

9 March 2020

To the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care

My name is Hope Curtin and I live in Oamaru. I am 24. Alva Sammons was my mother.

As you will have heard, my mum died when she was 26, because she still held so much pain from her childhood. I was 5 years old.

I don't have any memories of my mother before that time. I have been told by my grandparents that I lived with her until I was two. My grandparents told me that she used to go on about her childhood, how she had to steal food for her siblings, and how even then she was still scared a particular man was going to come after her. There were times she couldn't go out because she was terrified. Eventually she felt she couldn't do it anymore and dropped me with my grandparents. I lived with my dad after that.

My grandmother and my dad said mum was the most beautiful soul, she cared for everyone around her and most of all cared for and loved me. But she was lost, she'd had such a rough life and carried so much pain with her that she couldn't live a normal life. The abuse that she suffered had affected her ability to look after me, even though she loved and cared about me.

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young girl lost her mum and now my 2 beautiful children will never know their beautiful grandmother.

Through my life I've had to go through things a girl shouldn't have to go through without their mum. I was extremely grateful that I had my dad although he obviously didn't have the understanding a mum would.

I have also not had the chance to know my own family. I had no connection with my mum's side at all. My dad knew mum's sisters' names and that was it, so I had no contact with them. I only started finding out about mum's side of the family when I was a teenager, and we were eventually able to get in touch. I didn't even know that I had a brother – I only met him for the first time last year. He didn't know anything about our mum, and he also still doesn't know who his father is. I still know very little about that side of the family and my mum's extended biological family, and there is lots of family I have never had the chance to meet and get to know. I know nothing of our Māori heritage. I am only just starting to come to terms with everything now, and find out where I come from.

I still have so many unanswered questions about what my mum's life was like, what happened to her. My mum made a complaint about the abuse in 1992. Why was nothing ever done? I would like to have those questions answered. I would also like the government to acknowledge their role in what happened to her. They were responsible for her when she was just a kid, and what she went through then affected her whole life, and mine.

Most of all, it sickens me to think of the pain and sadness my mum must have felt all those years ago. The abuse affected her life to the point where she felt she couldn't stick around and be a mum, and so it's also affected me and everyone else around her that loved her.

I carry my mum's pain with me, and feel responsible for getting closure. I think we deserve closure and for our claim to go ahead so that someone can look properly at what happened to my mum, and acknowledge how she was failed by people who were supposed to care for and protect her, and also how that impacted me and my brother. Just because my mum has passed on doesn't mean I don't need and deserve the closure that my mum should have gotten.

My mum will always be in my heart and will always be in my 2 babies' hearts. And I will fight for my mum's claim until there's nothing more I can do.

Hope Curtin