

CHAPTER 2

INSTITUTIONAL CARE IN AUSTRALIA

*All I understood was that I was away from my family, and as bad as they said that situation was, it was still my family, and it was the only way of life I had known.*¹

Institutions

So began my life of fear, confusion, humiliation and shame as an orphan of the living in the Ballarat Orphanage. (Sub 18)

2.1 Various factors have been used implicitly or explicitly to define institutions, including size, overcrowding, separateness from the community, regimentation, external control, residents who lack identity, choice and autonomy, and physically and emotionally barren environments. Institution is rarely to be taken to be a positive term. An oft-cited 1961 Goffman definition of institutions includes:

A basic social arrangement in modern society is that the individual tends to sleep, play and work in different places, with different co-participants, under different authorities, and without an overall rational plan. The central feature of total institutions can be described as a breakdown of the barriers ordinarily separating these three spheres of life.²

2.2 Evidence to the inquiry described the atmosphere in many homes as emotionally and physically punitive, and where children were subjected to criminal assaults and had no emotional relationships with any adults or personal interaction with significant people in their lives.³ Apart from specific acts of emotional, mental, physical, psychological and sexual abuse, institutional life itself is inherently abusive:

It was abusive to be kept in an institution separate from your family. It was abusive to be denied rights as a human being, such as affection and relationships. It was abusive to be required to get up at five o'clock in the morning and milk the cows or have a cold shower.⁴

2.3 Many Australian institutional settings for children and young people such as orphanages, group cottage homes, foster care, homes for children with disabilities and juvenile detention centres, have fitted the above negative descriptions. Of significance is that while children and young people need care, protection and safe environments,

1 *Submission 235*, p.3.

2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Deinstitutionalisation: the move towards community-based care', *Australia's Welfare 2001*, p.98, citing Goffmann E, *Asylums: essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*, 1961 & 1968.

3 *Submission 22*, p.10.

4 *Committee Hansard 4.2.04*, p.22 (Association of Children's Welfare Agencies).

over time, many children were placed in institutions which not only did not meet these needs, but meted out cruel treatment and abuse.

Framework of children's institutional care - Australia

Introduction

2.4 The following discussion outlines the development of institutional care in Australia from the earliest times to the 1970s. The Committee was not in a position to conduct in-depth historical research into changes in child welfare practices in each jurisdiction. Much of the information provided below relates to New South Wales and Victoria, however indications are that these examples would be similar in other States.

2.5 Certainly the difficulties in gaining a clear picture of the development of policies affecting children in institutional care are worth noting and illustrated by an examination of the situation relating to child welfare departments. No comprehensive histories about the States' establishment of separate social welfare departments are available, presumably because such issues have always been a State responsibility, with myriad arrangements to accommodate them. It seems too that the administrative structures within which child welfare issues rest have been largely ignored by historians and governments alike. Further, any attention which they have received has usually been for reasons unrelated to the needs of child welfare issues.⁵

2.6 However, the information below should assist with understanding care arrangements for children, including the elements that have combined to influence the formation and evolution of policies and practices affecting children in institutions. While these issues have been described under a number of headings, they have an obvious nexus in terms of their relationship and interaction with each other.

Overview

2.7 The early period of Australian settlement was beset with problems in every aspect of life. From 1788, colonial New South Wales needed care for children who were orphaned or whose parents were in jail, destitute or experiencing some misfortune.⁶ Given Australia's British heritage, notions from England about child welfare and juvenile justice practices prevailed, and well into the 1890s, benevolent ideas of usurping poor parents and placing children in more 'morally suitable environments', prospered.⁷

5 *Submission 313, Additional Information, 11.8.04.*

6 Liddell, MJ, 'Child welfare and care in Australia: understanding the past to influence the future', in CR Goddard and R Carew, *Responding to children: child welfare practice*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1993, p.30.

7 *Submission 207, p.3.*

2.8 The youth of this newly-formed class were the targets of new systems of dealing with young people. Further the systems of control which were introduced to colonies like Australia were imposed in a society which was also in the process of dispossessing the indigenous community.⁸

2.9 Practices in Australia for children in institutions emanated from factors including the extent of government involvement which ebbed and flowed over many eras. Of significance was the power of organisations such as churches and 'child-saving'⁹ lobbyists, overlaid by the non-uniformity of standards, laws and government policies among the colonies, which continued after Federation in 1901, and became a hallmark of Australia's federal system. Further, colonial governments' involvement in policy decisions about the fate of children who needed some form of out-of-home care, may have been determined by what was politically and economically feasible, which in turn was subject to the influences of the media and public opinion.

2.10 A reflection on the patterns of the development of children's institutions in Australia is a reminder of the power of groups such as the churches, and the powerlessness of women, children and young people and poor families.

Policies of governments placing children in care

The role of governments, churches and other groups

2.11 Beginning in the 1800s, notions about ways to care for children requiring welfare assistance tended to move between those favouring institutions, or, family-based care such as foster care.¹⁰ Initially, the new colony chose foster care but the shortage of stable families and the survival needs of the times rendered this strategy doubtful.¹¹ Fashions existed at various times both within and among the colonies about institutional care or boarding-out (out-of-home care or foster care). Such fluctuations continued until the 1960s when governments became more involved in child welfare and moves began to close large institutions for children.

2.12 From the early times, churches were important given that before 1890 most of the children's institutions had been established by churches.¹² The Catholic Church

8 Cunneen, C & White, R, *Juvenile justice: an Australian perspective*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 1996, p.9.

9 The child welfare reformers of those times were known as 'child savers' – submission 207, p.3.

10 Tomison, A, 'A history of child protection: back to the future', *Family Matters*, No 60 Spring-Summer 2001, Australian Institute of Family Studies, p.49.

11 Liddell 1993 p.30.

12 Mellor EJ, *Stepping stones: the development of early childhood services in Australia*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, London, 1990, pp.16-17.

favoured institutional care for it was a way of imbuing the children with religion.¹³ According to evangelical reformers such as George Ardill and other church people, the key to helping children was via a proper Christian education, 'best achieved in a church institution'.¹⁴ Catholic orphanages were used extensively for the many Catholic children needing care in 1881-1905 and it is perhaps significant that most Catholic families were too poor to provide foster care to needy children.¹⁵

2.13 Other groups with influence over government child welfare policies, such as the New South Wales 1873-1874 Public Charities Commission, were scathing of institutional life for children,¹⁶ basing their criticisms on the appalling conditions they gleaned on their visits to State children's homes. The Commission noted the violence meted out to girls at the Biloela Asylum,¹⁷ many of whom had black eyes, bruises and bloody noses. The Randwick Destitute Children's Asylum, set up in the 1850s, also came under the Commission's critical eye, for many reasons including because it was said to be a barracks-like environment which bred barrack children. Other groups such as leading child saving experts also opposed institutional life for children.¹⁸

Developments - institutions versus boarding-out (foster care)

2.14 In the period 1850-1890, institutions continued as the prime response for housing welfare children and this coincided with the development of child neglect legislation and the establishment of reformatories and training schools and marked the beginning of greater government acceptance of responsibility in the child welfare sector.¹⁹

2.15 Among the colonies however, variations existed about ways to deal with child welfare issues, at times determined by economic imperatives and, as mentioned, the churches' views. Financial difficulties in Tasmania meant that many children were boarded out until 1846, when the government again funded the orphanages. In Victoria, while pressures to deal with its child welfare problems initially focused on institutions, the earliest responses, in the late 1840s, had centred on boarding-out schemes. The 1850s saw the establishment of a number of institutions commencing in

13 McGrath MS, 'Catholic orphanages 1890s-1950s: two case studies – St Brigid's Ryde and St Michael's Baulkham Hills', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol 77, pt 2, October 1991, p.26.

14 Garton S, *Out of luck: poor Australians and social welfare*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990, p.95.

15 McGrath 1991, pp.26-27.

16 Ramsland J, 'An anatomy of a nineteenth century child-saving institution', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, v.70, pt 3, 1984, p.202.

17 The girls from Biloela were later transferred to a site at Parramatta which subsequently became the Parramatta Training School for Girls.

18 Garton 1990, p.90-1.

19 Liddell 1993, p.34.

1851 with the Melbourne Orphan Asylum, and further boarding out schemes were established in the 1850s.²⁰ During the 1920s the shortage of foster parents in Victoria, attributable to economic pressures, resulted in the growing use of children's homes.²¹

2.16 In Queensland, after the 1866 economic collapse, the Diamantina Orphanage was bursting at the seams and the government partly funded the Catholic St Vincent's.²² Generally throughout 1890-1935 there was a push towards institutional care because it was seen as cost effective.²³ However, by 1930 in Queensland, only 10 per cent of State children were in institutions. This led to problems in securing inspectors to supervise the over 8 000 boarded-out children and hence Queensland State children were returned to institutions.²⁴ The first boarding-out experiments began in South Australia in 1872 with 200 children taken into cottage homes. Boarding-out was still in its infancy in 1900 in Western Australia, because government officials considered that there were insufficient suitable homes in the colony.²⁵

2.17 The drift of State children back to institutions increased in the 1930s and 1940s because of a lack of foster families.²⁶ By the 1940s, most young children needing residential care were placed in institutions. Another shift started and occurred at different rates in different states. In Queensland the percentage of State children in institutions doubled during 1930-1950 but declined slowly in the 1960s. By contrast, in Victoria, by the early 1950s, around half the state wards were in institutions, increasing to 85 per cent in the early 1960s and only starting to decline late in the decade.²⁷

2.18 In 1881, there were just over 3 000 orphaned, neglected and delinquent children in government industrial schools and reformatories. By 1911 there were 17 731 such children in Australia receiving State care, three-quarters of whom were fostered while the remaining one-quarter were in institutions.²⁸

Moves from institutions to other forms of care

2.19 A number of factors influenced policymakers' decisions about moving children from institutions to smaller homes. Issues about the cost of maintaining

20 Liddell 1993, p.31.

21 *Submission 173*, p.4 (Victorian Government).

22 Forde Report 1999, p.36.

23 Liddell 1993, p.40.

24 Mellor 1990, p.95.

25 Garton 1990, pp.91-92.

26 Mellor 1990, p.94.

27 Mellor 1990, p.142.

28 Garton 1990, p.92.

orphanages were significant and by the mid-1970s served as an incentive for governments to find alternatives.²⁹ No real thought seems to have gone into the effects on children of institutional life and until the early 1960s, little attention was paid to children's emotional needs and the effects of harsh treatment on children in later life.³⁰ Child protection services began to move from homes in the late 1950s-early 1960s, influenced by child development theories on the importance of maternal love and family life, but principally because of Bowlby's 1951 work about the link between maternal deprivation, emotional adjustment and mental health and childhood care.³¹

2.20 Government and non-government child welfare agencies considered that if children could not be in their own homes, they would be better off with family members or foster carers. The 1960s saw the end of the orphanage system and in the 1970s and 1980s many large children's homes were closed down.

If regimentation, isolation from the community, lack of independence, dignity and privacy, poor quality of care, and control by others were seen as the essence of an institution, then there is little wonder that social reformers and health and welfare advocates of the 1960s and 1970s argued for deinstitutionalisation.³²

Trends in types of care, including move towards foster care

2.21 In the 1960s and 1970s increased emphasis on adoption resulted in fewer children requiring residential care. For out-of-home children, the initial emphasis was on foster homes, and later, placements with relatives/friends and support for children in their own family home.³³

2.22 In the late 1950s, 'family group homes' comprised of children in a house with 'cottage/house' parents had started to take over from institutions.³⁴ In 1950s Western Australia after the Hicks Report into child welfare, institutionalisation was regarded as a 'last resort' and the department recruited foster parents to deal with children's placements. By 1959, the State's Welfare Reception Home was the only State out-of-care facility and the Government started to provide direct out-of-home care.³⁵ During the 1950s some Victorian non-government groups began to close large homes in favour of family group homes and there was an increase in foster care services among organisations and the department itself.³⁶

29 AIHW 2001, p.127.

30 Forde Report 1999, p.vii & p.36.

31 AIHW 2001, p.101.

32 AIHW 2001, p.99.

33 AIHW 2001, chapter 4.

34 Mellor 1990, p.144.

35 *Submission 55*, p.7 (WA Department for Community Development).

36 *Submission 173*, p.7 (Victorian Government).

2.23 While views and attitudes towards social welfare and what form of care best addresses the needs of a child have developed and changed over the decades, the one fundamental was simply described by a 70 year old lady:

I feel though things may get tough, a mother or father should never be forced to give up their children to any institution or home if it is at all possible to stay together, because after all a child only needs to know they are truly loved and wanted.³⁷

2.24 Nowadays, very few large institutions remain and most residential care for children is provided in family group homes or smaller residential establishments. More information about the trend towards the use of foster care and contemporary foster issues will be discussed in a second volume of this report.

Government responsibility and initiatives for children in institutions

2.25 Aligned to early debates and practices about institutional or boarding-out options, was the ambivalence of governments to take full responsibility for child welfare. In colonial New South Wales, government-subsidised committees ran the voluntary institutions. In 1824 the responsibility for orphan schools was transferred to the Anglican Archdeacon and in 1836 funds were provided to Catholic institutions. This pattern of government and private joint control remained for over a century.³⁸

2.26 Over the years, the use of charities for children's institutions was attractive for governments for various reasons including the churches' preparedness to take children at short notice.³⁹ As well, non-government organisations provided cheaper options; in Queensland, the licensing of St Vincent's Orphanage in 1867 resulted largely from financial expediency on the part of the government during an economic downturn.⁴⁰

2.27 Governments were at times influenced by non-government groups in decisions about types of care for welfare children. This was demonstrated in 1881 by the success of child savers (who favoured boarding-out systems) in persuading the New South Wales Government to establish the State Children's Relief Board, which then implemented a policy to pay subsidies to families with boarded-out children.⁴¹

2.28 However, the late 19th century saw moves for more government control over child welfare issues. For example, in the 1880s and 1890s, colonial governments appointed inspectors or superintendents to inspect and report on all charitable institutions which received government subsidies.⁴²

37 *Submission 269.*

38 Liddell 1993, pp.30-31.

39 Garton 1990, p.95.

40 Forde Report 1999, p.36.

41 Garton 1990, p.92.

42 Garton 1990, p.95.

2.29 Government bodies dealing with children in care seemed to adapt their roles in line with trends about ways to house children. In New South Wales the anti-institutionalisation stance fell into disrepute. After the enactment of the *Child Welfare Act 1923*, the State Children's Welfare Relief Board was abolished and replaced by a Child Welfare Department, responsible to the Minister of Education. This move marked a rethink about ways to house children and a return to the use of institutions. However, orphanages' operations essentially remained the same until the 1950s.⁴³

2.30 After World War II another push emerged for family-based care. In 1956, the New South Wales Child Welfare Department became the Department of Social Welfare with its own ministerial head.⁴⁴ By the 1960s, despite that State government children's receiving depots were grossly overcrowded, the government did not opt to use non-government institutions because it favoured the boarding-out system.⁴⁵

2.31 In Victoria, from the 1870s the State ceased operating government establishments except for the children's reception centre 'The Depot' at Royal Park, and for many years relied heavily on charitable and church-based agencies. However, from 1954 the government increased its involvement in direct services, coupled with the tighter government standards for non-government homes. The Victorian department's increased participation reflected the growing recognition of the importance of retaining the parents in their children's lives. Under the Victorian *Children's Welfare Act 1954*, the government established its own institutions for children and young offenders. However, the Victorian Government continued to rely on the non-government sector until the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁶

2.32 Evidence to the Committee showed the dependence of various State governments on the non-government sector in the provision of care to State children:

Without the voluntary children's homes it would have been impossible for the Victorian government to carry out its residential child care function in the 1950s and 1960s.⁴⁷

Some key points about...[WA out-of-home care] are: it has historically been one of a state sponsored system, with more facilities run by the private than the public sector. The role of charitable, mainly religious, bodies in the provision of out-of-home care has been paramount.⁴⁸

2.33 Later developments in Victoria included the introduction of the *Social Welfare Act 1960*, when the Social Welfare Branch of the Chief Secretary's

43 McGrath 1991 p.34.

44 McGrath 1991 p35.

45 *Submission 63, Orphans of the Living*, pp.142-43 & 152 (Dr Penglase).

46 *Submission 173*, pp.5-6 (Victorian Government).

47 *Submission 47*, p.24 (Mr McIntosh).

48 *Committee Hansard 9.12.03*, p.1 (WA Department for Community Development).

Department replaced the Children's Welfare Department. This coincided with moves towards foster care. The *Social Welfare Act 1970* in Victoria saw the establishment of a separate Social Welfare Department and various processes commenced including moves to keep children in care closer to their families.⁴⁹

2.34 The Queensland Government set standards for children's institutional care including under the *State Children Act 1911*. However, the orphanage system was very poorly funded and the government sought to reduce spending on children's institutions. Until the reforms of the Report of the Committee on Child Welfare Legislation (1963) and a Public Service Commission (1962), the department was massively under resourced and standards for the care of State children were poor.⁵⁰

2.35 Across Australia, increases in government responsibility in child welfare in the 1960s saw the establishment of separate State welfare departments. Generally prior to that, child welfare departments, however styled, had been part of other government departments.⁵¹ With the exception of Western Australia which set up its first child welfare department in 1934, most other states did not establish separate child welfare departments until the 1960s-1970s.⁵²

Attitudes of government officials who placed children in care

2.36 The Committee received many submissions that were critical of government departments and the officers responsible for placing children in care. The point was made often that welfare departments seemed to be obsessed with regulating adolescent sexual behaviour, particularly that of girls. While such notions dated back to very early eras, they pervaded institutions up to the 1980s.⁵³

2.37 This care leaver explained how the ineffectiveness of government systems had negative repercussions for her:

I was made a state ward at 15, in the early 1980s, after years of ineffectual intervention by a number of welfare organisations – government and non-government – as well as the police...I had to cope with sexual assaults from my stepfather and an uncle. By my 12th birthday, I had been to 20 different primary schools and had lived, variously, in Salvation Army hostels, foster care, orphanages, Housing Commission accommodation, motels, and an endless series of ad hoc, low-quality rentals. I had been repeatedly removed from my family and placed in care. (Sub 138)

2.38 Overall, many care leavers do not consider that child welfare officers took proper care of the children in their charge:

49 *Submission 173*, p.7 (Victorian Government).

50 Forde Report, pp.35-36.

51 *Submission 313*, Additional Information (Dr Liddell).

52 Liddell 1993, pp.44-45.

53 *Submission 173*, p.5 (Victorian Government).

I believe the people employed by the Child Welfare Department should be made accountable for the emotional, physical and mental abuse they bestowed on the young people who went through the system. Many of them are still living and their actions should be investigated. Some of the officers were very good and decent people, others were vicious and child abusers...Shame on the Department of Child Welfare, shame, shame, shame!!! (Sub 238)

Government financial contributions to non-government children's homes

2.39 While non-government organisations have played a key role in providing children's institutional care, the following information illustrates the intricacies at times between governments and the voluntary sector, particularly regarding funding for the homes and factors that increased their financial pressures. Significantly, when legislative definitions of children who could be made state wards were broadened, the numbers coming into homes increased as did the need for more institutions.⁵⁴ Further, often governments only made payments to homes for children who were designated as state wards or whose parents could not afford to pay.

2.40 The Western Australian Department for Community Development advised the Committee that its payments policy did not cover all children in homes:

It was not true for all children in institutions. We were paying for wards and we were paying for some proportion of privately placed children whose parents could not afford to pay for them.⁵⁵

2.41 In New South Wales, government policies for the State care of children had developed in conjunction with voluntary organisations which were heavily subsidised by government. However, the relationship between the State and agencies altered after the 1873 Public Charities Commission. The government ceased its funding to the homes which continued, but became dependant on private funds.⁵⁶ Similarly in other States, orphanages relied on businesses for finances and services and fund-raising activities.⁵⁷

2.42 Ms Sarlos from Wesley Dalmar confirmed the importance of government funding for the homes for children whose parents were unable to pay:

If say a year has gone by and the agreed payments from the parents have not been coming in, it may well be at that point that the government supported the children. It was really driven by the finances in terms of trying to make sure that there was some income...to support each child.⁵⁸

54 *Committee Hansard* 12.11.03, p.16 (Ms Gaffney).

55 *Committee Hansard* 9.12.03, p.15 (WA Department for Community Development).

56 *Submission 63, Orphans of the Living*, p.144 (Dr Penglase).

57 Mellor 1990, p.17; McGrath 1991, p.33.

58 *Committee Hansard* 4.2.04, p.9 (Wesley Dalmar).

2.43 In 1958, the New South Wales Association of Child Caring Agencies started lobbying for State subsidies for Catholic homes, many of which ran without government funding. The New South Wales Government favoured its boarding-out policies but in 1961 amended the 1939 *Child Welfare Act* to provide an allowance for children in homes, payable only where the parents permitted their children to become state wards. This practice became an administrative nightmare and in 1965 the Act was amended again to eliminate the requirement for wardship.⁵⁹

2.44 Victorian non-government homes were funded on a per head basis for state wards and the government reimbursed institutions for children's expenses. It seems that relations between the government and non-government sectors were difficult at times. In evidence to the Committee, Ms Gaffney said that the government might, with no warning, decide not to reimburse organisations for children's expenses:

I am not saying that that is a standard feature of the relationship, but you have little things like that, where the non-government organisations have maybe done everything they can and the government plays games or tightens its belt without necessarily telling them.

It is my impression, in some respects, that non-government organisations or institutions were sometimes put over a barrel. They became dependent upon state funding. They became dependent upon receiving state wards because of the per head funding. When they complained they were receiving unsuitable wards...and said, 'Will you stop sending us these wards', the government's response, on more than one occasion, was, 'We will stop sending you wards, and you will not get any money'. I have read file notes that said: 'This institution needs our money so we can threaten them with stopping sending them wards. They will accept any ward we want because they need our money.'⁶⁰

2.45 According to Ms Gaffney, the government at times had the upper hand even to the point of playing non-government organisations off against each other:

That marks Victorian welfare very much. It is an assumption that non-governments will provide these services—we can change the legislation and throw the number of children at them that we want; they will still pick up the children and provide the services. Here is the assumption that the government plays non-governments off against each other—the idea that if you will not take that ward because you think he is difficult, too bad; we will just remove all the wards and remove all your money. So there is competition between non-governments for government funding.⁶¹

2.46 The pressures among institutions about government payments to house state wards in Victoria came to a head in the early 1970s when the charitable institutions

59 *Submission 63, Orphans of the Living*, pp.151-52 (Dr Penglase).

60 *Committee Hansard* 12.11.03, p.18 (Ms Gaffney).

61 *Committee Hansard* 12.11.03, pp.18-19 (Ms Gaffney).

ceased to take voluntary placements and became, in effect, part of the residential arm of the Social Welfare Department.⁶²

2.47 As mentioned, by the mid-1970s institutions' costs served as incentives to find other ways to house state welfare children. Parents' ability to pay for their children's upkeep particularly in relation to any government financial help was also influential in decisions about children being placed in institutions. This issue is discussed below.

Government financial assistance to parents

2.48 Mr Scott from the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies told the Committee that for many years after WWII moves were made to obtain financial recompense from parents of children in homes:

When a child was made a ward, if the father was able to make a financial contribution he would be approached to make such a contribution. It did not necessarily make a great impact on the budget for the state care of children; it was seen more as reminding him of his responsibilities and, to some extent, keeping a link between them. It was abandoned because it was seen as punitive. It was expensive to collect...For various reasons at that time it was seen as desirable that parents maintain a financial contribution.⁶³

2.49 In various eras in Australia, schemes had been introduced to help mothers to keep their children at home. During the 1880s, Brisbane's St Vincent's Orphanage trialled paying the same allowances to mothers as were paid to foster mothers but the scheme stopped because it was seen to be creating a class of permanent pensioners. In Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia in the late 1800s, financial assistance was introduced for mothers to keep their own children. However, the early forms of such government assistance were limited for various reasons.⁶⁴

2.50 By the late 1920s, many State children or those on benefits were cared for in their own homes though some parents could not afford to keep their children despite boarding-out payments.⁶⁵ During 1900-1945, some States assisted parents with cash or goods to help them maintain their children, and, the federal government introduced the maternity allowance (1912) and the child endowment allowance (1941).⁶⁶

2.51 Given the pivotal role of finances in determining a family's ability to maintain their children, the social security benefits that characterised the Whitlam Government era (1972-1975) had obvious effects for people who might otherwise need to place their children in a home. The introduction of the Supporting Mothers Benefit in 1973

62 *Submission 173*, p.8 (Victorian Government).

63 *Committee Hansard 4.2.04*, pp.7-8 (Association of Children's Welfare Agencies).

64 Mellor 1990, pp.92-94.

65 Garton 1990, pp.94-95.

66 Mellor 1990, pp.74-76, 92-94.

and other government assistance, particularly to women, made it much less likely that parents would relinquish their children to the state, for financial reasons.⁶⁷

2.52 The increased Commonwealth Government financial support of the 1970s to parents fundamentally shifted the role of the state regarding parental responsibilities. In earlier times it had been accepted that some parents would be unwilling or unable to care for their children and could place their children in a home and pay for the child's care (or perhaps not), with the state playing no role. However, from the 1970s the state had an increasing role in supporting families and protecting children.⁶⁸

2.53 A discussion of the correlation between parents' finances and the economic pressures that have contributed to children's placement in homes, appears in chapter 3.

Number of children in institutional care

2.54 It is likely that more than 500 000 Australians have experienced life in an orphanage, home or other form of out-of-home care during the last century in Australia.

2.55 Evidence to the Committee has shown the difficulties encountered when assessing such numbers. Often data on children in institutions is not comprehensive, covers different time periods and has gaps and inconsistencies. As CLAN noted, often data is not broken down into categories such as numbers already in care, new admissions or departures from care, and because of recording practices, children may be counted more than once. Significantly, not all children in institutions were taken through the official legal processes of state wardship and therefore would not necessarily have been included in official records.⁶⁹ Further, different ways of collecting and maintaining data have existed within and among States according to counting requirements of various times. A discussion of how the 500 000 figure has been arrived at, is in Appendix 5.

Conclusion

2.56 The above outline demonstrates the *ad hoc* and disparate nature of the workings of governments and other groups and their agendas, which over the years, have had responsibility for children. Perhaps it is not surprising that many problems occurred for children in institutions. For instance given that State governments contributed nothing or very little to non-government children's homes, they effectively relinquished their chances to oversee the activities or standards of the homes.

2.57 As an academic, Dr Penglase noted, the New South Wales Government washed its hands of funding for the homes, clearly demonstrating its disapproval of

67 AIHW 2001, p.127.

68 *Submission* 173, p.8 (Victorian Government).

69 *Submission* 22, p.21 (CLAN).

the use of institutions. Dr Penglase also noted the lack of cooperation between the government and non-government sectors.⁷⁰ Mr McIntosh, a Victorian child welfare researcher advised the Committee that by the 1960s, any original reform ideas of the homes had diminished and the government's involvement had become merely administrative so that any planning and research activities came from the voluntary sector. As such, departmental officials were unable to suggest or require changes in care methods and voluntary institutions were limited in any efforts to introduce changes, because they did not have the funds to do so.⁷¹

2.58 More than anything, one would consider it reasonable to expect that there would be cooperation and openness between the sectors, given that the non-government sector was essentially doing the government's work.

2.59 Most telling perhaps is that the majority of State governments did not have separate child welfare departments until well into the 1960s and 1970s, a demonstration that child welfare issues were not a high agenda item for governments. In other words, it is likely that the core business of the large departments dealing with child welfare issues would have overshadowed the needs of children in institutions. This is also pertinent given that the managerial styles of large bureaucracies are not at all conducive to meeting the best interests of children, particularly those children who are society's most vulnerable.

Legislative framework, including Commonwealth's role

Background of child welfare laws

2.60 Under Australia's Constitution at Federation in 1901, a large degree of government responsibility remained with the State governments. Apart from various matters of national importance retained by the Commonwealth and powers derived from s.51 of the Constitution, the colonies (States) retained welfare service responsibilities.⁷²

2.61 By the 1890s, most Australian colonies had set up children's courts and child protection legislation.⁷³ Children's courts acquired exclusive jurisdiction over criminal matters (juvenile offending) and welfare matters (neglected children and young people). The courts could determine if a young person had committed a criminal offence or was neglected within the meaning of the Act. The courts had wide discretionary powers relating to young people;⁷⁴ a 'neglected' child could be detained

70 *Submission 63, Orphans of the Living*, p.144 (Dr Penglase).

71 *Submission 47*, pp.25-26 (Mr McIntosh).

72 Mellor 1990, p.73.

73 Tomison 2001, p.49.

74 Cunneen & White 1996, pp.18-20.

by the police and committed to government care.⁷⁵ The processes where children were deemed to be state wards and placed in children's homes, are discussed in chapter 3.

2.62 While legislative provisions differed across Australia and were introduced in different years, they did have similarities. Queensland's *State Children Act 1911*, was intended to codify existing laws regarding State children and was modelled on South Australian and Western Australian legislation from 1895.⁷⁶ In 1872, South Australia's *Neglected Persons Act* significantly broadened that colony's definition of 'neglected' to include uncontrollable children. The *Public Charities Act 1873* in Tasmania, allowed parents to surrender their children to government control.⁷⁷

2.63 In the 1800s in most jurisdictions, young offenders could be sent to industrial schools in certain circumstances. Legislation in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales provided for industrial schools for children defined as neglected. In Victoria, Queensland and South Australia, a child convicted of an offence could be sent to a reformatory regardless of the offence. In New South Wales, a young person convicted of an offence that was punishable by 14 or more days in prison, could be sent to a reformatory. Offences that resulted in incarceration in industrial schools and reformatories were often minor and the punishments often outweighed what the offences warranted.⁷⁸

2.64 Much of the States' early-days legislation formed the basis for later legislation and often remained for years. For example, section 13 of the Victorian *Neglected and Children's Act 1864*, set out the grounds on which a child may be deemed to be 'neglected', to include: found begging, wandering, residing in a brothel and the parent representing that he is unable to control the child. That definition of 'neglected' was expanded by the Victorian *Neglected Children's Act of 1890*.⁷⁹ The 1890 Act was consolidated in 1928 into the *Child Welfare Act*.⁸⁰ While the Victorian *Children's Welfare Act 1954* removed neglect as an offence and replaced it with an administrative procedure for removing a child from the parents' legal guardianship, the 1928 and 1933 provisions virtually remained until 1970. Four of the six grounds for a neglected child under the 1864 Victorian Act, remained operative in the 1960s.⁸¹ In other States, legislation from earlier eras was similarly built upon but with basic principles remaining unchanged for years.

75 Mellor 1990, p.18.

76 Forde Report 1999, p.289.

77 Mellor 1990, p.18.

78 Cunneen & White 1996, pp.14-15.

79 *Submission 47*, p.20 (Mr McIntosh).

80 *Submission 173*, p.4 (Victorian Government).

81 *Submission 47*, pp.20-21 (Mr McIntosh).

2.65 Despite amendments, many laws were locked into the past and seemed to imbue governments and managers of children's homes with wide discretionary powers regarding children. They were often skewed towards the needs of people in power, judgmental and punitive towards children and young people and not overly stringent on what they required of adults charged with the care and protection of children. Significantly, such laws were often not enforced. Even if arguments could be put that colonial and Federation times' mores underpinning legislation justified them then, by the 1960s and 1970s, they were archaic and out of kilter with current societal thinking.

2.66 In 1976 the Norgard Committee inquiring into child care services in Victoria, called for a major overhaul of child care legislation, noting that Victoria's child welfare laws were out of date:

Comparison between the *Social Welfare Act 1970* and earlier legislation indicates that much of Victoria's child welfare legislation has developed largely by a process of accretion and addition rather than from the results of fundamental review...it does not contain any clear rationale for official intervention in individual children's affairs. Those sections of the Act which are specifically concerned with the admission of children to State guardianship and with the exercise of that guardianship basically derive from the nineteenth century. They reflect the political, psychological and social beliefs of that day and still incorporate procedures which were pragmatically adopted by early legislators from their contemporary administrative resources. Many of the moral and social assumptions which they reflect are, in our view, no longer tenable today.⁸²

2.67 Pertinent to note is that over the years despite changes in legislation and forms of care, rarely did changes occur for the children in care. Very often, government programs have focused on immediate needs and preferably at the lowest costs. At the heart of the issues for policymakers have been those related to economic issues:

...the priority for both politicians and officials was not the wellbeing of children but cost cutting and economy.⁸³

An overview - provisions of the child protection laws

2.68 The following outline canvasses the effectiveness or otherwise of aspects of Australia's laws which were designed to protect young people.

2.69 Much of the legislation seemed to give governments and public servants significant power and control over children's lives. Consider for example, Regulation 5 of the Western Australian *Child Welfare Act 1947-1957*:

5. During a ward's attendance as so required at a place...and while a ward is travelling or being conveyed to and from such a place pursuant to that

82 Victorian Legislative Assembly, *Report of the committee of enquiry into child care services in Victoria* (Norgard Report), Government Printer, Melbourne, 1976, p.25.

83 *Committee Hansard* 3.2.04, p.108 (Mr Quinn).

requirement or is otherwise absent from an institution in pursuance of or accordance with any provision of the Act or these regulations, every person who has custody or charge of the ward shall, while so having custody or charge, have all such powers, authorities, protection, and privileges for the purposes of the execution of his duty in relation to the custody and charge of the ward, as any police officer has by common law or statute.

2.70 Feasibly, interpreting the definition of 'satisfaction' for the purposes of Regulation 78 of the Western Australian *Child Welfare Act 1907-1927* would be subjective and discretionary for the Secretary of the department:

78. A ward boarded-out with a foster-parent shall be fed, lodged, and clothed to the satisfaction of the Secretary...

2.71 The intent of Regulation 65 of the *Queensland State Children Act 1935*, seemed to lean more towards a carer's needs than those of a foster child (or his or her family):

65. On presentation of an order from the Director or district officer, relatives and friends may visit children apprenticed or placed out for hire at such times as will be convenient to the foster-parents. Such visits must not be longer than one hour nor more frequent than once every four weeks.

2.72 Government officials also had the authority to open children's mail in institutions and could decide if it would be forwarded to the recipient(s). Under Regulation 22 of the *State Children Act 1911*, all letters to and from inmates were to be sent through the superintendent who could, after perusal, forward the letter to the Director or district officer if he considered it undesirable to deliver the letter. Regulation 34 of the South Australian *Welfare Act 1972*, contained similar provisions regarding children's mail.

2.73 The language of legislation is vague to the point where it could have discouraged any reporting of improper behaviour towards children in institutions. By all accounts, sexual abuse of children in homes has been widespread. There seems to be little reference to this subject in legislation. Regulation 102 of the 1911 Queensland Act refers to 'interference' of a child. On a literal interpretation, it is unclear if this would apply to interference by anyone other than a child's 'relative' or 'friends':

102. It shall be the duty of every person with or to whom a State child is placed out or apprenticed to report at once to the Director or district officer any interference with the child under his charge by relatives or friends.

Laws to protect children and young people – inadequacies and contraventions

2.74 The New South Wales *Child Welfare Act 1939* which operated until 1987, related to children in care. It did not provide for discharging children back to parents' care nor provide specific ways to deal with badly treating or assaulting a child in State care.⁸⁴ Victoria's 1864 Act which operated until 1970 focused on punishing children

84 *Submission 22*, p.9; *Committee Hansard* 3.2.04, p.110 (Mr Quinn).

for being neglected but did not provide for intervention on the grounds of unfit guardianship of parents or make provisions to assist the child-family situation.⁸⁵ Regulations regarding training for institutional staff, licensing of homes and inspectors' visits to homes, were either not required or not strictly adhered to under the 1939 Act.⁸⁶ In Victoria, the laws governing children's institutions seemed to be equally as lax.⁸⁷ These issues are discussed in chapters 5 and 7.

2.75 The Committee heard that children were often kept in illegal isolated detention, well beyond the allowable maximum time under the NSW *Child Welfare Act 1939*, under the guise of what was called 'segregation':

Both involved being locked in a cell. Most of the cells had steel doors...Normally you got one decent meal a day, and the rest of the time you got a bread and milk or bread and water. That has never been officially acknowledged; nevertheless, it definitely existed. There is a file in the state records...which shows numerous cases of segregation in excess of one week. One case I found was 26 days.⁸⁸

2.76 Evidence to the Committee included information that illegal punishments were meted out to absconders under s.139(2) of the NSW *Child Welfare Act 1939*:

Under the 1939 act, absconders were supposed to be dealt with by the courts alone. The reason for that was, again, the Yanco scandal. Although it is not stated overtly in the act, the purpose of it was that, if somebody did run away from an institution, an independent body—for example, a magistrate hearing a charge of absconding—could at least determine whether there had been some good reason for the child to run away. That is contained in section 139(2) of the act. There had also been inhumane and illegal punishment of boys at Gosford, Yanco and Mittagong. This is well detailed in the report by John McCulloch in 1934.⁸⁹

2.77 While legislative provisions were available in New South Wales to punish people who criminally assaulted an institution's inmate, no records appear to exist of any charges being laid.⁹⁰

2.78 In Victoria, the Norgard Committee criticised the practical application of the 1970 child welfare laws which allowed police, not departmental officers, to undertake duties which were essentially welfare work:

Victoria is unusual in English-speaking countries in that its Welfare Department's staff is not authorised to approach families where children are

85 *Submission 47*, p.20 (Mr McIntosh).

86 *Submission 63*, p.2 and *Committee Hansard 3.2.04*, p.117 (Mr Quinn).

87 *Submission 173*, p.5 (Victorian Government).

88 *Committee Hansard 3.2.04*, pp.107-108 (Mr Quinn).

89 *Committee Hansard 3.2.04*, p.108 (Mr Quinn).

90 *Committee Hansard 3.2.04*, p.110 (Mr Quinn).

believed to be inadequately cared for, and to take whatever action is considered appropriate. We accept that the Police will retain a residual function in the welfare field, but consider that their primary duty of law-enforcement makes them generally inappropriate as first points of contact in welfare work.⁹¹

2.79 How children and young people in institutions were dealt with by bureaucracies and the laws meant to protect them, is perhaps best encapsulated below:

For good or bad, the child went forth into the unknown, a receipt for his person secured, and a brief history of the child sent to the Superintendent of the institution. This history was no more than a précis of the Police complaint, a statement of the court decision, and an itemised account of the disposal of the other children in the family. There the child would remain, and for practical purposes the file was closed, until it became necessary to remove him from the institution. For the time being, the Department had fulfilled its legislative functions, and no further action ensued until it was necessary to make a new decision about his disposal.⁹²

2.80 Appendix 4 provides examples of legislation relating to the treatment of children in institutions in Australia. Comparisons of what was legislatively permitted regarding punishments, with examples of actual abuses as outlined in the report, demonstrate that laws were broken and actions were illegal at various times in many institutions across Australia. An examination of what was specified under statutes regarding inspections of institutions against claims that such inspections were not undertaken, illustrates that laws were often not applied. Similarly laws pertaining to the education of children in institutions were very often ignored.

Conclusion

2.81 Because of the difficulties in harnessing information about the start and evolution of policies in Australia for housing children in need of care and the legislative framework to accommodate such policies, against the background of fluctuating ideas about types of care and prevailing attitudes of government officials dealing with children, it is impossible to accurately gauge how such elements affected children's lives in various eras and jurisdictions. The above information is simply an example of discrete outlines. A comprehensive study that draws these jigsaw pieces together would be helpful for many people in Australia, particularly those who have experienced, or are experiencing, life in some form of out-of-home care.

2.82 Such a study would also be useful for governments and parliamentarians in formulating policies for people who have experienced institutional care, particularly given the importance of lessons from past practices in influencing present-day policies. Leaving aside the moral issues of ensuring that children are not harmed,

91 Norgard Report 1976, p.26.

92 *Submission 47*, p.22 (Mr McIntosh), quoting Tierney L, *Children who need help*, Melbourne University Press, 1963.

strong arguments exist to provide help to children in order to reduce the social and economic costs that often ensue when a harmed child becomes a harmed adult.

Major organisations and their institutions for children

Early-days developments

2.83 Trends about the use of orphanages or boarding-out options for children needing out-of-home care varied until the 1960s-1970s, when moves began in earnest to close large institutions. The following information traces some developments in orphanages and other forms of out-of-home care for children in Australia from early times to later eras when large homes run by non-government providers tended to become the main providers, and remained so for many years. A salient feature of the early-days practices is that they set the scene for many years to come.

Orphanages

2.84 The early decades in Australia saw the establishment from 1792 of a range of caring institutions. Institutional care for children dates back to a small orphanage opened in 1795 on Norfolk Island⁹³ followed by other orphanages including the Female Orphan School (1801); the Male Orphan School (1819); the Benevolent Asylum (1821) for 'destitute, unfortunate, needy families'; and the Roman Catholic Orphan School (1837).⁹⁴ In the 1850s, Sydney's Society for the Relief of Destitute Children which was run by a group of prominent Sydney community leaders, set up an asylum for children, Ormond House, to deal with the alarming increases in child neglect and destitution. Later to become the Randwick Asylum, it took children from the Benevolent Asylum and trained girls in needlework, laundry work and housework and boys were engaged in gardening and manual labour. A government boarding-out system in 1885 saw the children taken from the Benevolent Asylum to the Randwick Asylum, leaving only those who had been privately admitted.⁹⁵

2.85 Throughout this period, ideas about institutional life versus small home-type environments for children varied both within and among colonies. From the 1880s a movement against institutional care in New South Wales saw strong advocates for cottage homes and some were set up in Mittagong about 1885. However, while preferred by governments and politicians, they did not become a reality because of their high costs.⁹⁶

2.86 In Tasmania, orphanages were opened in 1828 followed by an institution for transported teenage boys. The boarding-out system took over for a while, reverting to government-funded orphanages in 1846. In the late 1840s, Victoria's earliest

93 Liddell 1993, p. 30.

94 Cunneen & White 1996, p.12.

95 Ramsland 1984, pp.194-209.

96 *Committee Hansard* 4.2.04, p.108 (Mr Quinn).

responses to deal with children in need of care consisted of boarding-out options and a number of children's institutions were established in the 1850s including the Melbourne Orphan Asylum, and further boarding out schemes later in the 1850s.⁹⁷

2.87 In Queensland, orphanages and homes for destitute and neglected children were established in the mid-19th to early 20th centuries. In 1865, the government established Queensland's first orphanage, the state-administered Diamantina Orphanage in Brisbane, funded by the Benevolent Society.⁹⁸ From the 1890s, the vast majority of children in care were sent to a number of Catholic orphanages.⁹⁹

2.88 In Western Australia, the Anglican Church established the Perth Orphanage for Girls (1863) and the Boys' Orphanage at Middle Swan (1871). Other Anglican homes included the Children's Home (Adelaide, 1886) and the Orphan Home (Adelaide, 1860), founded by Mrs Parr in conjunction with the Church. Wesleyan orphanages during the 1880s included Livingstone Home, Melbourne.¹⁰⁰

Industrial Schools

2.89 Large and barrack like, industrial schools were set up in Australia to provide rudimentary education and industrial training for children who were not necessarily orphans but who subsisted in poverty or whose parents did not provide for them.¹⁰¹ Reformatories (nowadays juvenile justice centres), were often combined with industrial schools, often blurring the distinction between 'neglected' youth and young offenders.¹⁰² In 1864-1874, all Australian colonies legislated for 'neglected' and 'destitute' children and except in Queensland, this legislation distinguished between 'neglected' and 'criminal' children. The former were sent to industrial schools, the latter, to reformatory schools.¹⁰³

2.90 Some examples of Australian industrial schools include the Magill establishment in South Australia, set up in 1869, and the boys' reformatory in Queensland from 1871 on the ship, *Proserpine*. Victoria set up children's industrial schools including at Melbourne's Prince's Bridge, on the hulk, *Nelson*, and a number of smaller industrial schools were established in rural areas such as Geelong. St Joseph's Industrial School with orphanage facilities was established in Hobart in 1879. The Catholic Church and Salvation Army set up industrial schools in Queensland and Western Australia in the 1890s.¹⁰⁴ New South Wales children who were deemed to be

97 Liddell 1993, p. 31.

98 Mellor 1990, p.16.

99 Forde Report 1999, pp.31-34.

100 Mellor 1990, p.16.

101 Mellor 1990, p.18.

102 Cunneen & White 1996, p.17.

103 Mellor 1990, p.18.

104 Mellor 1990, pp.19-20.

'uncontrollable' could be sent to institutions such as Gosford, Yanco, and the Shaftesbury Reformatory for boys or the ships the *Vernon* and the *Sobraon*.¹⁰⁵

Juvenile Justice Detention Centres

2.91 A separate system to deal with juvenile offenders was developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, coinciding with reforms including restrictions on child labour and the introduction of compulsory schooling.¹⁰⁶

2.92 As a researcher in the juvenile justice field and former officer of the New South Wales Department of Community Services, told the Committee:

From its inception in 1866, the juvenile corrections system in New South Wales was essentially punitive. Right from the word go it used isolated detention and corporal punishment.¹⁰⁷

2.93 Children could be placed in juvenile detention centres despite not having committed a criminal offence. Hence the mixing of welfare and criminal cases in detention systems became a hallmark of dealing with young people in the juvenile justice system until well into the contemporary period.¹⁰⁸ Not surprisingly, the by-product of such indiscriminate mixing of children in detention centres 'bred' criminals, as the Committee noted. One care leaver described how abuse and bad treatment in various places pushed her to the point of running away often and circumstances of being arrested, taken before the courts and placed in Parramatta Girls' Home, from which she emerged at 18 years as a young offender.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

2.94 Many of the attributes that came to characterise children's homes such as low standards, overcrowding, poorly-trained staff, lack of children's education, parents' loss of control over their children, appalling conditions and sickness among the children, obviously stemmed from early-day practices. That low standards became the norm in many orphanages is not surprising. The Sisters of Mercy from Ireland who had opened St Brigid's Orphanage at Ryde in 1898 were familiar with the wretched poverty of Ireland and hence saw Ryde as 'palatial' compared to Ireland's very harsh orphanages. Conditions at St Brigid's seemed to indicate what lay ahead: too few nuns (carers) and too many children; a focus on menial tasks at the expense of education or occupational training and severe physical punishments of the children.¹¹⁰

105 *Committee Hansard* 3.2.04, p.109 (Mr Quinn).

106 Cunneen & White 1996, p.9.

107 *Committee Hansard* 3.2.04, p.107, (Mr Quinn).

108 Cunneen & White 1996, p.17.

109 *Submission* 238, p.2.

110 McGrath 1991, pp.26-29.

2.95 The Randwick Asylum's focus on producing goods for outside markets with the cheap labour of children¹¹¹ demonstrates the ready acceptance of child labour and the lack of any real thought about their careers. That families often had to sign over complete control when admitting their children to an orphanage,¹¹² demonstrates that parents were destined to take a subordinate role regarding their children's lives.

2.96 Child labour issues have been reflected in other inquiries into children in institutions such as the Child Migrant Report and *Bringing them home*, for example:

Much of the evidence provided harrowing descriptions of small children undertaking adult tasks – clearing land, building, looking after livestock – while at the same time trying to participate in the little education that was offered...most institutions required inmates to at least perform daily housekeeping and general operational chores.¹¹³

Although Aboriginal children were expected to take on the responsibilities of work at a very young age, they were not trusted with their own wages...I was sent out when I was eleven years old to [pastoral station]. I worked there for seven and a half years. Never got paid anything all that time.¹¹⁴

2.97 The Committee received numerous stories outlining experiences of child labour in institutions (see also chapter 4):

We were up very early every morning, either raking leaves or scrubbing floors...We worked hard, doing everything around the home. (Sub 101)

While at Riverview I worked in the dairy. I was required to get up between 4.00-4.30 am to bring the cows for milking...Another job I was required to perform while at Riverview was regular sanitary duty. This involved pushing wheelbarrow loads of effluent and burying it beside the Bremer River. (Sub 75)

2.98 With large numbers of children under the one roof, the serious health issues of orphanages and industrial schools were replicated in homes for years to come. At the Randwick Asylum in 1867, 77 children died of whooping cough and health and hygiene issues were a serious problem.¹¹⁵ At Melbourne's Prince's Bridge industrial school in the 1860s, at any one time, 22 per cent of the children would be sick.¹¹⁶

111 Ramsland 1984, pp.194-209.

112 Mellor, 1990, pp.16-17.

113 *Lost Innocents*, p.86.

114 *Bringing them home*, pp.171-172.

115 Ramsland 1984, p.201.

116 Mellor 1990, pp.18-19.

More contemporary times for children's institutions

2.99 Over the years as needs and options changed regarding the care of children who were unable to live with their families, institutions continued to be set up across Australia by government and non-government organisations.

2.100 The amount and nature of information in this section on Australia's children's institutions tends to be typical of that received by the Committee. The Committee has endeavoured to quote from submissions and evidence to give as diverse a picture as possible of Australian non-government and government institutions. Many of these homes have since closed or, over time, taken on different types of service provision for children such as foster care or residential cottage homes.

2.101 Significantly, although stories in this report depict many institutions in a bad light, the Committee acknowledges that many carers in these homes were concerned with children's best interests and that treatment and practices obviously varied according to management regimes and staff at certain times.

Catholic institutions

2.102 In 1836 Australia's first Catholic Orphanage school was established and moved to bigger premises in Parramatta in 1844. From the 1840s, Orders from Europe, particularly Ireland, arrived in Australia and by the 1860s, Catholic religious orphanages operated in all capital cities. Orphanages were established in cities and regional centres across Australia. In the early 1900s, more centres were opened by various nuns, while the Christian Brothers provided institutions for boys. In 1840s-1890s, Catholic homes were established for indigenous children, predominantly in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. New South Wales' Catholic orphanages have included Mater Dei, Narellan, and Sydney's Tempe Home. The Convent of the Good Shepherd, Abbotsford and St Augustine's, Geelong, are examples of Catholic children's homes in Victoria. In Western Australia, Catholic Orders such as the Sisters of Nazareth, Sisters of Mercy and Christian Brothers conducted various orphanages. In Tasmania, the Mt St Canice Home was established by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd for women and girls.¹¹⁷

2.103 Given that the Catholic Church has conducted a significant number of orphanages across Australia, not surprisingly, many submissions and information to the Committee have been in relation to Catholic homes.

2.104 In recalling a number of Victorian Catholic orphanages, one care leaver noted:

I watched a program on 60 minutes called the sisters of cruelty and was awakened to the memories of my own experiences of the two Nazareth houses in Victoria, Nazareth House in East Camberwell and Nazareth

117 *A Piece of the Story*, National Directory of Records of Catholic Organisations Caring for Children Separated from Families, Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, November 1999.

House in Ballarat from the 1960s until 1971...I still have nightmares...about...being forced by a nun to lean into the coffin and kiss a dead man I did not know...I even have flashbacks to this very day of the smell of a dead body. (Sub 5)

2.105 Other people's experiences also related to Nazareth Houses in Victoria:

Back to Nazareth House Camberwell, Victoria...a very painful period in my life to talk about in fact I still have nightmares especially when I have to revisit memories. I have come to realise that we were never children. We were an unpaid workforce, with no reward just punishment. (Sub 169)

I was in...Nazareth House, Ballarat in about 1957 – I was 4 years old...It is something that has never left me – how and why these places were allowed to run the way they were is impossible for me to comprehend – it made no sense. A place to de-humanise children? – it worked. (Sub 240)

2.106 This care leaver outlined her 'living nightmare' as a state ward when she was abused at Nazareth House, Ballarat, and St Catherine's Children's Home, Geelong:

My placement in these orphanages...has deeply scarred me and will continue to have an impact on me for the rest of my life...The emotional abuse I received was demeaning and humiliating, it undermined my confidence and self worth...The physical abuse never ceased, the beltings, having my head smashed together with another child's head (this was my introduction to St Catherine's on my second day at this home). (Sub 111)

2.107 The Committee received many submissions outlining experiences of St Vincent's, South Melbourne:

I was placed in St Vincent's orphanage South Melbourne from the age of 8 until I was 14. In that time I suffered the most horrific abuse, sexual physical and psychological. To this day I find it very hard to talk about without becoming upset depressed and angry. (Sub 137)

2.108 Various submissions outlined stories of appalling treatment at Adelaide's Catholic Orphanage, Goodwood, run by the Sisters of Mercy:

Next, we went to an awful children's home called 'Goodwood' in Adelaide...We were not allowed to go to the toilet and told not to wet the bed! I told my sister to wee in my bed, if she had to, so they wouldn't belt her. In the morning, the nuns would walk straight up to me and the other kids and we would all get belted with the strap for wetting our beds. I was made to work like a slave. At 4.30 am, my little, sick sister and I were forced to carry two mops and buckets up steep stairs to the next floor and scrub toilets and bathrooms...No shoes or underwear for me. The food was terrible. For breakfast everyday we ate stale bread with lumpy hot milk. For dinner we ate boiled 'hogget' with Swedes. A lot of the children were sexually abused – not me or my sister. (Sub 95)

2.109 The Committee also received information outlining significant abuse at St Anne's Orphanage in Liverpool, Sydney, including the following:

I remember my father visiting us and asking us what we had done with the pocket money he had given to Mother Phillipa. I told my Father we had not received this money. After that he gave the pocket money to us directly...the food at St Anne's was absolutely terrible...I hated it but Sister Herman made me eat some of it...She hit me with the cane over my legs and when I fell to the ground she then hit me over my back. (Sub 348)

2.110 Neerkol Orphanage in Rockhampton, Queensland, was mentioned in a number of submissions, very often in an unfavourable light:

I was bashed by the nuns and estranged from my brothers and sister. We didn't get much food and were made to feel stupid. It was a very bad place and I was confused and very scared. I tried to pretend that I wasn't really there so that when I was being abused sexually and mentally, I pretended it was happening to someone else. (Sub 149)

I was brought up in the Neerkol Orphanage outside Rockhampton...from the age of 10 months to 12 years old. During this time I suffered mental, physical and sexual abuse from employees of Neerkol. I was treated as being mentally retarded from the age of two until the age of 10 when they discovered that all that was wrong with me was a simple tongue tie. (Sub 218)

I was a ward of the state from 1961 to 1968 at a Queensland orphanage, that being Neerkol Orphanage. I was physically, mentally and sexually abused while there. I could not begin to tell you, especially in brief, how horrific my experience was and how I was transferred to eight different institutions in seven months (one being a psychiatrist hospital) so as to stifle me from speaking out about my sexual abuse claims. (Sub 309)

2.111 Western Australia's Christian Brothers' orphanages were remembered for their brutality and abuse of boys who went through their system:

I shall not forget that life of Hell that the Western Australian Government put us through. This is a story to be told, of each of these orphanages, Castledare, Clontarf, Bindoon, Tardun and St Joseph's, Subiaco. (Sub 41)

I left Perth over 20 years ago, hoping to forget the horrible things which happened to me while...in Castledare and Clontarf Boys Homes, run by the Christian Brothers...In 1950 aged 7 years along with other children, I was transferred to Castledare. This is where Hell on earth began. In 1954, aged 11, I was sent to Clontarf Boys Town a few miles away, where Hell continued for the rest of my childhood...I hold the child welfare department responsible for the abuse and lack of education while I was under the care of the Christian Brothers. (Sub 85)

2.112 Another care leaver provided significant details of abuse and harsh treatment of boys, including brutality and physical and sexual abuse at Castledare Boys' Home, Clontarf Boys Town, Bindoon Boys Town and St Mary's, Tardun. (Sub 365)

Anglican (Church of England)

2.113 Starting around 1890, the Anglican Church has operated many children's homes across Australia, including the Church of England Boys' and Girls' Homes, Carlingford, New South Wales. The Church's Queensland homes included the Home of the Good Shepherd, Nundah; St George's Homes for Children, Rockhampton and Tufnell Homes, Nundah. The Church's Northern Territory's homes included St Mary's in Alice Springs, while South Australian institutions included Adelaide's Orphan Home (Farr House), the Babies' Home, Walkerville, and, St Mary's Mission of Hope. Victorian-based Anglican homes included the Brighton Children's Home and the Darling Babies' Home, East Malvern, as well as many babies' homes, boys' training farms and Aboriginal missions. In Tasmania the Church conducted homes such as the Roland Children's Home (for boys) and assisted with residential care for Aboriginal children. Included in Western Australian institutions have been Swanleigh Hostel, the Anglican Children's Mission, Perth, and missions for Aboriginal children.¹¹⁸

2.114 The following example illustrates some experiences in an Anglican home:

When I was seven I was taken to a home in Brighton Victoria run by Church of England Nuns, they were very cruel, we were used for slave labour, we had to scrub floors on our hands and knees, use heavy machinery to polish floors, peel spuds, wash and dry piles of dishes, if we did anything wrong, our punishment was being locked in a cupboard most of the time we were locked there all night. (Sub 279)

2.115 Established in 1903, the Anglican Church's Parkerville Children's Home in Western Australia, pioneered small cottages for children in Australia with a 'village environment' that included a primary school, farm and homes with their own 'mother'.¹¹⁹ Describing Parkerville in the 1940s, one care leaver recalled:

When we arrived at Parkerville, we were separated...I hardly got to see my sister at Parkerville. She got very sick with rheumatic fever and because she didn't get treatment early enough, spent 6 months in Royal Perth Hospital...medical treatment was almost non-existent at the Home...There were about 30 kids per cottage. We slept on the veranda and in winter up in the hills it was freezing...Beltings were common for all the kids and mostly were not deserved. (Sub 181)

2.116 The above recollections at Parkerville were confirmed by his sister:

We had to do the housework in the Cottage, Padbury. We had to polish the wooden floors in the Dormitory and the Balcony until we could see our faces, every day we had to scrub floors and toilets with cold water, always on our Hands and Knees...Miss Middleton was very cruel. She would slap

118 Boyce James, *For the record*. Background information on the work of the Anglican Church with Aboriginal children and directory of Anglican agencies providing residential care to children from 1830 to 1980, Anglicare Australia, 2003, pp.23-44.

119 Boyce 2003, p.42.

the girls across the face or ears for nothing, and loved telling us if it wasn't for them we would be in the gutter, where we belong. We had no shoes for every day wear, we would get chilblains on our toes and fingers. (Sub 180)

2.117 Another person wrote about the Anglican Swan Homes in Western Australia and recalled instances of extreme punishment of the boys, including the following:

In January 1946, when I was just 12 years of age, my three younger brothers, a younger sister and myself were committed to care...and placed in the Swan Homes at Middle Swan then operated by the Anglican Church...I am now over 70 years of age but still find my experiences of this Institution remain with me, and some of the traumatic things I experienced still bother me, and I believe have had a profound effect on my life. (Sub 414)

Salvation Army

2.118 The Salvation Army has run children's homes in Australia for over a century. Victorian establishments have included: the Bayswater Boys' Home, Box Hill Boys' Home, Kardinia Children's Home, East Camberwell Girls' Home, Glenroy Girls' and Pakenham Boys' Homes. Its homes in South Australia include the Kent Town Boys' Home, Mt Barker Boys' Home and Woodville Girls' Home, while the organisation conducted homes in Western Australia in Cottesloe, Seaforth and Nedlands. In Tasmania, Salvation Army homes have included the Barrington Boys' Home and Maylands Girls' Home, and in New South Wales the Kolling Memorial Boys' Home at Bexley, Manly Boys' Homes, Lyndon House Girls' Home, Canowindra and Goulburn's Gill Memorial Boys' Home are other examples. In Queensland, the Salvation Army homes include Kalimna Vocational Centre for Girls, Toowong, Indooroopilly Boys' Home, the Riverview Girls' Industrial school and the Riverview Boys' group of homes, Ipswich.¹²⁰

2.119 The Committee received many submissions regarding abuse in Salvation Army homes. One woman recalled the home in Cottesloe, Perth, in the 1940s where she lived when her young mother was unable to care for her and her siblings:

I found it very traumatic as I was a bed wetter and had to wash my own sheet in the mornings and got into quite a deal of trouble for the bed wetting...I would need to use the toilet during the night and this got me into trouble for being out of bed and I was made to stand in the cold hall until the carers went to bed...this occurred on a regular basis. (Sub 184)

2.120 A New South Wales care leaver described treatment at the Salvation Army's Gill Memorial Home, Goulburn, from 1966:

I was in my innocence, entering these dimensions of the so called home from early childhood, to which I experienced and witnessed abuse from my early years to September 1974...For the first two years in the boys home

120 *Submission 46, (Salvation Army – Australia Southern Territorial Headquarters).*

influences affected my behaviour/personality, as I learnt the discipline of the home, and the hypocrisy of Christian ethics and morality from the age of about 8 to 15. (Sub 326)

2.121 He further described life at Gill, including being made to sweep the toilet with a toothbrush, having to stand outside in all weather conditions, sometimes without shoes and being punished for speaking about one of the officer's sexual misconduct. He left the home, totally disenchanted with the Salvation Army and its officers:

What annoys me the most is the two faced presentation of Salvation Army officers who pride themselves as upstanding citizens in the community while in SA uniform, the other face of abuse hidden from the community...The Salvation Army officers acted as wardens, not devoted fathers to us all. There was a lot of mental abuse in the so-called home that I had no experience of before I entered this place. (Sub 326)

2.122 In writing about the Gill Boys' Home and recent remarks in the media of a senior Salvation Army officer about 'tough love' for the boys, another man said:

I have difficulty in reconciling...'love' with: Being physically abused particularly by one officer who enjoyed punching boys in the mouth and hitting them across the face with his open palm...on a regular basis...As a child at the Gill Home for Boys at Goulburn, the abuse...was constant. There were obviously some officers who tried to uphold the principles of the founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth, but they were not able to stop, or have much of an impact upon those officers who choose to ignore humanitarian beliefs, ideals and concepts...as a teacher I ended up teaching one an ex-Gill Home officer's sons. This particular officer did try his hardest to make life as pleasant as possible for the boys. When I asked him why we were treated so badly he said that although he tried his hardest he was told that as a junior officer it was not his role to interfere and that if he didn't like it then he should pack his bags and leave. The arrogant, abusive and purposeful humiliation methods of the Salvation Army are still in existence today, and are still impacting on my life. (Sub 286)

2.123 Other care leavers wrote of the lack of compassion at the Gill Home:

After lights went out at night you would be quite often awakened by younger boys crying for their parents. If this wasn't sad enough, if the officer heard it, the doors would be flung open, the lights turned on and everyone had to stand at the end of their bed until the boy who had been crying was found. The officer then flogged the boy. (Sub 336)

2.124 Many stories about the Queensland Salvation Army home, Riverview, emerged, such as the following outline that included sexual and physical abuse. In describing a particularly abusive officer, this care leaver said:

On the way home, Captain Gilliam would often stop at a pub to buy alcohol and we were threatened with a flogging if we told anyone. On return to Riverview, approximately 12 boys were made to sort through this truckload of food and push the best of it in a wheelbarrow approximately 1.25 miles to the kitchen...Fights were a common occurrence during shower time at

Riverview...On one occasion I had my eye split open when Captain Spratt took a swing at one boy who ducked, leaving me to receive the blow. (Sub 75)

2.125 Located at Indooroopilly in Brisbane, the Salvation Army home, Alkira, was also the subject of criticism:

Boys were punished for sitting next to girls at little lunch...these punishments would range from going to bed without TV, the strap or the cane...The manager...would occasionally punch boys with a closed fist. The dairy officer...would hit you with a stock whip if he caught you talking during milking. (Sub 90)

Uniting Church

2.126 The Uniting Church in Australia is a union of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches and was inaugurated in 1977. The Methodist and Presbyterian Churches were 'relatively small players' in children's institutional care in Australia. Included in Uniting Church homes in Victoria have been the Dhurringile Rural Training Farm (Tatura) for boys; Kilmany Park Family Home for Boys in Sale; the Presbyterian Sisterhood for babies and homeless mothers in Melbourne; and the Orana Family Services which commenced in 1888, changing its name and location several times over the years.¹²¹

2.127 A number of care leavers submitted positive stories about Uniting Church homes in Victoria:

I was transferred to Tally Ho Boys' Home 20/5/1939 aged nine years and five months. I remember that when I went to Tally Ho I started wetting the bed for about eighteen months until I settled down. I was never punished for this. At Tally Ho they taught you to make your bed, wash your clothes, and we shared laundry duties, farm duties, cooking, separating milk, harvesting. I found the homes to be a good environment...The only fights I saw were between the boys. (Sub 153)

2.128 However, the Committee received contrary evidence about Uniting Church homes, for example, Kilmany Park:

From Baltara I was sent to Kilmany Park in Sale...When I did go to school and spoke to my family, and the home found out, I was constantly belted...We showered together and our penises were measured. I was abused by the superintendent's son and, when I told the superintendent, I was constantly pulled out of bed – probably at about 11 o'clock at night – for telling lies, made to do a three or four-mile run, made to swim in a freezing cold swimming pool and sent back to bed...this was a Presbyterian home. We went to church every Sunday and were told of this God of love and understanding who was watching over us. I could not understand, because I thought: 'Jeez, what's happening? He's not watching over me.' I

121 *Submission 52*, pp. 3-4, 16-17 (UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania).

was told my mother was nothing but a drunken slut who had never been any good to me. I was given a foot up the bum and sent back to school...The abuse, sexual abuse and torture abuse that I suffered at Kilmany Park – no child should have to go through it.¹²²

2.129 Western Australia's Mofflyn has provided a range of out-of-home care services to children, starting in 1923, through the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. Children's homes run by Mofflyn and its religious antecedents have included the Methodist Girls' Home, the Werribee Farm School (Allandale) and a number of campus and cottages such as Allandale and Cooina, Mt Lawley.¹²³ Mofflyn cited feedback which was generally positive from 13 parents and 18 children who had experienced Mofflyn residential services during 1967-1971:

'I could not have coped without Mofflyn' (parent), 'It was like a big family...I liked the cottages being together' (child), 'We felt loved by our Cottage Mother' (child, now adult). One boy 'just wanted to forget', and there were some criticisms of Mofflyn which were akin to comments on service improvements. No concern was identified...of any unsafe, improper or unlawful care or treatment of children. The current Director also made inquiries about any known concerns of this nature within the wider church, amongst past and present staff of Mofflyn...records and corporate memory. No issues or cases were identified.¹²⁴

2.130 From 1960 until 1989, Brisbane's Methodist-Uniting Church conducted Nicklin Cottages.¹²⁵ A care leaver described her experiences of Nicklin Cottages:

In 1960 the Methodist church built cottages...Geoff and myself moved to Nicklin in Aspley. I was 5 years old and Geoff was 6 years old...Geoff suffered from asthma and was later sent to join Les at Redcliffe...Les used to tell me that the man in charge...was cruel and would often take Geoff's puffer off him as punishment. Geoff died at the age of 12 and I was told he died from asthma. I went to the funeral with no family at the age of 11 years. I did not receive any support and neither did Les. Life at Nicklin went on and the lady in charge Mrs Elva Matthews was a kind and good woman...she left when I was 11 years and [another] woman...came and changed our home into an institution. This woman was cruel and often beat us...She constantly belittled us...I was molested at Nicklin by the Sunday School teacher who used to visit us and so were the other girls. I was raped twice at Nicklin but did not have the courage to tell anyone. (Sub 229)

122 *Committee Hansard* 11.11.03, p.64.

123 *Submission* 160, pp.1-3 (Mofflyn).

124 *Submission* 160, p.6 (Mofflyn).

125 Queensland Department of Families, *Missing Pieces: Information to assist former residents of children's institutions to access records*, Brisbane, 2001.

Wesley - Dalmar

2.131 From the late 1800s, the Wesley Mission provided substitute care to Sydney's neglected and orphaned children and young people as part of various Methodist Church networks. Initially in Woolloomooloo, this home moved to Croydon in 1900 and as Dalmar, relocated to Carlingford in 1923 as a cottage-style children's institution. From its inception, the complex was managed via a number of different styles, including in the 1960s when it accepted court and government referrals and took on increasing numbers of children from 'broken homes' and single parents.¹²⁶

2.132 A number of care leavers provided varying perspectives on Dalmar:

I wet the bed continually and was made to walk in shame with wet sheets and held up to ridicule...My brother and I were caned many times by Don Stewart for things I don't know why. Canings anytime, anywhere. (Sub 151)

We arrived at Dalmar March 8th and our first impression of Dalmar and Mr Stewart was what a filthy hole and what a bullying bastard Stewart was... Sister Olive who came out with us on a three year contract was trying to protect us from Stewart all the time. Sister Olive had years of experience in child care and she was made junior to a Sister Watson who had no idea and could neither read or write. (Sub 152)

I had this place that was my home and all these other children and people that cared about me...it was a place that I was 'happy' and now I was on the move again. I remember leaving in the car driving down 'that long driveway' and that distinctive main sandstone or brick entrance never seeing it again until years later. That was the end of my days at Dalmar the place of my first 'happy' childhood memories. Dalmar has always been one of my strongest childhood memories as well as lots of other good and very bad ones that I'm sure Dalmar children and others like us all have. (Sub 241)

My natural mother signed a document giving me into the care of the Methodist Church, so that I was legally a ward, not long after my birth in 1924. I understand I was first cared for in the Dalmar Home in Ashfield, and subsequently at Dalmar, Carlingford...my girlhood recollections are of happy days, both during school periods and during school holidays. (Sub 328)

Burnside - Presbyterian

2.133 UnitingCare (Burnside) is a child and family social welfare agency of the NSW Uniting Church synod, established in 1911 to provide institutional care for disadvantaged children in New South Wales. By 1923, with private benefactors' funds, Burnside included 14 cottage homes and a range of amenities such as a school, gymnasium, hospital, playing fields and vegetable garden. In the 1960s the buildings

126 *Submission 178*, pp.1-9 (Wesley Mission – Dalmar Child & Family Care).

were redeveloped to suit 12-15 children and later were replaced by smaller residential houses in Sydney. More recently, the organisation has turned to foster care services.¹²⁷

2.134 Recounting life at Burnside after her parents had died, one care leaver noted:

My younger sister and I ran away because of this Matron's attitude towards us. When I was taken back, the matron beat me and I was literally black and blue for six months. Before the belting I had to scrub the bathroom floor, the room was very big as the building was previously a hospital. She told me it depended on how well I did the floor to the punishment I would receive. I did my best as a 12 year old girl. (Sub 310)

2.135 Other care leavers informed the Committee of their experiences of Burnside:

I lived in the home next door to the administration office where the superintendent lived and if he had turned around in his leather swivel chair and looked out the window he could have seen beatings and abuse going on just about any time...a matron...hit girls with the bristle end of scrubbing brushes and dragged girls around by the soft part under their arms...staff were not trained to deal with disclosures of sexual abuse...Nothing at Burnside modelled normal family life or human relationships.¹²⁸

Every type of abuse happened in Burnside...For the slightest little thing...you were made to go up to the dormitory...You were made to put on your pyjama pants...and lie over the bed, ready for the punishment. You knew it was coming...it took about six or seven hours sometimes to come. Then you would hear him walking up the bloody steps and down the bloody hall. He would have a double razor stop...he took pleasure in belting your arse...[The food] was shit when I was there...If you threw it up...you had to eat it there and then.¹²⁹

When I was 12, 13, 14 years old I was in Burnside homes for children, me and my sister...were both treated badly, and spoken to very meanly. I was sexually abused by the male house parent, his name is available if needed. It caused me a lot of mental stress and still is today...I'm getting help from Burnside after care; they are helping me with these issues. (Conf Sub 125)

2.136 Brisbane's Presbyterian WR Black Home was established in 1928.¹³⁰ A number of care leavers referred to this home, the following excerpt is indicative of some of the comments:

I was hit across the nose with the leg of a chair...not attached to the chair. My nose was gashed open and bloody...The matron stopped us from

127 *Submission 59*, Executive Summary (UnitingCare Burnside).

128 *Committee Hansard* 3.2.04, pp.73-75.

129 *Committee Hansard* 3.2.04, p.78.

130 Queensland Department of Families, *Missing Pieces: Information to assist former residents of children's institutions to access records*, Brisbane, 2001.

studying. 'You needn't bother studying. You're nothing. You'll always be nothing. You're from the gutter. You'll end in the gutter', she said. (Sub 87)

2.137 Another former resident who entered the WR Black Home at the age of six, had to deal with her mother's death and many years of bad treatment:

Matron Gennon proved to be a very harsh and cruel woman, who was determined to 'Knock the BAD out of us'...Then began 10 long years of extreme mental and physical abuse from 'The Matron from Hell'...A favourite punishment was to stand facing a wall, both arms raised above heads and woe betide anyone caught with arms down. She often would forget us and had to be reminded...Children would be crying with pain...one of my jobs was to scrub the kitchen floor. I felt a searing pain as a tin dipper was slammed into my scalp, breaking the skin. 'You stupid girl' Gennon yelled. 'Always put cold water into the bucket first before hot'. I went to school with blood matting my hair... [The teachers] did nothing about it. After all I was 'Just one of the Home Kids'. (Sub 409)

Uniting Protestant Association Homes

2.138 Formed in 1938, the United Protestant Association (UPA) provided care for children and promoted the Protestant faith. In the 1940s-1950s, it had up to 12 homes each caring for around 15-25 children, with house parents and other staff.¹³¹

2.139 A number of care leavers submitted their stories about life at UPA homes. The following person was placed in a UPA home had already badly treated in foster care:

I was placed in NSW Protestant Federation Girls' Home, Garnet Street, Dulwich. The memories are of a cruel harsh regimental environment. I did not cope well. (Sub 234)

2.140 However, another care leaver's story of UPA contrasted with the above:

I was then taken to the United Protestant Association's, Buena Vista (meaning Beautiful Vision) Boys' Home in Orange, in the Central West of New South Wales from February 1951 (Aged 11) till October 1954 (Aged 15). This home being run by a lovely Christian Couple who were like Mother and Father to us and are the reason I am, as I am today. (Sub 390)

2.141 In the following story of a UPA home a care leaver emphasised that her experience was not as bad as those in other homes. She also attributed adverse treatment to the 'value systems' of the time. Nevertheless, many negativities are described:

Children were beaten on a daily basis. I can remember being beaten for something that I might do wrong in the future...The beatings were not the worst things we had to endure. Some of the staff played mind/emotional games with the children that enhanced their feeling of power whilst demeaning the child...There was a time when the local Church of England

131 *Submission 30*, p.1 (United Protestant Association of NSW Limited).

Minister was brought in to administer beatings as the then sadistic matron 'Mrs Ireland' was unable or unwilling to do it herself...she still smacked girls' faces and beat their bottoms when the Minister was not around. (Sub 311)

Plymouth Brethren (ie, Silky Oaks)

2.142 In Brisbane, the Open Brethren home, Silky Oaks Haven operated from 1940 to 1989.¹³² The Committee received a few submissions about this home, but they contained very similar information about the abuse of children:

During my time at Silky Oaks Children's Haven, after arriving there shortly after my fifth birthday, the abuse started, this ranging from physical through to sexual and including mental abuse. (Sub 102)

During my time in Care in 'Silky Oaks', was 'HELL' and 'HORRIFIC'. Mentally, physically, sexually, spiritually, culturally, emotionally and educationally. And I still today carry deep scars emotionally and to a large degree all the above. If it wasn't for my only son I don't know what I'd have to live for!! (Conf Sub 45)

Hopewood

2.143 Various people raised issues about the children's institution, Hopewood, set up in country New South Wales during World War II by a wealthy businessman, Leslie Owen Bailey. A common theme about Hopewood centred on its role as a social experiment, which 'took the form of the gathering and rearing, side-by-side, 86 male and female babies born to unwed mothers during the war years. The 'official' line put by Mr Bailey's supporters was that his philanthropy extended to a desire for the welfare of the children and the promotion of a 'natural health' lifestyle.¹³³

2.144 Contrary to the positive publicity on Hopewood of its founder, the Committee received other views. In writing about its *modus operandi* and negative impact on her mother (who had lived there as a child), one person attributed her mother's psychological damage and unhappiness, to life at Hopewood:

I grew up on stories of 'Hopewood' and knew the despair my mother felt from her experiences there....His [Bailey's] stance on gathering quantitative data from the Hopewood experiment via his subjects tells us very little other than the fact that the children were physiologically well kept (although this is a contested point by a number of children themselves). The Hopewood experiment, rather than being a philanthropic activity for a wealthy businessman, was an attempt by Bailey to eugenically improve a selected group of children. Bailey intended to use the data gathered from his experiment as a model for the eugenic engineering of the Australian population as a whole, as a defence against the perceived external, non-

132 *Missing Pieces*, p.84.

133 *Submission 337*, p.3.

European threat... The children of the Hopewood experiment were subjects. Their utility lay in the fact that they were able to provide the quantitative data necessary to prove Bailey's hypothesis and contribute to the development of 'scientific' knowledge. As individuals, they had become objectified, individuals made into objects of enquiry. (Sub 337)

2.145 Another former Hopewood care leaver expressed similar negative sentiments about Hopewood and its unconventional patterns of children's care, including attendance at three different schools each year, an inadequate diet, and sexual abuse.¹³⁴

Barnardos Australia

2.146 Since the 1920s, the child welfare agency, Barnardos, has operated in Australia and had over 30,000 children in its care.¹³⁵ Barnardos initially sent children to Western Australia's Fairbridge Farm School. In 1929, it established a model farm school at Mowbray Park, near Picton (New South Wales), based on the cottage principle. Boys were trained as farm labourers, the girls as domestic servants.¹³⁶

2.147 The Committee received limited information about Barnardos homes for children. However, it was advised of situations regarding sexual abuse of children. Dr Coldrey submitted details of a homosexual/paedophile ring which had operated in the 1950s at Barnardos Home, Picton. According to Dr Coldrey such events seemed to originate from sexual liaisons formed between some Barnardos teenagers en route to Australia from England and members of the ship's crew. Events escalated when a member of a Sydney homosexual ring was employed at Mowbray Park and introduced more lads to a paedophile circle. The story attracted high-profile media attention in *The Truth* newspaper, was investigated and various men were charged and sentenced for sex offences relating to former Barnardos pupils.¹³⁷ Barnardos itself submitted details of allegations made in the 1980s of sexual abuse of children from the 1960s in one its group homes. A man was charged, tried and goaled. The organisation offered counselling to ex-clients when it became aware of allegations.¹³⁸

2.148 A care leaver provided her account of some memories of Barnardos:

My sister and I then went to Dr Barnardo's Home, in Keiraville, Wollongong, in January 1964... Few incidents, although I remember being caught smoking along with older children – I must have been only about 6 years old. My sister tells me the 'carers' had a distinct interest in ensuring that our vaginas were scrupulously clean, other than that, I remember nothing. (Sub 418)

134 *Submission* 93, pp.2-3.

135 *Submission* 37, p.1 (Barnardos Australia).

136 *Lost Innocents*, p.48.

137 *Submission* 40, pp.47-49 (Dr Coldrey).

138 *Submission* 37, p.3 (Barnardos Australia).

Government organisations

2.149 As with non-government institutions, some of the government receiving homes, orphanages and juvenile justice centres for children and young people cited in submissions and evidence, have closed or continued under different names or modes of operation.

New South Wales

2.150 New South Wales Government homes have included homes for pre-school children as well as the receiving homes, Bidura and Royleston in Glebe, from which children were transferred to other institutions. Other boys' homes included Turner and Suttor Cottages, Mittagong, and the Berry Training Farm School.¹³⁹

2.151 Often an institution's 'official description' would be at variance with a care leaver's views. Royleston boys' home was described in a government publication as very comfortable, temporary accommodation for boys, in an attractive old house with many interesting features.¹⁴⁰ However, more than one care leaver had a contrary view:

...1953, I was two years old. My recollections of Royleston seem to be much later, around five or six...Royleston was a terrible place to find yourself, at any age...As a child, under care at Royleston, I felt the heavy hand of adult men, men employed to care for us...when they weren't happy, we suffered...Over time this treatment developed your sense of hopelessness, worthlessness, and aloneness. At times even the good guys had a heavy hand. (Sub 321)

2.152 Lynwood Hall for girls at Guildford, was said to be set in 'one of Sydney's most graceful old homes', where the educational objectives focused on English, speech, appreciation of the beauty of language and letter writing.¹⁴¹

2.153 The Committee received substantial information on Lynwood Hall, much of it extremely negative. This care leaver submitted a story that is generally supportive of the home though she did express reservations, including about its lack of homeliness:

I went there [Lynwood] around 1942 till late 1945 or early 1946. Contrary to the residents of later years (from reading the letters in CLAN magazine), we had it good...Yes we got punished when naughty, & put in clink when bad & believe me I did my fair share of punishment & clink. No one to my knowledge ever got a beating – punishment was scrubbing the dining room floor & polishing the main hall, we didn't have carpet & sometimes we had to stand in the hall barefooted in the winter & it was very cold...What was

139 McLean D, *Children in need: an account of the administration and functions of the Child Welfare Department, New South Wales, Australia: with an examination of the principles involved in helping deprived and wayward children*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1956, pp.36-48.

140 McLean 1956, p.39.

141 McLean 1956, p.45.

really missing was a homely atmosphere, cuddles when upset & very little if any TLC...We were taken to Guildford shopping once a month, given money to spend, we were also taken to Auburn & Granville swimming pool in summer...when the war ended...the gardeners built us a huge bonfire & we were allowed to raid the kitchen for pots & pans to belt together to make a loud noise to celebrate & no-one got into trouble...things were different to what a lot of residents of later years had to put up with. (Sub 402)

2.154 However, the following excerpts are indicative of stories about the Lynwood Hall of later years, which present it in a very different light to the above:

I was sent to Lynwood Hall...Miss Davies and I had a personality conflict – that leads to me being locked in clink (an isolation cell approx 3ft by 6ft) sometimes for weeks. One time in particular I had been locked in isolation for answering back. (Sub344)

After this I went to Lynwood Hall...I was there for three years...this place it was locked up at all times and run by Miss Davies...There was no staff apart from the supervisors and teachers as we did everything. If the girls cooking messed up we still had to eat it no matter how terrible it tasted...Punishments here were varied but included scrubbing bathroom floors with a toothbrush, hand polishing wooden floors and being locked up in a room about the size of a walk in pantry with no light and nothing to do for hours...you were reminded that you were wicked and worthless. (Sub 352)

A little while ago I met a woman who I was in the home with. She told me I was never violent as a child, the violence was done to me. The woman who ran Lynwood Hall – I was her punching bag. Every time I'd turn around she would smash me in the mouth with her keys. (Sub 394)

2.155 Mt Penang Training School for Boys at Gosford catered for boys aged 14-16 years, who were committed by a Court. It was said to be 'open' and was divided into a main section with dormitories as well as a privileged section.¹⁴² Information about life at Mt Penang included the following excerpt:

Ben was also charged with the theft of a pushbike and he received what he said was a General Committal...Ben was placed in what he said was known as the Gosford Boys Home [Mount Penang]...He spoke of the complete lack of proper follow up care by the Welfare Department in those days, there being no interest in how he was coping either at school or in the family home. (Sub 329)

2.156 The Tamworth Institution for Boys was a closed institution. It had stricter discipline than Mount Penang, only a small number of inmates (rarely older than 16 years), individualised training, no opportunities to abscond, discipline similar to naval standards and punishments for a wide variety of behavioural misdemeanours.¹⁴³

142 McLean 1956, p.28.

143 McLean 1956, pp.143-144.

2.157 Some stark outlines of the Tamworth Institution were put to the Committee:

Tamworth was set up in 1947 to counter the large-scale absconding that had occurred in the early 1940s from Gosford...this was an effort to create a place of terror, if you like, to stop boys absconding from Gosford. Tamworth was an old colonial prison. It had cells and you could still see the place at the end of the cell block where people had been hanged. No visitors were allowed. Talking was allowed for only one hour per day...Boys were confined in cells. They slept on the floor on coir mats...in both summer and winter in Tamworth. They were under continual surveillance and they were punished for the slightest infringement of rules – usually by 24 hours isolated detention.¹⁴⁴

2.158 A care leaver who spent time at the Tamworth Institution described it thus:

Ben likened the conditions at the Tamworth Boys Home to the conditions experienced by prisoners of war in the Changi prison camp in WWII...as the most unbelievably cruel, sick and sad place...It was staffed by mainly ex soldiers...The boys had to look ahead at all times at a point on the ground about three feet in front of themselves. Any glancing sideways or looking up was met with punishment...There were also in place rules as to how a boy had to sleep...At night...if you should have made the mistake of being snuggled completely under your blankets then a fire hose was pushed through the peephole and the boy and his bedding were soaked. (Sub 329)

2.159 In 1866, Sydney's Parramatta Girls' Industrial School was set up and until the 1980s was the main place for girls. It became renowned for extreme cruelty, was the subject of many inquiries which were scathing of its activities and achieved notoriety in the 1960s when many of the girls rioted against its conditions.

2.160 According to evidence, girls were judged and treated very badly:

...girls were treated far worse than boys...it was because of entrenched Victorian attitudes to fallen women and the view that girls were inherently more difficult to reform than boys. Those attitudes you can see in statements by Henry Parkes...and by a succession of people who were involved in the child welfare systems right up to the 1950s.¹⁴⁵

2.161 Girls were discriminated against including with sentencing and the extensive use of isolated detention and segregation.¹⁴⁶ Often young women were punished even though they had been the victims of serious crime. As the entry books to the Parramatta Industrial School show, girls who were raped or the victims of incest often found themselves committed to the institution, while the perpetrators remained free.¹⁴⁷

144 *Committee Hansard* 3.2.04, p.111 (Mr Quinn).

145 *Committee Hansard* 3.2.04, p.109 (Mr Quinn).

146 *Committee Hansard* 3.2.04, p.110 (Mr Quinn).

147 Van Krieken, *Children and the state*, Unwin & Allen, North Sydney, 1991, p.93.

The Committee received many stories about the cruelty and harshness at the Parramatta Training School for Girls as this 14-year-old girl's experience shows:

I was brought down in the train from Lismore with a handcuff around my ankle and a blanket put over me so that the other people in the train couldn't see the handcuffs. When I got to Parramatta I was told that they would break my spirit at that time I didn't know what they meant...a Mr Gordon punched me in the face several times, my nose bled I was made to scrub large areas of cement with a toothbrush even in the middle of winter with nothing under my knees and my knees used to bleed and some times I would pass out with exhaustion...I stayed in Parramatta for 4 years in that time I was sent to Hay NSW which was like a horror camp. (Sub 39)

2.162 The following excerpts are further evidence of the negativities of Parramatta:

I did not know what cruelty was like until I went into Parramatta Girls Home. I still do not understand exactly why I was sent to the home. I was no more than 16 years of age, an innocent child with a whole life ahead of me. Nevertheless regardless of what the reason no child should have endured the neglect, the cruelty, the brutality, malice and immorality that were shown by many of the staff to many of the girls in the home...From the day I entered the home I did not realise that my life would never be the same again, that my childhood would be taken from me. (Sub 110)

My mother never recovered from what she'd been through as a child in 'that dreadful place', called Parramatta Girls' Home. She blamed herself for what she'd been through, for being Aboriginal, and for losing me. Is it any wonder she wasn't able to bond with her subsequent children, and with the one she'd been forced to give up? (Sub 154)

I was involved in the Parramatta riots...Myself and other girls were the first to get on the roof at Parramatta which was to escape the brutal bashing we knew we would get for leaving the laundry. Mr Johnson was then in charge, he was a brutal man and within that week I had seen him bash and kick a girl that he had been molesting to try and induce a miscarriage...we tried to escape and because we couldn't make it to the gate the other alternative was to go to the schoolhouse roof. Johnson was called and we had our audience...I knew that I would be flogged but because I was on the roof I decided to out him and verbally screamed that I knew what he was doing to Barbara...it was a secret that everyone knew about but no one spoke about because of fear of this man. (Sub 250)

2.163 In New South Wales, a girls' institution at Hay replicating the Tamworth institution was set up in a former colonial prison to deal with the 'rebellious' girls from Parramatta after the 1961 riots.¹⁴⁸ A consistent theme about Hay was that girls were drugged when taken there, made to scrub paint work off walls and undertake tasks that were beyond their capacities and were deprived of food and subjected to many harsh

punishments. Recounting her involvement in the riots at the Parramatta girls' institution, a care leaver told of her transport and entry to Hay:

...three males came to my cell...they forcibly held me down in my cell and poured the Largactil down my neck I fought as much as I could...I was drugged and didn't know what I was doing...they handcuffed me to the seat in the train...I woke up at Junee Station...I needed help to be placed into the van...I was taken to the cell block...It was dirty and looked like it hadn't been lived in for years. The cell doors had peep holes in them...with big bolts that would lock the doors. I was given a bucket, a roll of toilet paper, bedding and a night dress. I was placed in the cell with a small table and wooden seat and a single iron bed and mattress on the floor. I was told to put the bed together and make it and I was told to stand at attention facing the door with my eyes down...we were told to sleep facing the door. If we turned over we were woken and told to stand for half an hour...For nine months I never slept a whole night without being woken up...We were treated like wharfie labourers and remember I was fourteen years...We had to dig up the old footpath that was four foot under the sand, sift the dirt...dig it over and over and dig truckloads of topsoil into it, mix cement, cement the paths together. (Sub 250)

2.164 Many other care leavers had equally horrific stories of Hay, as the following excerpts show:

I was...escorted handcuffed put on a train and taken to Hay Institution...more of a mental concentration camp than a reform school. There was no talking and eyes down, marching and having to raise your arm to report or report back. 10 minutes in the morning and 10 mins in the afternoon we could sit together and talk and raise our eyes but we had to be very careful what we talked about. At one meal time I was served Lambs Fry which made me gag and dry reach, I vomited on the plate. I was then served the same Lambs Fry for the next 3 meals until I ate it. I did not eat it and was severely punished and was given extra time at Hay. (Conf Sub 111)

I was also given Largactil before I was sent to Hay, a bigger dose than I was normally given at PGH...it knocked me out, but I vaguely remember being put in a van and driven to Hay...My first day at Hay...I couldn't eat or drink, they gave me a sandwich and weak milky coffee, they kept giving me the same sandwich and weak coffee to eat, until I ate it...The first couple of days at Hay I was scrubbing paint off walls in a cell. I had to do this all day for a few days...Every morning we had to turn our mattresses, if it was not done, you got half a meal. We had a bucket for toileting in our cell. And 4 squares of toilet paper...During your periods, you had to show your pad to get another one...It was a prison for little girls. (Conf Sub 137)

2.165 Situated at Thornleigh, the State-run home, Ormond, was established to provide short-term residential care for older children and young people who were state wards or in departmental care. Until 1976, Ormond was a girls' training school. From

1976 until 1982 it was a co-educational school for truants and in later times operated in various ways including as a secure unit for young offenders.¹⁴⁹

2.166 The Committee received submissions about life at Ormond, including:

I was about eleven and a half when I ended up in Ormond. Ormond was a regimental place. I was molested there, my memories are of physical abuse. We were still caned and beaten and my hair was cut off and I got a number...I got out of Ormond at 14, I was taught nothing. I knew how to iron and sew but I had no outside social skills, I had low self esteem. (Conf Sub 115)

2.167 Yet, another person who had experienced abuse and very harsh conditions at Parramatta Girls' Home, found Thornleigh to be fair:

From Parramatta I was sent to Thornleigh. A lovely place I had a fair go there. (Sub 377)

Victoria

2.168 In Victoria, from the 1940s many children admitted to State care were 'processed' via Turana in Parkville¹⁵⁰ and sent to other institutions. In the 1950s, because of increased numbers coming into care, the State established institutions such as Winlaton for girls and Allambie for both genders.¹⁵¹ Until 1955, reception care was provided only at the departmental 'depot' at Royal Park (later known as Turana).

2.169 The following care leavers provided their perspectives on time spent at Melbourne's Royal Park institution, all of which painted a gloomy picture:

Royal Park children's home is a batch of memories I would rather not have and most of them are painful to recall – however some of them are: Being severely beaten for going up to the crèche area to visit my brother David...made to go without food for two days at a time on numerous occasions for various 'offences' such as being late for assembly...I do have one specific fond memory and that was being allowed to dress in 'new' clothes and spending the whole day with my brother and we spoke to Santa on the phone (I still possess a photo of this occasion). (Sub 379)

I was made a state ward at the age of eleven and was placed in Turana Boys home Melbourne (Victoria) where I was abused physically and mentally on a regular basis. I remained at Turana for approximately six months...while at Turana I suffered regular bashings from other older boys for no other reason than they didn't like me. We ate reasonably well, except for when being put on punishment for trivial things. (Sub 268)

149 Community Services Commission, *The Ormond Centre – a complaint investigation into institutional care of children*, April 1999, p.4.

150 Prior to the 1950s Turana was known as the Department of Children's Welfare and Reformatory Schools Receiving Depot for Boys and Girls – Submission 207, p.4 (Ms Gaffney).

151 *Submission 207*, pp.4-6 (Ms Gaffney).

I was 8¼ years old...23/3/38 I was made a Ward of the State in Victoria and admitted to Royal Park Children's Home. It was a very traumatic experience being locked in an isolation room for the first week. All in one day I had lost my mother, brothers and my freedom. My sister and I cried and cried and cried. The nurses were too busy to sit and comfort, or talk to us. When we heard the key in the lock we weren't told why we had been locked in the wired in sleepout. (Sub 413)

2.170 Winlaton was also the subject of horrendous stories:

I had issues with my step-father and ended up made a ward of state for being 'exposed to moral danger' and was sent to Wimberra Remand Section of Winlaton. I was in a room on my own, being pregnant...That afternoon I met Ms Somerset, the deputy head of Winlaton. She lined all the girls up in the corridor and proceeded to belt them with her large bunch of keys and hands. She took one girl by her hair to the toilet pushed her head down and flushed...dragged me out by my hair and when I told her about the scrubber, she kept punching my face and head. She finally pulled my head up by my hair and I laughed. Why I don't know nerves I guess. That sent Somerset ballistic screaming and dragging me by my hair over 100 metres to Winlaton. Where I get another belting, one of very many to come. Why I didn't lose my baby, I've no idea. Life in Winlaton was rough and scary. (Conf Sub 94)

2.171 However, there were also positive stories about Turana:

Royal Park Boys Home (Turana) run by State officers saw no acts of physical or sexual abuse. We boys were well fed, schooled & recreated with daily gym & weekly movies by admirable staff whose ethics were exemplary. Conditions at Turana were so good that I cannot recall one instance of corporal punishment. (Sub 210)

Queensland

2.172 Established in 1959 as a remand, assessment and treatment centre for boys, Brisbane's Wilson Youth Hospital received its first intake in July 1961. In 1971 a similar centre for girls was built to replace Karalla House.¹⁵² Stories of abuse of young people in these homes emerged in the Forde Report, including those relating to corporal punishment, solitary confinement, physical abuse and lack of educational opportunities. While the boys' section was said to be akin to a training school, the girls' section has been described as running on a 'medical model'.¹⁵³

2.173 Recalling the 1970s at the Wilson Youth Hospital (by which time it housed boys and girls), one of its former chaplains told the Committee:

152 Initially known as Moreton House, Karrala House was set up in 1963 as a Training Home for Girls at the Ipswich Mental Hospital – Forde Report 1999, p.149.

153 Forde Report 1999, pp.151-154.

Probably most of the girls who went in there had not committed a criminal offence at all. They were running away from violence – physical, sexual and emotional violence. Many of the boys...were there for criminal offences. Many of them were minor criminal offences...one lad who had stolen \$5 and bought a packet of chips. They actually got the change back but he was processed through the Children's Court and placed under a care and control order.¹⁵⁴

2.174 In Queensland, Westbrook was established as the Reformatory School for Boys in 1900, later undergoing various name changes, including Westbrook Youth Centre (1987). Many shocking stories about treatment of young people at Westbrook have been told over the years and it has often been depicted as Queensland's most feared correctional centre for boys.¹⁵⁵ The Committee received many negative Westbrook stories, including the following:

Just before I turned 12 years old I was sentenced to Westbrook Farm Home for Boys near Toowoomba in country Queensland. Although sentenced to only two years, I was forced to remain incarcerated for 5½ years...Westbrook was a state-run reformatory for boys...The warders...were sadistic and brutal. We were treated as slave labour under the harshest conditions, working from dawn to dusk each and every day in the fields, the quarry, the farm, the kitchens, bathrooms and laundries. I was deprived of proper schooling...Most of the warders used sadistic methods to control and punish us, but the worst of them was the superintendent. This man seemed to take great pleasure in humiliating us publicly, flogging us with his heavy leather belt while we knelt naked at his feet. (Sub 141)

Western Australia

2.175 In 1894 the Western Australian Government Receiving Depot for 'destitute children' was established. The role of what later became known as the Walcott Centre or Government Reception Home was to provide short-term care prior to placement in other institutions. Until the 1960s it was customary for all children coming into the State system to be placed in the Reception Home.¹⁵⁶

2.176 The following outline exemplifies this care leaver's experiences in a number of Western Australian homes:

As a child I'd been, along with 3 younger brothers, tossed between several homes in Western Australia...My brothers got to the Catholic home too...Salvation Army home, Cottesloe, Parkerville [Anglican], Methodist and there's other government receiving homes...Presbyterian at Byford...Now I'm 60. I was abused, bashed, starved, tortured, disregarded as either a child or human, ie, one instance due to bed-wetting due to STRESS. I was undressed. Naked. Stood on one dining area table so all the

154 *Committee Hansard* 12.3.04, p.44 (Father Dethlefs).

155 Forde Report 1999, pp.124-125.

156 *Submission* 55, pp.4-6 (Western Australian Department for Community Development)

children could jeer! I was 8 or 9 (Presbyterian). Parkerville Anglican children's potties were tipped on me to revive me. (Sub 363)

2.177 Contrasting his life in Cornwall, England, before coming to Australia, this person described Fairbridge Farm School in Western Australia, a far cry from happier days. His experiences included being bullied, having monotonous food, experiencing hard labour, being constantly hungry and having very few personal possessions:

[Of Fairbridge]...I have only memories of fear, anger and resentment. When I left Fairbridge, I had become an uncaring, selfish, fearful loner. I had been dehumanised...We were assigned...a cottage mother...More of a sadistic prison warder than a surrogate parent. Among her less endearing ways of showing her displeasure was the full fisted punch to the face. (Sub 375)

Experiences of various homes and orphanages

2.178 The following extract from a submission shows this person's wide experience of Queensland religious homes:

Silky Oaks, Wynnum [Plymouth Brethren]. At pre-school age I got a very bad dose of the mumps my ears ached so badly my mouth was swollen...for this I was punished. I was placed in a wooden crate and taken down to the cow shed there I stayed until morning...they forgot me.

WR Black Home, Graceville [Presbyterian]. The matron was a cruel woman, I had my vomit shovelled back into my mouth not only was I swallowing it I was also swallowing my blood as the matron scrapped my gums with the spoon making sure I ate the lot.

Nudgee Orphanage [Catholic]. The lack of footwear and warm clothes in winter and of course the slop we all had to eat.

The Salvation Army Home, Toowong. This was the most barbaric home I was in...I spent many nights and weeks and months locked in solitary confinement...I went mad raging like a wild animal.

Holy Cross, Woolloowin [Catholic]. Locked in a broom closet...pitch dark and sleeping on a dirty mattress on the floor which I shared with the mice.

Mitchelton Good Shepherd Home [Catholic]. The food was so bad it was plain slop. The hygiene was appalling. (Sub 120)

2.179 Some people's experiences entailed a combination of government and non-government homes including training schools and centres for people with a disability:

I was born on 28th November 1941 in Sandringham, Victoria. I spent the first two years at home with my parents. Then I went into the first of the institutions. I was in: Royal Park Receiving Home; St Joseph's Home, Carlton; St Anthony's Home, Kew; St Joseph's Babies' Home, Broadmeadows; St Joseph's Boys' Home, Surrey Hills; St Augustine's Boys' Home, Geelong; Royal Park Receiving Home; Turana, Melbourne; Bendigo Training Centre; Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne. (Sub 283)

I have been placed in a number of ward establishments due to being a neglected child and mental homes due to mental abuse and physical abuse. The first home was Royleston, state ward home Glebe at the age of four years of age...1962...in 1965 I spent time in Royleston. North Ryde Psychiatric Centre children's unit, in the year 1967...I was returned to Royleston, Glebe – November 1967. State ward home Mittagong, Turner or Suttor Cottage, year 1968. Rydalmere Hospital, in adult ward 21/01/70...Yasmar Boys' Shelter 8/4/70...Toombong special central school, year 1970 – Mittagong training school Mackeller. Yasmar Ashfield NSW boys' shelter...Returned to Royleston...8/9/71...Berry Training Farm...1971...Callan Park and Gladesville Psychiatric hospitals 15/1/73. Metropolitan Boys' Shelter 26/2/74. (Sub 318)

I spent time...with my twin sister Sandra in 5 different orphanages and children's homes around Sydney, NSW for the first 14 years of my life. They are...St Anthony's Foundling Home, Croyden 1950-1962; St Joseph's Home, Croyden 1952-1956; Narrellan Girls' Home 1956-1957; St Martha's Girls' Home, Leichhardt 1957-1963; St Anne's Orphanage, Liverpool 1963-1964. (Sub 374)

I was placed in departmental care at the age of 7½ and spent the next 10 years in 8 different homes...Thornby Lodge, Baulkham Hills; Protestant Federation Girls' Home, Dulwich Hill; Palister Girls' Home, Greenwich; Bidura Orphanage, Glebe; Glebe Shelter, Glebe; Minda Remand Centre; Ormond Institution, Thornleigh; Parramatta Girls' Institution at Parramatta. During this time I was bashed, had my face cut, locked in a broom cupboard, in...solitary confinement, the dungeon, told I wasn't worth the dirt under their feet, dumb, an idiot, not worth the clothes on my back. (Conf Sub 119)

Comparisons of homes with jails

2.180 The most damning comment on certain institutions came from a few care leavers who compared the conditions in children's homes unfavourably with that of jails, the latter in some instances considered to be more endurable:

Westbrook was another hell hole but much worse than Neerkol no human beings should ever have to go through what I went through in Westbrook. There were guards screwing boys, bashing, threats, older boys standing over younger boys, older boys used by guards to hold other boys down while, they, the guard, bashed them and boys taken out of the dormitory at night to be used by the guards or the older boys for their sexual pleasure. I would lie awake listening to other boys sobbing in misery and I cried myself to sleep every night in sickening fear...After the hell holes of Neerkol and Westbrook I found Boggo Road a paradise. (Sub 217)

2.181 One care leaver made similar comparisons about a Melbourne Salvation Army home and Pentridge Jail:

Turana was pretty scary at first. I was a truant among petty criminals. It was hard at first, but I adapted...Then came the nightmare. In 1958 I was sent to Bayswater, another home run by the Salvos...We were bashed savagely,

not by officers, but by a large group of trustee prisoners. From then on it was nightmare after nightmare. We were then belted on a regular basis by the warders. They were savage beatings. Boots and all. Time and time again...Even being in Pentridge at the age of seventeen was bad but no where near as bad as Bayswater. Even H division wasn't as bad. (Sub 148)

2.182 As well, this care leaver compared life at a Salvation Army home unfavourably with later experiences at a South Australian 'reform school' for boys:

I was placed in the Salvation Army Boys Home...Mt Barker...about mid-1967. I was 10½ years old...I only spent 18 months in this place, but the legacy from the physical, emotional and psychological abuse, I took with me from there has basically destroyed my life...Strappings and canings came thick and fast, sometimes deserved, sometimes not...We received some pretty rough treatment in the remand home, this scared me when I was sentenced to the reform school...Reform school was nothing like I perceived it to be...The worst punishment was standing at attention for a couple of hours. The staff were more interested in finding the person and building on it...You had the opportunity to work your way up through the ranks...becoming a captain of a dorm, then an honour boy...If the Salvos had the same kind of program, I wouldn't have the problems I have today. (Sub 291)

Experiences of other homes

2.183 Amid the many negative stories, the Committee received positive ones:

Then when I was 13 I was sent to St Augustine's in Geelong and made a ward of the state...I spent time in Baltara Boys' Home and then a hostel run by Tally-ho for a couple of years. I was shown how adults should be and that not all are bad. I learnt a lot and met a lot of boys just like myself. (Sub 342)

2.184 Irrespective of a home's size or configuration, a common theme was the overlay of a harsh unloving environment. One care leaver described the small institution that was her 'home', run by two women, more as a commercial enterprise, principally because they had no men to support them financially:

The lives of these women...were shaped by the deaths or desertion of men, demonstrating the importance in these years of having a male breadwinner and the limited life and work choices if none were available. For my 'foster mothers' the sandwich shop had been hard work...hence the decision to set up a 'Children's Holiday Home', as they called it...There were also four other long-term inmates...We grew up together, but apart from my own sister, I never saw any of them again except for a chance meeting with one, years later...we lived under a totalitarian regime though obviously I would not have described it like this at the time...my sister and I and the other children – lived according to an iron-clad routine, in constant fear of doing the wrong thing and of the threatened (catastrophic) consequences of such transgressions...Materially we were very well cared for...It was an isolated and insular life...My feelings about the Home were complex. It was all that I knew and having in effect lost my parents, it represented security...I

depended so completely on the approval of this woman [the main carer] that I felt I must love her; I was also very afraid of her. She bound me to her by guilt, impressing on me how good she and her mother had been to save me from 'the gutter'. (Sub 63)

Conclusion

2.185 Much of the above information is indicative of material that the Committee received about Australia's children's institutions. It would not be surprising if stories of this ilk contrast markedly with what many everyday Australians would normally associate with children's institutions across the country, regardless of the time period or the type of operation.

2.186 Indeed, many publications and brochures have described institutions for the care of children, glowingly. For example, a 1956 New South Wales Child Welfare Department book provided a critique on various State institutions for children, describing the location of the Training School for Girls at Parramatta as 'a tree-lined lane, facing a sunken garden [with] a low stone wall which suggests an English village rather than busy Parramatta'.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, the Mt Penang Training School for Boys at Gosford is depicted as being in surrounds 'reminiscent of the beauties of England's Lake District'.¹⁵⁸ Unfortunately, such descriptions do not fit with those provided to the Committee about government and non-government homes.

2.187 Given the wide disparities between what is often put as the 'official line' about children's institutions and the reality, the Committee considers it vital that stories such as these presented are given prominence. The Committee considers that the information in this and other reports can serve as lessons in helping to prevent further bad treatment of children including those in some form of out-of-home care.

157 McLean 1956, p.153.

158 McLean 1956, p.129.