

CHAPTER 8

BACKGROUND AND CONDUCT OF THE INQUIRY

On 5 December 1980, the Senate agreed to a motion by Senator Knight (on behalf of Senator Walters) setting out the terms of reference which appear at the front of this report.

The inquiry was advertised in the national press on 31 January 1981 inviting written submissions. Letters were sent to five Commonwealth Ministers and all state Premiers. Invitations to write a submission were also sent to about 50 individuals and organisations. In response, a total of 126 submissions were received (see Appendix 6).

The Committee commenced public hearings in Canberra on 1 May 1981. During the course of the public inquiries, the Committee took evidence from 214 witnesses (see Appendix 5). Of these, 160 were from organisations, 39 from government departments, 11 from individuals appearing in their own right and one from a Northern Territory Member of Parliament. Altogether, 18 public hearings were held throughout all capital cities of Australia as well as in Morwell, Victoria and Alice Springs, Northern Territory. As a result of the public hearings, 3906 pages of transcript were compiled.

In order to gain further information, the Senate Committee Secretariat collected many articles and reports relating to homeless youth. Also, close liaison was kept with the section of the Commonwealth Department of Social Security which administers the evaluation of the Youth Services Scheme. The Committee visited 15 youth refuges during the course of its public inquiry, and met another seven organisations and groups who were directly involved with homeless youth. This enabled the Committee members and staff to gain first-hand knowledge of the problem and expectations of homeless youth.

Acknowledgements

The Committee wishes to thank all the witnesses who appeared before it to give oral evidence. The Committee also expresses its gratitude to those who presented submissions but were not called upon to give evidence. Much of the information in these submissions was used in the Committee's deliberations and in writing the final report. The Committee wishes to thank all state Premiers and the Northern Territory Chief Minister, as well as their departments, for the co-operation that they gave. It also thanks the staff of the Parliamentary Library for its assistance.

The Committee particularly wishes to thank the young people in the refuges that it visited. Their conversations with Committee members, often on very difficult personal matters, gave the Committee an insight into the problems of homeless youth that would not have been possible otherwise. The Committee would also like to thank the staff of these refuges for being most helpful in arranging the visits.

Finally, the Committee wishes to thank the staff —the Secretary, Mr Peter Keele, the Research Officers, Mrs Patricia Mayberry and Miss Pamela Gulloni, and the Steno-Secretary, Mrs Eleanor Gilmour, and the word processor operators—Miss Linda Rutter and Miss Robyn Graham.

The Senate
August 1982

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "M. S. Walters". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

M. S. WALTERS
Chairman