

Foreword

The University of Western Sydney is where the first author and subject of this book, Nancy de Vries, undertook her tertiary education. While at the University she met her co-authors, Jane Mears (Social Policy) and Gaynor Macdonald (Aboriginal Studies/Social Policy). Later they were joined by Anna Nettheim, who had previously worked documenting stories of removal for the 1997 Inquiry into the Removal of Aboriginal Children. This collaboration makes this book more than a biography. It is one woman's journey but it is also an invitation to travel with her. The story is unique but it documents an institutionalised history of trauma and oppression which touches us all. Nancy's co-authors have had to learn what it means to bear witness to such trauma.

I am touched by the impact the University of Western Sydney had on Nancy. Admission to UWS enabled her to follow her heart and study nursing. Her excellent academic record and subsequent accomplishments make the negative assessments of her ability as a child, so clearly documented in this book, all the more shameful. Years of being told she was not good enough left her doubting herself. At university she was able to develop the intellectual, social and professional skills to begin to put this behind her. Nancy's story, told here with great courage, reminds us that we should not accept the limits others place on our potential.

Nancy became one of our most distinguished graduates in 1988. She continued to participate in our university life, including her challenging guest lectures, here as well as at the University of Sydney, which touched the lives of hundreds of students. Once you have read this book, you will no longer think of Nancy or the many others who are part of the stolen generation in the same way.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to respond to Nancy's own generosity of spirit, and I congratulate the authors for bringing this confronting but highly readable book to a wider audience.

Professor Janice Reid
Vice Chancellor of the University of Western Sydney