

Supplementary Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Child Migration Schemes.

Supplementary Submission from Broken Rites Australia, PO Box 163,
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This organisation provided an initial submission to the Senate Committee on 18th December, 2000.

In the submission we detailed some of the organisation's experiences when working with, advising and advocating on behalf of a small number of former child migrants. We also put forward a number of recommendations for consideration by Senate Committee members.

Since making our initial submission, we have been able to request copies of a number of the submissions that were made or on behalf of other organisations. Our examination of these has caused us to bring some supplementary issues to the attention of the Senate Committee.

We are very grateful to Mr. Elton Humphrey and other staff members in the Secretariat for being so prompt in their responding to our request.

The matters put before the Senate Committee in our first submission were as follows:

That Committee members should recognise the need for improved and independent processes that would be available to persons seeking compensation for past mistreatment and abuse.

This would be assisted by conduct of an independent assessment of existing processes that have been established by the various charities and religious organisations that received child migrants in the past. We also argued that there should be an independent appeal process available to persons seeking compensation for past abuse.

Furthermore, we argued that the charities and religious organisations must be made to comply with equal opportunity requirements, in respect of each organisation's representation in any process.

The setting up of processes to consider claims for unpaid wages.

We argued that a number of former child migrants who are living today had been required to work in Institutions, essentially as child slaves. This form of slavery was practised despite the fact that the receiving organisations obtained government funding for the care and upkeep of these children.

We argued that former child migrants should be able to make claims for these unpaid wages from the charities and religious organisations that obviously profitted from the work done by children.

We pointed out to the Senate Committee the fact that financial settlements are now being reached by persons who worked as slaves during for the Nazis World War 2.

In view of some similarities of circumstance (although the slaves in World War 2 were usually adults and not children), we suggested that achieving justice in this area may require an Australian government, through its Department of Foreign Affairs, to enter into direct negotiations with the Vatican on behalf of former child migrants.

This matter Of financial support is further dealt with later in this document.

Services should to be set up that recognise the long term needs of child migrants.

We pointed out that there are some long-term needs which are identified by many former child migrants and by others who have similar experiences abuse. These are their wish to gain better reading and writing skills and their need for secure housing.

Furthermore we identified the link between these two needs; with poor literacy and writing skills restricting the persons access to anything other than low paid work and then this factor contributing to poor housing status, with many being in either private rental or public housing for long periods of time.

That Committee members should recognise the need for access to better legal processes.

We proposed that former Child Migrants who were seeking compensation form either charities or religious organisations should have access to legal aid and an exemption from requirements to pay fees when seeking official records using Freedom of Information (FOI). An exemption from FOI fees is granted by the Victorian government although we have no information about the situation elsewhere.

We also identified the need for a dedicated community legal service that would specialise in these sort of cases and we suggested that government funds should be available to meet the reasonable expenses of volunteer advocates.

That the Senate Committee members should encourage greater documentation of the experiences of women who were Child Migrants.

In our submission we attempted to draw the Senate Committee's attention to the scarcity of documented information about the treatment and the later experiences of many women who were brought to Australia as Child Migrants.

There is a small number of additional issues that we now wish to raise with the Committee.

Issue No.1

How many child migrants were brought to Australia and where did they go to?

For the purpose of the Inquiry, we were able to identify three types of submissions as follows:

Type 1. Organisations that were coming into contact with former child migrants because of assistance and services that the organisation was providing. Included here would be C-BERSS, The Child Migrants Trust, Voices (Mr. Bruce Blythe) and Broken Rites.

Type 2. Organisations that had been associated with, or could provide data on the movement of children out of their country of birth. Included here would be the National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations and the Child Migrant Friendship Society.

Type 3. Organisations that had received children after they arrived in Australia. Included here would be the Fairbridge Foundation, Barnados Homes and the Catholic Church.

Our examination of various submissions indicates that there are major discrepancies in the information provided by the Type 2 and Type 3 organisations in respect of the numbers of children in the schemes. This is clearly illustrated in Table 1.

The House of Commons Health Committee Report claimed that between 1947 and 1967, a number of children (between 7000 and 10000) were sent to Australia. This estimate is in reasonable agreement with the figures provided by Mrs Margaret Humphries in her book "Empty Cradles", although higher than figures provided to the Senate Committee from other UK-based organisations.

We are at a loss to explain the rather worrying data that has been provided to the Senate Committee from the Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. In assembling its figures that Department could have done a check by simply making a few telephone calls to the well known receiving organisations. Obviously no check was made and its figures are not reliable.

Consideration of Table 1 also raises a question about the final destination of a possibly large number of children who were sent from their country of birth. We would hope that the Senate Committee is able to use resources that are available to it to resolve this issue.

Issue No.2

What was the level of financial support provided to organisation that received child migrants in Australia?

In the material that has been provided to the Committee there is a paucity of data about the financial arrangement that underwrote the Child Migrant Schemes. Considering the scale of human traffic that took place and its extended duration, we find this surprising.

It is our hope that the Senate committee might be able to clarify the matter of finances paid by whomever (?government) for the support of each child migrant. In the book "Empty Cradles", an amount of 7s per week is given as being paid for each child. In contrast, the submission from the Catholic Child Welfare Council-UK, an amount of 51s presented.

Mr. Bruce Blythe gives other data (see page 25 of his submission). He is suggesting that in WA, the receiving organisations could have been given 52s3d per week per child migrant and in Queensland the figure could have been 25s per person per week. In the "Background Paper" that accompanies the submission from the Catholic Child Welfare Council-UK other amounts are used which are extraordinary. These are shown below.

- UK govt. contibution	126s /boy/week.
- Aust govt. contribution	83s/boy/week.
- Aust. State Govt.contribution	83s/boy/week.
Total	252s/boy/week!

We consider that it is important for the Senate Committee to record as accurately as possible, the details of the financial arrangements that were set up between governments and the receiving organisations for the care, housing and education of each child migrant. Accurate information is essential in order to be able to make informed judgements about the adequacy of these funding arrangements and to make comparisons with child-related costs as they existed in the Australian community at the time.

Furthermore we believe that it will be important to be able to compare these financial arrangements with the financial arrangements that existed for other children who were in care at the same time.

We believe that the Senate Committee should attempt to determine whether amounts that were being provided were in fact adequate for the upkeep of each class of child.

If there is a question about adequacy, then this raises the possibility that this was a factor driving the practise by the receiving agencies to put so many children to work. Another related issue is the question of possibility Cross-subsidisation resulting in a decreased level of care and provision for every child irrespective of its origins.

Issue No. 3

Participation in the Senate Inquiry Process.

Comment must be made about the range of submissions which have been provided to this Inquiry. Some have been prepared by individuals and others, on behalf of organisations. In most cases, considerable time and effort appears to have been directed towards their preparation.

Our organisation finds it extraordinary that no submission was provided to the Senate Committee by the Catholic Bishops of Australia. Instead the Committee has been presented with a minor document prepared on behalf of the Catholic Church's Joint Liaison Group On Child Migration and a two-page document prepared for the Christian Brothers! This is in keeping with the defensive strategy that our organisation has observed in nearly all of its dealings with the hierarchy of the Australian Catholic Church

Concluding Remarks

In concluding this supplementary submission, we want to again make the point that this Inquiry is not going to be able to report in any detail about the experiences of thousands of Australian-born children who also were institutionalised during the same period of the last century.

Our organisation's experience directs us to point out that when the Report of this Senate Committee Inquiry is made public, the Australian Parliament will in effect have received the second volume in what should be a trilogy. It is a trilogy about a period of approximately fifty years when Australian governments, charities, Christian religious organisations and some local authorities encouraged, participated in and/or sanctioned a range of schemes that implicitly exploited children. Such schemes were directed at Aboriginal, European-born Caucasian and Australian-born, Caucasian children.. The first volume in the trilogy is the *Stolen Generation Report, "Bringing them home"*. (3).

It is our firm view that the whole story must be put before the Australian people. We sincerely hope that the Senate Committee members will acknowledge this and make an appropriate recommendation in relation to the thousands of Australian Born children whose story has not yet been told.

Table 1.

SENATE SUBMISSION	NUMBERS OF CHILDREN SENT	NUMBERS OF CHILDREN RECEIVED
Child Migrant Friendship Society	7000 to 10000	
Professor Geoffrey Sherrington Univ. of Sydney	6000	
UK House of Commons Report	10000 approx * sent to Australia and New Zealand	
Aust. Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs	less than 3000	
National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations	7446	
Fairbridge Foundation		545
Catholic Church Joint Liaison Group on Child Migration		1045 from UK
Barnados		3000 approx
TOTAL		5090