

CHAPTER 3

THE SENDING TO AUSTRALIA

We left the U.K. from Tilbury Docks...Little did I realise the magnitude or the implications of the decision made by the British Government to deport us, this would be the last time that I would see my mother.¹

3.1 This chapter discusses some of the factors relating to the process of sending the child migrants to Australia. A number of organisations and religious orders were involved in child migration to Australia. The children chosen came overwhelmingly from institutions in the United Kingdom. An important question concerning who gave consent for the children to be sent was raised during the inquiry. Finally there has been debate over the actual numbers of child migrants sent to Australia during the twentieth century.

Agencies involved in child emigration

3.2 The main organisations involved in child migration to Australia during the 20th century were Barnardos, Fairbridge and a number of Catholic religious orders. A number of Protestant Churches and the Salvation Army were also involved, albeit in a smaller way.

3.3 Prior to 1939 almost all the child migrants arrived under the auspices of Barnardos and Fairbridge. As noted previously, after the Second World War, the main receiving agencies for child migrants were Catholic Church agencies, Fairbridge, Barnardos as well as some Protestant Churches. The role of Fairbridge and Barnardos was significantly reduced in the post-war period, whereas the Catholic Church played a more significant role in child emigration.

Barnardos

3.4 The most well-known of the late 19th century scheme's was run by Dr Barnardo, an evangelical philanthropist and social reformer who was born in Dublin and who moved to London in 1866. He supported schemes to send children from the slums of London to rural areas of England and also to the colonies.

3.5 From the 1880s until 1930, Barnardos sent some 20,000 child migrants to Canada. By comparison, Barnardo's involvement with Australia was small scale. In 1871 a family of three children rescued from London's slums was sent to live with a family in Australia. In 1883, an unofficial group of older Barnardo's boys arrived in Fremantle. Barnardo's Homes extended their field of operations in Australia in a systematic way after World War 1.

1 Submission No.4, p.1.

3.6 Barnardos initially sent children to the Fairbridge Farm School in Western Australia and subsequently established its own model farm school at Mowbray Park, near Picton (New South Wales) in 1929. The boys were trained as farm labourers, the girls as domestic servants, while accommodation was on the cottage principle. During the pre-war years, in particular, Barnardos child migrants:

...were seen as additions to the workforce rather than as children who required schooling. There was a rule, strictly applied, that boys work on the land and girls work as domestics. It was introduced early in the century as a condition of migration. Basically it was to avoid industrial unrest if Barnardos Boys (and presumably Girls) were to compete for jobs with unionised people in the cities.²

3.7 In 1946, in preparation for the renewal of child migration, the clause requiring boys to work on the land and girls to be placed in domestic service, was removed from the Barnardos charter. All children were given a choice of occupation within their vocational skills and interests. Mr Alan Gill noted that although abolished on paper, at least for girls, the old rule continued in practice much as before.³

3.8 In 1947 the first post-war group of Barnardo's Homes children arrived in New South Wales. In 1950, Greenwood, a property at Normanhurst (NSW) was purchased. Boys and girls were to be trained on the same property, a departure from previous practice.⁴ In 1956, Barnardos adopted a policy of establishing small, family-group homes, and in 1964 its services began to be reoriented towards caring for Australian-born children. By 1967 the last party of seven child migrants arrived in Sydney. In the 1950s Barnardos Australia was a branch of Barnardos UK; it was subsequently incorporated in New South Wales and in 1996 became a separate organisation from Barnardos UK. Barnardos UK now licenses the Australian group to utilise the name.⁵

Fairbridge

3.9 Kingsley Fairbridge, the founder of the Fairbridge Society was born in 1885 in South Africa. He was a philanthropist whose aim was to provide deprived children from the slums of Britain with a sense of self-worth, and the training and farming skills necessary for life in rural areas of the British Empire.

3.10 In 1912 with the assistance of the Western Australian Government, in the form of a land grant, he established a Farm School at Pinjarra to accommodate and train underprivileged British children in farming techniques. The first group of 13 child migrants arrived in Western Australia in 1913. In 1915 the Western Australian

2 Gill, A, *Orphans of the Empire: the shocking story of child migration to Australia*, Random House, Sydney, 1998, p.121.

3 Gill, p.122.

4 Gill, pp.114-16; National Archives of Australia (NAA), *Good British Stock: Child and Youth Migration to Australia, 1901-83*, Research Guide No.11, 1999, Ch 3, Part 12.

5 From discussions with Barnardos UK and Submission No.50, Appendix 2 (Barnardos).

Government agreed to provide a subsidy of 4/- per week for each child at Pinjarra, which was subsequently increased to 6/- per week in 1916. After 1913 the ensuing years 'saw a desperate struggle for survival as World War I separated Fairbridge from his Oxford support base and diverted attentions elsewhere'.⁶

3.11 At the conclusion of the war, Mr Fairbridge went to London to rekindle enthusiasm in the project and seek British Government support. One study noted that 'his arrival was opportune as immigration was re-commencing, imperial unity was in vogue, and convinced imperialists such as Lord Milner and L S Amery were dominant at the Colonial Office'.⁷ He expanded the scheme in the 1920s and obtained funding from the Commonwealth, Western Australian and British Governments. Under the *Empire Settlement Act 1922* (UK), the Overseas Development Board granted Fairbridge a substantial subsidy to purchase a new property at Pinjarra (Western Australia) and develop its facilities. In 1922 the Western Australian Government and the Commonwealth Government each agreed to pay 5/- per child per week for children to the age of 14 years. Barnardos Homes cooperated with Fairbridge in sending children, and the farm school was intended to take 300 children at a time. By 1924, cottage homes for 200 children had been built, and a school was provided and staffed by the Western Australian Government.

3.12 Mr Fairbridge died in 1924, but under his successors, the Fairbridge system matured. Moves to increase the numbers at the Pinjarra Farm School from 200 to 300 children were given an impetus in 1927 with an Agreement made between the UK Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and the Child Emigration Society in which provision was made for the maintenance of children sailing to Australia beginning in 1932. By 1932, the Farm School was receiving government subsidies from the Commonwealth, State and British Governments. The Commonwealth and the State were each contributing 3/6 per head per week and the British Government was providing 5/- per week for each child.⁸

3.13 The Fairbridge system involved small group homes under cottage mothers; primary education at local state schools until the age of 14 years; one year to 18 months training in farm work followed by placement in first jobs with boys as farm labourers and girls as domestic servants. One study noted that the principle of 'girls to domestic service, boys to farms' became anachronistic even during the 1930s – 'yet Fairbridge management clung to this principle until after World War II. There were tensions between Fairbridge, Western Australia and the parent body in London – also unresolved until well after the war. However, the Fairbridge mystique remained strong and the ideal still inspired'.⁹

6 NAA, Ch 3, Part 10.

7 NAA, Ch 3, Part 10.

8 Western Australia Legislative Assembly, Select Committee into Child Migration, *Interim Report*, 1996, pp.29-30.

9 NAA, Ch 3, Part 10.

3.14 In 1937 a second Fairbridge Farm School was established at Molong, near Orange in New South Wales. The Molong farm school was largely developed and operated with Australian funds, in contrast to Pinjarra which was funded and operated from the United Kingdom. The first British child migrants arrived in 1938 and between then and 1959 a total of 545 children passed through the Farm School. Thereafter the Farm School took in child migrants who were accompanied to Australia by a sole parent and, in the later years, before closing in 1973, children who had come to Australia with both parents.¹⁰

3.15 The Northcote Farm School, based on Fairbridge principles, was established at Glenmore, near Bacchus Marsh, Victoria, in 1937. The Farm was established as a result of a bequest by Lady Northcote, an admirer of Kingsley Fairbridge and his Farm School initiative. The Northcote bequest was invested in England by a group of trustees which included as chairman Earl Grey, a former Governor-General of Canada – ‘a firm imperialist with whom Fairbridge had discussed his plans’.¹¹ In 1936 a wealthy pastoralist, William Anglis, gifted a farm at Glenmore for the project. The Australian Government agreed to provide 3/- per child maintenance per week, while the British Government agreed to contribute 5/- sterling per week for each child up to the age of 14 years.

3.16 Although the Northcote Farm was established independently of Fairbridge it soon developed a close relationship with the Fairbridge Society, with the Society agreeing to select and send children from Britain to the farm school.¹² Professor Sherington and Mr Jeffery noted that Earl Grey approached Fairbridge in July 1935 seeking assistance and advice – ‘as a result the Society agreed to select and send out children for a charge of £30 per child. For this return the Society would also receive and keep reports on individual children and represent the Northcote Children’s Farm in any enquiries and correspondence. In effect, Fairbridge became the arm of Northcote in Britain’.¹³

3.17 After World War II, the Fairbridge schools continued to receive child migrants but by even the early 1950s ‘their management could see the “writing on the wall” for the farm school movement. Fewer children were available every year. In view of this situation, Fairbridge experimented with the so-called “One Parent” and “Two Parent” schemes to widen their catchment pool’.¹⁴

3.18 Small Fairbridge family homes were established at Tresca (Tasmania) and Hagley (Tasmania) and survived until the early 1970s. However, one study noted that ‘the rapidly changing times had made any scheme of child migration anachronistic.

10 Submission No.43, p.1 (Fairbridge Foundation).

11 Sherington, G and Jeffery, C, *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration*, University of Western Australia Press, 1998, p.164.

12 Sherington & Jeffery, pp.164-66, 262.

13 Sherington & Jeffery, p.166.

14 NAA, Ch 3, part 10.

Fairbridge – by adapting remained in the field longer than other child migration bodies, but social trends could be resisted only for so long. The end came in 1973’.¹⁵

Catholic Church agencies

3.19 There were three principal Catholic religious orders associated with child migration in Australia – the Christian Brothers, Sisters of Mercy and the Poor Sisters of Nazareth. The Christian Brothers were founded in 1802 in Ireland, by a former businessman, Edmund Rice. After the death of his wife he established an order of religious brothers for the education of poor boys.

3.20 In Australia, the Christian Brothers managed four Western Australian Catholic orphanages – Clontarf, Castledare, Bindoon and Tardun – which received child migrants, initially in 1938-39 and in larger numbers after 1947. As noted previously, Catholic interest in juvenile migration in Western Australia was associated with the founding of the Knights of the Southern Cross in Perth in 1922 as a Catholic counterpart to the Freemasons Lodge. One of the Knights’ objectives was increasing Catholic migration to Western Australia, and more specifically child migration.

3.21 The Sisters of Mercy, which were founded in 1831 in Ireland, took a number of child migrants into their orphanages at Goodwood (South Australia), and Neerkol, near Rockhampton (Queensland). The Poor Sisters of Nazareth, which were established in London in 1851, cooperated with the Christian Brothers in sending many of the boys in their care in English institutions to the Christian Brothers’ orphanages in Western Australia. They took a number of girls from Britain into their home – Nazareth House – at Geraldton (Western Australia) after World War II.¹⁶ Other religious orders receiving children, albeit on a smaller scale, were the Daughters of Charity, Sisters of St Joseph, Marist Brothers and the Salesian order.

Church of England

3.22 Church of England involvement in child migration began during the 1920s when various prominent figures within the Church in Australia encouraged assisted immigration. The Church of England had commenced migration work before the passing of the Empire Settlement Act – in 1921 it sponsored 174 persons to Australia, many of them ex-servicemen, and large numbers of boys for farm work soon followed. In Queensland, Canon D J Garland managed schemes for both adults and farm boys, while the church in NSW was assisting some 700 immigrants by 1925.¹⁷

3.23 After World War II the Anglican Church was not heavily involved in juvenile migration. Fairbridge, the Big Brother Movement and Barnardos were the main groups involved in the migration of Protestant youths in the post-war period. However, a number of children were brought to the Swan Homes near Perth (Western

15 NAA, Ch 3, Part 10.

16 NAA, Ch 3, Part 14.

17 NAA, Ch 3, part 15.

Australia).¹⁸ In 1947 Swan Homes was approached by the Commonwealth Government to place British child migrants in the institution with the British and Australian Governments agreeing to pay for their maintenance. Swan Homes agreed to this arrangement as the Commonwealth Government committed to the provision of capital funding to erect the necessary buildings to house the children as Swan Homes at that time did not have sufficient accommodation. By 1953, Swan Homes was caring for 211 children, 142 boys and 69 girls. A total of 350 children were sent to Swan Homes between 1947 and 1960.¹⁹

Methodist and Presbyterian Churches

3.24 The Methodist and Presbyterian Churches were only involved in child migration in a relatively small way. The Methodist Church's involvement in child migration began in 1938-39 when some 37 children were sent from the National Children's Homes in the UK to the Northcote Farm School.²⁰ Between 1950 and 1954 some 91 children emigrated in small parties to Australia and were accommodated in four Methodist homes – the Methodist Home for Children, 'Dalmar', in Sydney (New South Wales), the Methodist Home in Cheltenham (Victoria), Methodist Children's Home, Magill in Adelaide (South Australia) and Methodist Girls' Homes, 'Mofflyn' in Perth (Western Australia).²¹

3.25 The Presbyterian Church administered a home 'Dhurringile' at Tatura (Victoria) and received child migrants sent by the Church of Scotland. The first 29 boys arrived in 1950 and for a few years some 50 boys were in residence. Thereafter, the numbers declined and the home closed in 1964. The Church also operated the Burnside Orphan Homes at Parramatta (NSW).²²

Salvation Army

3.26 In the 1920s the Salvation Army was involved in efforts in helping especially poor young people move out of the crowded British cities to new opportunities in the Dominions – mostly in Canada and Australia. The scheme applied to youths aged 14 to 19 years. On arrival in Australia work was guaranteed on farms which had been selected by the Army. The scheme was especially focussed on Queensland with the Army establishing a special training camp at Riverview near Brisbane to give boys training in farming. Between 1908 and 1914 the Salvation Army had directly assisted some 50,000 adults and children to emigrate to the Dominions – however, separate figures for Australia are not available.²³

18 Submission No.56, p.2 (Swanleigh).

19 Peterkin, AR, *The Noisy Mansions: The Story of Swanleigh 1868-1971*, Swanleigh, 1986, pp. 105-110; Submission No.56, pp.1-2 (Swanleigh).

20 NCH was established in England in 1869 by a Methodist Minister, Dr Thomas Stephenson.

21 NAA, Ch.3, Part 17.

22 NAA, Ch.3, Part 18.

23 Gill, p.197.

3.27 The exact nature of the Salvation Army's involvement in child migration after World War II is unclear. Mr Gill stated that while the Army arranged the migration of thousands of children to join parents or guardians, and in some cases, to be adopted, it did not formally participate in the Government-endorsed post-war child migration scheme. However, Mr Gill argues that there were exceptions – in New South Wales, British children brought out by the Army joined Australian children at the Salvation Army's Bexley Boys' Home and Arncliffe Girls Home. Two country homes at Goulburn (for boys) and Canowindra (for girls) served the needs of children of high school age. Older youths attended the Riverview Training Farm School at Ipswich (Queensland). Child migrants also attended 'Seaforth', in Gosnells (Western Australia).²⁴

3.28 One study stated that the Salvation Army 'was not involved with child migration, strictly defined, after the war' noting that fewer than 100 'youth migrants' were sent to Riverview during the 1950s.²⁵

Institutions receiving child migrants

3.29 Appendix 3 lists the institutions receiving child migrants in Australia. It is compiled from a variety of sources, and every effort has been made to ensure that it is a comprehensive listing of the institutions receiving child migrants over the course of the 20th century. The list also includes some institutions that were licensed to receive child migrants but do not appear to have received any child migrants.

Consent to migration

3.30 In the course of the inquiry, many former child migrants complained that they were sent to Australia without their parent's consent. One former child migrant stated:

There is document after document showing details of my life. There is not one document that shows where my mother agreed to my being firstly deported out here and there is not one document to show that she agreed to my being adopted. There is no document that shows her signature to say that she agrees to those two items I have just mentioned.²⁶

Deception of parents and children

3.31 Some parents did give consent to migration, but there is evidence that they were told that their children would be fostered and would have a 'decent life'. One mother wrote 'I was told it would be a very good move for them with better prospects than staying in England...letting them go to Australia was the hardest thing I have ever had to do in my life but I believed it was the best thing for them'.²⁷

24 Gill, pp.199-200.

25 NAA, Ch. 3, Part 16.

26 *Committee Hansard*, 15.3.01, p.172.

27 Submission (Confidential).

3.32 The NCH noted during its discussions with the Committee in London that an examination of its records showed that parental consent was requested and that in many cases the parent said ‘no’. NCH conceded that parents were often unaware of the full ramifications of giving consent, with some now admitting they signed thinking it was in the best interest of the child who could be repatriated if unhappy.

3.33 There was much evidence that pressure was put on parents to consent to adoption, similarly believing that they would be giving their children a new life with a family and opportunities that they could not provide. Many former child migrants indicated that their parents had given consent to adoption within Britain but did not agree to migration to Australia. Parents were very shocked to find that their children had been sent to Australia.

As a young unmarried mother at the beginning of World War II, starving, jobless and ill, [my mother] had surrendered her sickly infant daughter to the good Sisters of Charity, never to see her again. Her only comfort had been in the knowledge that her baby had been adopted by a good Catholic family. The hurtful deception, however well-intentioned was the source of great stress in her latter years and went a long way to hindering any chance of us sharing any mother/daughter relationship.²⁸

3.34 Others did not agree to adoption, rather the parent had sought only a temporary placement in an institution until they could come back and claim their child. These parents expected to come back to get their children once they were ‘on their feet’, but instead had their children stolen away from them. One former child migrant discovered that her mother, on trying to reclaim her, had been told that she had been adopted to America. The mother’s telegram demanding that the adoption be halted was on the file. The child migrant stated that ‘it was all a lie anyway—I remained in England for another five years’ and was then migrated without her mother’s knowledge or consent.²⁹ The Committee heard other cases where parents were told that children had been adopted when in fact they remained in institutions in the United Kingdom for some time before leaving for Australia.

3.35 The Committee also heard of cases where relatives of the child in care had actively sought to prevent migration but the child was still migrated:

...my Aunt Mary found out that I was to be sent to Australia and got in touch with the Sisters at Nazareth House to object to my being sent to Australia. I was given a thrashing because my Aunt had found out and blamed for getting in touch with her.³⁰

In one particularly distressing case, the mother of a child being emigrated went to a train station to remove her child from the train. The nuns in charge forcibly restrained

28 Submission No.97, p.4.

29 Submission (Confidential).

30 Submission No.64, p.2.

the mother. The child migrant recalled how he thought he was going on a holiday and called out ‘will you be here when I come back mum?’ He stated that ‘these words still haunt my mum to this day, fifty years on’.³¹

3.36 In a further case, a divorce court ruled, against the wishes of the mother, that the children of the marriage should be migrated. The former child migrant noted ‘there was absolutely no thought given to the effect that separating children from their mothers would have on everyone concerned, then and for the future’.³²

3.37 There were also many complaints that the head of the institution gave consent rather than a parent who was still alive and who should have been consulted about their children’s migration:

[The immigration form] was signed by a Sister Bonaface on behalf of the Catholic Church. It is clearly a document which is false. The fact that I had other brothers and sisters living in other orphanages: somewhere someone should have investigated the fact. What has clearly happened here is that no-one at that stage bothered to see who was being brought from England. No-one checked on family background, it was just a matter of ‘Hand up if you want to go to Australia.’ If you put your hand up you went. I did not see this document until 1992.³³

3.38 Many witnesses also provided similar stories of being asked if they wanted to go on a holiday to Australia. They were told that there were kangaroos in the street and that you could put your hand out of the window to pick fruit from a tree. The children were given no indication that Australia was a great distance away and that they would not be returning to Britain.

3.39 Professor Sherington and Dr Coldrey have both considered the question of gaining parental consent for the migration of children. Professor Sherington noted that the issue of consent is ‘one of the more controversial issues associated with child migration’.³⁴ Dr Coldrey stated that ‘the idea that parents were treated shabbily or worse by charitable agencies, ignores the law as it stood, and the chaotic poverty-stricken world of the urban underclass from which the child migrants were dispatched’.³⁵

Children placed in care

3.40 In Britain, prior to the establishment of the welfare state, families in crisis often sought help from charitable societies or churches rather than have children

31 Submission (Confidential).

32 Submission No.120, p.2.

33 *Committee Hansard*, 16.2.01, p.90.

34 Submission No.119, p.2 (Professor Sherington).

35 Coldrey, BM, *Child Migration: Consent of Parents to their Children’s Emigration: The Legal and Moral Dimension*, Tamanaraik Press, 1996, Forward, p.2.

placed under compulsion in workhouses or state orphanages under the Poor Law. Barnardos UK, for example, indicated that children were committed to Barnardo's custody under the *Children Act 1908* (UK) but the majority of children were given into Barnardo's care directly by their family.³⁶

3.41 The children were committed to care because of a number of circumstances. Most commonly, many children were placed in care because they were illegitimate or abandoned. In Britain, many Catholic homes for unmarried mothers were managed by the Sisters of Nazareth or attached to Diocesan 'Crusades of Rescue'. Mothers also had their babies at Father Hudson Homes in the Midlands and Mersyside. When the babies were born, their mothers normally made the children available for adoption. Mothers often came from other parts of the British Isles, including Ireland, to have their babies in secret and then later returned home with the baby left behind. Barnardos also stated that in some cases children were abandoned in public places soon after birth and placed in its care.

3.42 In other cases, children were placed in care because of a change in circumstances in their families: one of the parents may have died or deserted the family and the remaining parent, often the mother, was unable to cope with balancing the need to work and raising the children on their own. The Committee also heard of a case where the mother was forced to choose between her keeping her children and remarriage.

3.43 Both Professor Sherington and Dr Coldrey stated that on many occasions the societies and orphanages had simply lost all contact with parents. Professor Sherington noted that the organisations then formally or informally assumed the role of *in loco parentis*. Dr Coldrey has written that sometimes the mother who had left a child in the care of the Church would return for the child when her situation improved, but often the visits by the mother became more infrequent and the child was 'abandoned – deserted for all practical purposes' and migration to Australia seemed the best option.³⁷

Regulation of migration

3.44 Barnardos UK stated that 'despite being a part of state policy, child migration schemes operated by charities were subject to very little regulation'. In relation to the legal requirements for child migration, under the Poor Laws of the 19th century, children could be migrated with the consent of the Poor Law Board and the consent of each child before two Justices of the Peace. Under the *Poor Law Amendment Act 1930* (UK), 'orphans' or 'deserted children' could be brought before two Justices of the Peace to give their agreement to their migration.³⁸

36 Submission No.50, Attachment 'After Care Service' (Barnardos).

37 Coldrey, *Consent of Parents*, p.40.

38 Coldrey, *Consent of Parents* p.41.

3.45 With the resumption of migration post war, Dr Coldrey stated that until the proclamation of the *Children Act 1948* (UK), emigration was carried out under the old procedures based on the *Custody of Children Act 1891* (UK) which ‘implied a right in the voluntary agencies to dispose of children apparently abandoned’. Evidence to the Committee indicates that this ‘apparently abandoned’ discretion was loosely used. Apart from this legislation, the voluntary agencies sought the consent of parent(s) if available or relied on:

- consent of the child given before two Justices of the Peace (under the Poor Laws); or
- the consent of parents given when the child was first placed in the institution that is in the paper signed by the parent (for example admission documents to Barnardos from Thomas Barnardo’s time contained a clause relating to child migration. These were signed by parents on a child being received into Barnardo’s care, thus giving consent for children to be sent overseas if the charity thought it appropriate); or
- the consent of the parent(s) given to have the child adopted where adoption had proved impossible and the carers felt that something had to be done.³⁹

3.46 The voluntary agencies often relied on the helplessness of many parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds to counter what they regarded as a superior authority.

3.47 The *Children Act 1948* referred to in chapter 2 sought to regulate the voluntary agencies and local authorities in arranging for the emigration of children in their care. The Act enabled a local authority, with the consent of the Secretary of State, to procure or assist in procuring the emigration of any child in their care. In this event, the Secretary of State had to be satisfied that parents or guardian were consulted and if this was not possible that the child, if old enough, consented to migration. The Act also empowered the Secretary of State to make regulations ‘to control the making and carrying out by voluntary organisations of arrangements for the emigration of children’. No such regulations were promulgated.

Consent to migrate

3.48 Professor Sherington suggested that migration without the consent of parents was more common amongst the child migrants arriving in Australia prior to 1939 than after 1947 when government regulations in Britain made the practice more difficult. There is evidence that parents did indeed consent to migration and in some cases, such as in the case of the Fairbridge Society, from the inception of the scheme in 1912 parents enrolled their own children with the Society. After 1947, more than half the children arriving through the Fairbridge Society had been enrolled with the Society by

39 Coldrey, *Consent of Parents*, pp.46-47.

their natural parents.⁴⁰ Another group of child migrants whose parents did give consent were those children from Malta.⁴¹

3.49 As Dr Coldrey has noted, in some instances, the agreement by parents to the adoption of their child was taken by institutions as agreement to migration. The Committee received evidence that some parents had agreed to adoption but at no time were they informed that ‘adoption’ could in fact mean migration to Australia.

3.50 In other cases, parents agreed to migration by signing admission documents which contained a clause relating to child migration. Barnardos noted that as many parents could not read, there were cases where parents believed that their children had been migrated without their knowledge. After World War II it became Barnardo’s practice to write to a child’s family seeking explicit consent for a child to be sent to Australia.⁴² Professor Sherington noted that Barnardos had informed the British Government in 1954 that more than two-thirds of parents consulted had refused consent to emigration and as a result Barnardos had only sent to Australia about 2 per cent of the potential pool of children.⁴³

3.51 There is some evidence of institutions attempting to find parents before children were migrated. Professor Sherington indicated that the files of the Fairbridge Society hold evidence that efforts were made to find parents but without success. The Catholic Children’s Society (Westminster), formerly the Crusade of Rescue, submitted to the West Australian Select Committee into Child Migration that extant records show that attempts were made to locate relatives prior to migration with a number of letters returned as the whereabouts of the addressees were unknown.

3.52 Professor Sherington commented that in the cases where parents were not directly involved or consulted, Fairbridge ‘seems to have relied on the opinion of the home from which the children came and assumed often that all contact had been lost with the parents’.⁴⁴ However, Professor Sherington noted that ‘on other occasions, there is no doubt that efforts were made to ‘protect’ children from their past particularly if their mothers were unmarried when they were born’. Professor Sherington concluded that the relationship between parents, their children and institutions were complex and depended on a number of circumstances. Further, ‘there were also different views about children and childhood and the roles and rights of parents in various schemes of child migration’.⁴⁵

40 Submission No.119, p.2 (Professor Sherington).

41 Submission No.54, p.13 (JLG).

42 Submission No.50 Attachment (Barnardos).

43 Submission No.119, Additional Information 24.4.01, p.1 (Professor Sherington).

44 Submission No.119, Additional Information, p.1 (Professor Sherington).

45 Submission No.119, pp.2-3.

3.53 In relation to Catholic migration, Dr Coldrey stated that ‘the handling of the consent of parents during the 1938/39 emigration to the Tardun scheme was meticulous’. During preparation for the migration of the boys, parents were traced so that they could give their consent, and in other cases approval was obtained from a Magistrates Court to emigrant children whose legal guardian could not be contacted.⁴⁶ For a group of girls migrated to Neerkol in 1951, the Home Office noted that consent by parents was obtained for nine of the 24 girls and for the other 15 parents were untraceable and consent had been given by the de facto guardian.⁴⁷

3.54 Dr Coldrey commented that ‘there is no doubt that the societies sought the signature of the parent on the Emigration Form, if possible; or a recent letter from the parent(s) approving of the planned departure of their child’. However, there ‘were many perfectly good reasons why a parent’s signature was not on the appropriate form, even though the parent or guardian had given permission for the emigration; or given permission to the Home Manager(s) to deal as they thought appropriate when disposing of a child’. Dr Coldrey argued that the actual consent forms may not have been signed by parents but the guardians had done so on receipt of a letter from the mother giving consent or where the consent was given to a third person, such as the local priest, acting on behalf of the guardian.⁴⁸

3.55 The Catholic Child Welfare Council (CCWC) provided an analysis of data it held which shows that of the 1,149 Catholic children migrated to Australia, consent by birth parent(s) was given in 229 instances (20%). In 920 (80%) cases, CCWC stated that it was unknown whether or not consent was given as the documentary evidence remains unfound.⁴⁹ A study of National Children’s Homes records indicated that out of 91 children sent to Australia between 1950 and 1954, a parent or guardian signed 67 consent forms.⁵⁰

3.56 A further matter that was raised in evidence was the giving of consent by the child migrants themselves. As already noted, consent by a child to migrate could be given before two Justices of the Peace. It is unclear from the evidence if authorities believed that asking children if they wanted to go to Australia for a holiday was compliance with this requirement. However, many former child migrants believe that they were deceived into giving consent by stories of great adventures in Australia. One former child migrant commented ‘the selection process was more like selling the idea to a group of lonely children who would grasp at any idea of change and adventure. What a cynical manipulation of young lives!’⁵¹

46 Coldrey, *Consent of Parents*, pp.45-46.

47 Coldrey, *Consent of Parents*, p.51.

48 Coldrey, *Consent of Parents*, pp.40, 47-48.

49 Submission No.51, Attachment, p.6 (CCWC).

50 Submission No.135, p.9 (WA Department for Family and Children’s Services).

51 Submission No.97, p.1.

3.57 Former child migrants also questioned the ability of young children to give consent to migration. One former child migrant argued:

it beggars belief that the authorities at the time believed that children, some as young as five years of age, could make an informed decision on a matter of this nature...[Church authorities] enticed these gullible children with the fables and fanciful lies that were spouted. Bear in mind that this was done shortly after these same children had been exposed to five years of continuous bombing and war. Combine this with the privations brought about as a consequence of the wartime rationing of food and one would have to question the morality of this selection procedure.⁵²

Conclusion

3.58 Evidence provided to the Committee indicates that for some children, parental consent was received and indeed in some cases parents actively sought placement of their children in the migration scheme. However, there is evidence that some parents who did consent, only did so because they were assured that their children would be better off in Australia, that there were greater opportunities for them and that they would be well cared for. While organisations may have had good intentions, they misled parents and in some cases badgered parents until they gave up their children.

3.59 Some children may have been sent directly contrary to their parents' wishes, however, most children were sent without parental consent. Undoubtedly, for some this was because institutions had lost contact with parents. In other instances it is clear that the whereabouts of parents were known and their views were not sought or were even rejected. The Committee considers this to be a further example of the incompetence and fraudulent actions of sending agencies as noted in the conclusion to this chapter.

Numbers of child migrants sent to Australia

3.60 There has been continuing debate over the exact number of child migrants sent under the various child migration schemes to Australia in the 20th century. While substantial numbers were sent to Australia it is obviously important to establish as comprehensively as possible the actual numbers sent, not least because the extent of resources and services that need to be directed to addressing the particular needs of former child migrants depends on establishing the size of the potential target group.

3.61 The Canadian experience shows that the impact of child migration on that country's population was substantial. Approximately 100 000 children were sent to Canada from 1869 to 1935. The impact of child migration for Canada can be gauged by their descendants who now number 3.5 million or approximately 12 per cent of the Canadian population.⁵³ The Committee's discussions in Canada emphasised the

52 Submission (Confidential).

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

importance of this point as these descendants are now trying to overcome difficulties in discovering and accessing records and pursuing issues of identity. In Australia's case the numbers of child migrants sent to this country was considerably less, with the impact on future population numbers likely to be less marked.

Numbers during the 20th century

3.62 It is difficult to establish with any degree of accuracy the total numbers of child migrants sent to Australia in the course of the 20th century. The Committee received different figures from a variety of sources, often covering different time periods. The difficulty in establishing precise numbers is indicative of the general problem of the lack of records and varying sources of data, and is arguably symptomatic of the imprecision with which the migration schemes operated. Table 3.1 shows in summary form the numbers of child migrants sent to Australia as provided in submissions to this inquiry and in other sources, including academic researchers in the area. Comprehensive information showing numbers of child migrants provided from these and other sources is at Appendix 4.

Table 3.1: Numbers of child migrants sent to Australia

Source	Time Period	Numbers	Reference
Mr Gill	1912-late 1960s	30 000	Gill, <i>Orphans of the Empire</i> , p.86
National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations (NCVCCO)	1920 - late 1960s	7 446	Submission No.55 (NCVCCO), p.5
Child Migrants Trust (CMT)	1920 - late 1960s	7 000 + (based on NCVCCO data)	Submission No.132 (CMT), p.7
Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs	1912 - 1961	6 500 (3 500 pre-war; 3 000 post-war)	Submission No.42 (DIMA), pp.15,17
Professor Sherington	1912 - late 1960s	6 000 (approx half pre-war; half post-war)	Submission No.119 (Professor Sherington), p.1
UK Health Committee	1947-1967	7 000 - 10 000	UK Health Committee Report, para.13
Dr Coldrey	1947-late 1960s	3 000-3 500	Submission No.15 (Dr Coldrey), p.38
Dr Constantine	1947-1965	3 170	Submission No.88, Additional Information, 25.3.01, (Dr Constantine), p.2

3.63 Evidence received by the Committee show that estimates of the total numbers of child migrants sent to Australia over the course of the last century range from 6,000 to 30,000. As the table shows, Mr Gill estimates the numbers of child migrants at 30,000. Mr Gill advised that this figure was his ‘best estimate’ based on his research of the numbers of child migrants.⁵⁴ Lower estimates are provided by other organisations. The National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations (NCVCCO) estimates the numbers of child migrants from 1920 to the late 1960s at 7,446. The Child Migrants Trust (CMT) also cites a figure of over 7,000 (based on NCVCCO data).⁵⁵

3.64 The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) indicated that approximately 6,500 child migrants arrived in Australia from the beginning of the 20th century to the early 1960s (3,500 pre-war, 3,000 post-war).⁵⁶

3.65 Professor Sherington cites a similar figure of 6,000 (for the period 1912 to the late 1960s). He advised that his estimate of the numbers of child migrants was based on pre-war figures of approximately 3,200 (comprising 1,500 children under the auspices of Fairbridge, 1,600 Barnardos children and 100 Catholic child migrants) and approximately 3,000 post-war child migrants.⁵⁷

3.66 Professor Sherington argued that estimates of the numbers of child migrants sent to Australia have often been ‘exaggerated’:

If you look very closely at unaccompanied child migrants from 1912, when the schemes began...from 1912 to the late 1960s my estimate is that it was in the order of 6,000. The 10,000 figure that has often been thrown around since about 1947 is because when Margaret Humphreys and others wrote the *Lost Children of the Empire* they looked at statistics which often did not draw a distinction between child and youth migration. If you count things like the Big Brother Movement, yes, the numbers are greater. But the number of unaccompanied children under the age of 14 is approximately 6,000.⁵⁸

Numbers of post-World War II arrivals

3.67 The Committee also received varying estimates of the numbers of child migrants arriving in Australia in the post-World War II period, ranging from 3,000 children to estimates as high as 10,000 children. As Dr Stephen Constantine noted:

54 Personal communication with Mr Gill, 20.8.01.

55 Submission No.132, p.7 (CMT). ‘Child migrants’ are defined in the submission as children who were sent to Australia at an age below the school leaving age.

56 The pre-war figure was based on the numbers of children sent to Barnardos, Fairbridge and Catholic institutions. See Submission No.42, pp.15,17 (DIMA).

57 Submission No.119, Additional Information, 26.6.01 (Professor Sherington).

58 *Committee Hansard*, 22.3.01, pp.519-20 (Professor Sherington).

Because of imperfect record keeping, the numbers of children in care sent to Australia between 1947 and 1967 are not easy to calculate. The figures of between 7,000 and 10,000 which appear in Health Committee, *Third Report*, 1998, paragraph 13, are based on memoranda prepared by the Department of Health (CM129) and the Child Migrants Trust (CM13A). The fragility of these estimates is evident from [the Committee's] *Minutes of Evidence*.⁵⁹

3.68 DIMA stated that Departmental records indicate that in this period the number of children sent from institutions in the United Kingdom to institutions in Australia 'is unlikely to have exceeded 3,000'.⁶⁰ This figure excludes, however, the 310 Maltese child migrants sent to Australia in the post-war period. Most of the UK children arrived in the late 1940s and early 1950s with the numbers declining sharply after the mid-1950s and virtually tapering off by the early 1960s. The Department estimates that there were 2,878 children under 16 years of age arriving in Australia between 1947 and 1961 (see Appendix 4 for further details).

3.69 Other researchers have cited similar figures. Dr Coldrey stated that after World War II, some 3,000-3,500 children came to Australia as child migrants, mostly from the UK, but also some 300 children from Malta.⁶¹ Dr Constantine estimates that 3,170 children were sent from Britain in the post-war period. With the addition of the 310 Maltese child migrants to Dr Constantine's total (3,170, plus 310) the total number (3,480) would be similar to Dr Coldrey's upper estimate.⁶² Professor Sherington argued that there is 'general agreement' amongst scholars that about 3,000 child migrants arrived in Australia in the period 1947-1965.⁶³

3.70 The UK Health Committee report, however, cited a substantially larger estimate of the numbers of child migrants. The report states that from 1947 to 1967 between 7,000 and 10,000 children were sent to Australia. A further breakdown of these figures is, however, not provided in the report.⁶⁴ In evidence to the Health Committee, the UK Department of Health stated that 'well under 10,000 children went to Australia in the final period of migration from 1947 to 1967'.⁶⁵

59 Submission No.88, Additional Information, 25.3.01, p.1 (Dr Constantine).

60 Submission No.42, p.7 (DIMA). DIMA refers to 'child migrants' as those children under the age of 16 years who had been living in institutions in the UK and who had no family ties or contacts in Australia and who were brought to this country under various schemes in the post-war period.

61 Submission No.15, p.38 (Dr Coldrey).

62 Dr Constantine's figures are based on official UK records of child migrants who were subsidised by the British Government and sent to Australia by voluntary societies from 1947-65. The table does not include 'juveniles', classified as aged 15 years and over who were not 'in care' and who were migrated by the Big Brother Movement and the YMCA. See Submission No.88, Additional Information, 25.3.01 (Dr Constantine).

63 Submission No.119, Additional Information, 26.6.01 (Professor Sherington).

64 House of Commons, Health Committee, *The Welfare of Former British Child Migrants*, HC 755, Session 1997-98, para. 13.

65 House of Commons, Health Committee, *Minutes of Evidence*, Department of Health, CM129.

3.71 The Department also made a similar point arguing that while some sources have placed the number of child migrants as high as 10,000 this is probably a better estimate of the total number of children and youths under the age of 21 years migrating under various child, youth and family migration schemes over the period. Some schemes, such as the Big Brother Movement were voluntary schemes and involved the migration of youths (largely 16 years and over) to take up training and employment opportunities. Under other schemes such as the one-parent and two-parent schemes, children migrated in advance of, or accompanied by, one or both parents.⁶⁶

3.72 As noted above, Dr Constantine also remarked on the ‘fragility’ of the estimates in the UK report⁶⁷ by referring to the evidence from the UK Department of Health before the Health Committee. The UK Department stated that:

...the number of children who went to Australia in the period from the war is relatively small. **I guess something like 7,000.** That is small both in the context of people getting assisted passages as families going to countries like Australia, and also small in the context of children that were in public care at the time... **We entirely accept that 7,000 or 10,000** or even 2,000 or 1,000 children would be a matter of great seriousness; and we entirely accept our part in the inheritance of responsibility for them **whatever the numbers** and whatever the period in which their emigration occurred.⁶⁸

Numbers of child migrants by receiving agencies

3.73 Evidence received by the Committee relating to the number of children by receiving agency also varies. Over the course of the 20th century Barnardos, Fairbridge and the Catholic religious orders were the largest receiving agencies. In the pre-war period, Barnardos and Fairbridge were the largest single receiving agencies whereas in the post-war period, Fairbridge and the Catholic religious orders were the largest single agencies. Other groups, such as Barnardos and certain Protestant Churches were also involved in the post-war period.

Barnardos

3.74 Barnardos Australia stated that 2,340 Barnardos children arrived in Australia between 1921 and 1938; there was no child migration during World War II and diminished activity between 1947 and 1964, when 444 children arrived. Most of the children sent after the war arrived in the 1940s and 1950s, with 86 children being sent

66 Submission No.42, pp.6-7 (DIMA). See also *Committee Hansard*, 6.2.01, p.10 (DIMA).

67 Submission No.88, Additional Information, 25.3.01 (Dr Constantine).

68 House of Commons, Health Committee, *Minutes of Evidence*, 20.5.98, pp.5-6.

in the 1960s.⁶⁹ Dr Constantine estimated a similar number of children (457) sent by Barnardos in the post-war period.⁷⁰

3.75 Between 1921 and 1965 Barnardos Australia stated that they migrated a total of 2,784 children to Australia. These children were all sent to NSW. Barnardos advised the Committee that:

We have been informed previously by Barnardos U.K. that a further 409 children who were in the care of Barnardos in the U.K. were migrated to Western Australia under the child migration scheme before the war. However they migrated under the auspices of the Fairbridge child migration scheme and we have no records of these children here in Australia. No Barnardos children migrated under the child migration scheme to Western Australia after the war.⁷¹

3.76 Barnardos UK cite different figures on the total numbers sent to Australia – stating that 2,784 children emigrated between 1883 and 1965. While there appears to be some contradiction between their respective figures, Barnardos UK advised that 442 children emigrated after World War II – a similar number to the Barnardos Australia figure. Barnardos UK also refer to 501 boys being sent to Western Australia in 1883, before the official child migration scheme started, though Barnardos Australia has indicated that they have no records in Australia of any children who migrated prior to 1921.⁷²

Fairbridge

3.77 Table 3.2 indicates that Fairbridge sent a total of 2,301 child migrants in the period 1912 to 1960. The table shows that of the total numbers of child migrants most were sent in the pre-war period (1,471 pre-war, 830 post-war). Of these, the largest group was sent to Western Australia, especially in the pre-war period (1,175). Fairbridge WA argued that Fairbridge was the largest receiving agency under the various child migration schemes in the pre-war period.⁷³

69 Personal communication with Barnardos Australia, 6.7.01. See also Submission No.50, Briefing Paper 'Child Migration' (Barnardos).

70 Submission No.88, Additional Information, 25.3.01 (Dr Constantine).

71 *Committee Hansard*, 22.3.01, p.467 (Barnardos Australia); See also Submission No.50, p.1; and Additional Information, 22.6.01, p.1 (Barnardos).

72 Submission No.50, Additional Information, 22.6.01, p.1 and Briefing Paper, 'Child Migration' (Barnardos).

73 *Committee Hansard*, 16.2.01, p.125 (Fairbridge WA).

Table 3.2: Numbers of Fairbridge child migrants

<i>Pinjarra (WA)</i>	
1912 - 39	1175
1949 - 60	346
<i>Sub-Total</i>	1521
<i>Northcote (VIC)</i>	
1937 - 39	161
1948 - 58	112
<i>Sub-Total</i>	273
<i>Molong (NSW)</i>	
1938 - 39	135
1947 - 60	364
<i>Sub-Total</i>	499
<i>Tresca (TAS)</i>	
1952 - 54	8
Total	2301

Source: Sherington, G, and Jeffery, C, *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration*, University of Western Australia Press, 1998, pp.264-66.

3.78 Fairbridge played a major role in child emigration to Western Australia. The Western Australian Department for Family and Children's Services observed that prior to World War II, some 1,290 child migrants had been sent to Western Australia and of these 1,174 had been sent to Fairbridge. The Western Australian Department also noted that during the operation of the child migrant schemes Fairbridge received the highest number of children (a total of 1,520) of all the child migrant schemes in Western Australia.⁷⁴ Sizeable numbers were also sent to New South Wales (499) and Victoria (273).

3.79 The Committee raised the issue of the apparent discrepancy in the numbers of child migrants Fairbridge received in Western Australia. Fairbridge WA stated that it received 1,200 child migrants from 1913 to 1959. The Western Australian Department stated, however, that Fairbridge received 1,520 child migrants over the same period (1,174 pre-war, 346 post war) – a difference of some 320.⁷⁵ Fairbridge conceded the Department's figures were probably more accurate. Fairbridge WA stated:

74 Submission No.135, p.2 (WA Department for Family and Children's Services).

75 Submission No.135, p.2 (WA Department for Family and Children's Services). The Department's figures are also confirmed by the figures cited by Sherington & Jeffery, *Fairbridge*, p.264.

The figure pre-war does match Fairbridge figures to what Family and Children's Services has. There is some discussion and discrepancy about the figure post-war of the other 300 in terms of who is defined as a child migrant and who is not. Some of those figures post-war, in our discussions you would include some of those as child migrants. So more than 1,200 would probably be more accurate.⁷⁶

3.80 This discrepancy in the figures in this instance highlights the difficulty of establishing accurate figures of the number of child migrants and raises particular concerns when the receiving agency's records are less accurate than other data collected, in this case by a government department.

Catholic religious orders

3.81 The Catholic Church's Joint Liaison Group estimated that 1,355 child migrants were placed in Catholic institutions in Australia in the 20th century. Of these, 1,045 came from Britain (and Ireland via Britain) and 310 from Malta. A further breakdown of these figures by country of origin and State of destination is provided in Appendix 5. The Catholic Child Welfare Council (CCWC) in the United Kingdom provided figures that indicates that 1,149 child migrants were sent from the United Kingdom over the same period (see Appendix 4 for further details). The CCWC data exclude figures on Maltese child migrants.⁷⁷

3.82 The child migrants were placed in institutions owned and operated by religious orders, except for the Murray Dwyer home in Newcastle, which was owned by the Maitland diocese, although staffed by the Daughters of Charity.⁷⁸

3.83 While the figures from these sources differ, the Liaison Group indicated that it was 'reasonably confident' with the accuracy of its figures and it provides a more comprehensive set of data as it includes figures on both UK and Maltese child migrants. The Liaison Group pointed out that the discrepancy between its figures and the CCWC of about 100 is between the number of UK child migrants – 1,045 (Liaison Group estimate) and 1,149 (CCWC estimate).

3.84 The Liaison Group indicated that the main reasons for the discrepancies in the figures are that:

- some of the children on the CCWC list did not come to Australia under specifically approved child migration schemes;
- others were sponsored by the religious orders but actually travelled with families;

76 *Committee Hansard*, 16.2.01, p.126 (Fairbridge WA).

77 CCWC is a federation of Catholic Children's Societies, diocesan social welfare agencies and some religious congregations providing social care services for children and families in need in the UK.

78 Submission No.54, p.6 (JLG).

- there are a number of duplications on the CCWC list; and
- in some cases the children did not actually travel to Australia.⁷⁹

3.85 The Liaison Group estimated that Catholic child migration accounted for some 18 per cent of the total child migration to Australia in the 20th century.⁸⁰ Based on its data sources, the Liaison Group estimated that some 64 per cent of the migrant children were aged between eight and 12 years, with an average age of 9.5 years, when they were sent to Australia.⁸¹ Of the estimated 1,355 UK and Maltese child migrants, 984 were boys (73 per cent) and 371 were girls (27 per cent). The vast majority – 1,095 (81 per cent) were sent to Western Australia. The bulk of Catholic child migrants came in the late 1940s and early 1950s. For further details see Appendix 4.

3.86 In addition to data provided by the Liaison Group, CCWC provided extensive data on UK child migrants *only* sent to Australia under Catholic Church auspices in their submission to this inquiry. This data is less comprehensive than the data from the Liaison Group in terms of coverage as it excluded Maltese child migrants, and this explains the discrepancy in this data compared with the previously discussed data from the Liaison Group. Further details are provided in Appendix 4.

3.87 In summary, the CCWC data relating to UK child migrants sent to Catholic institutions *only* indicate that:

- the average age of children sent to Australia was 9.4 years, with the majority of the children between the ages of 5 and 13 years;
- 69 per cent of the children were boys and 31 per cent were girls;
- consent by birth parent or parents was given to the migration of children in 20 per cent of cases; in 80 per cent of cases it is unknown whether or not parental consent was provided;
- sending agencies – the vast majority of children were sent to Australia by the Poor Sisters of Nazareth; and
- receiving agencies – over half of all children went into the care of the Christian Brothers (52 per cent); 20 per cent to the Sisters of Mercy and 13 per cent to the Poor Sisters of Nazareth.

Other organisations

3.88 Data available on the numbers of child migrants received by other Christian Churches and the Salvation Army is more limited. The data show that over 400 child

79 Submission No.54, Additional Information 29.5.01, p.2 (JLG).

80 Based on 1 355 Catholic child migrants out of an estimated total of 7 500 child migrants. See Submission No.54, p.4 (JLG).

81 *Committee Hansard*, 16.2.01, p.103 (WA Christian Brothers Province Archivist).

migrants were placed under the care of the Church of England in the post-war period; in excess of 90 children came under the care of the Methodist Church and over 80 by the Presbyterian Church. Up to 100 children were under the care of the Salvation Army. Further details are provided in Appendix 4.

Data on numbers by State

3.89 Professor Sherington stated that over the period 1912 to 1967, most child migrants were sent to Western Australia but all Australian States received some children, with relatively large numbers going to New South Wales and Victoria.⁸²

3.90 DIMA stated the majority of the child migrants sent to Australia prior to World War II were sent to institutions in Western Australia and New South Wales.⁸³ Professor Sherington stated that approximately 1,275 child migrants were sent to Western Australia, 1,735 to NSW and 160 to Victoria pre-1939.⁸⁴ The Western Australian Department for Family and Children's Services stated that 1,290 child migrants were sent to Western Australia prior to World War II.⁸⁵

3.91 In the post-war period, most child migrants were sent to Western Australia, with substantial numbers also going to New South Wales and Victoria. Professor Sherington and Mr Jeffery estimated that 961 child migrants were sent to Western Australia in the period 1947-53, with 521 going to NSW and 232 going to Victoria. The Western Australian Department estimated that 1,651 children were sent to Western Australia under the post-war child migrant schemes.⁸⁶ Further details and data from State Governments/Departments on numbers of child migrants are provided in Appendix 4.

Conclusion

3.92 While it is difficult to give precise figures for the numbers of child migrants sent to Australia, the Committee believes that, on the basis of the evidence received between 6,000 and 7,500 child migrants were sent to Australia during the course of the 20th century. Of this number, some 3,000 to 3,500 child migrants were sent in the pre-World War II period and between 3,000 and 3,500 in the post-war period. Figures showing that upwards of 10,000 child migrants emigrated in the post-war period would appear to overestimate the number of child migrants sent during this period, although this figure probably reflects total child and youth migration.

3.93 The Committee notes the appalling inaccuracies and discrepancies in the data on the numbers of child migrants by Governments as well as the receiving and

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

83 Submission No.42, p.3 (DIMA).

84 Submission No.119, Additional Information, 26.6.01 (Professor Sherington).

85 Submission No.135, p.2 (WA Department for Family & Children's Services).

86 Submission No.135, p.3 (WA Department for Family & Children's Services).

sending agencies. The Committee suspects that this goes far beyond the imperfect record keeping characteristic of the time and at worst amounts to gross incompetence at best. The evidence indicates, on the part of sending and receiving agencies, that this was due to deliberate fraud or criminal neglect. Parents were lied to as to the fate of their children, and children were lied to with respect to their origins, parents and status. To say that in some circumstances children were stolen from their parents and their country is not putting it too strongly. When it is considered that in the case of child migrants sent to this country under the auspices of the Catholic Church from the United Kingdom that in up to 80 percent of cases it is unknown whether parental consent was given, there emerges a picture of total disregard of the rights and feelings of both parents and children – a feature symptomatic of the overall operation of the child migration schemes. Such a pattern of systemic incompetence and abuse cries out for redress, which is addressed in detail in the succeeding chapters of this report.

3.94 The Committee believes that more work needs to be done on establishing precise numbers involved in child migration during the 20th century so that the level of resources and services required to address the needs and aspirations of former child migrants can be determined and properly addressed.

Recommendation 3: That the Commonwealth Government establish the means to accurately determine the numbers of child migrants sent to Australia during the 20th century to assist in determining the level of support services and other assistance needed for former child migrants.



Former child migrants hold vigil outside Melbourne hearing