

DOREEN WEBSTER



Doreen Webster is a Barkindji woman, born in Wilcannia in NSW's north west.

"I remember happy times with my parents before I was taken ... My dad worked on a station. I loved it. I had a younger sister. She was a baby when she was taken."

Doreen and her brother John were taken to the local police station and locked up in cell.

"Like criminals we were locked up. I was only eight."

The next day she was put on a train to Sydney, where at Central Station, Doreen was separated from her brother.

"A man was waiting there for my brother, from Kinchela Boys Home."

"I said 'Where are you going?' And I was pulling at him, trying to pull him back," she said.

"Here I am on the station, a little eight year old, screaming and crying because they were taking my brother away."

Doreen was taken to the Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls.

"When I got up to Cootamundra ... I was thinking, 'What's going on here? Where am I?'"

I had no idea where I was or what was happening to me. I was screaming for my mum and dad. When we got there we were treated so cruelly—so cruelly," Doreen said. She recalls the matron asking a police officer to punish her.

"I was sitting down on the ground and he got me by the hair of the head and just pulled me up, straight up to my feet—lifted me off the ground and stood me on my feet—and then he stood on my foot. I had no shoes on. I was screaming out in agony."

"It was just horrifying. I used to run away all the time," Doreen said.

Doreen says at one stage of her life she became an alcoholic to blot out the pain, a fate shared by her mother to cope with the removal of her children.

Doreen is now a vocal advocate of appropriate aged care for the Stolen Generations. She believes on the 20th anniversary of the Bringing Them Home report, the survivors of Cootamundra, and the infamous Kinchela Boys Home, need their own services.

"For when we get older—where we can be there. We are family; we are our family here. All the girls are family. We are sisters to the Kinchela boys. They are brothers to us. And there is a closeness. That is our family."

