman who alleged sexual abuse while placed at the family home was first placed in State care for a minor offence in the early 1950s when she was nine years old. The department initially placed the PIC with her mother for nine months. She later lived at Seaforth Home and alleged she was also sexually abused there.

The PIC told the Inquiry she was sexually abused over several years by a man with whom her mother lived, and that the abuse began before she was placed in State care. She said the man carried her to his bedroom in the family home, while her mother was at work. He touched the PIC’s genitals and attempted to penetrate her. She said, ‘It was hurting me, but he didn’t—he had to stop because it was hurting his penis’. The PIC alleged that this abuse occurred until she left the family home. She said the department ‘didn’t know about’ the abuse.

The PIC said she was abused on two other occasions while living at home. On one occasion her mother sent her to the home of her employer’s son, who was married with children. While there, the PIC said, the son showed her comics, which she loved. She gave evidence that ‘He said, “Do you want these?” and I said, “Yeah”, and he said, “All right. You pull your pants down and I’ll pull mine down”’. The PIC recalled that, ‘Something told me to get the hell out of there, so I did’. She said she later told her mother what had happened but her mother hit her in the face and told her not to tell lies.

On another occasion when away from the family home, the PIC and two other girls encountered a male friend of her mother’s partner. This man told the girls they could earn 10 shillings if they went into a public toilet with him. All three girls went into the toilet. The PIC said, ‘I did go in there and he stuck his penis between our legs; he pulled our pants down’. She did not tell anyone about this incident at the time, but told the Inquiry that the other girls’ parents asked where their daughters had

obtained the money and she later told her mother what had happened.

Departmental records stated that ‘home conditions do not appear to be good for child’. Her SWIC noted that the mother’s partner ‘dislikes girl and she should not be left in the home alone with him’. Records give the reason for the PIC’s transfer to a government institution: ‘Home unsuitable’.

A seven-year-old girl arrived in Australia as a child migrant in the late 1940s, accompanied by a woman she called ‘aunty’, although they were not related. As she was a child migrant she is considered by the Inquiry to be in State care until the age of 21. The PIC recalled that departmental workers came to the farm where she lived and to her school from time to time.

The PIC told the Inquiry that in the mid 1950s, when she was about 14 to 16, ‘aunty’s’ husband repeatedly sexually abused her. She said it started one day when he followed her to the milking shed. He ‘squeezed my breast ... but then it just got worse ... he pushed me against the railing and exposed himself to me’. He told her ‘that I was slut, that I was a whore, that I was a temptress ... I didn’t even know what the word meant’.

She could not avoid going to the shed as milking the cows was her job. She alleged the man continued to sexually abuse her there for about two years and eventually digitally penetrated her. He threatened her into keeping quiet by saying:

You tell aunty and she’ll die ... No-one will believe you because I am a respected member of the community, a [member] of the church ... and who’s going to believe you, that nobody knows?

She said she did not tell departmental workers about the abuse because they never spoke to her alone. After about two years on the farm she left to go into a career.

At the time of the Inquiry she said she found it helpful to talk about her past ‘because holding a secret like that for so many years is debilitating’.

A young Aboriginal girl was placed under the supervision of the Aborigines Protection Board (APB) for several years from the mid to late 1950s. Due to the lack of available records concerning placements and the actions of the APB in placing children without the approval of the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Board (see page 14), it was not possible for the Inquiry to properly determine whether the PIC was placed in State care. She told the Inquiry she was sexually abused both before and after being placed under APB supervision. She remembered very little of the abuse she experienced as a toddler but clearly recalled being sexually abused when under APB supervision at the age of seven or eight by a male relative whose family lived nearby. She told the Inquiry that she and her siblings 'used to all go and sleep at [their] place ... he come into the room and he was standing over us and touching us'. She alleged he also digitally penetrated her on several occasions. She did not tell anyone about it for many years.

The girl believed she was taken away from her mother soon after this but there are no records of a placement. When her mother died in the early 1960s she and her siblings lived with their grandmother. Some time later the APB decided the grandmother was too old to care for them adequately. The PIC was brought to Adelaide and sent to several places of care until she was about 15.

It was only as adults that the PIC and her female relatives discussed the abuse by their relative when they were children: 'We never talked about it [before]'.

A nine-year-old girl was placed in State care in the early 1960s after a court found her to be destitute. She had lived at St Joseph's Orphanage since she was six and alleged she was sexually abused there. Her SWIC indicates she had multiple placements. She told the inquiry she was later sexually abused at the Convent of the Good Shepherd (The Pines), in foster care and in her family home.

A senior probation officer placed the PIC with her mother for almost two years when she was 11. She told the Inquiry that on her first day back home her stepfather, who was violent and abusive towards her, called her 'a slut' in front

of the family, which 'sort of gave the green light for them to treat me badly'. She alleges she was sexually abused 'all the time' by three male siblings. One of them 'regularly raped me over a two-year period' and beat her severely.

She said she didn't tell anyone about the sexual abuse because 'you'd get a handful of hair ripped out if you said anything'. One sibling threatened to 'shoot me if I told anybody'. Departmental records show that the stepfather complained about the PIC's behaviour at home and said she was 'leading his sons astray'. When she was 13 the PIC was charged with larceny and remanded to The Pines.

She told the Inquiry that as an adult she 'lived in fear' and had difficulty trusting anyone or forming relationships 'in the sense of intimacy'. A few years ago she decided to get some counselling to 're-educate myself on feelings, emotions'.

In the mid 1960s a four-year-old girl was found by a court to be neglected and was placed in State care. According to departmental records there were allegations that the PIC's father had behaved inappropriately in front of her and her siblings. She was sent to multiple places of care over the next 14 years. She alleged she was sexually abused while in foster care, in the family home, at Hay Cottage and at Davenport House.

Records received from the department show the PIC was seven when she was placed with her mother.

The PIC told the Inquiry that her mother's live-in partner sexually abused her for over a year when she was about eight. She said 'he raped me in the house, in the barn and also on a boat'. The alleged perpetrator also forced the PIC to watch him have sexual intercourse with her mother. The alleged perpetrator threatened the PIC with a stockwhip and threatened to 'shoot my brains out if I ever told the welfare what was happening to me'. The PIC said she believed her mother was aware of the sexual abuse, because she caught them in the shed one day when the PIC's 'dress was up over my head', but her mother's only reaction was a dismissive remark. The PIC said she was too afraid to tell her departmental worker about the abuse, but she recalled pleading to be returned to the government

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home where she previously had stayed, even though she had hated it there.

According to departmental records, the PIC's mother and grandmother both reported incidents of sexual abuse against the child by the partner. The department investigated the mother's allegations and found one of them 'proved to be unfounded and the mother had admitted that she'd made it up out of spite'. The department noted that the mother also asked to retract the second allegation against her partner, saying she had been 'mistaken'.

On more than one occasion, visits by an officer of the department revealed that the PIC's mother had left her partner and gone to live with her husband. On one such occasion the officer told the mother the PIC could not remain living with the partner. The records state that the mother immediately agreed to return to her partner, which sent the PIC 'into a fit of hysterical crying'. On the same day the PIC was returned to the government home, requiring constant reassurance that she was not being taken back to her mother's partner.

The PIC alleged that her father also had sexually abused her when he took her on outings from Hay Cottage when she was 11. Aged 15, the PIC moved in with her father, with the consent and knowledge of the department, and she said he continued to sexually abuse her in his home. A departmental worker noted that although the father 'was suspected of having interfered sexually with the children ... [he] states that this allegation was made by his wife out of spite'.

Within a year the PIC ran away from her father and moved in with a female relative who worked as a prostitute. She said she had nowhere else to go, and told the Inquiry that the relative's partner forced her into prostitution and sexually abused her regularly.

Departmental records indicate the PIC's father alleged the relative's partner was sexually abusing the girl and the partner made similar allegations against the father. The records contain several notes suggesting the PIC was

engaging in prostitution while living with her relative. There is no indication on the file that the department took any steps to prevent this. The PIC's departmental worker commented on her living arrangements, given the allegations and counter-allegations by the PIC's father and the other man. She stated that despite the allegations of sexual abuse, 'it seemed the only alternative at the time'.

The PIC told the Inquiry she wished that she had been able

... to grow up in a normal, loving family, to be nurtured by good parents, to have been able to have had a decent education ... to have not lived in fear.

She hoped her evidence might benefit others:

If I can help just one child in State care not to have suffered the way I have suffered ... then I have achieved some good in my life.

In the mid 1960s a 14-year-old girl was charged with larceny and placed in State care by court order until she turned 18. The PIC told the Inquiry she had been falsely accused of the offence but no-one believed her. She was placed under the supervision of her mother, who had separated from the PIC's father several years earlier. She alleged she was abused while in her mother's care and in a later foster placement.

She said that while she was living at home, and not yet sexually active, her departmental officer sent her to a doctor who prescribed her contraceptive pills. She alleged that while the doctor was examining her, he forcibly subjected her to 'full-on sexual abuse' by digitally raping her while he masturbated.

She said she told her mother about the incident and her mother told her to 'stop romanticising'. She did not disclose the abuse to her departmental officer. 'Who would listen?' she said. 'My mother didn't. And that's an embarrassment that you don't want to talk about with anybody.'

Evidence from males

A seven-year-old boy was placed in State care by a court order when he was found to be destitute in the early 1940s. He was placed at the Glandore Industrial School for about three years, during which time he had various holiday and foster placements, returning to the school between each. Just before his 10th birthday, the PIC was placed on probation with his family and alleged he was sexually abused during this placement and also at Glandore.

He told the Inquiry that while he was on probation with his family his mother operated a brothel from the family home. The PIC described it as ‘the most debauched house that ever a human being could live in’. He said his mother took him out of school in the mid to late 1940s, when he was in his teens, and put him to work providing sexual services to female clients in return for his board. He recalled that ‘it was my first job ... not full-time there but when it was a woman [who frequented the brothel], it was me’.

He recalled a departmental worker coming to the house only once to check on him. His said his mother

... made me stand outside on the front fence ... I wasn't allowed to let the welfare man in, and they stood behind their front door listening to what I had to say.

The PIC told the worker only that he was ‘all right’ because ‘I didn’t know to say anything different’.

The PIC’s SWIC contains the note: ‘Home and boy well cared for’.

However, notes on the PIC’s client file suggest the department believed the PIC needed sexual education. One notation reads:

I spoke to [PIC’s mother] re sex education ... she did not really think there was much he did not know. I told her that often when boys discussed matters without receiving the proper instruction they obtained the wrong views.

A note from a senior officer instructs the PIC’s probation officer to supervise the PIC ‘for the purpose of imparting sex instruction ... and a report made to me’. The file does

not note the reason for this instruction or contain a copy of the report.

The PIC was 13 in the late 1940s when he left his family home—while still on probation with his family—to work on a farm outside Adelaide. The PIC told the Inquiry he moved between places of employment and ‘I eventually got in trouble with a farmer’s wife who I was working for. She was 35 and I was about 14’. He said he walked in on the farmer’s wife when she was naked. As a result, the farmer planned to send the PIC back but instead had to go to Adelaide himself for long-term medical treatment. The PIC remained on the farm—where he was employed for another year—and said that ‘before that year was up I was sleeping with [his employer’s] wife’. After the employer returned to the farm, he took the PIC back to Adelaide.

The PIC’s records show his departmental probation officer—who had only recently been assigned to him—was unaware he had left Adelaide to work. The file records a visit by the officer to the family’s home:

Mother informed me that boy was at [country town] working and I complained that I should have been informed and asked her to write to the boy straight away asking him to write to me.

The PIC wrote back, ‘I’m very sorry I didn’t contact you before I left. I didn’t know your name or where about’s to send it’. A reply from the probation officer requesting the PIC’s employment details reads:

I do not intend to contact your employer ... so long as you do the right thing there is no need for your employer to know that you are under the control of this department. Try and remember to write to me once a month.

The PIC said that sex was ‘the way I was taught, the only thing I knew’. When he attended school,

They caught me in the girls’ toilet, trying to interfere with them. Now, not only that—a female teacher came along to drag me out and I put my hand straight between her legs. You know, I thought this was how people lived.

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He said it affected not only his childhood, but also his adult years; his sexual activity was 'non-stop, all the time. Everyone was a target.'

A nine-year-old boy was remanded to a government home for a few days in the early 1950s after stealing some food from a lunch room. He was charged with larceny and placed in State care, but allowed to live at home under the supervision of his mother. He told the Inquiry his mother was very poor and said that two men sexually abused him while he lived with her. Later there was an attempt to sexually abuse him at the Magill Boys Reformatory.

The PIC told the Inquiry that while he lived with his mother a male leader of a local community group sexually abused him on three occasions. The man took him into a dark room, reached inside his pants and rubbed his upper legs, and on the third occasion also touched his genitals. A departmental worker noted in a report that during an interview with the PIC 'he said he did not like [the community group] any more'. The PIC told the Inquiry he had been afraid to go back to the community group because of the abuse.

He also alleged that at a later date he was sexually abused once by a clergyman, who invited him to sit and talk with him and then touched his thighs beneath his clothing. The PIC said he did not report the abuse.

An 11-year-old boy was found to be destitute by a court in the mid 1960s and was placed in State care until he turned 18. His parents' excessive drinking and violence had marred his home life and there was little food for the children. Records received from the department show the PIC was in foster care and at four institutions over the next seven years. He told the Inquiry he was sexually abused at Windana Remand Home, Glandore Children's Home, Kumanka Boys Hostel and McNally Training Centre, and in the family home.

At 13 the PIC returned to live with his parents for a few months. He alleged that during this time his father regularly touched his genitals, anally raped him and engaged him in oral sex. He recalled that it happened

... as often as two or three times a week, whenever he got the chance ... It was always after [my mother] was either drunk or she'd gone to sleep.

He said his father was a 'very violent man' who told him:

'If you ever tell anyone our secret I will kill you and bury you so no-one will ever find you'. I believed him and nothing more was said.

The PIC told the Inquiry he pleaded with his departmental worker to take him out of the family home because his father 'was doing the sex thing all the time', but the worker accused him of lying. There is no departmental record of this complaint. Records received from the department confirm that the PIC asked to be removed from his family, however a note states that he came into the office saying he wanted to return to Glandore, that he had been a slave to his mother and accused of being a thief.

In the late 1960s, an eight-year-old boy was placed in State care after a court found him to be neglected following the breakdown of his family. The PIC told the Inquiry he experienced family violence and alcohol abuse when he was a child. He was sent to several government institutions, cottage homes and foster placements over the next decade. He told the Inquiry he was sexually abused during placements at Stirling Cottage and his family home.

At 10, the PIC was returned to live at the family home for two years. He told the Inquiry that during this time he solicited money from a man he met in a public park who engaged him in sexual activity: he 'sat me on his knee, played with my penis, hugged me'. He said they met and engaged in sexual activity on three more occasions; the man once attempted to have anal intercourse with him, but stopped when the boy said it hurt. The PIC said he never told anyone about the abuse because he found it 'comforting and enjoyable ... it was nurturing almost'. He later realised he had been seeking only affection and an adult's attention, but 'I didn't need my dick played with. I needed a hug.'

A four-year-old boy was placed in State care by court order in the mid 1960s as a result of his being neglected and under unfit guardianship. He was sent to a government home until the age of five, when he was put into hospital for treatment and then placed with his mother—he alleged he was sexually abused while in her care. He was released from State care in the early 1970s, aged 10. At 14, he was again placed in State care and told the Inquiry he was sexually abused during a placement at Brookway Park in this period.

The PIC told the Inquiry that while in State care and placed with his mother, she forced him to engage his sister in oral sex and to take part in other sexual acts while his mother watched. He alleged she subjected him to brutal physical and psychological abuse.

The PIC said his mother made his sister ‘suck me off nearly two hours a day’. He also said his mother made him cut the lawn

... with the scissors ... no lawnmower ... as a punishment. And it was cold and windy and raining ... I didn't have nothing on, nothing, just underwear ... Then she spit on my food, she give me kerosene to drink. She gave me some tomato poison, some tomato poison to drink ... I fell over, I went unconscious, went to the hospital and then my mother come along and she says, 'If you tell the nurses that I gave you that drink, when you come home, you're going to get [a] big hiding ...' So I lied to the nurse that I took [an] overdose.

Departmental records indicate the PIC told staff about his mother's abuse but the departmental worker noted that there was no direct evidence. The supervisor's observation report notes that the PIC wanted to stay at Brookway Park rather than return to his mother's care.

The PIC told the Inquiry that in later years he suffered from flashbacks of his mother's abuse and had sought psychiatric treatment. He said he felt confused, angry and depressed about what happened to him in the past: 'I just keep thinking about whatever happened to me can happen to somebody else'.

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1970s

Evidence from females

A seven-year-old Aboriginal girl was placed in State care in the late 1960s after a court found her to be neglected. The PIC said she did not know why she was removed from her family. Over the next 10 years she lived in government institutional care, foster care and with her family. During this period she absconded several times and returned home to be with her mother. She told the Inquiry she was sexually abused at Seaforth Home, Clark Cottage, in foster care and in the family home.

The PIC alleged that when she was about 15 and living at her mother's home, two male relatives sexually abused her. One man indecently assaulted her and the other 'tried to rape me in the bathroom'. She said she didn't tell anyone about the incidents because her mother had not believed her when the PIC told her about being sexually abused as a young child, and another relative had 'just said, "Don't be silly"'. The PIC told the Inquiry that 'you just didn't have anyone to trust. You just didn't know where to go'.

As an adult she has a positive outlook on life and does not want to be bitter about her past experiences:

I want to use everything I've gone through in my life and let it benefit other people. I can't change anything I've gone through in my life, but I can make a decision about how I want my life to be.

In the late 1960s, a court found that a five-year-old girl was neglected and under unfit guardianship and placed her in State care until she turned 18. The PIC told the Inquiry her stepfather drank and had been violent and she believed he had sexually abused her before she went into care. Soon after the court order, she was placed in Hay Cottage, where she alleged she was sexually abused.

Aged nine, she left Hay Cottage and returned home. She told the Inquiry that life had been 'relatively normal' for a couple of years until her mother became addicted to drugs and started working as a prostitute, which involved taking the PIC to meet clients by the river at night. She recalled

that in her early teens while in State care her mother had tried 'to coax me into doing it as well'. She agreed to have paid sex with a client on one occasion when her mother was ill but 'when he pulled his pants down I ran out of that room so fast'. She told her mother and 'got a slap across the face'.

The PIC said a departmental worker occasionally visited her at home but there was never an opportunity to speak to her alone, 'so I couldn't really tell her what was going on'. She was released from State care on petition at the age of 14. The PIC said she was about 15 when her mother was sent to prison; the department had helped to arrange a flat for the PIC, who had become addicted to morphine. She said she had taken up with 'bad sorts' and had been sexually abused around this time. In her late teens she had 'hung around with abusive men because I thought I wasn't good enough to be with anyone normal'. She also told the Inquiry: 'I have never had any counselling or told anyone about any of these events'.

A 14-year-old girl was placed in State care until the age of 18 in the late 1960s by the court as a result of offending. She spoke of violence and alcohol abuse by her father and said that while in State care she was sexually abused at Windana Remand Home, Davenport House, in foster care and in the family home.

She returned to the care of her parents from time to time while in State care. She told the Inquiry that when she was about 15 and living at home, she was gang-raped by five young men who were part of her social circle. She said she tried to fight them off but 'I had been drinking, which ... made me physically not strong enough'. After experiencing sexual abuse several times, the rape was 'the last straw ... I just went, "Oh, I just can't take it any more"'. She took alcohol and drugs to 'cover the pain' and attempted suicide, but didn't tell anyone about her experiences.

She said that some of the young men who raped her had recently apologised to her. She felt 'it was really good to hear ... they were sorry' because she had felt 'a lot of guilt' about the incident.

She told the Inquiry it was difficult to come forward with the allegations of sexual abuse, as she was fearful about not being believed. Giving evidence to the Inquiry was ‘the first time I’ve actually told a man, other than my ... partner’.

In the mid 1970s a six-year-old girl was placed in State care until the age of 18, after a court found her to be neglected. She said the department had been involved with her family before her placement in State care, due to concerns about her mother’s parenting abilities. The PIC told the Inquiry she was sexually abused during her time in State care when placed back at the family home and then later in foster care.

After the PIC was placed in State care, her departmental records show she was returned to her mother’s supervision on at least two occasions before she was nine. The PIC told the Inquiry her mother sexually abused her from her early primary school years. She alleged that while she was at home her mother forced her to perform sexual acts on one of her siblings and with an animal, while her siblings were made to watch. She also alleged that one of her older siblings raped her.

In addition, the PIC said her mother subjected her to harsh beatings and urged her siblings to inflict violence on her — she said that in the first eight years of her life she was ‘in and out of hospital constantly’. She told the Inquiry that at home, she would have to sleep in the chicken shed, eat dogs’ faeces and insects and drink her own urine.

When she was about nine, the PIC was placed in foster care, where she alleged she was again sexually abused.

She told the Inquiry that because of the abuse she was unable to have lasting relationships as an adult, and that she attracted the ‘wrong kind of men’. She felt that ‘the department didn’t do enough regarding the protection of us, and our mother should have been charged’.

A 12-year-old girl was placed in State care by a court in the mid 1970s after being found to be neglected. The care order was initially for three months, and then extended to age 15. Her SWIC indicates she had several foster care placements and was returned to the care of her

mother about six months later. She told the Inquiry she was sexually abused by her father both before and after being taken into State care, as well as by a foster parent.

The PIC alleged her father began sexually abusing her when she was eight. She said he touched her and digitally penetrated her when he drove her to her sporting commitments and while her mother was in the shower. She told the Inquiry he threatened that if she said anything her mother would become jealous and throw her out of the house. He promised to give her a bike and other gifts if she allowed him to do sexual things to her, but he never kept his promises. The PIC said she began to act violently at school, in the hope that someone would ask her what was wrong, and often ran away from home. It was because of this behaviour that the department first placed her in State care.

The PIC told the Inquiry, and it is confirmed by records, that she disclosed the sexual abuse to the department just a few months before being returned home to her mother’s supervision. She also claimed her mother told her she had spoken to police about the sexual abuse. The Justice Information System (JIS) does not indicate any investigations of, or charges being laid against, the father in relation to the PIC. It does show that he was wanted in relation to an unrelated sexual assault in the early 1970s.

The PIC claimed that within weeks of arriving back home aged 13, her father recommenced sexually abusing her but was ‘a lot more aggressive’ than before. She recalls that ‘I was a little bit more reluctant to allow him to but he would overpower me’. She said he waited for her to come home from school and made her expose herself while he rubbed himself or made her masturbate him. She complained to her mother, who said she would leave him. She did not leave the home, however, until the PIC turned 18.

The PIC told the Inquiry that in her late teens she became addicted to heroin: ‘I certainly didn’t choose to be a drug addict ... I just couldn’t handle the feelings’. She said she stole to support her habit and got into trouble with the law. She claimed her father visited her a few years ago and sexually assaulted her. When she reported it to the police they told her she would not make a credible witness due to

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her drug and criminal history. This 'just reinforced to me that I was worthless, which is something I've felt my whole life'.

At the time of the Inquiry she was off drugs and focused on being a 'good mum' to her children. She decided to give evidence to the Inquiry because she would like things to change in the future.

A seven-year-old girl was brought to Australia in the mid 1970s by prospective adoptive parents. She lived with the couple but was placed in State care until her adoption was formalised. According to departmental records, within a few months of the PIC's arrival the prospective mother notified the department of a breakdown in the marriage and left the household. She also informed the department that her husband was neglecting the children. An investigation was conducted and a report several months later states:

While the children are well cared for at the moment, I remain suspicious of [the father's] motives for wanting these children. The little girl is in need of adequate 'mothering' and clings to any female ... For the children's sake the situation needs resolution as soon as possible.

About 18 months later, the father was granted adoption orders for the PIC and another child. The PIC then ceased to be in State care.

The PIC told the Inquiry that during and after her placement in State care her adoptive father sexually abused her by photographing her naked, encouraging her to walk around topless or wearing a short negligee, and showing her pornographic movies and pictures. She also claimed that he made her sleep naked in his bed on several occasions and that he touched her.

The PIC alleged that he beat her and her adopted sibling regularly and that she was terrified of him. After one particularly brutal beating, the PIC ran away and told an adult friend about the violence at home. The friend took her to the department. The PIC does not recall whether or not she told anyone there about the sexual abuse but she and her sibling were again placed in State care and moved to a foster home.

A 10-year-old girl was placed in State care by a court in the early 1970s after being found to be neglected. She told the Inquiry she suffered severe physical abuse at the hands of her alcoholic father before being taken into care. Her SWIC indicates that she was sent to multiple placements and stayed with her mother during holidays.

She told the Inquiry that while living at her mother's home between the ages of 10 and 12 she was sexually abused by a man who lived in the neighbourhood. She said the man enticed children into his shed by offering them sweets and she recalled seeing children in a bed in his shed. She said he also would drive around in his car and encourage children to get in with him.

The PIC said she went with him in his car on one occasion: 'He somehow got me off the street and I was on my own'. She alleged the man removed her underwear and fondled her. She recalled that two police officers later visited her at home and questioned her about the incident. Records confirm that the man was charged and sentenced to jail.

The PIC also told the Inquiry that while she was living at home several males, including a local shopkeeper and a deliveryman, engaged her in sexual activities in exchange for money. She said she used the money to buy food for the family. She didn't tell anyone about the abuse.

The PIC told the Inquiry that for many years, 'I really told people as less as I could about my past and stuff. Some of it was very uncomfortable to bring up.'

An account of three sisters

Departmental records show that in the mid 1970s, three sisters aged about 11, nine and three were placed in State care for reason of neglect. The PICs told the Inquiry their father was violent and was often away working interstate, and their mother had left the family home. One sister said that before their mother left, the mother 'was constantly entertaining male guests and the house was filthy'. Two sisters alleged they were sexually abused while initially placed at Seaforth Home, and all three alleged ongoing sexual abuse by their father after being placed in the family home while in State care. Two told the Inquiry the abuse began before they were placed in

State care, and two alleged the abuse continued while in foster placements, when their father would take them out.

In the early 1970s, before the girls were placed in State care, departmental records show that the police and the department were aware of allegations by the two older siblings that they were victims of incest by the father. No action was taken for reason of reliability of evidence. However, the police reportedly warned the father about his behaviour.

Several months later a charge of neglect was brought before the court. The three sisters were placed in Seaforth Home. Departmental records show that a report prepared by the department for the judge alerted the court to the allegations of incest in relation to the two older siblings and also to a previous suicide attempt by the father.

Two months later, the neglect charge was reportedly withdrawn on the proviso that the father found an approved housekeeper. He complied and the three sisters were returned to his care. Records show that seven months later an older sibling returned from interstate and became the housekeeper. However, the records also show that the older sibling soon contacted the department alleging sexual abuse of sisters [A] and [B] by their father. The court was notified of this, temporary custody orders were made in respect of [A], [B] and sister [C] they were placed in different foster families.

Records show that a departmental worker interviewed the older sibling, who confirmed that [A] had told her that the father 'sticks his dick in mine', and that [B] had told her that the father had 'put a white thing on and then put his finger in my thing' and that he had threatened to smack her if she did not get into bed with him. The older sibling also told the worker that the father had interfered with her and that he had attempted to hang himself. After this he had threatened more than once to kill her and shoot himself with his rifle.

Departmental records show that the departmental worker interviewed [A] and [B] separately, and [A], then aged 11, reported that the father 'sticks his dick in mine'. She said this had happened on four or five occasions and that he

had 'put his dick a little bit inside' and that it had hurt. [A] said she had done this because he would hit her with his belt if she did not and that he previously had hit her with the belt.

The records show that [B], then aged nearly nine, reported in an interview with the departmental worker that her father had pulled down her pants and felt between her legs and told her to 'rub his sausage'. Her father had tried to 'put his sausage in' but 'it would not go in and then he put his finger in', hurting her. She said her father had told her not to tell anyone and that the police would lock him up if they found out and she would go into a home until she was 18. [B] recalled that 'I drew stick men with penises. I think there were sexual acts involved.'

She told the Inquiry that she believed the departmental worker knew she was being sexually abused but didn't do anything about it 'because they betrayed me immediately. Straight after that report I was sent back home'.

The departmental worker notified the judge of the allegations in a report, but commented that [A] was 'most reluctant to divulge what had taken place with her father but was quite definite in the details' and that [B] had been 'less reticent initially ... but has recently become more reticent'.

About two months later, in the mid 1970s, the court ordered that the three sisters and other siblings be placed under the guardianship of the Minister until they turned 18. It was reported that the court made no decision about the allegations of sexual abuse because it was satisfied the other evidence presented was sufficient for the order to be made. The court said that to hear the evidence of sexual interference 'may prejudice future jurisdiction if and when the police charge [the father] with these offences. Consequently it is possible that the police may charge [him] and the children may yet again have to appear in court.' A month later it is mentioned in an internal departmental report that '[the father] has not yet been charged by the police' in relation to the offences 'although statements have been submitted to the police prosecution department, and it could be that they will decide that there is insufficient evidence with which to charge him'.

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In accordance with the records discussed above, all three sisters told the Inquiry they could recall an occasion when their father was reported to the police for sexual abuse. Each recalled independently going to the police and being examined. However, they said the older sibling encouraged them to withdraw their statements. [A] said she refused to change her story, 'so my father said that I had betrayed the family and he didn't want me back'. No records were received by the Inquiry from the South Australian Police in relation to the reporting of the allegations.

About 11 months after being placed in State care, all sisters were placed back in the family home with their father, reportedly 'on a trial basis'. [B] recalled that the sexual abuse became worse and the father penetrated her. She said he always put them in separate rooms to isolate them.

I used to have to masturbate him ... and then he had [one of my siblings] and I involved with the masturbation act jointly, and that's when the penny dropped.

[B] recalled that apart from the persistent sexual demands of the father, there was little food in the home: 'We scrounged for whatever we could have ... essentially we were starving.' He never bought them clothes, so they stole from shops and raided mission boxes. During frequent rages, he would beat them across their backs and legs, leaving welts that would last for days. He was also suicidal and constantly threatened to kill himself, as well as the children. 'We were pretty terrified of him but, at the same time, we didn't have anyone else to rely upon.'

Five months after the sisters were placed back with the father, it is recorded that a housekeeper informed the department that [B] and [C] slept with the father on occasions and that he walked around the house naked. It is reported that [B] denied any sexual activity took place.

Only a few months later, another housekeeper reported that the father had [B] in his bed behind closed doors and played in a sexual manner with the girls. It was reported by the departmental worker that '... five housekeepers had left because of the father's "sexual advances and uncouth remarks"'.

Sisters [B] and [C] were then placed in foster care and [A] in cottage care, reportedly 'until the situation became clearer'.

A departmental record shows there was a discussion between the departmental worker and his superior, in which it is noted:

... it was felt that as there still remained a great deal of reciprocal warmth and affection between [the children] and their father, it would be less traumatic and damaging for them to return to the care of their father and his housekeeper, albeit with certain provisos.

That same record notes that [A] had expressed a desire not to return and the father was 'not keen to have her back'. [A] continued living away from the family home and was transferred from cottage care to foster care, where she remained until released from State care.

The department placed [B] and [C] back with their father. By this time [B] was 10 and [C] five. Records provided to the Inquiry do not indicate the department made a report to the police to investigate the housekeepers' allegations regarding the sexual abuse.

About one month later, the departmental records show another housekeeper informed the department that the father had exposed himself to her and the children, and played with his genitals while they were present. It was also alleged that [B] spent long periods in the father's bedroom. [C] was placed in her former foster home. The department reportedly again conducted interviews, and [B] and [C] denied there were any problems. One sister recalled that when departmental workers came to their home,

Dad would sort of shove me out in front of him ... and then he'd stand behind me I had no choice but to say everything was fine.

The father denied the allegations. Again, there is no information on the departmental records to suggest these allegations of criminal conduct were referred to the police. [B] remained in the care of the father with another sibling.

When she was six, [C] returned from foster care to live in the family home with the father, [B] and another sibling. [C] recalled that the sexual abuse worsened: 'He would put his fingers inside of me and he would perform oral sex'; and he continued to beat her—'most often it would be around the face or arms or chest'. She tried to cover up the 'cuts and bruises' with her hair and her shirt, but a teacher once saw the marks when she was changing for physical education. 'They asked me how it had happened and I said that it was an accident, because I was frightened of saying what had really happened.'

Her father had told [C] that no-one would believe her if she said anything or, worse, that she would be 'taken away and never to come back', just like her older sibling. Sometimes he said he would kill her if she talked about it.

He'd keep me home from school, usually every Friday ... you knew that you'd get hit or he'd threaten you with the gun ... it was going to happen and there was little you [could] do about it.

She recalled one occasion when she was about 11, when her father took her to a doctor 'and asked him to put me on birth control pills'. The doctor asked her whether she wanted to have sex. 'I said, "No, I don't". He said, "Well, I don't have any reason to" [put her on contraceptives]. But Dad carried on demanding until the doctor gave in.'

[C] attempted to commit suicide more than once but made no allegation to the department of the sexual abuse. She left the home in the mid 1980s, when she was nearly 14, and went to live with [B], who had left when she was 16.

The father, who is now dead, was never charged with sexual offences against any of his children. In 2001, the sisters obtained access to their departmental records. Two sisters subsequently made a complaint alleging that the department had failed in the exercise of its duty of care. They were each awarded an ex gratia payment on the basis that there was no admission of liability by the State.

All three sisters told the Inquiry that the sexual abuse had profoundly affected their lives as adults. One said:

You feel worthless ... Once you give up on yourself ... you turn yourself into a doormat and everyone will treat you so ... It's a bit like an abused

dog. I mean, if it considers a kick to be attention, well, then it is going to play up like hell to get another kick.

Another sister said she found it hard to make friends or be intimate with others:

I don't want anyone to touch me in a sexual way. I even find it hard to let people give me a hug ... if you get close to people you just get hurt, so I try to keep my distance.

The third sister said that 'even as an adult I felt that I couldn't protect myself against him'. When the father died, she went to the funeral home with her sisters to see his body:

I really needed to see that he was dead, and I took a photograph of him in the coffin so that any time I was feeling a bit unsafe I could look at it and know that he was really gone.

Evidence from males

In the early 1970s, an 11-year-old boy was placed in State care until the age of 18 as a result of a criminal offence. He told the Inquiry his family was very poor and he stole to support himself. His SWIC indicates he was placed in various institutions and at his family home.

He told the Inquiry he was sexually abused while placed in his family home on release from Windana Remand Home when he was nearly 12. A man in a car driving through the PIC's neighbourhood asked directions and 'tricked' him into getting in the car to show the way. He said the man drove him to a remote area, anally raped him at gunpoint and threatened to kill the PIC and his family if he told anyone about the rape. The PIC remembers being 'afraid to tell anybody because I didn't want anything to happen to my mum, my [siblings]'. He said he never saw the man again but after the incident he 'didn't trust anyone ... I suppose it really hardened me'.

The PIC said he lived on the streets from the age of 13 and prostituted himself to make money: 'I was just trying to survive'. He told the Inquiry of two particular older men, both professionals, with whom he had ongoing sexual relationships in exchange for money and food. He alleged a third man forcibly performed oral sex on him and he

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complied out of fear for his safety. Of these relationships he said:

I'm not attracted to men. I think what it comes down to is wanting to be needed or that I mean something, and I'm worth something, and when I'm paid attention to I'm very vulnerable.

In the 1970s a seven-year-old boy was found by a court to be neglected and sent to a government cottage home for six months. He was then placed in State care under a temporary order and put under his mother's supervision. He alleged his mother sexually abused him and his siblings while he was at home.

The PIC told the Inquiry his mother suffered a mental illness and that she touched him in a sexual way when he was in the bath, penetrated him with objects and forced him to perform sexual acts with his siblings. He did not tell anyone about the abuse at the time.

The PIC and his siblings also suffered considerable violence at the hands of their mother. Departmental records indicate they were taken to hospital with severe physical injuries consistent with being beaten. Despite this, they were not removed from the mother's care for some time, and were then returned to her care from time to time. The PIC did not tell anyone about his mother's sexual abuse but he did tell police and departmental authorities that he didn't want to go back home because he was not happy there.

The PIC was removed from his mother's care when he was nearly 10 after a court found him to be uncontrollable. He was placed in State care until the age of 18 and sent to several placements. He told the Inquiry he wished

... that I didn't go through what I went through as a child ... the welfare should have stepped in a long time ago because we could have had a better life.

After being charged with breaking, entering and stealing, a 10-year-old boy was placed in State care in the early 1970s. His SWIC indicates he was placed under his father's supervision. He told the Inquiry he was sexually abused on several occasions while living at home.

The PIC told the Inquiry he often visited boats that came into the port near his home and talked with the sailors on board. Occasionally the sailors gave him foreign coins, chocolates or exotic foods. On one occasion a sailor took him into his cabin and anally raped him, then gave him 60 cents. The PIC said the incident left him confused—'Nobody had ever ... done anything like that before'—and he was too embarrassed to tell anyone.

When the PIC was about 11 his father abandoned the family. The boy continued to visit the boats, as they provided a distraction and a refuge from an older sibling who subjected him to violence. Another sailor took him into a cabin and performed oral sex on him. He told the Inquiry he had mixed feelings about the incident:

I didn't know what to think at the time ... To be honest about it, there was two elements: one was an element of some pleasure and the other was just feeling or knowing that it's not right.

The PIC told the Inquiry he also was abused by an older male relative who 'would come and touch me during the night on the private parts'. One day when they went swimming the relative pinned him down while he masturbated and 'wouldn't let me up until he'd finished'.

The PIC told the Inquiry that as an adult he still felt the sexual abuse was 'my fault for being there, for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, for not knowing'.

1980s

Evidence from females

In the mid 1980s, a 14-year-old girl was placed in State care under temporary orders and interim guardianship when her relationship with her adoptive father, with whom she had been living, broke down. She was moved to several places of care and then placed with her adoptive mother and stepfather for a trial period of several months.

Records show the PIC had come to the attention of the department in the early 1980s after she had made allegations of sexual abuse against her stepfather. The PIC, who was then about 10 or 11, told the Inquiry her stepfather had tried to penetrate her over a period of months when her mother was out of the house. She told the Inquiry that, in response to the allegations, department workers assured her they would speak with the stepfather and monitor his behaviour. She recalled that 'they told me they investigated it and they just said everything would be all right'. Records indicate the PIC was medically examined at the Sexual Assault Referral Centre about this time, when the evidence was 'consistent with some interference'. South Australian Police records show that after questioning the stepfather, who denied the allegations, it was determined there was insufficient evidence to support charging him.

When the department placed the PIC with her mother and stepfather for the trial period, records note that the PIC had expressed a strong desire to live with her mother and that she should be supervised because of the previous allegations. The PIC told the Inquiry that while living there, her stepfather drove her to a remote area and sexually assaulted her. She said she complained to her mother and others, and was taken to hospital. According to a medical examination at the time, the PIC sustained injuries that were 'entirely consistent with rape'. Records indicate the PIC disclosed the sexual assault to department workers and to the police. It was reported that charges would not be pressed. The PIC told the Inquiry her mother said that if the PIC were to press charges against her stepfather she 'would disown me as a child, forget about me altogether'.

Records show that in later years, after leaving State care, the PIC again disclosed the alleged sexual abuse to police and the department. In relation to the police disclosure, it

was reported that time limitations prevented the matter from proceeding.

The PIC told the Inquiry the alleged sexual assault made her feel 'dirty. I just wanted to die ... I tried committing suicide over it'. She said: 'I can visualise everything as if it's happening now ... It has never left me'.

In the late 1980s, a seven-year-old girl was declared by the court to be in need of care after her father died and her mother, suffering from a mental illness, had difficulty coping with her children. The PIC was placed in State care under an interim guardianship order and then a director-general's order for 18 months in relation to health and residence. During her period in State care, the PIC was placed in several foster homes and then returned to live with her mother. Records show that while living with her mother she was placed in ongoing respite care with a former foster family until the order expired.

The PIC told the Inquiry she suffered sexual abuse while living with her mother and possibly while in foster care. She alleged the abuse was perpetrated by a man who used to regularly drive her to and from school and also, when she was living in foster care, drove her to visit her mother. The PIC told the Inquiry she believed the department arranged the man's driving services, because she once visited a departmental office with him. She said the man and his wife befriended her mother.

The PIC alleged the man showed her pornographic videos and photographs of himself engaged in sexual acts with a woman. She said he videotaped her naked and in her underwear, and she alleged the abuse also included oral sex. She said he would sometimes give her money. She claimed the abuse occurred mainly at the man's house and continued until she was in her early teens, when the man suddenly died.

The PIC told the Inquiry: 'I was distressed. I was always scared ... I was never scared that he was going to hurt me or anything, but I just knew that it was wrong.' She recalled being visited by her departmental worker while in foster care and at home with her mother, but she didn't tell anyone about the abuse because she didn't know who to trust and 'I felt that it was my fault ... I was a kid. I was embarrassed. I didn't want people to know'.

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Chapter 3 Allegations of sexual abuse

Departmental records received by the Inquiry show the department contracted a volunteer of the same name as the alleged perpetrator given by the PIC to the Inquiry to help transport the PIC for the duration of the order placing her in State care. The records show that soon after the initial interim order was issued, he was transporting the PIC to appointments and to visit her mother, while the PIC was in foster care. The records also report that the man 'became very supportive of [the PIC's mother]'.

Police records show this man had prior convictions for indecent assault at the time of his engagement by the department. It is not apparent from the PIC's departmental files that any prior checking of the man's criminal history was conducted. No personnel file was received from the department to assist in determining whether the department conducted a criminal history check of the man before engaging his services.

The PIC recalled that in her mid-teens she started taking drugs, left school, and 'picked a lot of very bad people to be in relationships with'. She also developed eating disorders. She said she told her mother about the abuse at that time, and that it was good to tell her story to the Inquiry

*... so that it doesn't happen to other people.
I did want some kind of closure about this
because it's never really happened and I'm sure I
still have issues.*

In the mid 1980s a six-year-old Aboriginal girl was placed in State care until she turned 18, after being found to be in need of care. Departmental records show that while in State care she was placed in various foster homes, detention and also lived from time to time in her mother's care in the family home.

The PIC told the Inquiry that when she was about seven or eight and placed in the family home, her mother's male de facto partner would have sexual intercourse with her. She said this abuse continued into her teenage years. She said:

'He treated me like shit' and told her not to tell her mother. She said she didn't tell anyone about this until much later because 'I was sniffing glue, I was taking pills, to block it all out'. When at 17 she finally told her mother about the abuse, her mother accused her of telling lies.

Departmental records indicate there were concerns about possible sexual abuse of the PIC by the de facto partner when she was nine. She was referred to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). The physical findings suggested abuse but it was not possible to say how long ago it occurred; the report stated that the interview with the PIC was 'quite inconclusive'.

A departmental psychologist's report written the same month as her referral to SARC about whether the PIC and her sibling should return to live with their mother shows the department was concerned about the PIC's 'age-inappropriate sexualised behaviour, suggestive of sexual victimisation'. The report shows the department knew the de facto partner had been 'confirmed as having sexually abused his own children'. The psychologist wrote: 'I have my concerns that [the mother] does not acknowledge the possibility of them being at risk with her lover [named]'.

When the PIC was in her mid-teens, the department noted concerns about the mother's partner and the earlier suspicions of his sexual abuse of the PIC. It also noted, however, that the PIC refused to clarify the allegations and would not discuss the matter with departmental workers.

The PIC told the Inquiry the de facto partner has 'ruined my life ... I felt like killing him when I saw him ...' She feels she never had a childhood and that the physical and sexual abuse has contributed to her engaging in substance abuse.

At the time of the Inquiry she was continuing to sniff glue: 'I sniff glue when I'm at home to try and block everything out'.

Evidence from males

An 11-year-old boy was placed in emergency foster care for a brief period in the early 1980s. Two years later he was found to be 'in need of care' and was placed in State care until he was 18. The PIC alleged he was sexually abused when placed with his family, as well as in foster care, at the Gilles Plains Assessment Unit and when absconding from placements.

The PIC gave evidence that when he was 15 and placed in the family home, he was sexually abused by a man who had earlier visited him at a government admission unit and 'tracked me down' to the family home. He alleged the man forced him to engage in anal and oral sex over a period of six months, usually at the man's home. The man gave him food, clothes and money and warned him not to disclose the abuse. One day, when the man took him flying in a small plane, he threatened the PIC:

... that if I told anybody about what had happened ... 'things could happen, like you could fall out of a plane' ... it absolutely scared the wits out of me and that's when I thought I would never say anything to anybody.

The PIC said he ran away from his family home, absconded from other placements and lived on the streets, working as a prostitute for several months in his mid-teens. He said another boy suggested that instead of being abused in care, 'we could get money for doing it and live our own way'. He frequented a bar in the city, where he met clients. He alleged he performed oral sex on the bar's proprietor in exchange for free drinks. He went to the homes of several men and performed oral and anal sex in exchange for money.

He told the Inquiry he came forward to give evidence because he believed that abusers should be stopped. 'It can be at least brought to light that the authorities know that they're doing this.'

A 14-year-old boy was placed in temporary State care in the mid 1980s after being found to be in need of care. His SWIC indicates he initially was in care for one month and then was placed in State care when he turned 18. He spent time at a government institution and then went to live with an older sibling with the permission of the department.

The PIC told the Inquiry he was sexually abused by family members from the age of six, before being placed in State care, and that he had come to believe this was normal and what was expected of him. He also alleged that while he was living with his sibling and in State care, he was sexually abused by a man known to the sibling. He claimed that while staying with the man on a weekend, he 'began to fondle me'. He said this happened several times in bed but he couldn't leave because 'I was basically stuck there the whole weekend because I had no transport'. The PIC later stayed with the man and had a continuing sexual relationship with him. He said he had no other accommodation as he had fallen out with his sibling and his father refused to have him at home.

The PIC told the Inquiry he did not tell anyone about the abuse because 'I was always scared' and he did not know who he could confide in due to 'a whole change of all people all around' the department.

He married very young but the marriage did not last long and he returned to live with the man who had previously sexually abused him.

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Chapter 3 Allegations of sexual abuse

1990s

Evidence from females

A woman born in the late 1970s alleged she was sexually abused in State care as a teenager living in a family home and a unit organised by the department. She had come to the department's attention as a five-year-old due to her sexualised behaviour, parental neglect and housing need. The department monitored the child and, when she was 12, placed her with relatives, who received payments for her care. About two years later she was placed in State care until she turned 18. She then had many different placements including briefly with a family friend and then in her own unit. Both are reported as abuse in a family home placement for the purposes of this Inquiry.

The PIC told the Inquiry she began living with the family friend after the closure of an assessment unit in which she was living. During this period the PIC was convicted of an offence and required to undergo a community work program as part of her sentence. The PIC said she was sexually abused at the centre where she undertook this program. She remembered that a worker connected to the program approached her from behind, lifted her skirt and fondled her inside and outside her underwear. He also allegedly abused her on one occasion when he stopped at a building site while driving her home. The PIC did not return to the work program and did not tell her departmental worker about this abuse: 'I didn't think they'd believe me'. However, the PIC's client file noted in the mid 1990s that she 'alleged sexual abuse by a worker at one of the Community Service Order placements that she was at'. There was no further information.

When she was 17 the PIC lived independently in a small unit, where her departmental worker visited her regularly. She alleged she was raped by two male acquaintances one night in her bedroom. She called the department's Crisis Care line and was taken to hospital. Police went to the hospital and the PIC recalled being placed in an interview room. She did not recall the events that followed, nor whether she was medically examined, saying she became agitated and passed out. She later gave a

statement to police and identified one of the alleged perpetrators as a member of an organised crime gang, but told the Inquiry she would not give evidence against this man for fear of reprisals: 'You don't give evidence against people like that ... there's not much I can do about it'.

The Inquiry received client files that show the PIC reported the rape to the department. Her departmental worker visited the PIC at her home and observed her injuries. The worker recorded that the PIC had some support from a friend, and also offered support.

In the early 1990s a young girl came to the attention of the department due to her mother's inability to properly care for her. When the girl was 10 she was removed from her mother's care under a voluntary custody agreement, following allegations of sexual abuse by her mother's partner and his teenage son.

The department arranged for her to live with her father, whom she did not know. It was noted on a file that she was to receive counselling regarding the abuse. It appears she had regular contact with a departmental worker but this ceased after several months in her father's care. She told the Inquiry her father sexually abused her for the two years she was with him, and remembers him saying that 'if I ever told anyone, they wouldn't believe me, and that he would kill me'.

In the late 1990s, when the PIC was 13, she came to school with a black eye. School staff alerted the police and the PIC reported that her father had physically abused her. It is unclear from the Justice Information System (JIS) records whether she also reported her father's ongoing sexual abuse. She was immediately placed in foster care. Her father signed a voluntary custody agreement and was charged with assault.

The PIC spent the next three months in foster care. She told the Inquiry she was abused in one of her foster placements. She returned to live with her mother between the ages of 13 and 15; her mother then moved interstate and abandoned her. She subsequently lived on her own and became involved with bikies and drugs.

She told the Inquiry that after so many placements and moving around she felt she had 'no stability in my life, at all.

So ... I don't really know who I am. I'm a bit lost.' She said she also felt angry about the way she was treated by the department:

The government knew that they weren't safe places for me to go but they kept putting me there. Like, that's the kind of the things that have ruined my whole life.

Evidence from males

A boy whose parents had separated when he was very young was placed in State care between the ages of seven and 12 as a result of voluntary care agreements. He was then placed in State care by court order until the age of 18. He told the Inquiry that when he was eight his father sexually abused him while on a weekend visit.

He recalled being driven to his father's place by transport arranged through the department. He alleged his father forced him to share the same bed and then anally raped him and fondled his genitals during the night. He said the experience was 'disgusting' and he demanded to be taken home the following day. When he disclosed the sexual abuse to his mother she contacted the department and took him to the police station, where he made a statement. Departmental and JIS records show the PIC complained of being indecently touched but did not disclose that he had been raped. As a result, there was no medical investigation.

The JIS records indicate that police interviewed the PIC's father, who denied the allegations and said he suspected that the PIC's mother fabricated them. The PIC said he did not see his father again until he was 19. Some time later he was placed in foster care, a government unit and a remand centre.

The PIC told the Inquiry the sexual abuse had an ongoing impact on his life: 'I feel it's just caused me to shut down all my life ... I've never let anyone in; I've just pushed everyone away'. At the time of the Inquiry he had a child who had been placed in care with a relative. He said he didn't want to be like his father: 'I want to be a better father and a different father, but I don't know how'.

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Chapter 3 Allegations of sexual abuse

2000s

Evidence from females

An 11-year-old girl was placed in State care by a court in the early 2000s after an allegation that her mother had assaulted her—an allegation the PIC later denied. The PIC had come to the attention of the department as a toddler and, once in State care, she was sent to various placements. She told the Inquiry she was sexually abused while living at home with her mother.

The PIC had a long history of absconding from care and returning to her mother's residence or staying with acquaintances. She said that her mother's male de facto partner sexually abused her regularly during weekends at home, when she was aged between 10 and 13. He had told her to keep their relationship secret, but she eventually revealed the abuse to her mother, who reported it to the department. The police questioned the PIC but she refused to provide a statement or give any details.