

APPENDIX 7

TEXT OF APOLOGIES

This Appendix contains the statements of acknowledgment and apology referred to in chapter 10 from the following:

- *Congregation of Christian Brothers of Western Australia, July 1993;*
- *Queensland Government and Churches, August 1999;*
- *Government of South Australia, 23 February 2001; and*
- *Catholic Church's Joint Liaison Group on Child Migration, 22 March 2001.*

THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS

**Clontarf (1901-1983), Castledare (1929-1983), Tardun (1928-1965)
Bindoon (1936-1967)**

A Statement by the Congregation of Christian Brothers of W.A.

INTRODUCTION:

In recent years, controversy has arisen over the treatment of children resident in the W.A. child-care institutions at Clontarf, Castledare, Tardun and Bindoon, especially during the 1940s and 1950s.

Some former students have made serious allegations of ill-treatment and abuse.

Other students of the same era claim such allegations are grossly exaggerated and are not representative of life in these institutions.

The following statement from the Congregation of Christian Brothers in W.A. seeks to put the events and circumstances of that time into proper context so that fair judgement can be made and to establish a basis for reconciliation with those who have been aggrieved.

OUR FINDINGS:

We have studied the allegations available to us, and we have made our own independent inquiries. The evidence is such as to convince us that abuses did take place, abuses that in some cases went well beyond the tough conditions and treatment that were part of life in such institutions in those days.

While the extent of the abuse appears to have been exaggerated in some quarters, the fact that such physical and sexual abuse took place at all in some of our institutions cannot be excused and is for us a source of deep shame and regret. Such abuse violates the child's dignity and sense of self-worth. It causes psychological and social trauma that can lead to lasting wounds of guilt, shame, insecurity and problems in relationships.

OUR APOLOGY:

We, the Christian Brothers of today, therefore unreservedly apologise to those individuals who were victims of abuse in these institutions.

We do not condone in any way the behaviour of individual Brothers who may have perpetrated such abuse.

In apologising, however, we entreat people not to reflect adversely on the majority of Brothers and their co-workers of the era who went about their work with integrity and deep regard for the children entrusted to their care.

Their work and dedication are reflected in the numerous students who, despite deprived backgrounds, went on to take their places as successful members of Australian society. We are deeply grateful for the very many expressions of thanks and support we have had from former students.

THE CONTEXT:

Between 1901 and 1983 some 4,000 boys, mostly orphans, child migrants and State wards, were cared for in Christian Brother institutions in W.A.

Most of the children who came to these institutions were from deprived backgrounds. Many were child migrants from the U.K. and Ireland, brought to Australia in a scheme initiated by the Commonwealth Government and with which several voluntary organisations, including the Australian Catholic Church, actively co-operated.

Conditions were tough, unnecessarily so by today's standards, but quite common in child-care institutions in those days. Resources were scarce, Government assistance was minimal, personnel were untrained in child-care and were often overworked, and specialist help was almost unknown.

For some boys their time in these centres provided them with the care, education and training which gave them their opportunity to make their way in life; for others it was an unhappy and hurtful experience.

We acknowledge the shortcomings in the child-care practices of those days and deeply regret the hurt that some children suffered, and whatever long-term suffering that may be attributable to their experience in these institutions.

We reject, however, the implication sometimes made that the later suffering or difficulties of some former residents can be blamed entirely on the time spent in our institutions.

Many factors can adversely affect the way people's lives turn out, and the boys concerned suffered more than their fair share before and after their time in our institutions, e.g.

- Experiencing little or nothing of ordinary family life and spending formative years in child-care institutions;
- Experiencing the turmoil and deprivation of war and its aftermath in Britain and Europe; and
- Meeting later hardships and disappointments as young adults trying to find their place in society.

Is it any wonder that such circumstances affected many of them for the rest of their lives?

Indeed, the courage and resourcefulness shown by many of them in the face of childhood deprivation must command our respect and admiration.

We cannot and do not excuse any abuse that took place in our institutions nor do we wish to minimise in any way the damage caused.

However, for those looking to apportion blame for such incidents the following must be borne in mind:

- The events took place mostly 30 to 50 years ago and many of the people named as accused, victims or witnesses, are dead or unable to be contacted. While the passage of time does not diminish the seriousness of the incidents, it does make it extremely difficult to uncover the full truth; and
- Regular inspections were made of these institutions by the Government agencies who had ultimate responsibility for the welfare of the children. There is no indication of generalised abuse in their reports.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE:

We cannot change the past. We cannot take away the hurt. We can express our heartfelt regret for the failings of the past and we can, on behalf of our predecessors, beg the forgiveness of those who suffered.

Also, we can offer practical assistance to those who need it. To this end we are considering practical ways of offering assistance to those who are now suffering. To those who were adversely affected, we give our sincere commitment that we will do all that reasonably can be done to ease your pain by helping you with your present day needs.

We hope that a spirit of cooperation and reconciliation will mark our efforts to find mutually acceptable solutions to present problems.

We continue to welcome approaches from former residents of our child-care institutions who wish to share with us their concerns. Some may wish to speak to Br Pat O'Doherty on (09) 458 9693 (after hours); others may wish to contact one of the Brothers at our Province office on (09) 450 5311; others may prefer to contact Sister Tanya at Catholic Migration on (09) 221 1727.

Br Gerald Faulkner
On behalf of the Congregation of Christian Brothers
Perth W.A.

Apology

To Those Harmed in Queensland Institutions
during their Childhood

We the government and churches together welcome the report of the Forde Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions.

We acknowledge that there have been failures with respect to the children entrusted to our care, despite all the good the Institutions did in the light of their day. The result has been a system in which some children have suffered maltreatment, and their social, emotional, and physical needs have been neglected.

We sincerely apologise to all those people who suffered in any way while resident in our facilities, and express deep sorrow and regret at the hurt and distress suffered by those who were victims of abuse.

We accept the finding of the Forde Inquiry that government under-funding and consequent under-resourcing was a significant factor in the failure to provide adequate services to children in care.

We are committed to establishing and continuing dialogue with victims of abuse in institutions to discuss the basis for providing appropriate responses. We acknowledge that discussions are well advanced between some parties.

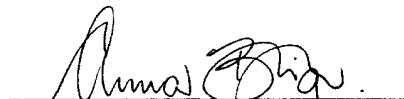
We are committed to working together with victims of abuse in institutions to ensure the provision of appropriately coordinated services through the establishment of a "one stop shop", as recommended by the Forde Inquiry. This initiative will be integrated with church and government run services and processes for bringing about reconciliation with victims of abuse in institutions. The focus will be on providing victims with the most effective path to healing. We are committed to continuing to provide such services as long as they are needed.

We recognise the value of formal reconciliation experiences in healing the hurt some have suffered, and undertake to plan these in consultation with former residents.

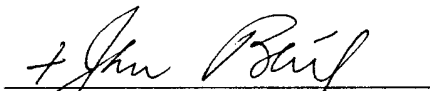
We are committed to doing all we reasonably can to ensure that children in our care are not subject to abuse and neglect. Further, we are committed to ongoing review and improvement of our services to children and families.



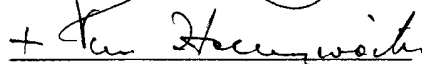
Peter Beattie MLA
Premier of Queensland



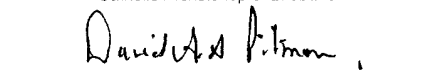
Anna Bligh MLA
Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care
Minister for Disability Services



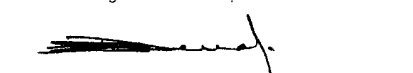
The Most Reverend John Bathersby DD,
Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane



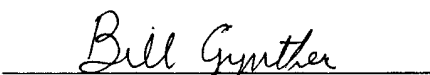
The Most Reverend Peter Hollingworth,
Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane



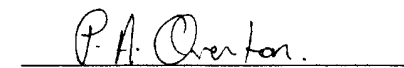
Reverend Dr David Pitman, Moderator,
Uniting Church in Australia (Qld Synod)



Hillmon Buckingham, Commissioner,
Territorial Commander, Australia Eastern Territory,
The Salvation Army



Bill Gynther, President,
Baptist Union of Queensland



Reverend Peter Overton, Conference President,
Churches of Christ in Queensland

**Extract from the Speech by the Hon Dean Brown MP for the unveiling of the
British Child Migrant Plaque at the South Australian Migration Museum**

Friday, 23 February 2001

Official Acknowledgment

Many of the former child migrants tell us that they suffered greatly as a result of their being sent to Australia.

Many have told of experiences of physical, emotional and sexual abuse at the hands of people in whose care they were placed.

Many say they were told that they were orphans.

Many say they were launched into adulthood without formal documents, such as birth certificates or citizenship papers and without any idea of their heritage.

The resultant pain for the former child migrants is said to be enormous and has posed life-long challenges to them and their children and loved ones.

The Government of SA wishes to acknowledge that these experiences, though not intended by the schemes, may have occurred and been suffered by the child migrants.

At the same time, many of the former child migrants made an enormous contribution to the State of South Australia and have since demonstrated enormous courage and faith as they have worked to put the past behind them and move into a future with hope and optimism.

We trust that the Government can move positively into the future with them and play a role in assisting and supporting the former child migrants and improving services for them.

**A Statement from the Joint Liaison Group on Child Migration on behalf of
the Australian Catholic Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees,
and the Executive of the Australian Conference of Leaders of
Religious Institutes.**

This Statement refers to the Australian Catholic Church's involvement in child migration, which began in 1938 and concluded in the mid-1960s, and which saw more than 1,000 children from Britain and 310 children from Malta brought to Catholic institutions in this country.

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees and the Executive of the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes apologise to all those men and women who suffered because of their experiences as child migrants in Catholic institutions.

While we recognise that there were good intentions in child migration, there were also factors at work that often led to children's interests being subordinated to other considerations. For many men and women, the result has been a profound disruption and dislocation in their lives.

We are painfully aware that some children suffered physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and this is a source of deep shame and regret for us. We are sorry that some of those vulnerable children who should have found care and protection in our Catholic institutions suffered abuse.

At the same time, we affirm the many carers who served the children with integrity and generosity. There are many former child migrants who are today grateful for the care they received.

While acknowledging the shortcomings in the child care practices of those days which were not then known, we recognise that many of these were a result of the social and economic conditions of the times.

In offering this public apology, we commit ourselves to continue to assist the former child migrants who came to Catholic institutions.

March 22, 2001