

**Submission to Yoorrook Justice Commission****From: Owen Butler****Dated: 11 June 2024****Submission:**

I am a 72yo Wiradjuri man. Two years ago my family consisted of a mother, sister, four children and four grandchildren. I knew I was Aboriginal but had no knowledge of my families history as my family would not talk about it, probably due to a number of reason but I will put it down to [REDACTED] being fostered into servitude on an outback station when just a child. fostered into servitude on an outback station when just a child. She was removed from [REDACTED] along with [REDACTED] [REDACTED].

My father was never identified as Aboriginal for fear of being removed as well and subsequently the story continued on with his children. On the birth of my first grandchild I started to track my families history. My Nan had already passed and my father would not speak of it. I had received snippets of information and family names from my Nan in the past of which I collated for the future and from there I attempted to find out more.

By fortunes of luck I received some family photos and a crude genealogy. I joined a Facebook site called Wiradjuri mob and from there I was able to recognise a photo that I had possession of which led me to reuniting with third cousins at a family reunion. The cousins had heard of my Nan but unfortunately no one could give me information that could fill the gaps in my family life. My cousins who came from another limb of the family tree were very close and tightly bonded family unit which made my meeting at the reunion very warm but still so detached.

I am for ever grateful that my cousins welcomed me into the family two years ago but my immediate family still feel lost. I have always felt disconnected to all around me as I was growing up but unaware why. I gravitated to the multicultural kids at school and have consequently ended up working in the multicultural world where I am most comfortable.

I do this because I have lived a privileged life growing up as a white person, being educated well. Education is the first of the four pillars of wellbeing: education, employment , housing and health. I have lived that life and appreciate that there are many who have not and are still not, so I give back as much as I can.

I know my story is common but as I sit around and yarn at my gathering place with all of my brothers who are lost, detached from family, land, country, language and as urban Aboriginals we are just trying to gain a little bit of culture as the days, weeks, months and years roll by. Many of my brothers still have little information of there family with little prospect of finding out. We try to keep each other strong but loss is loss.

**END OF SUBMISSION**