

CHAPTER 2

CHILD MIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA DURING THE 20TH CENTURY

Child migration to Australia remains a poorly understood chapter in Australia's Commonwealth history. Myths, misunderstandings and deliberate deceptions are deeply woven into this sorry saga.¹

2.1 This chapter provides background information on child migration to Australia in the 20th century. It discusses British child migration policy and the factors influencing that policy in the United Kingdom in the late 19th and 20th centuries. This discussion places child migration to Australia in its wider historical context. The chapter also discusses the rationale for, and policies relating to, child migration in pre- and post-second world war Australia. Child migration from Malta is also discussed.

2.2 The background information in this chapter is in the form of a brief overview rather than a detailed history. A number of histories of migration schemes and institutions have been written from differing perspectives and some academic research has been undertaken utilising various records including those from the Australian Archives and the Commonwealth and Home Office records at the Kew Archive in London. The Committee has drawn together this historical overview from published sources and submissions provided to the inquiry.

2.3 Due to continuing community pressure, government records, as well as the records of agencies and institutions, are becoming more readily accessible. The availability of these records will enable the research and writing of a more detailed history of child migration to Australia. However, the Committee's task has been primarily to investigate, at a personal level, the impact on the children who were migrated from the United Kingdom and Malta under the various child migration schemes. This chapter provides the historical context within which the child migration schemes evolved and places the individual experiences of child migration in the context of that history.

Defining 'child migration'

2.4 The terms 'child migration' and 'child migrant' have been subject to various interpretations and meanings over time and definitional problems still persist today in attempting to define these terms.

2.5 One definition of 'child migration' refers to the term broadly as the dispatch of poor, abandoned, often illegitimate youth from orphanages, institutions and

1 Submission No.129, p.8 (IAFCM&F).

workhouses throughout the United Kingdom to overseas British colonies – later Dominions.²

2.6 Other definitions attempt to provide a more specific focus. Mr Alan Gill, author of a major study on child migration, for example, states that ‘child migration’, as commonly understood, refers to the group migration of *young* unaccompanied minors (that is, minors unaccompanied by, or not travelling to join, parents or a relative). ‘Young’ in this context is defined as children aged between 5 to 11 or 12 years at the time of their arrival in their new country. He refers to those of school leaving age, from the age of 14 years, as ‘youth’ migrants and ‘juvenile migration’ as an umbrella term encompassing both ‘child’ and ‘youth’ migration.³ Dr Barry Coldrey refers to child migrants as children in care and still of school age transferred from orphanages in the United Kingdom to orphanages in Australia for education and training before being placed in employment. Child migrants were usually 8-13 years of age on arrival in Australia, while many were younger. Dr Coldrey states that juvenile/youth migrants were typically young men aged 15-19 years of age, who had left school and had made their own decision to migrate or had made a decision to precede the rest of the family.⁴

2.7 The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) defines ‘child migrants’ as children under 16 years of age who had been living in institutions in the United Kingdom and who were brought out to Australia under various schemes and who had no family ties or contacts in Australia.⁵ The Department noted that the term ‘child migration scheme’ has often been applied to a range of significantly different child, youth and family migration schemes, operating, at times concurrently, from the post war period to the early 1980s. The Department noted that children and youths migrated to Australia under a variety of schemes, some of which, like the Big Brother Movement, were voluntary and involved in the migration of youths (largely 16 years and over) to take up employment opportunities.⁶ Some organisations, notably Barnardos, took both ‘child’ and ‘youth’ migrants often leading to a blurring of the distinction between the different schemes. Under other schemes, such as the one parent and two parent schemes, children migrated in advance of, or accompanied by, one or both parents.⁷

2 Coldrey, BM, *The Scheme: The Christian Brothers and Childcare in Western Australia*, Argyle-Pacific Publishing, 1993, p.124.

3 Gill, A, *Orphans of the Empire: the Shocking Story of Child Migration to Australia*, Random House, Sydney, 1998, pp.4-5.

4 Submission No.15, p.36 (Dr Coldrey).

5 Submission No.42, p.6 (DIMA).

6 The Big Brother Movement was established in 1925 to provide British male youths with the opportunity to migrate to Australia for training and employment purposes. It was a voluntary scheme open to boys between the ages of 15 and 19 years.

7 Submission No.42, p.6 (DIMA).

2.8 The Western Australian Department for Family and Children's Services defines 'child migrants' in the context of Western Australia as children from the United Kingdom and Malta who were sent to that State between 1913 and 1968 unaccompanied by parents and under the guardianship of the Federal Minister for Immigration (in 1946), and the relevant State Department (after 1947), where a British, Commonwealth and State Government subsidy was paid.⁸ Prior to the enactment of Commonwealth legislation in 1946 State child welfare legislation and the general law covered custody and guardianship arrangements.⁹

2.9 In the context of this inquiry, the Committee uses the term 'child migrant' to refer to unaccompanied children generally under the age of 16 years who were brought to Australia from the United Kingdom or Malta under approved schemes during the 20th century. The Committee believes that it is important to draw a distinction between 'child' and 'youth' migration, because, as discussed later in this chapter, the higher figures sometimes claimed for 'child migration' are in fact including figures from a range of different child, youth and family migration schemes.

British child migration – an historical overview

2.10 British child migration spanned four centuries beginning in 1618 when the first group of destitute children were sent to Richmond, Virginia. The most intense period of emigration was from 1870 until the start of the World War I.¹⁰ Mr Gill stated that between 100,000 and 180,000 children were sent from Britain to the American colonies, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Rhodesia, South Africa and the Caribbean from the 17th century to the mid-1960s.¹¹ Dr Coldrey notes that child migration was a policy of social engineering:

It was a social policy which involved the transfer of abandoned youth from the orphanages, homes, workhouses and reformatories of the United Kingdom to overseas British colonies – later to the self-governing Dominions. Once overseas, the children were placed with colonial employers – usually in rural areas. Often the children were placed in local institutions for preparation and training prior to employment. The care and removal of the children was undertaken by religious and philanthropic organisations...but with government approval and under the law as it then stood.¹²

8 This definition excludes children and young people who emigrated under other programs such as the One Parent Scheme, Big Brother Movement and the YMCA. These migrants were either accompanied by a parent, received on arrival by a parent, or emigrated under requisition or nomination systems. See Submission No.135, p.1 (WA Department for Family & Children's Services) .

9 Submission No.42, p.15 (DIMA).

10 Coldrey, *The Scheme*, p.124. See also Coldrey, BM, '*...a place to which idle vagrants maybe sent*' – *The first phase of child migration during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, Tamanaraik Publishing, March 2001.

11 Gill, pp.85-86.

12 Coldey, BM, *Child Migration to Catholic Institutions in Australia*, Tamanaraik Publishing, 1995, pp.1-2.

2.11 With regard to the first group of ‘child migrants’ little is known of the 100 children sent to Virginia in 1618, however, another group of 100 children were sent a year later. Mr Gill remarks that these early experiments in migration were evidently a success because the Virginia Company asked for more children to be sent. In 1622, the Council for New England put forward a similar request to the authorities in England. Little is known of the fate of the youngsters despatched to the American colonies. The American War of Independence (1775-83) ended the use of American colonies as a place to send children and new locations needed to be found¹³

Child migration to Canada, Rhodesia and New Zealand

2.12 By the mid 19th century, Canada had progressed to a rapidly developing farm-based economy and society. However, a shortage of farm labour was being felt that was slowing Canada’s development. With the social problems in England and the need for labour in Canada, the two Governments implemented the ‘Juvenile Farm Immigration Policy’. This agreement encouraged and permitted young English boys and girls to be sent to Canada to work on Canadian farms as labourers, in the case of boys, and domestics in the case of girls. The child migrants were generally placed in private homes in rural communities.

2.13 The use of child migrants to boost the numbers of a particular religious denomination in newly settled areas was also a motive. Mr Gill noted that:

Ontario wanted as many non-Catholics as possible to settle there, conscious of Catholic expansion in adjacent Quebec. Quebec, eyeing the influx, called in turn for child Catholics.¹⁴

2.14 In the beginning, the religious and charitable agencies sent generally poor children to Canada, however, over the years, a wider selection process was used to meet the ever increasing demand for labour in Canada. The program declined in the 1930s as the Depression deepened in North America.¹⁵

2.15 In 1925 the Canadian Government passed an interim law prohibiting the migration of children under 14 years of age. This arose out of concerns by Canadian child welfare experts that children from England, especially placed by Barnardos, were being placed without sufficient care or supervision in Canada. The Canadian ban was made permanent in 1928, though various exceptions were allowed.¹⁶

2.16 Barnardos UK stated that Barnardos tried to establish a strict system of vetting and inspection of the Canadian child placements:

13 Gill, pp.41-42.

14 Gill, p.529.

15 Submission No.53, p.1 (Canadian Centre for Home Children).

16 Gill, pp.57-58; Coldrey, *The Scheme*, p.126.

However, the children were seen only once a year by a Barnardo's worker and were in reality very vulnerable, located on remote farmsteads which were often cut off for months in winter. Living conditions were tough and the climate was harsh. All the children bore the stigma of being "home" children and were treated as outcasts. Luckier children became part of the family, but many were treated as little more than slave labour, and there were many cases of abuse and neglect.¹⁷

2.17 The Canadian Centre for Home Children also stated that 'upon their arrival in Canada the acceptance and treatment of children varied widely throughout the country... [however] research has shown that 66% of all former child migrants were abused in some form. This was either at the hands of the receiving homes or farms they were placed on'.¹⁸

2.18 Approximately 100,000 children were sent to Canada from 1869 to 1935. Home Children Canada noted that laws were relaxed to allow the last 76 boys to be sent to the Fairbridge Farm in British Columbia between 1945 and 1948.¹⁹

2.19 As Canada restricted the entry of child migrants, the various British agencies emigrating children turned their attention to Australia, Rhodesia and New Zealand.

2.20 In Rhodesia, the Fairbridge Society initiated moves towards the establishment of a farm school in Rhodesia in the mid-1930s. There was support from commercial interests in Rhodesia and from the Rhodesian Government, which saw white immigration as a means to sustain the racial balance of the country. This fitted in with the 'kith and kin' arguments of that country's leaders at the time. In 1946, the Rhodesian Prime Minister, Mr G Huggins, supported the Fairbridge scheme with a land grant and maintenance payments for the students at the College. The Fairbridge Society established the Fairbridge Memorial College with a hostel at Bulawayo having its own farm and near an existing school. It recruited children with the expectation that the parent or guardian would contribute to the child's maintenance costs. In contrast to other child migrants sent elsewhere, the British child migrants sent to Rhodesia were generally better treated and were destined to be overseers and managers not farm workers. Some 276 children attended the College from 1946 to 1956.²⁰

2.21 Child migration to New Zealand began in the 19th century, and continued on a small scale until World War II. New Zealand gave a temporary home to children evacuated from British cities under an arrangement between the New Zealand Government and Britain's Overseas Reception Board during World War II. The

17 Submission No.50, Barnardos UK Briefing, 'Child Migration' (Barnardos Australia).

18 Submission No.53, p.4 (Canadian Centre for Home Children). The same statistic was referred to by Home Children Canada in their submission No.122, p.21.

19 Submission No.122, p.9 (Home Children Canada).

20 Sherington, G and Jeffery, C, *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration*, University of Western Australia Press, 1998. pp. 182-85, 263, 266; Gill, pp.171-72.

presence of the evacuees influenced the Government to introduce a formal migration scheme for British children when peace returned. The scheme was introduced under the *Child Welfare Act 1948* (NZ). It operated between 1949 and 1954 and involved about 500 children, aged between five and about 15 years.

2.22 In contrast to Australia, the children brought to New Zealand were fostered rather than placed in institutions. Religious and charitable groups were not involved – the scheme taking children who were in the care of, or who had come to the notice of, local authorities and social workers in the United Kingdom. Most were still living with one or both parents, but in conditions regarded by the authorities as ‘unsatisfactory’. Relatively few very young children, that is five-or six-year olds were sent, and foster parents were arranged before the children left Britain. Often this was a relative of the parent or guardian.²¹

2.23 This migration scheme existed in conjunction with a parallel program to bring boys aged 15 years and above to work on the land, called the Flock House Scheme. Some 200 boys migrated under this scheme. A small number of older teenage girls were also brought out to work in nursing and similar ‘sought after’ occupations. Both the Flock House migrants and the child migrants were under the formal guardianship of the Superintendent of Child Welfare.²² Mr Gill noted that the fostering arrangements were not always successful and cases of abuse have been reported. A number of children had to be transferred to other families, and in a small number of cases to institutions, when relationships broke down. There were also some complaints that children were used as cheap labour.²³

2.24 The UK House of Commons Health Committee report stated that the limited nature of the New Zealand child migration scheme, and the fact that it appeared to have been better organised than some of the other schemes, ‘seems to have led to fewer cases of severe abuse’. The report noted, however, that evidence from some former child migrants indicated resentment at the way that they had been treated in New Zealand, and complaints were made regarding the lack of educational opportunities, their loss of identity, accusations of slave labour, and the anguish of not being informed of the location of siblings.²⁴

2.25 A number of common themes in relation to the treatment of child migrants emerge from the history of British child migration. For many child migrants sent to overseas British colonies and later the Dominions, once in their new country there was a depressingly common pattern of abuse and neglect. Child migrants were also used as cheap labour, suffered a loss of identity and sense of belonging, were lied to and about their family, and were stigmatised as outcasts in their new country. These themes are

21 Gill, pp..516-18.

22 Gill, pp..516-18.

23 Gill, p.518.

24 House of Commons, Health Committee, *The Welfare of Former British Child Migrants*, HC 755, Session 1997-98, ‘New Zealand’, p.2.

discussed in greater detail in the following chapters of this report in relation to child migrants sent to Australia.

Factors influencing child migration in the 19th and early 20th century

2.26 Child migration policy in the United Kingdom in the 19th and early 20th century was influenced by a variety of factors, including philanthropic, socio-economic and imperialist/racial considerations with the emphasis changing over the period.²⁵

2.27 From the beginning of the Victorian era, a major factor was a philanthropic desire to ‘rescue’ poor and abandoned children from destitution and neglect in Britain and send them to a ‘better life’ in the ‘healthy’ rural lifestyle of the underpopulated colonies. This was associated with a wish to protect children from ‘moral danger’ arising from their life on the streets of the urban slums of Britain – a life seen to be associated with poverty, theft, prostitution and begging. As Dr Coldrey has noted:

The choice appeared to be between begging, thieving, disease, prostitution and early death in the British Isles; or a healthy farming existence with good prospects for decent living on the rich farms of North America. It seemed an easy choice to make and justify.²⁶

2.28 Dr Stephen Constantine of Lancaster University also remarked that ‘the emigration to empire destinations of children “deprived of a normal home life” had been...a major child care strategy since the mid-19th century’.²⁷

2.29 The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs observed that by the beginning of the 20th century:

British religious and benevolent institutions saw emigration as a means of creating opportunities for abandoned children. Many of the children sent abroad had been placed in institutions because they were illegitimate, a label which in those days... invoked social ostracism. It was thought to be in the child’s best interests to be thought of as an orphan rather than illegitimate, and to be given a fresh start in life in a new country.²⁸

2.30 Child migration was also seen as providing an economic benefit to Britain, as it relieved the burden on public finances of looking after these children. It was also seen as beneficial to the receiving countries – because child migrants were regarded as being potential members of a healthy and productive white workforce. Professor Sherington and Mr Jeffery noted:

25 The arguments in this section of the report have been drawn from a number of sources including the Report of the UK Health Committee, pp.2-3; Coldrey, *The Scheme*, pp.124-128; Sherington & Jeffery, *Fairbridge*, pp.xi-x-xii; Submission No.88 (Dr Constantine); and Submission No.42, pp.14-15 (DIMA).

26 Coldrey, *Catholic Institutions*, p.2.

27 Submission No.88, p.2 (Dr Constantine).

28 Submission No.42, p.14 (DIMA).

The peculiarities of the British child-saving movement's association with migration lay in the expansion of the white dominions of Empire and the need this created for labour. Although British child migrants were sent overseas from the sixteenth century the peak of child migration was from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Many British child savers sought to rescue the children of the urban poor by transplanting them to become labourers and domestic servants on the farms and rural settlements in the expanding Empire.²⁹

2.31 The prevailing socio-economic conditions in Britain were also a factor in encouraging emigration. Conditions in towns and cities were worsening, especially after the 1840s. There was an influx of immigrants from Ireland arising from the famines and a reduction in the housing stock, leading to chronic overcrowding. Socio-economic conditions were exacerbated by the economic depression of the 1870s. Overcrowding was also a feature of the workhouses, and the Poor Law Guardians after the 1830s were permitted to send paupers, including children, abroad. Dr Coldrey described the conditions prevailing at the time:

The population was rising rapidly and it was an increasingly youthful population. This upward demographic trend was producing more able-bodied workers than even Britain's dynamic economy could absorb. Unemployment was rife, living conditions in the urban slums defied description. Housing was at a premium and the constant influx of immigrants from Ireland increased chronic overcrowding.³⁰

2.32 A further motive had racial overtones: the importation of 'good white stock' was seen as a desirable policy objective in the developing British colonies. Imperialists wished to 'invest' in the Empire through the settlement of the untenanted land of the colonies with immigrants from the UK. It was seen that young white colonists, in particular, would 'consolidate' the Empire and form a living link between the colonies and the 'mother country'.

2.33 In Britain, the *Poor Law Act 1850* made provision for the emigration overseas of the children of the poor who were under 16 years of age. Every application was supposed to be submitted to the Poor Law Board for approval and the children themselves were required by law to agree to the arrangement. There was a long history of children being sent overseas, usually as cheap labour, with the Parkhurst boys who were sent to Western Australia in the 1840s an example.³¹

2.34 The legislative basis for British funding of the child migrant schemes was the *Empire Settlement Act 1922* (UK), which permitted the UK Government to channel funds to non-government organisations in support of their migration work. The passage of the Act enabled British government funds for the first time to be available

29 Sherington & Jeffery, *Fairbridge*, p.xi.

30 Coldrey, *The Scheme*, p.125.

31 Submission No.135, p.4 (WA Department for Family & Children's Services).

to subsidise the fares and maintenance of children sent overseas by the voluntary societies. The Act empowered the British Government to cooperate with Dominion Governments in any scheme mutually agreed upon. In dealing with the administrative processes required for emigration to the Dominions, the British Government relied on existing Government and private organisations³²

2.35 The Government of the Republic of Ireland, unlike that of Britain, strongly disapproved of child migration and refused to participate in the practice. However, a large number of ‘British’ child migrants were, in fact, Irish. They were born to Irish mothers living in England, and in some cases Scotland or Wales, who, perhaps to avoid the stigma of illegitimacy, had gone to Britain to find a home for their child. They were also born to Irish mothers living in Ireland who subsequently went to England with their children. Many of these children were then sent to Australia from the institutions in which they had been placed. The Republic’s stance was based on the personal views of the Prime Minister, Mr E de Valera, who opposed child migration and migration in general as a solution to the new Irish State’s problems.³³

2.36 Before the Commonwealth’s involvement in child migration, which did not commence to any significant extent until after World War II, immigration matters were largely handled by the individual States’ own Immigration Departments. Each of the State Governments entered immigration agreements with the British Government under the Empire Settlement Act – primarily concerning subsidy agreements and numbers of immigrants. However, it appears that once details such as numbers of child migrants and financial subsidies were finalised between the state government and the sending agencies, the latter dealt mostly with the receiving agencies.

2.37 The loss of Canada as a destination and the outbreak of war in 1939 temporarily halted child migration from the United Kingdom.

Child migration to Australia

2.38 The rationale for child migration to Australia changed throughout the twentieth century. Prior to World War II child migration schemes concentrated on a system of providing rural farm training for boys and domestic skills for girls. With the advent of the Second World War this original rationale had far less significance with Australian Government support for child migration after 1945 resting essentially on the creation of the post-war immigration program with the aim of increasing Australia’s population.³⁴ At a time when Canada was restricting the entry of child migrants due to concerns over their care and supervision, and in Britain the attitude of government was less favourable to the idea of child migration, the Australian Government largely ignored these concerns and persisted in increasing their intake of child migrants.

32 Submission No.42, p.15 (DIMA).

33 Gill, p.546; Coldrey, *Catholic Institutions*, p.53.

34 Submission No.119, p.1 (Professor Sherington); Submission No.42, pp.8-15 (DIMA);

2.39 Professor Sherington of the University of Sydney stated that the original aims of the child migration policy were encapsulated in the intentions of the Fairbridge Society which established a farm at Pinjarra (Western Australia) in 1912 to provide training in agriculture for boys and domestic service for girls. This was a model followed by Barnardos and the original Roman Catholic child migration scheme, initiated before 1939. Professor Sherington argued that the model received support from the interwar British and Australian Governments because it fitted the purposes of Empire Settlement in the period 1919-39 and the specific aims of rural development in Australia. After World War II this original rationale was less significant even though many of the child migration schemes continued to provide training in rural and domestic skills.³⁵

Commonwealth-State responsibilities

2.40 The Commonwealth Government had only limited involvement with child migration until after World War II. Before this time, immigration schemes were largely handled by the individual States, each having its own Immigration Department.³⁶

2.41 In 1920, the Commonwealth and the States entered into a joint scheme in relation to migration, with the States' responsibilities being reception, settlement and after-care. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs stated that 'from the information available it appears that State/Territory child welfare legislation and the general law covered custody and guardianship arrangements for the children'.³⁷ There was no Commonwealth legislation governing the migration, settlement or guardianship of migrant children prior to 1946 until the enactment of the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946* which is discussed later in the chapter. While the Commonwealth did not legislate for child migration until 1946, from the first government-assisted child migration scheme (Fairbridge in the 1920s), the Commonwealth contributed a subsidy towards the cost of individual child migrants.³⁸ It was this subsidy that was to provide a significant incentive for the receiving agencies to promote child migration.

Pre-World War II migration

2.42 There was little organised juvenile migration (that is, child and youth migration) to Australia before World War I except for the Dreadnought Trust in New South Wales from 1911 and the Fairbridge Society in Western Australia from 1913.

35 Submission No.119, p.1 (Professor Sherington).

36 Submission No.135, p.9 (WA Department for Family & Children's Services).

37 Submission No.42, p.15 (DIMA). See also Submission No.135, p.1 (WA Department for Family & Children's Services).

38 Submission No.135, p.9 (WA Department for Family & Children's Services). In 1922 the WA and Commonwealth Governments each agreed to pay 5/- per child each week for each child at Pinjarra until the age of 14 years.

Both of these developments were essentially ad hoc, State-based initiatives.³⁹ In 1910, the Dreadnought Trust entered into an agreement with the NSW Government to bring British boys between the ages of 16 and 19 to be trained as rural workers.⁴⁰ The first party of Dreadnought Boys arrived in April 1911. This was the first government-assisted body of migrants to consist exclusively of minors. As noted above, they were older youths and not ‘child migrants’ as such. In 1913 the first group of 13 child migrants under the auspices of Fairbridge arrived in Western Australia. The work of the Fairbridge Society is discussed in chapter 3.

2.43 The First World War slowed the expansion of the Fairbridge project, and child migration was temporarily halted for the duration of the war. In 1920 all forms of migration resumed and special provision was made for young people by most States. Child and youth migration was – in overall migration terms – small-scale but nevertheless important, because for some sections of the rural community such labour was inexpensive and exploitable, and because the arriving young people did not compete in adult or urban labour markets for some years.

2.44 From the early 1900s, governments provided funding for child migrants arriving in Australia. In 1915, the Western Australian Government provided a subsidy of 4/- per week for each child at Pinjarra. The British Government matched this amount, together with monies for the purchase of additional land in 1919. The State contribution was increased to 6/- per week in 1916. In 1922, both the Commonwealth and State Government agreed to pay 5/- per week per child to age 14. The Commonwealth and State grants were reduced to 4/3 per week following the provision of financial support to Pinjarra under the 1922 Empire Settlement Act.

2.45 In 1930, the Commonwealth decided to end financial support for children at Pinjarra. This decision was reversed in 1931 but with the commencement of the Depression, the payments were reduced to 3/6 per week by both Governments.

2.46 With the establishment of Northcote in Victoria in 1937, the Commonwealth agreed to a maintenance grant of 3/- per child migrant (increased to 3/6 in 1938). However, the Victorian Government did not provide equal funding. The next year, with the establishment of Molong farm, both the Commonwealth and the New South Wales Governments provided maintenance grants. In 1938, the Christian Brothers were approved to recruit one hundred migrant boys and to receive funding similar to the Barnardo and Fairbridge schemes.⁴¹ In the same year, the Commonwealth and New South Wales Governments agreed to contribute towards the maintenance of approved children brought to New South Wales by the Presbyterian Church at a rate

39 National Archives of Australia (NAA), *Good British Stock: Child and Youth Migration to Australia, 1901-83*, Research Guide No 11, 1999, Ch 3. Mr Gill argues that young migrants were sent to the colonies – Canada and Australia – as early as 1908. However the precise arrangements and ages of the migrants are disputed. See Gill, p.55.

40 The Dreadnought Trust was established in NSW in 1909 to assist and support young men to emigrate from Britain to be trained as rural workers in that State.

41 Sherington, and Jeffery, *Fairbridge*, pp.261-62.

of 3/6 per child per week up to the age of 14 years with a maximum payment by the Commonwealth of £1,000 per annum.⁴²

2.47 Juvenile migration was popular within the broader Australian community whereas adult migration was less so. One source noted that juvenile migration:

...generated the “feel-good” factor. Unemployment was high in the 1920s and adult migrants were competitors for scarce jobs. Many working class people and the Labor Party were cool towards, or opposed outright, to immigration. However, it was harder to be opposed to the arrival of deprived youngsters brought by Fairbridge or Barnardo’s, and equally difficult to be bitter towards young men brought by the Dreadnought Trust or the Big Brother Movement or the churches, intended for rural work at low wages which few Australians wanted.⁴³

2.48 In 1921 the Sydney Millions Club sponsored the arrival of the first official group of Barnardos boys, whose average age was 16 years.⁴⁴ In 1923, the first group of Barnardo girls arrived in Australia. In the same year the Fairbridge Farm School was re-established at Pinjarra (Western Australia). Further details of the Barnardos scheme are discussed in chapter 3. In 1925 the Big Brother Movement was launched, although they generally took older youths. In the mid-1920s the organisations bringing out child migrants became increasingly ambitious in their plans. In 1925 the Salvation Army chartered an entire ship to bring migrant boys and some married couples to Australia.⁴⁵

2.49 Until this time the major emphasis among the charitable and religious organisations involved in juvenile migration had been on creating a ‘new start’ in a new country for school-leavers rather than for younger children.

2.50 Catholic Church interest in child migration commenced in the 1920s. Dr Coldrey suggested that there were a variety of reasons for this but the main emphasis was on maintaining ‘Catholic numbers’ against the Protestants. He added that:

There were seven non-Catholic organisations, such as Barnardos, Fairbridge, the Big Brother Movement and the Millions Club, bringing numbers of children to Australia; no Catholic agencies. Some Catholic boys and young men were coming under the auspices of Fairbridge or the Big

42 Letters from the Commonwealth Department of Interior, dated 27.4.38 and NSW Department of Labour and Industry dated 9.5.38, attachment, confidential submission.

43 NAA, *Good British Stock*, Ch 3, p.1.

44 The Millions Club was formed in Sydney in 1916. Its aim was to settle ‘a million farmers on a million farms’ in NSW and Victoria.

45 Gill, pp.56-57.

Brother Movement, and this appeared an affront to some Catholic leaders who felt they had no equivalent service to offer suitable Catholic youth.⁴⁶

2.51 In 1922 the Knights of the Southern Cross was established in order to promote the interests of Catholics and to counter perceived Masonic and ‘Orange’ influence in the community generally. One of the objectives of the Knights was the promotion of Catholic immigration. It was in Western Australia that the Knights moved to encourage child migration with the approval of the bishops and the assistance of the Christian Brothers, especially two prominent members of the Order in Perth– Brothers PA Conlon and FP Keaney. The success of the Fairbridge Farm School at Pinjarra provided a challenge to Catholics in Perth. They responded by developing their own farm school at Tardun, which was intended to train both Australian and British youths in farming techniques.⁴⁷

2.52 After extensive negotiations between British and Australian churchmen and the Australian, Western Australian and British Governments, Brother Conlon was eventually sent in 1938 to the UK to finalise arrangements to bring about 100 boys to Western Australia. Three groups of British child migrants – 114 boys in all – were brought to Christian Brothers’ orphanages in Western Australia in 1938-39. Dr Coldrey characterised Catholic child migration in the late 1930s as small-scale, privately organised, enjoying a small government subsidy; and motivated by sectarian and child rescue considerations.⁴⁸

2.53 In 1930, as the Depression deepened, almost all immigration to Australia ceased. Youth migration under the Dreadnought Trust and the Big Brother Movement was curtailed, however Fairbridge was permitted to continue its work bringing children to Western Australia and Barnardos to its home at Picton (NSW). There was almost a complete cessation of immigration for the next seven years.

2.54 By the mid 1930s, as noted earlier, Canadian restrictions on the entry of child migrants forced the various agencies emigrating children to turn their attention to other countries, including Australia.

2.55 In 1937, juvenile migration to Australia under the Big Brother Movement and the Dreadnought Trust recommenced. In the same year a second Fairbridge farm school was established at Molong (NSW) and the Lady Northcote Trust established a similar farm school at Bacchus Marsh (Victoria); and the Christian Brothers brought their first group of child migrants to Tardun (Western Australia). Two years later the outbreak of World War II terminated migration for the duration of the war.

46 Coldrey, *The Scheme*, p.126.

47 Coldrey, *The Scheme*, p.128. See also Submission No.54, p.4 (JLG).

48 Coldrey, *The Scheme*, p.128.

Post-World War II migration

2.56 Child migration policy in the post-war period was based on several objectives, partly humanitarian and partly in line with the larger objectives of the post-war migration program. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs noted:

The concept of rescuing “war babies” and underprivileged children from orphanages in war torn Britain and offering them a new life in Australia had popular appeal, and the fact that these migrants were children was thought to give them an advantage in being able to more readily adapt and “assimilate” into the Australian community.⁴⁹

2.57 Strategic and defence considerations arising from World War II also played an important part in the genesis for Australia’s post-war immigration policies, of which child migration was a part. The Department observed that:

Australia was a large, sparsely populated country with densely populated neighbours at its doorstep. “Populate or perish” was the slogan; mass immigration was seen as the solution. This policy had bipartisan support in Parliament, and wide community acceptance. The need to defend Australia’s shores against the possibility of invasion, a declining birthrate, and an urgent need for labour provided the justification for a significantly increased immigration program.⁵⁰

2.58 Dr Constantine also noted that from 1942 Australian concerns about national security and under-population ensured that child migration again featured strongly among ideas to boost immigration to Australia of preferably British ‘stock’.⁵¹

2.59 Economic factors also played a role. The Department stated that like other migrants, child migrants ‘would eventually supplement the labour force but would not immediately take jobs away from returning ex-servicemen. They were...also part of the larger immigration scheme aimed at massively increasing Australia’s population in the post war period’.⁵²

2.60 Even prior to the end of World War II the Commonwealth Government had been developing plans to bring large numbers of child migrants to Australia. On 19 October 1943, Dr HC Coombs, Director-General of Postwar Reconstruction, wrote in a memo: ‘the Minister [the Hon JB Chifley, Minister for Postwar Reconstruction] thinks we should plan for immigration of large numbers of children after the cessation of hostilities’.⁵³ The involvement of child migration in this program was considered at an interdepartmental committee on postwar reconstruction in 1944. In the context of

49 Submission No.42, p.8 (DIMA).

50 Submission No.42, p.18 (DIMA).

51 Submission No.88, p.2 (Dr Constantine).

52 Submission No.42, p.8 (DIMA).

53 Cited in Coldrey, *The Scheme*, p.130.

increased adult migration, the Commonwealth Government undertook to take every available opportunity to facilitate the entry into Australia of approved children from European countries. The Government had already approved in principle a plan to bring to Australia, in the first three years after the war, 50,000 orphans from Britain and other countries.

2.61 On 2 August 1945, the then Minister for Immigration, the Hon Arthur Calwell, in his first major statement on immigration policy referred to the Government's plan to bring 50,000 orphans to Australia during the first three years of peace. In his speech, Mr Calwell stated:

Pending the resumption of large-scale adult migration, the Government will take every available opportunity to facilitate the entry into Australia of accepted children from other countries. The Government has already approved in principle a plan to bring to Australia, in the first three years after the war, 50,000 orphans from Britain and other countries that have been devastated by the war. Discussions on the details of this plan are proceeding with the States, and we hope soon to reach a stage where the full possibilities of the scheme can be properly assessed.⁵⁴

2.62 This program of child migration was the most specific immigration program to emerge from the war years. Australia's post-war immigration program – for both adults and children – formally came into effect on 31 December 1946. However, it soon became evident that the target of 50,000 war orphans could not be reached. The belief that the war had created a greater number of orphans in Britain was soon dispelled. Other European governments also proved unwilling to send children as they considered that it was their own responsibility to care for the homeless and orphaned, and their countries also needed rebuilding after the war.

2.63 The plans for child migration were made in consultation with the State Governments. It was decided that as far as possible the Commonwealth Government would rely on private organisations such as Barnardos, Fairbridge and the religious organisations, to promote child migration. Neither private fostering nor adoption of child migrants was favoured, partly for legal reasons as the death of the parents of refugee children might be impossible to determine.⁵⁵

2.64 On 20 August 1946, a conference of State Premiers gave specific attention to child migration. The conference expressed the hope that child migration should be on as broad a scale as possible, under the auspices of 'approved voluntary migration organisations'. According to the conference resolution: 'It was agreed that the Commonwealth should continue to be the sole authority in respect of migration activities overseas, and should accept financial responsibility for the recruitment, medical examination and transportation of all assisted migrants'. It was agreed in principle that the States should carry out the function of reception on arrival in

54 House of Representatives, *Debates*, 2.8.45, p.4914.

55 Submission No.42, p.18 (DIMA).

Australia, and also that of looking after the migrants' accommodation needs, but in practice this was passed to the voluntary agencies.⁵⁶

2.65 In 1946 a new assisted passage scheme was approved in which 'assisted' adults could travel to Australia for £10, and certain categories of migrants, such as child migrants would travel free. The Immigration Minister, Mr Calwell also announced a schedule of priorities for assisted migrants. There were 11 categories, with child migrants at the head of the list.

Legislative basis for post-war child migration

2.66 In 1946 the Empire Settlement Act, discussed earlier, was reactivated and the British Government, in partnership with the Australian Government, entered into agreements with each of the sending agencies. The agreements prescribe child migrant numbers and financial contributions agreed by the governments, and the powers of the UK Secretary of State to approve all immigration. The British Government was responsible through the Secretary of State to regulate and oversee the schemes.

2.67 The voluntary societies and sending agencies were responsible for the administration of the schemes. They were required to provide information to the UK Secretary of State for his authorisation to migrate children. However, 'it appears that in practice they dealt with all decision making processes and procedures in relation to the selection of children, consents and migration arrangements'.⁵⁷ The Committee notes that the British Government effectively 'out-sourced' the task of child migration to the charities and religious organisations. Dr Constantine has noted that agreements were signed with the voluntary societies in 1947 and were repeatedly renewed. He has argued that these renewals were among the occasions when the merits of child migration as a welfare strategy in general and of Australian child care institutions in particular were officially debated.⁵⁸

2.68 The legislative basis in Australia for post-war child migration was the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946* (IGOC Act). As noted previously, prior to 1946 the Commonwealth Government had not legislated for child migration. The IGOC Act placed legal guardianship in the Minister for Immigration for child migrants when they arrived in Australia until the child reached the age of 21 years. The intention of the Act was to enable uniformity in regard to legal guardianship of the children.⁵⁹

56 Gill, pp.64-65.

57 Submission No.135, pp.8-9 (WA Department for Family & Children's Services).

58 Submission No.88, p.6.

59 Submission No.42, p.20 (DIMA). DIMA provided further advice on the definition of 'guardianship'. The Department stated that a guardian in relation to a child is 'a person with the right to make decisions about the long-term needs of the child, as opposed to the day to day care of the child...The Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act modifies the traditional role of a guardian. The Act does not define guardian, so the ordinary understanding of that word, as discussed above, must be taken as the proper meaning. However, in ascertaining legal obligations and liabilities by the Act, it must be recognised that

2.69 Clause 6 of the Act stated that:

The Minister shall be the guardian of the person, and of the estate in Australia, of –

- (a) every evacuee child; and
- (b) every immigrant child who arrives in Australia after the commencement of this Act, to the exclusion of the father and mother and every other guardian of the child, and shall have, as guardian, the same rights, powers, duties, obligations and liabilities as a natural guardian of the child would have, until the child reaches the age of twenty-one years or leaves Australia permanently, or until the provisions of this Act cease to apply to and in relation to the child, whichever first happens.

2.70 The Act made further provision for the delegation of these powers. Subsection 5(1) of the Act enabled the Minister to delegate his functions and powers as guardian:

...to any officer or authority of the Commonwealth or of any State or Territory of the Commonwealth all or any of his powers and functions under this Act (except this power of delegation) so that the delegated powers and functions may be exercised by the delegate with respect to the matters or class of matters, or the child or class of children, specified in the instrument of delegation.

2.71 The Minister delegated his powers as guardian of child migrants to State welfare authorities shortly after the legislation was enacted. The Department stated that it was ‘not intended that the Commonwealth exercise direct control over the migrant children, but that State Authorities should assume that role’. Indentures were made between the delegated State Government welfare officials and voluntary organisations in which the organisations agreed to bear the responsibility for the care and welfare of the children placed under their care. The statutory scheme established by the IGOC Regulations:

...envisaged that the State authority would be primarily responsible for the supervision of the welfare and care of child migrants. The local State authority was likely to have better knowledge of the rights, powers and responsibilities of guardians and custodians under child welfare legislation and a better understanding of local conditions. In addition to this, officers of the State authority dealing with child welfare matters on a regular basis were

the legislation does in some ways modify the traditional role of a guardian. For example, the Act envisages delegation of the powers and functions of the Minister to State welfare authorities; and together with the regulations, the legislation provides inspection and other powers to State welfare authorities to supervise custody, and envisages that the State authority would be primarily responsible for supervision of the welfare and care of children covered by the Act. See Submission No.42, Additional Information, 9.4.01, pp.11-12 (DIMA).

better equipped to deal with these matters than the staff of the Commonwealth Immigration Department.⁶⁰

2.72 The Western Australian Department for Family and Children's Services described the operation of the system in Western Australia. After the Commonwealth Minister for Immigration delegated his powers to the Western Australian Under Secretary for Lands and Immigration in 1947,⁶¹ indentures were drawn up between the custodians (the receiving agencies) and the guardian, dealing with the respective responsibilities for the care of migrant children. Under the terms of the indenture each custodian agreed to '(1) bear all responsibility for the care and welfare of the children (2) not remove them from the place specified without consent, and (3) in all things comply with the provisions on its part relating to such children and contained in the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946*, and in the *Child Welfare Act 1907-41* and the regulations made thereunder and amendments thereto'.⁶² At the same time, the Child Welfare Department agreed to assume an inspectorial role over child migrants, to assist the Lands and Immigration Department in fulfilling its responsibilities.

2.73 Some submissions argued that as the custodian (the receiving agency) agreed to bear 'all responsibility' for the care of the children, this meant that the primary responsibility for the subsequent maltreatment of children under their care belongs to those to whom the children were entrusted – those who were there in the institutions and those who supervised them. Professor Sherington stated that:

The vast majority of child migrants arrived in Australia under the age of twelve. The child migration societies had thus effectively assumed a duty of care until the child migrants reached the age of majority at twenty-one. This moral if not legal obligation appears to have been enforced by governments on an intermittent basis.⁶³

2.74 *The Children Act 1948* (UK) gave the UK Secretary of State the legal power to control the emigration arrangements made by the voluntary organisations. Under the Act, local authorities could arrange for the emigration of children in their care. The Act provides that a local authority may, with the consent of the Secretary of State, procure the emigration of any child in their care; and that the Secretary of State shall not give his consent unless satisfied that emigration would benefit the child and that suitable arrangements have been, or will be made, for the child's reception and welfare in the country to which he is going; that the parents or guardian of the child

60 Submission No.42, pp.20-21 (DIMA). Copies of the 1946 instrument of delegation signed with each State and an example of an indenture are appended to the submission.

61 Guardianship of migrant children was transferred from the WA Lands & Immigration Department to the WA Child Welfare Department in 1952.

62 Cited in Submission No.135, p.6 (WA Department for Family & Children's Services). See also Submission No.146, Additional Information, pp.4,6 (Queensland Government).

63 Submission No.119, p.3 (Professor Sherington).

have been consulted or that it is not practicable to consult them; and that the child consents.⁶⁴

2.75 In the post-war period the main receiving agencies for child migrants were Catholic Church agencies, Fairbridge, Barnardos as well as some Protestant Churches. A number of organisations did not operate child and youth migration schemes as they had prior to World War II. The Dreadnought Scheme ceased bringing out British youths and the Salvation Army confined its activities to single adults or people, including children, travelling with or coming to join families (see also later discussion of the Salvation Army in chapter 3).⁶⁵

2.76 Child migration did not resume until 1947 with the arrival of boys for the Christian Brothers institution at Bindoon (Western Australia). In the period 1947 to 1950 a number of Catholic women's religious orders – notably the Sisters of Mercy and the Poor Sisters of Nazareth – entered the field of child migration. In 1951 Barnardos opened a new home, 'Greenwood', at Normanhurst (New South Wales) with both boys and girls in residence, which was intended to keep brothers and sisters together. By 1952 most of the 'caring' organisations were also looking after Australian-born children. Barnardos was the exception – concerning itself exclusively, until the 1960s, with youth migrants from the United Kingdom.

Financial arrangements

2.77 With the recommencement of child migration in the post World War II period, it was again agreed that maintenance payments would be shared by the participating Governments (British, Commonwealth and State). Payments were made for all children to the age of 14 years and for those still in school, up to the age of 16 years. All States agreed to pay 3/6 per week. The Commonwealth's maintenance payment was replaced by child endowment of 5/- per week which had been introduced in 1941 (increased to 7/6 and then 10/-) for all children resident in Australia aged under 16 years.⁶⁶ It was also agreed at the 1948 State Conference on child migration, that the State would provide child migrants with a clothing and pocket money allowance, and a wage subsidy upon leaving care, commensurate with the assistance given wards.⁶⁷ The Commonwealth also agreed to pay an equipment allowance if the child was under 14 years at the date of sailing to Australia.⁶⁸

2.78 Professor Sherington and Mr Jeffery noted that by 1953 there were considerable differences in State maintenance payments. Western Australia at that date was contributing £1.3.3 per child per week while Victoria was contributing 6/-

64 Cited in Submission No.15, p.42 (Dr Coldrey).

65 Gill, p.68. Mr Gill notes, however, that a small number of child migrants, travelling independently, were sponsored by the Salvation Army (see Gill, p.78).

66 Sherington & Jeffery, *Fairbridge*, p.262.

67 Submission No.135, p.13 (WA Department for Family and Children's Services).

68 Submission No.42, p.22 (DIMA).

per week and New South Wales 4/8 per week. These State differences remained in place throughout the next decade.⁶⁹

2.79 The Western Australian Department for Family and Children's Services provided the following detailed information on maintenance payments. In 1948 payments to child migrants up to 16 years were summarised as:

Commonwealth child endowment	10/- per week
State subsidy	3/6 per week
British Government subsidy	6/3 per week
Lotteries Commission	3/- per week
Total	£1.2.9 per week

In 1963 payments were:

Commonwealth child endowment	10/- per week
State subsidy	15/- per week
British Government subsidy	£1.5.0 per week
Lotteries Commission	10/- per week
Total	£3.0.0 per week⁷⁰

2.80 The Queensland Government provided the following information from Annual Reports for 1954-55 and 1956-57 for payments for child migrants under 16 years of age:

Commonwealth child endowment	10/- per week
State subsidy	12/6 per week
British Government subsidy	12/6 per week
Total	£1.15.0 per week

Where a child was still attending secondary school at 16 years of age, the State increased the payment to 25/- per week and payments from the other Governments ceased.

2.81 The Queensland Government noted that in 1954-55 the amount paid by the State Government to denominational homes for each State ward was 25/- per week. In addition to this amount, child endowment of 10/- per week was received for each child, making a total of £1.15.0 per week, the same amount received by the institution for each child migrant. In all instances, the cost of medical and dental treatment of the children and of school requisites was defrayed by the State, which also paid half the cost of buildings, extensions, repairs and other capital items.⁷¹

69 Sherington & Jeffery, *Fairbridge*, pp.262-63.

70 Submission No.135, pp.14-15 (WA Department for Family and Children's Services).

71 Submission No.146, Additional Information, p.4 (Queensland Government).

2.82 In 1950, the Maltese Government agreed to pay a 10/- sterling maintenance subsidy per week until the age of 16 years.

2.83 While the Commonwealth Government and the relevant State Governments contributed to the support of child migrants, the funding arrangements for the church and charitable institutions caring for children generally varied across the country. Institutions received child endowment payments from the Commonwealth from 1941, but in New South Wales and South Australia, for example, maintenance payments were not paid by the State to voluntary child care institutions for Australian-born children. Dr Joanna Penglase has stated that in effect the institutions in New South Wales were run on the 19th century model, relying on charity and endowments. Thus 'private donations, bequests and fund-raising appeals were a major source of income for most Catholic Homes, and even an important factor in their survival since the Diocese itself rarely funded the Homes within it'.⁷²

2.84 The poor financial situation of some New South Wales institutions was also illustrated by Dr Marion Fox's research on St Anne's at Liverpool where in 1951, 'the orphanage administrator was instructed by her superior that economies such as reducing the children's supply of meat and sugar were to be discontinued'.⁷³

2.85 Following intense lobbying by the Association of Child Caring Agencies (established in 1958 for the express purpose to address the issue), the New South Wales Government commenced payments for children in voluntary child care institutions in 1961. However, these children had to be made a state ward. The requirement for wardship was eliminated in 1965.⁷⁴

2.86 Dr Fox stated that post war the Catholic bishops sought capital funding from Government for all new buildings and equipment and for the extension of existing buildings to house child migrants. In return, the Church would guarantee to accommodate the children for at least ten years.⁷⁵ In 1946, the Commonwealth and States agreed each would pay one-third of capital expenditure for Commonwealth approved projects to accommodate migrant children. Dr Fox observed that 'this was a major concession for Catholic orphanages in New South Wales which otherwise received no capital grants'. Dr Fox also noted that :

With governments paying all transport expenses for children, passages expenses for escorts, and a small equipment allowance for each child under the age of fourteen, Simonds [Coadjutor Archbishop of Melbourne] advised the bishops in October 1946 that they had won at least twelve 'generous concessions'. Notably, they would retain full control of buildings which

72 Penglase, J, *'Orphans of the Living': The Home Children NSW 1939-1965*, Ph.D thesis, Macquarie University, 1999, pp. 196, 197.

73 Fox, M, 'British Child Migrants in New South Wales Catholic Orphanages', *History of Education Review*, Vol.25, (2), 1996, p.8.

74 Penglase, p.152.

75 Fox, p.4.

received government grants and would not be required to repay grants unless buildings were used for other purposes. Writing to Calwell [Commonwealth Minister for Immigration] in March 1946, Conlon had acknowledged the Minister's need for caution to ensure that concessions made to the Church could apply equally to all voluntary agencies.⁷⁶

2.87 In Western Australia, Brother Keaney sought funding for extensive work at Bindoon. This was not without disagreements—evidence indicates that the Commonwealth Government had concerns about the cost of the building projects at Bindoon and that it was known to Commonwealth officials that much of the labour was provided by children at the institution.⁷⁷ In New South Wales applications for government capital funding for two new Catholic orphanages at Cowper and new buildings at Liverpool were not approved. The Murray-Dwyer and Monte Pio orphanages received a joint capital grant of £10,000. An extensive building project began at Monte Pio in expectation of additional funding. This was not approved because officials believed that even with extensions, accommodation remained inadequate and indeed Child Welfare reduced the approved number of Australian children in the home by twenty.⁷⁸

2.88 Ms L Williams in her study of child migration to Tasmania also noted the benefits of capital grants for institutions. The Church of England Clarendon Children's Home had, in 1946, proposed to build a set of small cottages. However, 'due to financial difficulties this idea had been shelved, and was only revived in the early 1950s, when involvement in child migration allowed the Home to utilise financial incentives being offered by the federal and state governments to participate in the scheme'.⁷⁹ Documents also indicate that State and Commonwealth capital funding was proved for Swan Homes. In 1949, both Governments agreed to contribute £5,990 each towards the building of Lee Steere House (Western Australia).⁸⁰

The Catholic Church and post-war migration

2.89 After the Second World War the Catholic Church became the largest single sponsoring agency bringing child migrants to Australia.⁸¹ As noted previously, prior to this time, Catholic Church involvement in child migration was small-scale. By the end of World War II, meetings of the Catholic hierarchy in Australia were discussing the possibilities for post-war migration, including child migration. This took place in

76 Fox, p.4.

77 From National Archives RecordSearch - Letter from the Western Australian Department of Lands and Survey to the Commonwealth Department of Immigration, dated 20.2.51, K403/3 W59/87, pp.70-71.

78 Fox, pp. 8-9.

79 Williams, L, "'Good British Stock': British Child Migration to Tasmania after 1945", *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, Vol 5, no.1, 1996, p.160.

80 Submission No.42, Additional Information, Attachment J, 9.4.01, p.4 (DIMA).

81 This section of this chapter relies on several sources including Coldrey, *The Scheme*, pp.133-139; NAA, *Good British Stock*, Ch 3, Part 14; Gill, pp.71-75.

the context of the Commonwealth Government's strong support for immigration in the wake of the war.

2.90 In 1946, the Australian Bishops explored the possibilities of bringing large numbers of children to Australia:

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference arranged with the Christian Brothers to allow Brother Conlon to accompany Archbishop Simmonds to Europe in April 1946: Simmonds to explore the possibilities of bringing out large numbers of war orphans from devastated continental Europe to Australia, and Conlon to arrange a lift of British child migrants to the Tardun scheme. The Immigration Department funded the exercise.⁸²

2.91 Dr Coldrey noted that 'Catholic Church leaders – late arrivals on the Australian juvenile migration scene – responded to government policy with the fervour and dedication of recent converts'.⁸³ For example, Archbishop Prendiville of Perth wrote to Cardinal Griffin in London in July 1945 offering to take 2 500 British orphans into Western Australian Catholic orphanages during the first eighteen months of peace. In 1947 the first post-war group of child migrants arrived in Australia.

2.92 Mr Gill noted that while the Catholic initiatives in this area were explained as responding to a humanitarian need 'inevitably some saw it as a sectarian exercise' and he noted that correspondence of the period suggested an awareness by several religious bodies of the role orphan children could play in 'a denominational numbers game'. Before leaving for Europe, Archbishop Simmonds sent a letter to all the Bishops of Australia giving an account of his intentions. A copy of the letter was sent to Superior-General of the Christian Brothers in Dublin, whose assistant wrote to a colleague that:

This letter [from Simmonds] reveals a scheme much more comprehensive than bringing out a few hundred migrant children and the object is to increase the Catholic population in Australia as well as to save Catholic children from losing their holy faith and from being drawn into the Protestant current that will flow into Australia.⁸⁴

2.93 Some Protestant groups in Australia also expressed alarm at the apparent partiality shown by the Catholic Church in the selection of immigrants.⁸⁵ However, the Protestant Churches displayed an awareness of the role child migration could play in 'keeping up' numbers with the other denominations. Mr Peterkin, Director of the Anglican Homes for Children (Western Australia), recounted a meeting in 1946 of the heads of denominational institutions responsible for child care in Perth to ascertain whether they wished to receive child migrants. After the other denominations had

82 NAA, *Good British Stock*, Ch 3. See also Submission No.54, p.4 (JLG).

83 NAA, *Good British Stock*, Ch 3.

84 Cited in Gill, p.72.

85 Gill, pp.71-74.

offered to take various numbers of child migrants he recounted a meeting with the Anglican Archbishop of Perth:

When I said that the Church of England couldn't do anything about child migration because our enrolment was at capacity, he [the Anglican Archbishop] fiercely replied: "Peterkin, don't you ever say that the Church of England can't do anything about anything". He was in fact most hostile that we were not co-operating, and eventually it was decided between us that, provided help with the erection of buildings was forthcoming, we would offer places for fifty child migrants a year'.⁸⁶

2.94 Some evidence to the Committee also argued that a motive for the Catholic Church in promoting child migration was monetary gain.⁸⁷ Child labour was used for laundries, child nurseries, commercial contracts, construction, clearing and farming – all with government subsidies. These subsidies, coupled with the income from these activities, provided the means for the religious orders to exist and to be self-sufficient. Dr Fox noted that the Catholic Bishops did not make their institutions available to take child migrants without first gaining concessions from governments – 'public funding towards capital works and children's maintenance provided a pragmatic reason for participation in the [child migration] program'.⁸⁸ The Catholic Church, in particular, gained financially from an increase in the value of its property holdings. Broken Rites stated:

Clontarf and Bindoon started off as bare ground. I understand that Bindoon was a 17,000-acre property given to the Christian Brothers and boys worked as slaves to create and turn that into a capital asset which must be worth millions in terms of the upgrading of the land, its farmability, the buildings that were put there. There were no wages paid to any of these children. They created the capital asset for the Catholic church and the Catholic church maintains the benefits of having that capital asset.⁸⁹

2.95 These issues are discussed further in chapter 5.

2.96 The Australian and British Governments in the light of Brother Conlon's highly personalised, semi independent advocacy for migration requested the Catholic Church to place its immigration organisation on a more formal basis. In 1947 the Federal Catholic Migration Committee was launched and Catholic Migration offices were opened in the capital cities. The arrival of over 300 child migrants in Western Australia in 1947 filled the available spaces in Catholic institutions and over the next three years few children arrived under Catholic auspices. The Catholic authorities, however, made strenuous efforts during the years 1950-56 to recruit additional child

86 Peterkin, AR, *The Noisy Mansions: The Story of Swanleigh 1868-1971*, Swanleigh, 1986, pp.105-106.

87 *Committee Hansard*, 15.3.01, pp.254,267 (Broken Rites); Fox, pp.2-5, 13.

88 Fox, p.13.

89 *Committee Hansard*, 15.3.01, p.254 (Broken Rites).

migrants for Catholic institutions around the country, however, most went to Western Australia.⁹⁰

2.97 In the United Kingdom, Catholic migration was operated through the Catholic Child Welfare Council (CCWC). The Council argued in its submission to the inquiry that throughout the period of migration of children to Australia it appears that the representatives of the Catholic hierarchy in Australia were by-passing the Council and going directly to the children's homes run by Catholic religious orders in the United Kingdom to recruit children for migration. The Council highlighted a case in point when in November 1953, 114 children from England and Wales were sent to Australia without the knowledge of the Council. The complaints of the CCWC were finally addressed in 1954 when it was agreed by the Australian Catholic Migration Committee that all negotiations about the migration of children were to go through the Council.⁹¹ Child migration under Catholic Church auspices, however, ended in 1956.

Role of the United Kingdom and Australian Governments

2.98 While some submissions emphasised the active role of the Australian Government in seeking child migrants from Britain in the post-war period, other evidence suggests that the United Kingdom Government played a much more significant role than previously imagined.⁹² The Western Australian Select Committee noted that during discussions with UK Government officials, those officials pointed to the 'the minimal and insignificant role played by the [UK] government at an official level in child migration'. However, the Western Australian Committee argued that a number of archival documents and the 1956 Ross report (a fact finding mission sent to Australia from the United Kingdom to collect information on the arrangements for the reception of child migrants in this country) 'lead us to a different view...which indicated that in many cases, the UK Government involvement was significant. Indeed, this involvement may even go to approvals of individual children by the Secretary of State for the Home Department'.⁹³

2.99 The Western Australian Committee reported that:

From what we know now of the selection process of children in the United Kingdom, it would appear confirmed by the Ross Report that each child selected while under the care of a local authority in the UK could not have

90 NAA, Ch 3, Part 14, p.2.

91 Submission No.51, Attachment 1, p.4 (CCWC).

92 See Submission No.132, p.2 (CMT) for arguments concerning the 'active role' of the Australian Government. See also Submission No.129, p.13 (IAFCM&F); *Committee Hansard*, 22.3.01, p.513 (Professor Sherington).

93 Western Australian Legislative Assembly, Select Committee into Child Migration, *Interim Report*, 1996, p.40.

been migrated without the specific approval of the Secretary of State, one of the top three cabinet ministers.⁹⁴

2.100 The Western Australian report, citing the Ross report, indicated that after 1947, although grants for capital expenditure were not given by the United Kingdom Government towards new or existing institutions, the United Kingdom Government's 'approval was required before a new establishment could be brought into use for the reception of unaccompanied children'.⁹⁵ The Ross report also noted that assistance towards the costs of children's passages to Australia was given by the United Kingdom Government. Moreover, capitation payments were made towards the cost of maintaining UK children, under the age of 16 years, in an approved institution.⁹⁶ The report of the UK Health Committee acknowledged that 'voluntary agencies received the encouragement and financial backing of successive British governments and of successive governments of the receiving countries'.⁹⁷

2.101 In 1947, Mr Calwell outlined the formal procedures for admittance of children from the United Kingdom, underlining the respective roles of the various governments and receiving agencies. Mr Calwell stated that:

..all action must be taken within the framework of the free and assisted passage arrangements made between the UK and Commonwealth governments and the procedural and other arrangements decided upon at the Premiers Conference in August [1946] in relation to the immigration functions of the Commonwealth and the states... Before the children can be shipped [to Australia] (a) The Catholic authorities in Australia must give details of the Homes in which the children are to be accommodated; (b) The United Kingdom representative in Australia must be satisfied that the accommodation and other facilities provided for the children are suitable in every respect; (c) After the above, Catholic authorities must then submit group nominations on Form LEM 3...(d) After acceptance, Australia House will arrange for medical examination and final selection.⁹⁸

2.102 The evidence suggests that the child migrants sent to Australia from the United Kingdom, especially in the immediate post-war period, were often the most deprived children in UK institutions. While some evidence suggests Australian officials had little choice in accepting these children due to the lack of a larger 'pool' of British children available for migration at that time, other evidence suggests that attitudes and practices in the United Kingdom also played a part in the type of children available for migration. There was also the expectation in Australia, at least in the mid to late 1940s that the children to be sent to Australia would be 'war

94 WA Interim Report, p.40. See also Coldrey, BM, *Child Migration: Consent of Parents to their Children's Emigration*, Tamanaraik Publishing, 1996, pp.34-35.

95 Cited in WA Interim Report, p.41.

96 Cited in WA Interim Report, p.41.

97 Report of UK Health Committee, para 14.

98 Letter from Mr Calwell to Brother Conlon, 23.1. 47, cited in Coldrey, *Catholic Institutions*, p.82.

orphans’, whereas in practice this was not the case – while many were abandoned or illegitimate the vast majority were not orphans.⁹⁹

2.103 In the United Kingdom, the 1945 Curtis Committee report into the care of children, which provided the basis for post-war British child care services stated that children of ‘fine physique’ and ‘good mental equipment’ should be kept in the United Kingdom; for such young people ‘satisfactory openings can be found in this country’. The report stated that child migration should remain a placement option for certain especially deprived children ‘with an unfortunate background’ for whom a start in a new country could be ‘the foundation of a happy life’.¹⁰⁰ Dr Coldrey stated that once the recommendations of the Curtis report were accepted by the UK Government in 1947, child migration was advocated only for seriously deprived children, not the ‘elite’ of the institutions. Dr Coldrey noted that ‘the Australian Government wanted as many child migrants as could be obtained; they had to take those they could get. It was not the case that “we will take only the best”’.¹⁰¹ The Curtis Committee report is discussed later in this chapter.

2.104 Dr Coldrey also stated that within individual homes and orphanages in the United Kingdom ‘there was understandable pressure on harassed administrators to send their problem children to Australia. This occurred in many cases; not in all’.¹⁰² These ‘problem’ children were often disruptive or troublesome children that the institutions had difficulty in coping with or disciplining or were seen as less intelligent than the other children in the institution. In March 1952, Fr Nicol, of the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee, referred to ‘some of the convents [in the past] submitting their problem children for emigration’.¹⁰³ There was also some evidence that agencies, because of their lack of funds, saw child migration as a means of concentrating scarce resources on children in need in the United Kingdom. Barnardos noted that ‘financial restrictions on agencies like Barnardos meant that child migration enabled more children in the United Kingdom to be assisted’.¹⁰⁴

2.105 Concerns were raised in Australia regarding the overall standards of child migrants sent from the United Kingdom. At a Conference of Commonwealth-State Immigration Ministers in May 1949, two years after the arrival of the first post-war group of child migrants, the Western Australian Minister complained of the poor health and educational standards of child migrants from the United Kingdom sent to that state. In December 1949 a report was prepared by Mr J McCall of the Education Department of Western Australia on the educational standards of migrant children in Catholic institutions in Western Australia. The report noted the low level of

99 Submission No.129, p.15 (IAFCM&F).

100 Cited in Coldrey, *Catholic Institutions*, p.75.

101 Coldrey, *Catholic Institutions*, p.82. See also Submission No.15, p.55 (Dr Coldrey).

102 Coldrey, *Catholic Institutions*, p. 91.

103 Cited in Coldrey, *Catholic Institutions*, p.93.

104 Submission No.50, p.2 (Barnardos).

educational attainment of this group of children and recommended that that the selection of child migrants from the United Kingdom ‘be such as to ensure that groups contain at least the usual distribution of intelligence’.¹⁰⁵

2.106 The Commonwealth Minister assured the Ministers’ Conference that the question of the stricter supervision in the selection of child migrants from the United Kingdom would be taken up with the Chief Migration Officer at Australia House in London. In August 1949, the Chief Migration Officer responded to these concerns stating that ‘almost without exception [the recent child migrants] came within the category of “deprived” children and together with other disrupting circumstances could not be expected to be on a par with Australian children’. The Commonwealth Department’s comment in relation to the ‘deprived children aspect’ was that Australian children in institutions ‘also probably lack a normal home life’ and as it was two years since the children arrived from the United Kingdom that ‘they should have settled down by now’.¹⁰⁶ In January 1950 the Secretary of the Commonwealth Department advised the Chief Migration Officer in London to ensure that in future, child migrants sent from the UK are ‘of normal average intelligence’.¹⁰⁷ Dr Coldrey, noting the problems of obtaining ‘suitable’ children, suggested that officials at Australia House took those child migrants that were ‘available’ at the time.¹⁰⁸ Dr Coldrey contends that ‘the critical reality was that few children were available for immigration. Australian authorities – at all levels – were slow to come to terms with changing British care policy towards deprived children’.¹⁰⁹

Changing UK attitudes to the care of children

2.107 As noted above, during and immediately after World War II there was a concerted effort within Australia to boost immigration to Australia of preferably British migrants, including child migrants. Dr Constantine noted, however, that in the United Kingdom, the studied effects of wartime evacuation and family separation confirmed the more widely publicised view in official and professional circles of the importance of stable child-parent relationships for the psychological well-being of children. These conclusions led to a questioning of the appropriateness of child migration as a child care practice.¹¹⁰

2.108 In 1945 the United Kingdom Government appointed the Care of Children Committee (the Curtis Committee) to report on the care of children. The Committee took the conventional natural family as the unit most conducive to the well-being of

105 Cited in Submission No.54, Additional Information, 23.4.01, p.2 (JLG).

106 Commonwealth Department of Immigration, *Cabinet Submission*, 6.5.49.

107 Letter from Mr T. Heyes, Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Immigration to the Chief Migration Officer, Australia House, London, 6.1.50.

108 Coldrey, *Catholic Institutions*, p.81.

109 Submission No.15, p.55 (Dr Coldrey).

110 Submission No.88, p.2 (Dr Constantine). See also Coldrey, *Child Institutions*, pp.57-60; Submission No.42, p.19-20 (DIMA).

children. The emphasis they placed on the psychological and not just the physical needs of children was indicative of an important shift in professional child care thinking in Britain. In its conclusions, the Curtis Committee emphasised that local authorities and voluntary societies caring for children ‘deprived of a normal home life’ should attempt to replicate the ‘natural family’ as far as possible in child care practice. The Committee concluded that the emigration of children in care should remain open for those with ‘an unfortunate background’ and who ‘express a desire for it’, with the important caveat that the treatment of children sent overseas should not be less satisfactory than the care which they should receive in the United Kingdom. The recommendations of the Curtis Committee were accepted by the United Kingdom Government in March 1947.¹¹¹

2.109 Dr Constantine argued that the recommendations of the Curtis Committee, the views of the Home Office, and changed perceptions of children’s needs altered ‘best practice’ in Britain. The priorities became, if possible, to support children with their natural parent(s), and failing that to secure adoption or boarding-out of children with foster parents. Where children were to be retained in institutional care, the preferred ‘institution’ was to be a small group of children, looked after by a married couple, living in ‘scattered homes’, that is, ordinary houses indistinguishable from others in the neighbourhood. If, as a less desirable option, distinctive institutions were to be operated, these should allow children in small groups of different ages and both sexes to be looked after by a trained house ‘mother’ in purpose built ‘cottage homes’. Far less acceptable were large ‘barrack’ institutions, especially those in which children slept in dormitories and dined in large groups. It was also seen as important that children should not be gathered into single-sex institutions. Siblings should not be separated. Contact with other relatives and friends should be retained. Conventional socialisation should occur by arranging for children, if possible, to attend normal state schools and to be involved in local sports and club activities.¹¹²

The Moss and Ross reports

2.110 Two major investigations into the situation of child migrants were conducted by British government officials in the 1950s. These led to the publication of two reports – the Moss Report in 1953 based on John Moss’s visit in 1951-52; and the Ross Report in 1956 based on a UK official fact finding mission.

2.111 Mr Moss was a member of the Curtis Committee and Kent County Welfare Officer. His visit, at the request of the British Home Office, was to assess the quality of care available to British child migrants in Australian institutions. The Moss Report had much to say in favour of several Australian institutions, and its thrust was to recommend child migration as a suitable child welfare strategy. Nevertheless, as Dr Constantine points out, Curtis principles still guided the necessary reforms that John Moss sought to encourage. Assessing some institutions, he was critical of their

111 Submission No.88, pp.3-4 (Dr Constantine).

112 Submission No.88, pp.3-4 (Dr Constantine).

accommodation and facilities and of their isolation, expressed concern about single-sex establishments, and drew attention to a lack of trained staff. He was keen to see more effort to encourage integration of children with the wider community and wanted to see more use of employment and vocational guidance services. He also urged the societies to abandon barrack-like institutions in favour of cottage homes, boarding-out of more children, or the promotion of adoption as an option.¹¹³

2.112 The other inquiry, the Ross Committee, was a fact finding mission led by John Ross as part of the decision making process for renewing subsidies under the Empire Settlement Act, which were due to expire in 1957. Mr Ross was Assistant Under-Secretary at the Home Office. The Ross Committee attacked the very principle of child migration. They dismissed the argument that deprived children were naturally those who would most benefit from a 'fresh start'. In their view it was 'precisely such children, already rejected and insecure, who might often be ill-equipped to cope with the added strain of migration'.¹¹⁴

2.113 The Ross report also criticised the nature of institutional care in Australia. Of the 26 establishments visited by the Committee, 11 were barrack-type, 8 were cottage-style homes, and 7 were houses or groups of houses. The report criticised the institutional nature of many of the establishments. Moreover the report noted that not all staff in these institutions had 'sufficient knowledge of child care methods', and it expressed regret that there was no specialised scheme of training in child care work in Australia. Especially in the larger establishments, the report stated that there was a lack of a 'homely atmosphere' and too little privacy. Even some cottage homes lacked the mix of children by age and gender characteristic of families. The report noted that evidence of the separation of siblings indicated a failure to grasp the importance of family-focussed child care. The report was critical of the lack of educational and employment opportunities made available to the children. Finally, the report noted that the isolation of several establishments and the lack of contact between children and the local communities inhibited the process of assimilation into Australian society. The report especially singled out five institutions for special condemnation – Dhurringle, Bindoon, St John Bosco Boys' Town, Magill, and Riverview Training Farm, though Mr Ross privately informed Home Office colleagues that 'others could easily have been condemned' but extreme criticism was limited due to 'considerations of practical politics'. The report also noted that some boys and girls were being exploited as cheap labour. Dr Constantine noted that the report 'left no doubt that existing practices should be much overhauled if child care migration were to continue to deserve official British endorsement and further funding'.¹¹⁵

2.114 The Australian government would not agree to the publication of the Report in its first version until Australian officials had visited the institutions. In July 1956 an

113 Moss, J, *Child Migration to Australia*, HMSO, London, 1953.

114 Ross, J, *Child Migration to Australia: Report of a Fact-Finding Mission*, HMSO, London, 1956, p.73.

115 Submission No.88, p.15 (Dr Constantine).

inquiry was conducted by the Prime Minister's Department, but shortcomings were only detected at Dhurringle and Bindoon and minor improvements suggested. The Australian inquiry concluded that 'in view of [this], it is felt that there is no justification for your government to take any action to cause even the temporary deferment of child migration to Australia'. In the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth Relations Office recorded that 'as we feared, the Australian authorities focus only on material things like bathrooms and carpets, and ignore what has been said about atmosphere and management'. A UK Home Office official minuted that the Australian report 'confirms my view that Australian and UK thinking on child care matters is poles apart'.¹¹⁶

2.115 Dr Constantine concluded that it was 'abundantly clear' that the particular practice of child migration after 1945 was considered by most child care professionals in Britain as at best unnecessary and at worst – unless the Curtis Committee caveat was followed – damaging.¹¹⁷ Dr Constantine added that the politics of child care ensured that the caveat was dishonoured:

The voluntary societies in Britain had inherited traditions, reputations and allies, and neither the Home Office nor the Commonwealth Relations Office faced up to confrontation. Even the dependence of the voluntary societies upon British taxpayers' subsidies was not employed as a sanction to insist upon changes in the treatment of British child migrants. Instead British officials attempted to "educate" Australia.¹¹⁸

Conclusion

2.116 The Committee believes that the Commonwealth Government's policy of child migration in the post-war period reflected the values of the time and was well-intentioned. However, this policy is now regarded to have been seriously flawed. The policy had obvious serious and long-lasting deleterious impacts on the lives of many former child migrants.

2.117 The Committee notes that the original intention of the post-war immigration policy was based on a number of motives including humanitarian concerns, and was also in line with the need to increase Australia's population. The idea of rescuing underprivileged children from orphanages in war-ravaged Britain and offering them a new life in Australia had particular popular appeal. At the time it was thought that migrant children would be the 'best migrants' – more readily adaptable than adults, and easier to integrate into the wider Australian community. However, evidence to the Committee indicated that the children sent from British homes and orphanages were amongst the most socially deprived in the United Kingdom at the time and that their backgrounds were not as originally envisaged by the Australian Government.

116 Submission No.88, p.18 (Dr Constantine).

117 Submission No.88, p.23 (Dr Constantine).

118 Submission No.88, p.24 (Dr Constantine).

2.118 The Committee considers that the policy of child migration cannot be seen other than in the context of its time and with regard to the practices of the time, especially the emphasis placed on the institutional care of children, which judged by today's standards is an outmoded practice, and detrimental, in many cases, to the welfare of children in care. This aspect of removing children from the United Kingdom under government and private migration schemes needs to be seen separately from the subsequent treatment they endured in Australian institutions by those who had direct charge of them. However, both aspects contributed to the harsh outcomes for the children in care.

2.119 The Committee also believes that the roles and responsibilities of all governments involved in child migration need to be recognised. While the Australian Government played a significant role and must accept its responsibility for the consequences of those policies, the role of the British Government in facilitating and providing financial support for the schemes was fundamental. The Committee considers that it should be recognised that without the co-operation of the British Government, the child migration schemes could not have operated.

Child migration from Malta

2.120 Between 1950 and 1965 some 310 Maltese children – 259 boys and 51 girls were sent from Malta to Australia (see Appendix 6 for further details), although child migration, a long-standing feature of British social policy, had no long-standing roots in Maltese society. In Maltese society comprising large, extended close-knit families the 'abandoned child' hardly existed. However, most Maltese were poor, their families were large, and the pressure of population on resources meant that the Maltese, from at least the 19th century, were an emigrant people.¹¹⁹

2.121 Child migration from Malta was a marginal feature of Maltese emigration in general, with adult migration playing a much larger role. Child migration was first mooted in the 1930s when the Christian Brothers through Brother Conlon, negotiated with the Catholic Emigration Society (UK) regarding the emigration of child migrants from Catholic institutions in the United Kingdom to the Brothers' institutions in Western Australia. Some Maltese Catholic leaders in Australia were anxious for Maltese children in institutions to be included in the scheme. In 1938, Brother Conlon negotiated a draft agreement with the Maltese Government to take some 20 boys annually from institutions and poor families in Malta to Western Australia. However, the agreement was not implemented immediately and the war postponed further consideration of child migration.

2.122 World War II had a devastating effect on Malta, and in its wake, and in the midst of a population explosion in the country, the Maltese Government encouraged tens of thousands of its citizens to emigrate. In February 1950 a formal agreement between the Maltese Government and the Catholic hierarchy in Australia was signed

119 Coldrey, BM, *Child Migration from Malta to Australia: 1930s to 1960s*, Tamanaraik Publishing, 1992, p.i.

with Australian Government approval regarding child emigration from Malta.¹²⁰ The Agreement provided that ‘the [Maltese] Minister shall undertake all the general administrative work in Malta connected with the said scheme including the selection of the children under the control of the Maltese Government and their approval by the Australian Government and the Australian Catholic Church Immigration Authorities prior to embarkation for Australia’. The Agreement also provided that the Catholic Immigration Committee ‘undertake that the training of the children admitted to the Institutions under this Agreement shall be of the kind that shall fit them for life in Australia’.¹²¹

2.123 The first Maltese child migrants arrived in Western Australia in April 1950 and were placed in Christian Brothers’ institutions, according to their ages and perceived level of academic potential. Thereafter, groups of 10 to 20 young unaccompanied migrants arrived each year until the mid-1960s.¹²²

2.124 Most of the child migrants were male and almost all were placed in Catholic institutions in Western Australia. The majority were not orphans but came from large families that found it difficult to cope after the war while some were from single parent families. Initial selection was made by calling for volunteers. Medical and academic tests were then applied and final selections made by Australian migration officials in Malta. Parents were often encouraged by the Catholic clergy to permit their children to migrate.¹²³

2.125 Submissions emphasised that there were significant differences between the experiences of child migrants from the United Kingdom and from Malta. In the case of Maltese child migrants, families were often involved in the migration of children. One submission noted that in ‘most cases a parent or parents were involved in the decision to come out here. Their consent was given on the understanding that they were sending us here to get a better education and with the hope of returning to Malta qualified in some field or other’.¹²⁴ C-BERS noted that although the circumstances of their migration were different, the Maltese child migrants ‘did experience family dislocation – often with similar effects’, such as the impact of separation and isolation from family members.¹²⁵

120 The Agreement was signed by Fr WA Nicol, the Australian Catholic Bishops agent for migration in London representing the Australian Catholic Immigration Committee and the Hon. JJ Cole, Minister of Emigration and Labour in the Maltese Government.

121 Coldrey, *Child Migration from Malta*, Appendix 5, ‘Child Settlement Agreement between the Catholic Hierarchy in Australia and the Malta Government’.

122 Coldrey, *Child Migration from Malta*, pp.i-ii,15.

123 Submission No.7, Attachment 1.

124 Submission No.45, Additional Information, 4.5.01, Appendix 2 (C-BERS). See also Submission No.7, p.1.

125 Submission No.45, p.3 (C-BERS). See also Submission No.7, pp.1-2.

2.126 Maltese child migrants have also had a relatively higher level of family reunification than former UK child migrants. C-BERS estimated that at least 45 per cent of Maltese former child migrants were reunited with their families who subsequently become resident in Australia, and another 5 per cent returned to Malta – thus in total some 50 per cent of Maltese former child migrants were reunited with their families.¹²⁶ C-BERS noted, however, that while many of these children were the ‘first wave’ of a subsequent family reunion ‘we are now finding that the impact of separation has often had effects on the family unit that have been irreparable’.

2.127 C-BERS also noted the need for both UK and Maltese former child migrants ‘to experience the culture and ambience of the place where they spent their early childhoods’ and that this factor should not be underestimated.¹²⁷ As noted in chapter 7, C-BERS has funded a number of reunion trips for former Maltese child migrants for travel back to Malta. However, former Maltese child migrants are ineligible for funding under the UK travel scheme.

2.128 Evidence to the inquiry highlighted a number of concerns of former Maltese child migrants:

- many former child migrants have been given confusing information concerning their rights to Australian citizenship and their rights to British citizenship (as Malta was a British colony at the time of the child migration schemes);
- the child migrants worked at institutions, such as Bindoon, with no remuneration – as a consequence of this work – which took the place of education – many Maltese child migrants never learned to read and write and so remained illiterate;
- a number of Maltese child migrants, like the British child migrants, were abused in a number of ways at the institutions – one former Maltese child migrant noted ‘the sexual and physical abuse that I suffered instead of my education’¹²⁸;
- some Maltese migrants did get help from families and from the institutions, while others did not – ‘this has set up a strong feeling of unfairness’;
- Maltese child migrants were often made to stop speaking and using their own language in the institutions;
- some claimed that the names of some Maltese migrants are not on the PHIND index;
- the Maltese Government had an important role in the migration scheme – ‘however, the Maltese government has never publicly accepted any responsibility’; and

126 Submission No.45, Additional Information, 4.5.01, p.4 (C-BERS).

127 Submission No.45, p.3 (C-BERS).

128 Submission No.7, p.2.

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- former child migrants from Malta wish to be known as pioneers ‘who can hold their heads up high’.¹²⁹

2.129 The needs of former Maltese child migrants were identified as follows:

- clarification about their ‘rights as Maltese/British citizens’;
- a chance to live in their country of birth;
- a formal apology from the government(s) involved in the child migration schemes;
- counselling that is freely available;
- a half-way house in Malta for returning former child migrants;
- financial support – ‘monetary compensation’ for the traumas suffered while in the institutions;
- ‘liaison links’ with the Maltese government;
- support for literacy and numeracy classes;
- less restrictive travel assistance arrangements;
- an ‘interface’ between Maltese former child migrants and their families and governments; and
- urgent attention to these needs as due the increasing age of the child migrants ‘we are running out of time’.¹³⁰

2.130 These issues and concerns are discussed in the following chapters of the report.

2.131 The Committee believes that the British and Maltese child migrants suffered equally in the institutions and should not be differentiated in their rights to access any services provided to former child migrants.

Recommendation 2: That British and Maltese former child migrants be treated equally in accessing any of the services currently provided or as recommended in this report, including access to travel funding.

129 Submission No.45, Additional Information, 4.5.01, pp.2-3 (C-BERS). This information is from comments received at a forum of former Maltese child migrants held in Perth to discuss the needs of former Maltese child migrants in response to this inquiry. See also Submission No.7, pp.1-3.

130 Submission No.45, Additional Information, 4.5.01 p.3 (C-BERS).

