

Mr Peter Bent

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The Secretary  
Senate Community Affairs References Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

## **Inquiry into Children Raised in Institutional Care (Public Submission)**

Dear Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to have a small input into this important inquiry. Important, because it's an effort by decent people to come to terms with a sordid past of child abuse in Australian institutions.

I wish to convey to Senator Andrew Murry my thanks and appreciation for his persistent lobbying which was the catalyst for this inquiry. In the same vein, I wish to compliment the unsung heroes of CLAN who give their time and energy freely in the quest for justice and help for the many fellow Australians who suffered abuse as children in State and religious institutions. Also, I praise the people of Broken Rites for their valuable work and support for the survivors of clergy sexual abuse. Due credit must also be given to the VOICES support group for blowing the whistle on child abuse in Catholic Institutions in WA when criticism of the church was a no-no.

The terrible fact is that the systematic abuse of institutionalised children was perpetrated by their religious & government carers. I trust your recognition of this fact will be reflected in your final report along with practical help for the many adults who have gone through life suffering the effects of

institutionalised child abuse. This will finally give those affected some measure of justice.

As senators you may find it hard to comprehend how human rights could be snuffed out so easily in a supposed democratic country as Australia, the so-called 'lucky country' and, in turn, lead to disgusting and inhuman treatment of innocent kids taken into care. We who went through the child care system are not surprised, in fact, we are wary that the abuses we suffered in the guise of child care could be inflicted on children in the near future. All it needs is a slack government dept charged with the care of children as in the past and presto! History is repeated.

## **The Four Christian Brother Institutions in Western Australia**

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### **Castledare Boys' Home**

This property was acquired by the Catholic Church in 1927 for about \$5000. Situated about 12kms from the Perth GPO on the upper reaches of the canning river, it was a farm of sixty acres (thirty hectares) with an Edwardian residence which has recently been refurbished and heritage listed. It is now a retirement home for priests. The original chapel was in this building. The word Castledare means place of oak trees. Various buildings were added over the years, such as twin dormitories, picture hall, laundry, three modern classrooms, dairy, dining room to seat a hundred kids gardens, lawns, playing field and a modern chapel in 1957. All these buildings except the chapel and the original residence as mentioned above were demolished in the early 1990s.

Castledare started out as a school for mentally handicapped children. This venture failed due to parents having no confidence in an isolated institution as Castledare was then. A second enterprise of taking in deaf and dumb boys also failed.

A reprieve for Castledare came about through selling it to the Christian Brothers owing to the influence of Br. Conlon who at that time was a big wig in the Christian Brothers' hierarchy. The agreed price between the Archbishop of Perth and the Christian brothers was \$8.000 in 1933. It would

be renamed St Vincent's Preparatory School for junior boys from Clontarf a few miles down the Canning River. The survival of Castledare for fifty years was assured because of the constant supply of junior boys ie state wards & child migrants, the latter often out numbering the Aussie kids. The emotive word Orphan was always used to gain grants from the government including one of \$60.000 to save it from closure in the 1970s and donations from the public. In the latter years of it's history, Castledare drew huge crowds to it's field-days or fetes with some well known TV personalities giving their time freely to promote these money raising events. There was no hint of its dark history of child abuse during this period of public admiration for what seemed like a well maintained Christian institution in ideal surroundings. Castledare sometimes held up to a hundred and fifty boys with many on reaching the age of ten being transferred to other institutions. In the mid-1950s, day boarders were accepted. Its name had yet again been changed to Castledare Boy's Home finally closing down in 1979.

Most of the original sixty acres (thirty hectares) has been sold off for housing and a retirement village. Castledare and the other three Christian Brother institutions were really operational farms however, many who went through them would say Prison Farms. Incidentally two paedophile Christian Brothers who each spent ten years at Castledare Boy's Home were charged some years ago with sexual abuse of junior boys. One was convicted the other now dead had court proceedings suspended because of ill health.

### **Clontarf Boys'Town**

Clontarf is situated like Castledare on the Canning River only a few miles down stream where it becomes quite wide. Now only a short drive from Perth, but back in 1901, it was a very isolated place reached by a bush track. The purchase price was \$4000 for a three hundred hectare virgin bush block with a permanent source of spring water. A substantial federation two story limestone main building was commissioned in the same year. The limestone was quarried down river in Cottesloe and transported to the Clontarf site in huge wooden barges. This then was the beginning of nearly a century of child care or by going on its history a "centenary of child abuse". The first Aussie orphans to reside at Clontarf were transferred in September of 1901 from St Joseph's in Wembley (formerly Subiaco) originally run by the Nuns but handed over to the Christian Brothers in 1897. However the nuns operated on the same site a St Joseph's Foundling Orphanage. On reaching

the age of six, the boys were transferred to Castledare and after a few years here they would be sent to one of the other institutions of Clontarf, Tardun or Bindoon.

Thousands would pass through Clontarf's gates with many suffering abuses that would emotionally damage them for life.

A building program by Br. Keaney started in the 1930s to 1941 with the help of child labour that resulted in a huge institution being carved out of the bush. At least seven two story brick towers were added along with various other buildings. Terra-cotta roofing tiles gave it the appearance of a Spanish town. The Clontarf Chapel takes pride of place, designed by a lady architect and constructed with child labour.

Other buildings built under the same harsh conditions were a bakery, classrooms, a larger dining room, a kitchen, a laundry, a piggery, a dairy, upper story verandahs to the main building, concreted quadrangle, metal & carpentry workshops, two Grottos, a stone jetty, four large & four small handball courts and a swimming pool. The natural bush was cleared by kids for playing fields by the river. This was done by forming a human rake which meant forming a line then bending over and raking the ground clear of any branches. Any kid not working quick enough was belted. This technique was also used to clear the site for the Posh College of Aquinas along with other work by earlier Clontarf lads.

A few incidents as witnessed and mentioned in several memoirs of former 'inmates' give some hint of the environment while Keaney was running the show, included him flogging a horse with a piece of wood when it was too weak to cope with work on the main grotto. When it gave up the ghost it was dragged off to be fed to the pigs. After belting a kid in the hall he grabbed him by the arm and propelled him into the wall. Any perceived slackers on the building sites of Clontarf were belted publicly by Keaney. To think this evil man received an MBE is outrageous. Other priests were no better, for instance, one smashed a lad in the face with his fist for bringing his breakfast late. Br. Beeden dished out cruel treatment with a wooden hair brush during the evening showers. He would line naked kids up and walk along belting any kid he deemed hadn't cleaned themselves properly around the crouch area. Br. R.M. Moloney is cited as being another sadist. Br. Dawe was molesting kids during this period. The name Clontarf hails from Ireland

and is said to be the spot on Dublin bay where an Irish king gave the Vikings a good hiding.

The pine plantations which became a feature of Clontarf for most of its history were planted and cared for in the 1930s by kids. In the 1950s we pulled down some of them to extend the lawns and gardens which impressed the visitors. In 1942 Clontarf was seconded to the Air force for several years as a training base, all the kids were evacuated to St Marys Tardun and put to work clearing land and constructing massive buildings, despite the war.

Only by taking part in a child trade scheme (child migration) which guaranteed a constant supply of overseas children was Clontarf and the three other Christian Brother owned institutions (ie detentions camps for kids in WA) able to survive and prosper for so long. Clontarf's early history would be blighted with a Christian Brother being convicted for sexual relations with half a dozen lads. These lads would be hounded for the rest of their stay at Clontarf by Br.Keaney. This abusive environment would continue with at least two known child molesters on its staff right up to closing down as a child care faculty in the late 1980s.

### **Bindoon Boys'Town**

This property (originally named Mt Pleasant) of about 17,000 acres (8,500 hectares) 80kms north east of Perth, was given to the Christian brothers as a gift in 1936 by a wealthy landowner, Catherine Musk. When she died some years later a large sum of money was bequeathed in her will to set up orphan lads from Bindoon on their own farms, a kind gesture that never eventuated. A committee of Catholic businessmen was set up with Br. Keaney as its patron to organise an appeal for funds to meet this aim. A considerable sum of money was collected but it all came to naught.

Construction of St Joseph's Bindoon later to be changed to "Boy's Town" began in 1938 by a group of Clontarf lads who lived in tents while they labored on the foundations of this new institution which would become famous for all the wrong reasons. Its founder Br. Keaney a farm labourer had migrated from Leityclogher in Ireland as a young man in 1888 to Queensland Australia where he joined the police force.

Because Keaney was perceived as running out of control by the Christian Brothers ruling hierarchy then stationed in Victoria, he was transferred out of WA. in 1945. A group of prominent Catholic business men who were impressed with Keaney's style exerted pressure on the Perth Archbishop by withholding funds from his coffers until Keaney was returned, which he did in 1948 to continue where he left off in the construction of Bindoon Boys Town.

From what has been revealed about this era by survivors things were harsh under the brute that was Br.Keaney. He had expanded Clontarf and Tardun using brutality and child labour, now he would carve out Keaney's Kingdom which, when completed, would rival Clontarf and New Norcia, especially if the boys had have only worked harder and finished the planned magnificent Bindoon Boys Town Church. They had put down the foundations and formed some of the columns but alas he died. "God sure works in mysterious ways". This child exploiter and basher was even given the title "The Orphans Friend" by his admirers, certainly not the kids who suffered under him. These same people put up a life like bronze statue on a on a substantial pedestal in front of the imposing main building that was "constructed with child slave labour". He even received a MBE from the Queen. Not bad for an ex-cop. This was gained by a well oiled public relations machine using orphans as pawns. This is the same bloke who threatened the Child Welfare with closure of the institutions in WA if they insisted on checking up on their charges. A threat they took seriously as they stopped inquiring about the welfare of state wards in Catholic institutions. Br. Keaney died in 1954 and is buried in a prominent position in front of his dream, the main building at Bindoon Boy's Town which is now an exclusive Catholic Agricultural College.

## Headless Statue

The author L.P. Welsh who wrote a book (Geordie) describing his experiences as a child migrant shipped out to Bindoon Boys Town in November 1947, was in 2001 given a community based order for 12 months for being in possession of the severed head of Keaney's statue. This statue was subsequently removed from the pride of place it held for many years in front of the main building. This statue, unveiled in 1957, by Keaney's Catholic admirers represented years of brutality and exploitation to the many who as kids were entrusted into his care. Two former Aussie orphans have

written books about their experiences in these institutions in the 1930s and 1940s. (Kate Davis – *When Innocence Trembles* published by Angus & Robertson) & (Ivor Knight – *Out of Darkness* published by Fremantle Arts Press).

An interesting point regarding this era of child care is that the minister for lands was also the minister for child welfare.

Aussie kids from Clontarf started the construction of Bindoon Boy's Town in 1936 completing two twin buildings in 1938 using local rock. Then the foundations for the main administration building were completed. Construction stopped with walls and a concrete slab to the first floor level. This gave a hint of a massive structure which would be completed ten years later under similar conditions. A substantial underground concrete water storage tank was included in this building stage. There was still a lot to do to complete the whole institution as is seen today by tourists. Incidentally the public is invited to view these now impressive heritage buildings while being fed a sanitized version of the history of their construction. Many of the lads who did the plastering and bricklaying were promised that the time spent working on the construction site at Bindoon Boy's Town would be credited to their apprenticeship. This often turned out to be a cruel lie. The publicity that these institutions were training lots of lads for the trades was a farce. The final solution for the majority of kids from these institutions when the paid subsidy cut out at age sixteen was to be given over to Catholic farmers. Many lads would suffer more years of abuse and exploitation on these farms including severe loneliness, substandard living conditions and the non-payment of wages and with the realisation they had no one to turn to.

The name of Bindoon Boys Town was changed by Br. P.M. O'Doherty, a great admirer of Br. Keaney, to Keaney College in the late 1960s. However, a successful campaign by VOICES in revealing the true history of this institution caused its name to be changed yet again to the Bindoon Catholic Agricultural College.

A friend who as a child was incarcerated in Bindoon Boys Town in the 1950s got to see the outside world twice in four years. Little wonder that he and many others found it hard to fit in with normal society. The BBC movie "The Leaving of Liverpool" was actually based on the history of Bindoon Boys Town which in this movie was referred to as St Bed's.

Because the number of Aussie state wards was dwindling, it was decided to import kids from overseas. In 1947, a large group of post-war child migrants from the UK and Malta were brought in to give a hand, followed by others in the 1950s. Some of these kids would help to complete the buildings at Bindoon Boys' Town. Promised a better life in the lucky country they were put to work under the same harsh conditions as the former Aussie kids in the interest of completing the dream of a Irish megalomaniac. They were denied decent child care, completely deprived of an education and put at risk of being sexually and physically assaulted in the process by four sometimes five pedophile Christian brothers on Keaney's staff. Even a couple of priests from the New Norcia Monastery 40 kms up the road would get in on the act. The swimming pool is named after a known pervert (now deceased) a Br. C.M. Dawe. A place of depravity indeed.....

### **Tardun St Mary's**

This institution started out in 1926 as a collection of about a dozen leased blocks in the names of individual Christian Brothers. Combined they totalled 40,000 hectares. Br. Keaney was one of the nominees. Some would say this was a case of dummy bidding for government land grants. Originally this project was proposed by a committee of members of a Catholic organisation The Knights of the Southern Cross.

Located a long way from Perth about 340 klms north, the area is quite remote and prone to droughts. A great place for kangaroos and wild flowers but the brothers wanted wheat farming. Tardun's first name was Clontarf Farm School, which was really an annex of St Joseph's Clontarf to give farming experience to senior boys from there. Things didn't go too good in the first decade of this new institution. There was plenty of scrub to clear and prices for farm produce fell and the drought set in. The driving force of Br Keaney was used in urging his charges on in the same harsh style he used in expanding Clontarf. Br Conlon saved Tardun from going down the gurgler in its early years and was rewarded in seeing it become a permanent farm of expanded acreage. With child labour and a back-room deal with politicians to exempt Tardun from paying Shire rates, Tardun would become a profitable venture. However with the demise of child migration in the early 1960s along with a couple of droughts it faced the last decade with the threat of closure. Today, Tardun survives as a boarding agricultural school. On it's



staff is the legendary (for all the wrong reasons) Br B. Doyle now aged 84 as an assistant teacher. His brutality towards many kids in the four Christian Brothers run institutions in WA made their childhood "an enduring ordeal".

## Boy farmers

One of the main themes of the Tardun Scheme was the persistent promise by the Christian Brothers to give orphan lads the opportunity of owning their own farms. This was used to gain public support and additional land grants from the government. The brothers kept their promise and a few lads, about twenty, eventually gained title to the blocks of 2000/3000 acres which after years of development became their farms. As well as having an aptitude for farming, the candidates for these blocks had to gain the approval of the Geraldton bishop by marrying a good catholic girl. The Christian Brothers kept a tight reign on what tasks should be done and when they should be completed. The trainee farmers as they were referred to were subject to the control of the brothers until they turned twenty one or more before they were eventually given title. This for some was a hard and rocky road as some were treated with more favor than others. The only chap who received a property in the Bindoon Scheme walked off fed up with the interfering and control of the brothers regarding the running of his place. The creating of farms for orphans was a good selling point for the Tardun Scheme but it could be said in the scheme of things that the dismal number of lads who benefited from this venture didn't justify the exploitation of the many.

## **The Fairbridge Scheme Connection.**

Kingsley Fairbridge had a dream! It involved importing children from the UK. to WA in 1913. This bloke had what seemed like a good idea. Get lots of poor English kids send them out to the dominions to create a class of British farmers for the Empire. All these schemes had other people's motives as their basis, the kids who were crucial to their success, who were used as pawns for monies, grants, bequests and exemption from rates and taxes. Their needs and feelings were snuffed out in the interest of the bigger picture. They were merely fodder for the various institutions and when the subsidies cut out at sixteen, they were thrown out of the institutions as youths to be exploited as cheap labour on farms. The farmers were usually of the same religious denomination as the institution. All these child schemes were very fruitful for the carer organisations. The final tally of kids

imported by Fairbridge to WA was 5000 and 890 boys by the Christian Brothers 890 boys.

Joe White, a child migrant shipped to this place in the 1930s, describes it as a brutal place for kids. He tells of the resident Vicar having it off with some of the lads including his best mate. His book *Pringles War* is published by Collins Australia.

Then there was the numbers game as each Christian denomination run institution was fearful of the losing kids to the other. There was also the fear of more catholic kids being bought into WA than protestant kids.

In the mid-1920s, the Christian Brothers paid a visit to Fairbridge in Pinjarra. The cottage system was quaint but not for them as it involved having women on site. Besides they had a love affair with huge grand buildings. But this Fairbridge mob had solved their financial woes as they were given a government subsidy by the Aussies and British governments for every child they imported from the age of 8 to 14 and later to 16.. The penny dropped for the Christian brothers. The Tardun scheme was formulated. They would lobby the British, Australian and state governments for the same right and benefits for importing kids from overseas. An added bonus for Tardun was being exempt from taxes and shire rates, the result of a back room deal with political cronies and Bingo! Tardun was saved from bankruptcy.

In 1938 about 110 young kids aged eight to thirteen were shipped from the UK. Tardun in WA received a quota of about fifty. The plan was to import a hundred annually but this was not achieved as the war broke out. Melbourne's Archbishop Mannix got involved and he chose Br Conlon to go to the UK and select kids from Catholic institutions run by nuns. He had a letter of introduction to the Southern Irish leader deValera. This letter espoused the benefits of the Tardun Scheme. De Valera was not convinced and no kids were sent to WA legally, however a few were smuggled over the boarder illegally and ended up in Tardun. They reckon they were kidnapped by a religious cult (the Christian Brothers) and shanghaied to a foreign land where they were used and abused.

A decade later in 1947 child migration took off in a big way with 340 catholic girls and boys shipped out to the various WA institutions and in April 1950, a consignment of 27 kids arrived from Malta. The exploitation

of these kids of different nationalities along with Aussie kids as labourers in clearing the land and constructing the impressive two story buildings of cement blocks, plus the subsidies paid per lad guaranteed the survival of Tardun.

### **The common denominator**

As with the three other institutions, there were paedophile Christian Brothers on the staff at Tardun from the 1930s through to the 1950s. Then from 1965/1974, the superiors of Tardun were Br.Foley and Br. B. Doyle who physically assaulted me and others at Clontarf a decade earlier. This leads one to believe things hadn't changed for the better for Tardun kids for another decade. A lot of sexual abuse of kids at Tardun was committed by "lay brothers", they were the ones who supervised the farm work as they were not qualified to teach in the classroom. One of the worst molesters in the early 1940s after complaints from lads in Tardun was simply transferred to Castledare, a junior orphanage back in Perth where he happily resided for ten years. That left another three known molesters still on the Tardun Staff. In the Christian Brothers official literature these same blokes are described as having saintly qualities. One Christian Brother would take boys behind "the green door" and give them hands on sex education even when these lads left Tardun he would drop in at their place of residence and impose himself on them. They named the sport's oval after this bloke. My imputations regarding the exploitative and abusive environment of Tardun & Bindoon (which I had the good fortune not to be incarcerated in) come from what has been related to me by friends who were not so lucky. The Devil in the guise of some Christian Brothers was quite at home in Tardun, the most isolated of the four institutions.

None of these places for most of their history could ever be described as 'Safety House Zones' for children. Several of my friends spent time in all four orphanages and were molested in every one, a shocking indictment of this system.

The Christian Brothers recently celebrated a century of child care. In the institutions of WA it was a nearly a century of Child Abuse.

When the Pope visited WA some years ago he should have publicly washed the feet of those abused as children by the Christian Brothers at the entrance

of these four institutions. It's hard to believe he was not aware of the sins of the Christian Brothers in these hell-holes. Any other organisation with only a fraction of the disgusting history of this mob in regards to children would be closed down. In my opinion, the fact that they are allowed to continue is testimony to the influence of the old boys' network of sympathizers in politics and the judiciary

### **Boys'Towns**

Br. Doyle (Killer), the infamous big lump of a sadist who was the principal of Clontarf Boys'Town during most of my time there in the mid 1950s, once boasted to the whole orphanage during assembly in the Clontarf picture hall just after he flogged two kids for absconding that "The Clontarf gates are always open, but woe betide any boy who leaves Clontarf without my permission". When runaways were bought back by the police he would put on a show of concern towards these lads. But when the cops left he would flog the returned kids nearly senseless. He definitely was no Fr Flanagan who Spencer Tracey made famous in the 1938 Hollywood movie that was a portrait of kids taken off the streets in Narbraka U.S.A. and cared for in a Boys'Town run by a Catholic priest. We in the real Boys'Towns of WA who were often cold, hungry and belted almost daily with an assault weapon "the strap" were not amused. One night a friend of mine was bought back to Clontarf having had a nervous break down due to harsh conditions on the farm he was sent to work on. The concerned couple who returned him were impressed with the Father Flanagan persona adopted by the Superior Br.B.Doyle (Killer) who assured them the lad would receive the kindness and care he obviously needed. The couple, believing the lad was in good hands, got back into their car and drove out through the main gates of Clontarf Boys'Town. Their tail lights had just disappeared into the darkness when Killer Doyle, who just a few minutes ago was Father Flanagan, grabbed the lad by the hair and collar dragged him into the office and proceeded to assault him about the face with fists causing a severe nose bleed. To add further insult this lad was ordered to work in the piggery for seven months without pay and barred from seeing a movie for the duration of this period.

The Catholic Church seeing the public relations value of the movie Boys Town, renamed St Joseph's Clontarf to Clontarf Boys Town and the now

infamous St Joseph's Bindoon to Bindoon Boys Town). Tardun ironically retained its name of St Marys.

At Clontarf runaways were tracked down in the surrounding bush by fellow older orphan boys who for a successful catch were rewarded by a treat of lollies. They in fact became hounds for Br Doyle and were quick to dish out rough justice to any lad who resisted them. Br. P.B. Doyle became a legend for brutality towards kids. He gained his nickname "Killer" for a particularly brutal bashing of a lad on the Clontarf quadrangle in the year of 1951. A runaway had just been returned to Clontarf by the police. In front of all the assembled kids and as a lesson for them, Br.Doyle & Br. O'Doherty started lashing this kid with straps. When he fell to the ground he was dragged up by the hair. Br.O'Doherty finally tired but Br.Doyle kept on belting this kid senseless. A friend who witnessed this assault made the remark "Doyle will kill that kid"another lad said, "Yeah, that Doyle is a killer". The name stuck. These two child bashing cowards would have long careers as superiors of the four Christian Brother Institutions in WA.

Br O'Shea was no better. He was such a violent character it's a wonder he didn't kill some of the kids he criminally assaulted. One time he dunked a kid into a near boiling tub of water in the kitchen. This kid while screaming and looking like a cooked lobster had to be carried over to the infirmary by two lads. In the classroom this monster would, for the slightest mistake, belt us with a walking stick on the hands, elbows, back, neck and head. At end of year exams he would go from desk to desk shouting and belting us for putting in the wrong answers. On one occasion, he caused a severe gash to a lad's head. He used fists, boots, lumps of wood and stones and would go into a frenzy when belting a kid.

It was only in the mid-1950s, the latter years of my time at Clontarf, that we were allowed more frequent contact with the outside community. This may have been the result of a tragic accident on Dec 15, 1955 involving the Clontarf bus and a truck. This gave Clontarf a high profile exposure to the public which it previously lacked. The bus was full of kids going down south for Christmas holidays. A twelve year old lad Michael Bowman was killed, two lads lost both their legs and two lost one leg and a score were badly injured with broken bones and cuts. Ironically Br. Doyle was the driver.

Once a month on a Sunday, which became known as 'third Sunday', many of us would spend the day with catholic families. Then there were the Christmas holidays of six weeks duration which gave us a welcome break from the abusive environment of Clontarf. Now you would think this was a golden opportunity to blow the whistle on what was happening at Clontarf. A few did and were flogged by Doyle publicly during assembly in the Keaney Memorial Hall for telling lies about Clontarf. One lad was belted because he was seen coming out of a protestant church and another for telling his 'third Sunday' people how he enjoyed a feed of horse meat seeing how food was so scarce at Clontarf. Another lad for having dinner with one family and afternoon tea with another according to Br. Doyle it gave the outside community the wrong impression of Clontarf.

An unnamed Christian Brother who was at Clontarf in 1949 complains in Br. Coldrey's book how fellow now deceased brothers are having their names defiled. Well, on the staff with this bloke were two known paedophiles and they deserve to be defiled. Being dead doesn't wipe the slate clean. One must question the true motive of these people who use this ploy to defend the deceased. "The evil that men do lives after them". The unsung heroes in this scenario are surely the innocent kids. Very few Christian Brothers in the institutions lived up to the motto "Esto Vir" (be a man) they hid within an organisation which at one stage in WA history was deemed to be above the law.

Child migrants were a valuable resource for these prison farms because of the subsidies paid per child up to the age of sixteen by the British, Commonwealth and State Governments. Nothing was done for nothing by religious organisations regarding child care.

The Christian Brothers Order was founded about 1802 in Ireland by Edmund Rice a rich merchant and a committed Christian. Now here was a good bloke with an innovative idea; educate the kids of the poor! God knows there were plenty of them. Edmund put his money where his mouth was and duly acquired property for schools. His appeal to the big boss in Rome was accepted as a men only teaching Order (the Christian Brothers), an appeal that was granted. These origins set the stage for his Order to take root and then be exported throughout the world arriving in Australia in the late 1860s.

The ink had not long dried on the accreditation document for the Christian Brothers as an autonomous male teaching Order with its own separate bank

account when some of the Blessed Founder's own colleagues started a whitewashing campaign. This took the form of false claims that the founder was embezzling money donated for his schools. In fact he died with this cloud hanging over him. From these humble beginnings, this Order would end up being a wealthy corporate body with education being its main commodity. No taxes were ever paid, in fact subsidies and donations were duly given by governments. Any land sold, as was the case with Castledare, Clontarf & Bindoon was not subject to capital gains tax. In WA a back room deal was done by political cronies to make the Tardun institution exempt from paying rates to the local council. All the proceeds from the sale of land of these institutions would help make the Christian Brothers order a wealthy organisation.

Wealth, power & influence often give credence to the adage "power corrupts; absolute power completely corrupts". The Christian Brothers would degenerate into this category because they lost sight of the principles of Jesus Christ. Today there are still some in the hierarchy who grasp at the straw of denial claiming there was only one known paedophile Christian Brother in the four institutions throughout their entire history.

The enlightened principals for child care of Edmund Rice were defiled, especially in the Christian Brothers run institutions where vulnerable children had no one to turn to. The Christian Brothers were accountable to no one and this set the stage for their neglect, abuses and assaults of their charges in these institutions. A renowned Australian author Morris West when asked why he didn't take his final vows to become a Christian Brother replied: "I came in contact with twisted minds" of which I did not wish to be associated with". Many of these twisted minds, sadists, perverts and misfits ended up in the four Western Australian institutions where they abused generations of children.

### **Aussie Christian Brothers**

Despite the express teachings of their founder that no child was to be given corporal punishment or humiliated, for failure to comprehend school lessons as, "this will surely permanently damage the soul and psyche", the Christian Brothers became famous for doing these very things and worse, to generations of children. Three real sadists at Clontarf in the mid-1950s were Br.J.C. Higgins, Br. J.B. Cahill and K.S. Foley. The latter would just before

kneeing you in the groin say, "this will hurt me more than you." The Order may have originated in Ireland but it gained many Australian recruits. The only connection with Ireland were their names; Doyle, Higgins, Foley, Murphy, O'Shea, Moore, Murphy, O'Doherty and Mc Gee. They were all Aussie blokes born in Australia who spent a big part of their lives abusing children under the guise of being Christian Brothers, agents of God.

Incidentally a very high percentage of 'lay' brothers in these institutions molested kids. These brothers were not qualified to teach in the class-room, in fact they lacked a reasonable standard of education. They supervised farm and manual work and there were many deviants and sadists amongst this lot.

The Christian Brothers were a teaching Order and in the WA institutions they taught with systemic violence. Their black habits and white collors were a uniform that gave them absolute control over any child locked into their system. They had to be careful if they came into contact with outside kids who had rights, but institution kids had no rights and were treated accordingly. On their emblem which adorns many of their buildings is a Latin phrase that means "To do and to teach" however, many in the Order made a mockery of this vow as they did of their added vow of the "Gracious instruction of youth"

## **Apologists**

All sorts of supercilious excuses have been made for the disgusting behavior by Christian Brothers towards many children entrusted to them in their institutions. Their apologists cite various reasons; over work, stress, heart trouble and too many kids. If this was the case, why were so many children herded into these places in the first place where they were subjected to a crude form of education by sadists calling themselves Christians. A red herring often used is that the perpetrators are dead; no thought is given to the victims who are still suffering. Another ploy is that the abusers are now frail old men. Another excuse put forward is that "there were only a few rotten apples in the barrel". The fact of the matter is in the institutions nearly the whole barrel was rotten! A supposed historian himself and erstwhile Christian Brother, Barry Coldrey has inferred in newspaper articles that the kids were at fault. (Now that's history revision at its worst). He took on the role of spin-doctor for the Christian Brothers. This bloke was given exclusive access to the Order's files the result was a skilful whitewash called



*The Scheme.* Yet a secret report he composed from info in the files which contained evidence of pedophile rings of Christian Brothers sharing young boys for sexual gratification was never meant to see the light of day. It would take a court subpoena to make it public.

Because of their guilt, some former bully-boys (themselves abusers of younger children) hope the true history of the institutions will never be made public and are some of the strongest supporters of the Brothers.

Because of their religious bigotry a number of people can believe quite readily that other religions are capable of crimes against innocent children and humanity but find it impossible to accept the fact that their own brand is guilty of the same. Then there are those whose religious belief is nothing more than a crude ideology masked by hypocrisy and sustained in the hope of benefiting from the wealth power and influence of the Catholic Church. Some politicians come into this category in their quest for the Catholic vote.

## **Nuns**

I have an ambivalent view of them owing to my personal experiences. My first was being belted around the face while in a cot in an Orphanage in the UK for peeling off some plaster from a wall out of boredom. However, while in Castledare Boys' Home in WA there arrived four Nuns from New Zealand in 1949. They stayed for two years. These nuns were wonderful unlike most of the Christian Brothers. They were not a teaching Order and worked mainly in the kitchen, infirmary and laundry. They lived up to the name of their Order, the Sisters of Compassion. In their presence I felt secure. The day of their departure from Castledare left me in a fearful state of mind and as it turned out with good reason. On an earlier occasion for talking to Sr. James in the laundry I was taken down to a small shed near the dairy where the saddles were stored and belted with a leather harness by Br Moore and warned the same would happen again if he saw me talking to the Nuns. This sadist was transferred to Bindoon Boy's Town where he inflicted similar treatment on some of the poor lads there.

At Clontarf the Hungarian Nuns (about five of them) did similar sort of work, but there was not the same rapport with these ones. They worked hard but had little input with the lads during my time there. On one occasion, a Nun chased two of us around the brothers long dinning table for taking a

piece of fruit. She caught the other kid and gave him a hell of a slapping around the face. A friend who was sent to Tardun told me as a fifteen year old lad while working in the kitchen, he would sometimes be plagued with spontaneous erections and the nun would make snide remarks about it. On other occasions, if he made a mistake she would hit him on the shoulders, hands, legs and back with a belt she wore around her waist.

The Hungarian Nuns at Clontarf were used as cheap labour. The brothers seemed to treat them with aloofness perhaps this was because they hardly spoke any English. The Nun in charge of the infirmary deserves a citation for chasing Br.B.Doyle out with a broom because he was belting a sick kid in one of the beds in there. The infirmary was sometimes used to cover up some of the effects of criminal assaults on kids by the brothers. Br L.Murphy criminally assaulted a small aboriginal kid who as a result spent some time in the infirmary. Br Roberts used fists on me in the foyer of the Clontarf Chapel for taunting one of his pets who it turned out he sexually abused. Br.B.Doyle punched my friend Wally in the head in the Chapel for talking during prayers and whacked myself and some other lads with a base ball bat for being out of bounds in the sports room. Br Mohen punched a kid repeatedly in the stomach for being slow to get out of bed. This lad had to be rushed to hospital for an appendix operation. This same brother whacked another kid in the head with a lump of wood with a nail in it. He had to carry this one to the dormitory where he was confined for a week without proper medical help. While retrieving a tennis ball from the classroom roof another boy was belted on the back with a cricket bat by Mohen. He grabbed another kid around the neck and punched him furiously about the face for kicking a football into one of the ornate rose gardens in the quadrangle This bloke was a maniac while at Clontarf.

The resident priest at Clontarf while I was there was Polish. He had no imput except for saying mass and hearing confessions. He was more involved with the Polish community, many being new arrivals. Again, there didn't seem to be a strong rapport between him and the brothers. According to statements I was privy to while secretary of VOICES, a support group for ex-Catholic institution lads in WA, there is no doubt that he failed to act when confided in by some boys in the confessional of forced sex acts by some Christian Brothers. Some claim he dobbed them in to Br. Doyle. I don't quite believe this, it was more a case of Doyle watching from the choir loft as to who was taking a long time in the confessional and who were given the long task of saying the stations of the cross. It seems these lads were deemed by

Br.Doyle to be guilty of sexual activity. They would be ordered to his office for interrogation, sometimes for long periods late at night and repeatedly belted with the "strap" until he extracted his required answers.

## **Places of Depravity**

The sordid history of systematic abuse of children entrusted to the care of Christian Brothers in Castledare, Clontarf, Bindoon and Tardun is a lesson for the present and future communities to listen to the kids, not their carers. These institutions became life long havens for pedophiles and sadists.

Government bureaucrats in child care today should stop making excuses for their predecessors by using selected statements in govt dept files. They must accept the fact that through the negligence of former child welfare depts many Aussie and overseas kids were subjected to the most brutal and disgusting abuses normally associated with uncivilized, draconian societies.

Because of the volume of written statements and related experiences of sexual assaults of numerous individuals from different eras in these institutions, there can be no doubt that known deviants ie Brothers and several lay staff like the band leader at Clontarf in the 1950s. There were also a few benefactors and some older boys who during their time in the institutions were warped by the role model of the Christian Brothers . Also a number of visiting brothers & priests resided in these places from the 1920s-1970s preying on generations of children. By cross reference a clear picture emerges showing thatthere was nearly always one pedophile in the four institutions in WA but more often two, three, four and at one period five known pedophiles at Castledare, Bindoon and Tardun. It was into this environment that child migrants & aussie state Wards were abandoned by their supposed guardian the State Child Welfare. These institutions were for most of their history never "safety zone houses for kids".

## **Clontarf Boys Town Revisited**

Sometimes when returning for a visit to these places for reunions as an adult, you were given the "cold fish" and patronizing treatment by your former abusers. This I concluded was a cover for their guilt. A friend who was badly sexually abused in these institutions would at various functions catch the eye of one of his former abusers, a popular lay brother, and just hold the

moment for a while. Not a word was said, the abused was now in control and the abuser knew it.

## **The Stockholm Syndrome**

Some supporters and apologists for the Christian Brothers past disgusting behavior towards children were themselves abused. They dismiss it as corporal punishment used by some brothers as a prelude to sexual abuse. They also witnessed the abuse of others yet stay in a state of denial even paying homage to their former abusers. Others believe they owe the brothers a debt because they gained an education, failing to see it was the genes they inherited which was the deciding factor. I and others not blessed in the same fashion were belted day after day with a dangerous assault weapon, "the Strap" for being slow to comprehend our school lessons. I could never equate this brutality with the beautiful mosaic scene above the entrance to the Clontarf chapel that depicted a loving Jesus welcoming little children.

The large number of kids who left these institutions unable to read and write is testimony to the crude and brutal methods used by a supposed teaching Order, the Christian Brothers. It also points to a complete dereliction of duty of care by the Child Welfare authorities. They should have been involved and provided remedial help for those struggling with their education in a climate of fear.

The greatest admirers of discipline for children and adults were Adolf Hitler, Stalin and most of the Christian Brothers institutions. One of these blokes or was it a Jesuit priest is credited with saying "Give me a child at seven and I'll give you the man", of course he is right.

The Christian Brothers were given a golden opportunity to nurture and prepare vulnerable children to grow into happy, confident adults and as productive members of society. The tragedy is they failed miserably. Instead their Christian ethos was distorted and replaced with a hybrid form of religion with a fetish for brutality and humiliation of their charges. Their Order will permanently be associated with child abuse mainly because of what transpired in their institutions where perverts and sadists were given sanctuary by the Order.

At least four cases of sodomy of kids in Castledare & Clontarf have been confided to me personally. On being 'released' from the institutions to fend for themselves in the real world, quite a few lads who suffered abuses as innocent children just couldn't cope, causing them to end up in the state mental & prison systems with many suffering life long alcohol problems. There is a high rate of loners who never married and many with emotional problems have taken up the option of suicide. "Give me a child indeed."

### **Bully-Boys, Squealers & Pets**

The above mentioned were common in the four institutions. It was hard enough getting by the brothers who were prone to unleash at the drop of a hat brutality on you for the slightest mistake. These bully-boys usually had a brother as their patron. They were given jurisdiction over groups of younger boys for chores and work parties. It was in this context that some of them abused their younger charges in the same manner as most of the brothers. Sometimes it started with physical abuse under the guise of discipline for perceived wrong doings, and then ended in sexual abuse.

Young kids transferred from Castledare Boys' Home, a junior orphanage a few miles up the river from Clontarf, were often targets of abuse from bully-boys. One group, when assigned to weed the lucerne patch near the dining room on Saturday mornings, suffered physical assaults. The older bully-boy put in charge on being told by his squealers that some kids were slow to do the work or were pulling out the lucerne instead of weeds would kick these lads with his hobnailed boots and belt them with a stick. Just like a qualified Christian brother. A friend of mine while in a work gang watering the roses by bucket along the main Clontarf drive was taken by the bully-boy in charge into a small brothers supper room on the right hand side of main building and told to drop his pants and ordered with threats of violence to indulge in a sex act.

Another bully-boy sexually assaulted younger lads in the bakery and sports towers. One of his victims had been molested by a Christian Brother in Castledare and by another in Clontarf.

The patron of the bully-boys at Castledare during my time there was Br Murphy, himself a notorious molester. He gave them the run of the

orphanage. Here they operated in packs singling out a lad who they would brutalize.

On one occasion, two bully pets of Br. Murphy lined some small kids in the shower room and with threats of violence forced these unfortunates to drink urine out of a milk bottle. Such was the power of the bully-boys. Then there were those who were just bullies throughout their childhoods picking on the weaker lads and in some cases inflicting life long injuries to their victims. The culture of bullying was rampant at Castledare and became the catalyst on one occasion for the entire orphanage to abscond for several days. It was no good running to the Brothers to complain about being bullied because they called you a sook. You just had to cop it. Anyway, they were the biggest bullies going. Bullying was a permernant aspect of these orphanages and sometimes resulted in younger boys being sexually abused by older boys. At no time were the relevant authorities informed of this problem.

The squealers were always a problem reporting to the brothers anything disparaging that we said and any infringement of the rules such as being out of bounds. These kids hoped to gain favor with a particular brother in the hope of extra food and less of the strap.

The pets were in a category of their own. Most of the Christian Brothers had a group of them and they would actually publicly demonstrate kindness towards them. The motive in many cases was sex. Kids not in this exclusive group were treated in a cold detached manner often with accompany brutality and humiliation. The irony was that these pets were treated well by their patron but brutalized by other Christian Brothers. It wasn't all plain sailing for them. They deserve some sympathy as they had to cope a prison like environment at a tender age.

### **Recruiting boys**

From the above described environment, recruits were sought by Br. Sly and the sadistic Higgins for the Order. Some kids in year 2 and year 8 grades were invited to join a secret society of "St Michael of the flaming sword". Other kids called them (the Squealers Club). They were offered a feed of lollies, cool drinks and ice cream once a fortnight and free time in the library. It was hoped these kids would join the Order. About fifteen joined from the various institutions. Not a good idear as they were coming from a

closed institutional shop and into another closed shop, the Christian Brothers. No doubt there were genuine ones who signed up with the best intentions. A mate of mine put his name down in the hope of getting a gold watch. However, others adversely warped by institutional life would, on becoming Christian Brothers, continue the cycle of child abuse.

### **Culled for sex**

There was another category where lads were culled out from the rest and isolated to become a sex toy for some of the brothers. This was done in a most cunning and vicious manner to convince the lad there was no one to turn to. He had to either accept the reality of this state or give in to a call from within to end it all with suicide.

### **Royal Commissions**

In Western Australia in the 1980s there were three Royal Commissions into Land Management, Liquor Laws, and Racing /Trotting . One industry in the eastern states (could be racing) has had fifty nine. Nothing for kids.

The RSPCA is an exclusive Organisation which tries to prevent cruelty to animals. There is no such organisation for children.

In November 1996 the Westralian Select Committee into Child Migration chaired by Mike Barnett MLA (the then member for Rockingham) presented its Interim Report to parliament. It called for a State inquiry, an Royal Commission. The Forde Inquiry in QLD was quite effective in revealing decades of institutional child abuse however, the politicians true to form have not acted on its recommendations.

VOICES, a support group for former residents of the WA Christian Brothers institutions, in its submission to the Select Committee, blew the whistle on the Christian Brothers. Its detailed information from ex-residents of these places regarding the abuse of Aussie state wards & child migrants in the four institutions brought to light a history of systematic child abuse that has laid dormant for forty years. Thirty paedophile brothers were cited as residing in these four institutions for most of their history. That was a good reason for a Honorary Royal Commission, but the incoming Court Government didn't think so. Yet it often mouthed off how children were our future. It was quite

happy to have a judicial inquiry into whether a former WA Premier told a fib to Parliament.

It seems a Royal Commission can be found for anything but child abuse. In the 1930s, a call for a Royal Commission into the treatment in the WA Religious missions for aboriginals was quashed.

There needs to be A National Royal Commission into the past treatment of state wards put into institutions and foster care in Australia. Canada has shown what a proper judicial inquiry can achieve. This resulted in paedophile Christian Brothers being jailed. "The past is the past but any credible historian worth his or her salt will tell you if past mistakes are not recorded accurately they are prone to be repeated. This is why a National Royal Commission into the treatment of state wards put into Government/Religious Institutions and foster care is paramount for the interest of children in Australia.

Doing good deeds for the community does not give organizations such as the Christian Brothers, Anglicans, Salvos, Nuns and other religious cults the right to do evil in the form of child abuse.

## **Community Values**

Decent citizens and good Christians ie Catholics, Anglicans, Salvos are shocked and disgusted with the revealed history of child care practices in Australia, especially the long history of child abuse in various institutions. The community was duped into thinking vulnerable kids were in safe hands. Religious organisations & government departments were thought to be doing the right thing by the kids who had no one to turn to.

## **The Christians Brothers in Third world Countries**

In a public written apology, the present day Christian Brothers hierarchy in one sentence stated they were sorry for any abuses that may have occurred in their former institutions in WA but, in the next sentence claimed according to "our investigations some of the allegations of abuse were exeragated". This "clayton apology" was crafted to suppress and hide the disgusting truth of their Order. The Christian Brothers are quick to offer counseling sessions to their many victims, but it is they who really need this service because of



their compulsive denial of the truth regarding the sexual and physical assault of children by their Order. With their double-talk, how can people around the world be confident that innocent kids in poor Third world Countries of Africa, Asia and South America where they are setting up similar institutions will not suffer the same abuses that occurred in Australia.

### **Aussies at War**

While Aussies were fighting to make the world a better place, some of their kids were made state wards because their mothers became ill or couldn't cope on their own. They ended up in institutions where they suffered for the duration. There were no visits from Legacy with offers of help. This was an era when there was little child support. It was a time when the state was supreme and individual rights counted for nothing. State wards had no rights even if they were the sons & daughters of servicemen. To stand up to the child welfare was courting the danger of having your children taken into care. They could take kids away from parents on the slightest pretext and on occasions did. The Aussie kids locked up in institutions gave new meaning to out of sight, out of mind. Their basic human rights were cancelled, they suffered treatment as kids that their fathers were risking their lives to rid the world off. Often their families would never be able to reunite because of loss of contact. A state security system was put in place to control the lives of state wards. Even in the 1950s, 1960s and through to the 1970s one bad decision by a state ward as a teenager or loss of a job and you were arrested and taken to the Mt Lawley Receiving Home (detention centre). Female teenage state wards deemed by the Child Welfare to be antisocial were handed over to the Good Shepard Nuns in Wembly. Also very young girls whose parents had alcohol and mental related problems along with girls who had suffered sexual abuse ended up in these places. Here their jailers (the Nuns) used them as cheap labour in what was a profitable commercial laundry. This Order, like the Sisters of Mercy who have a similar history, claim they have changed, the proof being all the charitable work they do. Yet, they refuse to be honest and accept that the unchristian behavior of their Order led to the abuse and exploitation of young girls. These nuns conveniently forget the teaching of Jesus (If you harm a child you harm me). Many Christian Brothers also forgot this teaching.

## Regulations re Corporal Punishment

1. Corporal punishment is not to be regarded as a proper aid to teaching
2. It must not be inflicted for failure or inability to learn, for trivial breaches of school discipline or for neglect to prepare home lessons.
3. All cases of Corporal Punishment are to be recorded in the Punishment Book at the time the Punishment is inflicted.  
(Note: This applies to every punishment, even if only one stroke of the cane)
4. Corporal Punishment may only be employed for offences against morality, for gross impertinence, or for willful and persistent disobedience. It should not, as a rule, be inflicted in public.
5. Corporal Punishment may be inflicted by the principal teacher only, or by a assistant teacher under the direction and on the responsibility of the principal teacher.
6. In the absence of the principal teacher the senior assistant is empowered to enforce obedience.
7. Monitors are in no case allowed to resort to Corporal Punishment
8. The "boxing" of children's ears is strictly forbidden, as is also the Corporal Punishment of girls of twelve years of age and over.

This submission has been compiled with a fair amount of emotional torment as I can still recall the distorted faces of kids pleading for mercy while being belted by a full grown adult a supposed Christian Brother in the classrooms of Castledare & Clontarf for the slightest spelling or maths' mistake. This form of abuse was made into an art form by Br. Doyle once a week in the Keaney Memorial Hall. We were all gripped in a state of fear during these public belting sessions lest we would be singled out next. Most of the Christian Brothers made sarcastic remarks to destroy ones innate personality and self worth. The perpetual drive to snuff out the spirit of the individual by inflicting them with senseless brutality and humiliation to conform to the

grinding regimented life of the institutions was in the main successful. This would ensure the full potential of many kids in these institutions would be snuffed out.

In the main, the level of child abuse in these institutions was determined by the Superior.

### **The times were a changing**

In the early 1980s, fortunately for the kids still being placed into these institutions the appointment of principals Br.Negus, Br.Donohoe and Br. O'Driscoll more enlightened teaching methods were finally adopted. In Tardun they were resisted by some on the parents committee and even by some old boys. Also, there were strong moves to close Tardun & Bindoon and it would take a million dollars from the Christian Brothers to save it. Many of the grand buildings constructed in former times with child labour were now becoming a liability because of the high cost of maintenance. My imputation of institutional child abuse does not include this era.

This submission is not an articulate or perfectly researched document of a commissioned academic or historian. They would not have a clue as to the suffering and terrible life long effects of institutionalization as they did not experience it. Rather, it is a combination of personal recollections, statements and confided experiences including reflections of institutional care.

I trust my submission gives the committee & the public an insight into a past chapter of institutionalised care in Western Australia. By proxy, may it also convey the feelings and sentiments of the many who through death, ill health, damaged psyche, painful shame or a denial of education are unable to have their say in regards to how they were treated while in these institutions.

Faithfully yours

Peter Bent