

Stolen organ apology due

'Nightmare': Families tell of body parts pain as MLC calls for redress

Sue Bailey

A Queensland woman has told of the ongoing trauma of receiving part of her brother's brain as she prepares for a formal apology in parliament to families who had body parts from their loved ones retained by a pathology museum without permission.

And independent MLC Meg Webb, who campaigned for the apology, is urging the government to consider redress for 177 families affected when parts were collected and kept between 1966 and 1991 – and in some instances on public display – at the Rodda Museum of



Independent MLC for Nelson, Meg Webb

Pathology. Cheryl Springfield's 14-year-old brother David Maher died in a car accident in July 1976 after two youths stole a car and returned to the Wybra boy's home to get him "because they knew he was going to be physically abused that night".

"It's been absolutely a nightmare from that moment we were told," Ms Springfield said.

"I broke down and cried and I still cry now because I don't understand how this could happen. I don't understand why it happened.

"This apology on Tuesday, it's a good thing. I get it. It's in the right direction. But it's not going to fix it all."

Ms Springfield has been offered four counselling sessions and was unable to attend one because she cares for her grandson who has disabilities.

"I'm not coping with this at all. I've told my kids that they're never to allow anyone to do an autopsy on me.

"It's going to be a long, hard day, and we are taking a photo

of our brother to hold. Meg Webb has fought for us but the Premier hasn't said a word."

John Santi was 13 when his brother and "best friend" Tony, 19, was killed in a motorcycle crash.

He said his brother's brain was returned in a shoe sized box which had now been interred.

"It's been so traumatic. I've become dependent on alcohol because of the trauma and because of all this I hardly get to see any grandkids anymore because I'm pretty hard to deal with.

"I get very upset. I just go and sit in my room for hours."

Mr Santi is keen for someone to be held responsible for the pain and heartache he and others are suffering.

"There needs to be justice done, for what they've put us through, and for so long. From day one, it's been so hard to deal with.

"I had Meg Webb on my side, she was the only one that's got me through this."

Ms Webb said while the formal apology was "significant" it did not go far enough.

"It will not undo the harm done, answer all unresolved questions, or rebuild broken trust, so there may need to be further steps taken to consider

redress for affected families for the unspeakable treatment of their loved ones," she said. "This would be consistent with a trauma informed and responsive approach.

"With the passage of time presenting challenges in holding individuals to account, it may be difficult to fully deliver a sense of justice, which strengthens the case for providing other reparations to families, in acknowledgment of the trauma and harm they have suffered due to these unlawful acts."

Health Minister Bridget Archer will make the formal apology on Tuesday.