Witness Name: Ann Mary McVeigh, PhD

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1992 to 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF ANN MARY McVEIGH

I, Ann Mary McVeigh PhD will say as follows:-

1, I am a (part-time) employee of the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and in 1995 I submitted to the Queens University of Belfast a thesis entitled "A history of the child and juvenile migration schemes to Australia" for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I was awarded this degree and I have been invited to assist the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry by drawing on that thesis to give some background information relating to the origin and nature of child migration schemes from the United Kingdom, and in particular to Australia.

2. In order to prepare the thesis I carried out extensive research at a number of Institutions, including the Royal Commonwealth Society Library, the Salvation Army Library, the Catholic Child Welfare Council (all in London), the Queen's University Library, Belfast, the Archive Department of the University of Liverpool, as well as at a number of other archive and library centres. I also carried out an extensive analysis of many publications that had a bearing on this topic. In this statement I will sometimes refer to the source of the information, but in general more detailed information can be found in my thesis and in the footnotes, appendices and bibliography. A copy of the thesis can be consulted at Queen's University on application. This statement is therefore an abbreviated version of the fuller treatment of this topic contained in my thesis,

to which reference should be made by those who wish to consider the matter in greater detail.

3. The practice of sending young unaccompanied minors abroad has a long and varied history. The Americas, and principally Canada, were for lengthy periods the favoured destination of children sent from the United Kingdom under various child and juvenile migration schemes. The very first contingent of young migrants was sent at the instigation of the Privy Council in London in the early years of the 17th century. The first party of children were sent out in the spring of 1619, and a second group arrived in 1620. The initiative for this came from the Privy Council in 1609 when it complained to the Lord Mayor of London that the "ills and plagues" of London were due to the great number of poor people living within the city walls. Although money was raised in 1609 for the purpose of shipping young people to Virginia, it was not until 1619 that the first party of children was sent.

4. Although London was the main supplier of young paupers to New England, other cities sent their excess children to other colonies, and by 1627 it was claimed that up to 1,500 children had been taken from the streets of London and other "divers places" and sent, some of them very reluctantly, to the New World. With the encouragement of various acts of Parliament young criminals were sent abroad, and transportation was an accepted way of dealing with felons of any age, but for those under nineteen, it was generally as a result of a commutation of the death sentence.

5. With the commencement of the American War of Independence in 1775 transportation ceased, but resumed in 1788 when Australia became the chief receiving area for convicts. Juveniles, some as young as nine, were sentenced to transportation for criminal offences, and many were condemned to serve time in a penal colony in Van Dieman's Land (later renamed Tasmania).

6. After the 1850s young offenders were no longer sent to the colonies. However, Victorian philanthropists saw the migration of children as a suitable way of

providing opportunities for a better life than they could achieve in the United Kingdom. In 1844 the Ragged School Union (RSU) was formed, and at that time the Earl of Shaftesbury became interested in this work. Already prominent in the field of child welfare, he was an ardent supporter of juvenile migration and helped to fund the immigration to Australia of the first of the Ragged School scholars, a party of nine "promising" boys. 150 young people were sent to South Australia in 1849, and a further 300 to Australia over the next two years. Those sent to Australia under the auspices of the RSU were boys and girls over the age of fourteen, who had proved themselves, by regular attendance at school, worthy of the faith placed on them. The RSU encouraged students to regard immigration as something to aspire to as a reward for hard work, and only the best scholars were selected. However, the discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria in 1851, and the unsettled conditions which usually accompanied gold rush fervour, led the RSU Immigration Committee to reconsidered their policy and to cease further migration to Australia.

7. Due to the Great Irish Famine of 1845-49, the Irish workhouses were severely overcrowded. One perceived solution to the problem of overcrowding was to send some suitable female inmates overseas. However, the scheme was not well-received in Australia because many of the workhouse girls did not have any training in domestic service or farm work, and many ended up working as prostitutes. There were protests against the "dregs" of the Irish workhouses being dumped on Australian society. The final group of Irish workhouse orphans left for Australia in April 1850, and during that period 4,114 girls were sent out by the Boards of Guardians: 2,253 girls to Sydney, 1,255 to Port Phillip and 606 to Adelaide.

8. Another scheme to encourage family settlement in Australia was the Family Colonization Loan Society founded by Caroline Chisholm in 1849. By the beginning of the Crimean War in 1854 it had helped over 11,000 people, the majority of them young women, to start a new life in Australia.

9. Throughout the remainder of the 19th century, large numbers of young people were assisted to immigrate, most of whom who went to the North Americas, particularly Canada. Immigration was again urged as the panacea for all social problems, particularly at times of economic depression. Canada remained the favourite destination for child migrants until as late as 1924, when the Bondfield Report recommended that it cease. Australia then started to increase in popularity. The export of British youngsters was seen as a means of expanding the empire.

10. In the early part of the 20th century a number of schemes were created by voluntary societies which flourished at that time. The Dreadnought Trust had started life in 1909 as a fundraising movement to provide a dreadnought battleship for the Royal Navy. However, as a result of a decision to maintain a defence fleet in Australian waters, the monies raised by public subscription were surplus to requirements, and it was eventually decided to establish a college in Australia in which young immigrants from Britain could be trained in Australian farming methods. Despite the harsh terms and conditions that applied to applicants, there was no shortage of volunteers, and in 1927 alone 865 young men between the ages of 15 and 21 accepted a place in the Dreadnought Farm School. From 1921, when operations recommenced after the WW1, to 1929, a total of 5,488 passed through its portals. However, it was a casualty of the Depression as young men found difficulty in obtaining farm work, and it failed to attract further students after the Australian government withdrew its offer of assisted passages for boys for farm work, and the scheme folded in 1938.

11. The Big Brother Movement (BBM) was founded by Robert Linton, an Australian, in 1925. Linton believed that Australia required "clean-living, well-mannered British boys with grit and determination". He decided that an organisation that would undertake to stand in *locus parentis* would overcome parental concerns and lead to an increase in youth migration. He enlisted the support of several influential citizens such as the Prime Minister of Australia and the Premier of New South Wales. The organisation was launched in

London on the 14th July 1925, and the first consignment of "Little Brothers" arrived in Australia in 1927. The BBM guaranteed to find employment and accommodation for each young man, and to be his legal guardian until the age of 21. The BBM differed from other organisations in that it also provided a surrogate "Big Brother" who would keep a fraternal eye on the youngster. As with the Dreadnought Trust, the aim was to introduce boys to employment as farm workers. In the first years of its existence between 1925 and 1931, it was responsible for introducing 1,926 boys into Australia before the onset of the Depression forced a halt to their activities. In 1939 a further 79 lads sailed when the BBM restarted its activities, but again the migrations had to be abandoned when the Second World War started.

12. The BBM re-established itself after WWII, and although finance was a major headache, it succeeded in becoming re-established and sent an average of 200 boys a year from 1947 until the 1970s. In October 1968, the United Kingdom decided to change the name of the Movement in Britain to "British Boys' Movement for Australia". However, changes in the Australian migration laws in 1972 meant that unaccompanied juveniles, whether with or without the backing of an agency, were no longer acceptable to the Australian government.

13. The Fairbridge Society was originally established as the Child Immigration Society in October 1909 but later renamed in honour of its founder, Kingsley Fairbridge. The Fairbridge Society had as its brief
"*To send children, not necessarily orphans, from the workhouses, the orphanages and the over-crowded city streets, to Australia*".
The children were not to be fostered out, but brought up in a farm school where they would be taught to be antipodean farmers and farmers wives.

14. Kingsley Fairbridge was born in South Africa in 1885, and later moved to Rhodesia. After a stay in England he decided that Great Britain had too great a population, whereas the population of Rhodesia was too meagre. Although he applied to the Rhodesian government for a grant of land on which to establish a farm training school for young British immigrants, his request was refused. It

was the opinion of the government that Rhodesia was too young a country and too underdeveloped itself to be part of an experimental training programme for young people. However, Fairbridge believed his idea was still good in principle, and ultimately it was decided to look for suitable property in Australia. Kingsley Fairbridge found a small farm near Perth in Western Australia that had been allowed to fall into disrepair by its previous owner. Aided by his wife he made the farm habitable, and the first party of 13 boys arrived in January 1913, followed by a further 22 in June. The onset of WWIprevented any further arrivals for several years. In 1921 enough monies were raised to enable the purchase of a better and larger farm three miles north west of Pinjarra, a small town approximately one hundred miles from Perth. In 1921, Dr. Barnardo's, an organisation that actively supported the Fairbridge ideals, sent 58 children to the farm school.

15. Although Kingsley Fairbridge died in 1924, the farm school he founded continued to grow, and in 1937 a second farm school was opened in New South Wales. By the outbreak of WWII the Fairbridge Society had been responsible for the migration of 1,202 children to Australia. When migration resumed in 1947, approximately 600 more unaccompanied child migrants passed through Fairbridge. The Society ceased catering solely for unaccompanied children in the 1950s, when it started schemes to allow a parent to leave children in the care of the farm school while the parents sought work and accommodation. However, as with all other migration societies, its work in this field ended in the 1950s. A non denominational organisation, its reputation was such that many other organisations, including local authorities, Church-based associations and various childrens societies, sent children in their care to Australia to be brought up on Fairbridge farms.

16. One of these was Dr. Barnardo's, a organisation that first sent children to Fremantle, Western Australia, in 1883. The official start to Barnardo's in Australia is considered to be 1921, when it bought premises in Sydney, New South Wales, as a "distributing" home in which children would remain only until suitable placements could be found for them. It opened several more homes

and training schools in Australia, and by 1960 there were nine Barnardos centres in Australia, with two receiving homes and seven farm homes, all in New South Wales.

17. The children and, where applicable, their parents, did not have to make any contribution to the expenses incurred in sending them abroad. Apart from the actual cost of passage, which was normally paid for by the Australian State or Federal governments, each child was kitted out with clothes, shoes and pocket money for the journey. From 1921 approximately 3,000 children immigrated to Australia under Dr. Barnardo's auspices, 500 of whom left Britain after 1947. Barnardo's sent the last group of migrant children to be sent to Australia, a party of nine, in 1967.

18. A number of Christian denominational bodies were also involved in encouraging and facilitating child migration. The National Children's Home (NCH) had its origins in Methodism. It was founded in 1869 and provided children with the opportunity to travel abroad to escape from what were described as "the scenes of their degradation". 49 children migrated to Canada in May, 1873, and by 1909, 2,177 youngsters had emigrated to North America.

19. Migration to Australia, although not organised as a policy by the home, was an option for those young people who expressed that preference. The first to go in 1882 was a 16 year old boy who had been admitted to the Home at the age of 7 in 1873. A steady trickle of boys and girls, around 40 in all, made their way to Australia and New Zealand until WWIintervened. Migration recommenced after WWIbut ceased due to the Depression in the early 1930s. When it resumed, Australia was the sole destination for the National Children's Home.

20. Although ambitious plans were made to send 200 children in the first year and a 100 a year thereafter, for some unknown reason the number of children sent by the NCH to Australia fell far short of these intentions, and it is known that only 91 children were sent between 1950 and 1954.

21. The Church of England Waifs and Strays Society was founded in 1881, and grew rapidly. In 1883 it changed its name to the Church of England Central Society for providing Homes for Waifs and Strays. It initially sent children to Canada. Apart from the Waifs and Strays, other Church of England agencies were concerned with emigration. All the agencies came under the umbrella of the Church of England Council of Empire Settlement, including the Waifs and Strays Society, in 1924, and a scheme for juvenile migration was established in Queensland in 1925. Within three years some 750 boys were helped to settle in that State, but the onset of the Depression, and the withdrawal of government grants, put an end to that scheme. After WWII migration was reintroduced by the Church of England Council, and between 1948 and 1953 over 200 child migrants were accommodated in the Church of England homes.

22. In common with most religious organisations, the Roman Catholic Church has a long tradition in both education and childcare. From the earliest times, Roman Catholic nuns were involved in the running of orphanages, in the care of distressed mothers, and in the training of young girls. Roman Catholic priests and brothers were prominent in the field of education, some fraternities were founded primarily as teaching orders, of which the Christian Brothers are probably the best known in Ireland. As well as those in holy orders of one form or another, some Roman Catholic lay people were involved in Church activities, particularly in regard to the care of children.

23. By the middle of the 19th century this resulted in a plethora of Roman Catholic homes, all working along similar lines, but without any central control. In 1901 an amalgamation of a number of the homes in and around London resulted in the formation of The Crusade of Rescue and Homes for Destitute Catholic Children (the Crusade of Rescue). It claimed

"That no Catholic children, really destitute or in danger with regard to their Faith and for whom no other provision could be made, would be refused admission to our homes".

This type of claim, with the substitution of the word "Catholic" for whichever denomination was appropriate, was common to all the religiously based childcare agencies.

24. Father Banns was appointed as the first administrator and secretary of the organisation in 1901. In 1919 he was succeeded by Fr (later Canon) Craven, and it was Canon Craven who initiated the Australian migration scheme. Fr Banns had been both president and treasurer of the Catholic Emigration Association, an organisation formed in October 1903 by the merger of the Canadian Catholic Emigration Society (Southwark) and the Catholic Emigrating Association (Liverpool), but this association limited itself to sending children to Catholic Homes in Canada.

25. In 1937 Canon Craven was approached by Brother Conlon, acting on behalf of the Christian Brothers in Western Australia, concerning the feasibility of sending youngsters from Roman Catholic homes in the United Kingdom to Christian Brothers' establishments in Australia. Following discussions with officials from the United Kingdom Dominions Office, and with members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, with the approval of Bishop Bernard Griffin, then auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham and later, as Cardinal Griffin, Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, it was agreed that Canon Craven should sign an agreement between the Dominions Office and the Catholic Emigration Association.

26. Under the terms of the agreement, Canon Craven was to be the general administrator. He was required to present quarterly accounts to the Dominions Office and annual accounts to the administrators of the Western Australia Homes. The new organisation, to be known as the Catholic Child Migration Scheme (Australia) officially came into existence in May 1938. Nazareth Houses throughout the United Kingdom were canvassed for boys between the ages of seven and twelve who would be interested in going to Australia.

27. The first group of 37 boys set sail on the SS Straithard on 8 July 1938, followed eight days later by a further 31 boys on the SS Otranto. *St. Peter's Net*, a Roman Catholic magazine, reported the occasion thus.

"For fifty years the Christian Brothers of Western Australia have been building up an organisation for poor boys that has now reached a state of excellence not excelled anywhere in the Empire. And it is to these up-to-date Religious of Western Australia that the young citizens of the Empire are now speeding. They will be trained for whatever trade they show most aptitude, and when fit to labour for themselves will be settled either on farms of their own, or set up in life as independent tradesmen."[1]

28. The boys went to one of the five Christian Brother schools in Western Australia, i.e., Subiaco, Castledare, Clontarf, Bindoon and Tardun. Preparation was also being made for young girls.

"It is our intention to send out girls as well as boys to Western Australia, and we have recently had the satisfaction of learning that Sisters of Nazareth have begun the erection of a Nazareth House in Geraldton, ... the object of which will be to prepare girls for a farming career. This new development is of the greatest importance. It will enable us to keep brothers and sisters in touch with each other, make it possible for girls to follow a career other than that of domestic service; and enable them to become useful wives to Catholic farmers."[2]

29. The Second World War put an end to emigration to Australia during the war years, but plans conceived during the twenties and thirties came to fruition in 1947. In that year, Brother Conlon revisited England to resurrect the child migration scheme, with the result that 226 children from the Catholic Child Rescue Society Homes went to Australia under the protection of the Catholic

[1] *St. Peter's Net*, Vol.18, 3 September 1938, page 69.
[2] Ibid, Vol.19, 3 September 1939, page 76.

Child Welfare Council. This, however, was not the only Roman Catholic agency promoting child migration. In a letter to Fr Stinson from the secretary of the CCWC, Canon Flint, in 1953 it was stated:

"It has been a muddled year and I want to put on record that the CCWC does not hold itself responsible for possible future inquiries concerning those children whose emigration it did not sponsor. It would appear that at least 114 children from England and Wales were dealt with directly by yourself without reference to this office".[3]

30. Although child migration, as so defined by the CCWC, ceased in 1956, by which time at least 930 children had migrated to Australia, juvenile migration still continued. A number of young men between the ages of 14 and 18 were recruited through Roman Catholic organisations (notably the Federal Catholic Immigration Committees). These usually came from family homes, rather than institutions, and went straight to Tardun, the agricultural training college of the Christian Brothers. Altogether, the number of young people who migrated to Australia under the aegis of Roman Catholic bodies amounted to over 1,000 between the years 1938 to 1966.

31. As mentioned earlier, many religious organisations and societies such as the Salvation Army, the YMCA, the YWCA, Quakers and the Church of Scotland were involved in overseas migration. For many years these institutions had facilitated, if not actively encouraged, the migration of their members. They gave help and advice to those thinking of settling in any of the Dominions, and letters of introduction, as well as sponsorships and nominations, flowed freely between the members in Britain and Australia. The organisations could be relied upon to help in every way possible, even to the extent of carrying advertisements in their newspapers.

[3] Letter dated 6/11/53 held in the archives of CCWC.

32. In the field of organised juvenile emigration, each religiously based organisation essentially replicated the work of the others, operating separate denominational homes, schools and training farms both in England and overseas. Young children were "transferred" between homes; and older children were trained in farm schools in Britain before continuing their education in Australia. These training schools, farms and orphanages also, without exception, catered for Australian born children.

33. For older youths who were ready to start work immediately, officers in the overseas branches arranged for employment, accommodation and supervision. Most of these organisations had been involved in organised juvenile migration from the early years of the 20th century, and, with the usual interruptions occasioned by the Depression and the Wars, continued their involvement up to the 1960s.

34. Child and juvenile schemes were revived after the Second World War, as they had been after the First World War, because many of the arguments advanced in their favour seemed as relevant in the post-War era as they had been in the 19th century. New arguments were added, and old ones given a fresh lease of life.

35. From the inception of the concept of child and juvenile migration, the arguments of those who supported these schemes embraced both concern for the child and concern for the country. Another important consideration was the religious and moral welfare of the young person, and the danger to which it would be exposed if it should remain either in its own, unsatisfactory, home or in an institution. There was also a belief that the British Isles were over-populated, while the colonies were under-populated. A similar but separate argument, was that there was a need to build up and maintain the Empire, and to ensure that the predominant population of the Empire was of white, preferably Protestant, British stock.

36. Of all the arguments in favour of these schemes, however, the most enduring was the financial argument. By sending selected youngsters to the colonies, where they would have a chance to "better themselves", more room was made available in the overcrowded workhouses, orphanages and homes. Paying the fare to Australia would be money well spent. All the major child and juvenile migration agencies used some variant of this economic argument. At its simplest, it was reckoned that it was cheaper to send a youngster abroad than to keep it for several years in a workhouse. The same economic arguments were advanced by all the advocates of juvenile and child migration, some in more detail than others. If not exactly in total agreement as to how migration should be carried out, the main points were not in contention.

37. The youth or child otherwise unprovided for, on condition he is in good health, should be sent to the colonies. The preferred employment would be farm work. This would relieve unemployment at home, while at the same time increasing the labour force of the receiving country. More importantly, the youngsters would become producers of primary goods and raw material. Britain would be able to buy, at preferential rates, the products of the Australian farms, rather than buying from foreign powers. Wealth and capital would stay within the Empire, and the threat of a foreign power to restrict or withdraw essential raw materials would be minimised. The new Australians would be customers for British manufactured goods, helping to bolster industrial production at home.

38. An influential component of the argument for sending children abroad was the desire to supply enough young people, of the right type, to enable Australia to attain its full potential. The "right type" was, by common assent, white, Anglo-Saxon and preferably Protestant. Although Australia's White Australia Policy had been in force in most of the states since the 1870s, and in all of them by the 1890s, the concept of racial purity only gained support amongst Europeans in the early years of the 20th century.

39. A further consideration was the belief that sending children to the healthy outdoor life in the fresh air and sunshine of Australia, far away from the slums, from evil influences and from institutional life, would do more for a poor child than all the charity offered at home. Children could become "strong, sturdy and efficient citizens able to play their part in developing the vast resources of Australia".[4] Not only the physical health, but the moral welfare of a child was considered. It was necessary to remove the child from the evil influences of "degenerate" parents and guardians, as well as preventing them from falling into crime and removing them as far as possible from "vicious and immoral" influences.

40. Some people considered the risk of drifting into the wrong religion even more damaging. Most religious denominations had their own homes, each replicating the work of the other persuasions. Each, however, jealously guarded its own sphere. Should a child be in danger of being brought up in the "wrong" religion, it was considered righteous practice to send it out of the country to people who would bring it up in the "right" faith.

41. The "rescue" of disadvantaged young people was a constant theme with all the child migration societies. Whilst only one actually incorporated the term into their societies title,[5] it was used extensively in the literature of other societies. Most of the societies that cared for children published annual reports, as well as pamphlets appealing for funds. These pamphlets usually incorporated images of the "before and after" type. As well as the established childcare societies, during the period 1907 to 1926 there was a wealth of literature from private individuals and newly founded organisations, urging child and juvenile migration within the Empire. *The Times* had a long-running debate on the subject in its letter page between 1907 and 1913, while the *Daily Express* ran a competition giving free passages to Australia as the prize.

---

[4] Arthur Lawley, in the epilogue to *The Autobiography of Kingsley Fairbridge*, (London, 1934), page 179.
[5] Crusade of Rescue and Homes for Destitute Catholic Children.

42. With the Empire Settlement Act in 1922 the governments of Great Britain and Australia provided a statutory framework to encourage juvenile and adult migration. Young boys who wished to follow a career in farm work, and young girls trained for domestic service, were able to take advantage of generous grants. An outline of the arrangements made between the Commonwealth and State Governments to regulate immigration into Australia can be found in the Australia Year Book, number 22 at page 929. The grants were offered by both the British and Australian State Governments but with the onset of the Depression the grants were curtailed. In 1930 the assisted passages concessions were limited to

"boys for farm work, young women for household employment, and to nominees, mainly wives and children of husbands in Australia."[6]

Two years later even these concessions were revoked. Although assisted migration resumed in 1938, it was curtailed again in 1939 due to the threatening hostilities, and assisted passages were not reintroduced until 1947.

43. Before considering the manner in which the child migration schemes were reinstated and expanded with the end of WWII, it is appropriate to refer to the comments on child migration contained in the *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, chaired by Miss Myra Curtis, CBE, which reported in 1946. The Curtis committee was established to investigate the various options available for the care of children in need in Britain because it was recognised in the closing years of WWII that there would be a dramatic increase in the numbers of orphaned, abandoned and homeless children. It had become clear that the entire childcare system in Britain was in need of an overhaul, and the aftermath of war was an opportune time for it.

[6] Australia Year Book, 25, 1932, page 495.

44. Although primarily concerned with the childcare system in Britain, the Curtis committee did give consideration to child migration. Given the many difficulties and experiences that child migrants have reported, this passage is worthy of quotation.

"We understand that organisations for sending deprived children to the Dominions may resume their work in the near future. We have heard evidence as to the arrangements for selecting children for migration, and it is clear to us that their effect is that this opportunity is given only to children of fine physique and good mental equipment. These are precisely the children for whom satisfactory openings could be found in this country, and in present day conditions this particular method of providing for the deprived child is not one that we especially wish to see extended. On the other hand, a fresh start in a new country may, for children with an unfortunate background, be the foundation of a happy life, and the opportunity should therefore in our view remain open to suitable children who express a desire for it. We should however, strongly deprecate their setting out in life under less thorough care and supervision than they would have at home, and we recommend that it should be a condition of consenting to the emigration of deprived children that the arrangements made by the Government of the receiving country for their welfare and aftercare should be comparable to those we have proposed in this report for deprived children remaining in this country."[7]

The report further stipulated:

"The emigration of deprived children should be subject to the condition that the receiving Government makes arrangements for their welfare and supervision comparable to those recommended in this report,"[8]

[7] Page 193.
[8] Page 182.

45. In the period from 1930 to the early 1950s, with travel between the two countries taking much longer than it does today, and telephone links uncertain, written reports were, perforce, the predominant means of contact. The parent agencies in Britain relied heavily on these despatches for information on what was happening in their homes and schools in Australia. Writing the reports was normally the duty of the principal or head of the establishment. He or she would be required to send regular bulletins on all aspects of the home to interested parties back in Britain. Yet if someone was systematically abusing a position of trust, or condoning abuses by other staff members, they were unlikely to state so in their report. Therefore, while a certain degree of trust had to be placed in the principal of the home or school in question, a safeguard was instituted in the form of periodic inspections by Australian State Child Welfare officials.

46. Prior to 1935 there were few investigations into conditions for the child migrants. There were various investigations into child migration such as the official report of the Emigration Conference 1910; a report by O.N. Neville of 1914, the Bondfield Report and the Kent Colonising Societies Report. Most of these looked at the advantages or otherwise of child migration, rather than the condition of the homes themselves. There seems to have been no awareness of a need to inspect the homes of philanthropic agencies, particularly those based so far from Britain. The number of children involved at this stage was relatively small.

47. Inspections of the institutions catering for child migrants did not, therefore, seem either necessary or urgent. Analogous to homes and orphanages in Australia, they would naturally come under the jurisdiction of the state welfare agencies and be subject to their periodic inspections. Farm schools such as those operated by Fairbridge and Barnardo's were also inspected by members of their respective boards.

48. It was not until the child migration schemes recommenced just before the Second World War that serious attention was focused on the state of the

establishments to which the children were being sent. In 1942 a report on the Christian Brothers establishment at Tardun found the premises overcrowded, with "crammed" dormitories, inadequate blankets and a general lack of cleanliness.[9] Ronald Cross, the inspector, was of the opinion that the principal, Brother Sandes, was "unfitted" for that office. In mitigation, however, the report added that the children did appear to be happy and healthy and that the Australian children were treated in exactly the same way as the British migrants. Cross added that the crammed conditions were due to Tardun being the main evacuation centre for children from various other Christian Brother establishments.

49. The contrast between Tardun and other institutions was marked. Nazareth House, Geraldton, was considered "good enough for our own boys"[10] while the Fairbridge establishment "was fresh, clean, homely and had developed amenities in flowers, shrubs and so on", and favourably impressed Cross. Despite coming away from Tardun "feeling sorry for those nice boys, and somewhat haunted by the memory of their con[dition] ", and with a "general impression of uncleanliness, of a lack of scrubbing, a whitewash and mending", Cross ended his report by opining that "on balance" the value of the institution was "good".[11]

50. In 1943 the Australian government initiated a report conducted by F. McAdam. He visited three Christian Brothers Homes, reporting much more favourably than Cross. McAdam claimed that in Tardun, boys received "the best possible training and character moulding", while Castledare provided well for all the boys' daily wants. As far as Bindoon was concerned, the boys in residence there were "more fortunately placed than those more comfortably circumstanced". All three institutions received excellent reports, the writer concluding:

---

[9] TNA DO35/1138/M1020.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

"In my opinion, the Agreement signed by the controlling authority and the British Government is being carried out to the letter."[12] In 1994 the Dominions Office instigated a report at the request of the Fairbridge Society and this was carried out by Garnett. Although the Fairbridge establishments in Australia were Garnett's main focus, he also visited and reported on some of the Roman Catholic institutions. He was not impressed by either Castledare or Clontarf. He did not regard Clontarf as "a fit place in which to receive British children"[13]

51. As a result of Garnett's report, Roman Catholic officials were forced to concede that further investigation was necessary. Canon Craven, representing the Catholic migration agencies, claimed

"It had always been intended that representatives of the Catholic Church should go out to Western Australia to inspect the Christian Brothers Institutions, but that this intention had been stopped by the War. They were not satisfied with conditions of these Institutions and before they would allow any further children to go out to Australia a visit would have to be paid to examine the conditions on the spot and ascertain that the deficiencies were remedied. This represented their general attitude to Mr. Garnett's report and they were grateful for having been supplied with it."[14]

52. When a visit was finally made in 1946, Castledare was considered "very poorly equipped" and the accommodation of a very low standard "it cannot be regarded, at any rate in its present condition, as suitable for United Kingdom children".[15]

53. The investigators were also critical of Tardun, which was described as overcrowded and lacking facilities for "manual training"; that it was remote and

---

[12] TNA DO35/1138/M1020/4 Report by F. McAdam to the Under Secretary for Lands, 15/4/1943, page 27.
[13] TNA DO/35/3386.
[14] TNA DO/35/1139/M1126/1.
[15] Ibid.

that the boys did not get enough opportunities to mix with others outside the school. It was noted, however, that Brother Sandes, the principal complained of by Cross in his 1942 report, had been replaced. The investigators' view of Tardun was that:

"The living conditions at Tardun are primitive; the boys are well fed and housed but there is an entire lack of any comfort. [On the other hand,]...the boys appear to be happy and healthy. They are intelligent and well-mannered and evidently under excellent discipline. The school work is good and although it is considered that the migrant boys are approximately six months or so behind boys from private homes, it is admitted that the same is true of Australian boys who come from other institutions."[16]

54. The investigators found Bindoon to be "admirably equipped and situated", while Nazareth House, Geraldton, was considered the flagship of the Catholic orphanages.

55. In 1947 a number of other inspections of various homes were carried out and there were further inspections in 1948 and 1949.

56. Although these reports were critical of various aspects of individual homes, they were also complimentary in some respects. It is undeniable that in the early years and particularly during WWII, several of the homes were overcrowded, amenities were inadequate, living conditions harsh and home comforts scarce. In mitigation, it must be said that wartime exigencies forced many organisations to suffer. Certain commodities were in short supply, particularly building materials and labour. Clontarf had been commandeered by the Air Force, forcing the evacuation of boys to homes already fully occupied.

57. Building permits were delayed and approval had to be obtained from the British Government before any establishments could be brought into use for child

[16] Ibid.

migrants. Even when permits and supplies were available, sufficient labour power was not. It seemed to those concerned with the institutions that employing the older children in the building of new extensions, and in the refurbishing of old buildings would be an excellent idea. It would overcome the labour shortage and give the children practical training. Several of the official reports on the various child-care establishments in Australia commented very favourably on the usefulness of this form of training, for example

"Poor boys entering this institution [Bindoon] have the advantage of being trained in all phases of agriculture and receiving instruction in the various trade classes. They are more fortunately placed than those more comfortably circumstanced.[17]

58. On learning that John Moss, CBE, a member of the Curtis Committee, was to holiday in Australia, the Home Office asked him to make enquiries into the care of the migrant children there, and his report was published in 1953.[18] Moss commented

"There seems to be a feeling in some quarters that it is wrong to send a child, for whom a local authority is responsible, some 10,000 or 12,000 miles away. If, however, members and officers of Children's Committees had had the same opportunities as my wife and I had seeing the conditions under which the children are being cared for; the arrangements for their education and further education; their placing-out and after-care, I am sure they would have no hesitation in helping to fill the vacancies which now exist in approved establishments and would adopt a general policy of sending a regular, but small, flow of suitable children. They would then not only be doing good to the children but helping, in a small way, to increase the English-born population of Australia."[19]

---

[17] TNA DO35/1138/MI020/4 F. McAdam to the Under Secretary for Lands, page 22.
[18] The Moss Report (Cmnd.6922).
[19] Page 42.

59. Moss made a number of comparisons in his report between the standards of care available in Britain and Australia.

"I formed the opinion that the Roman Catholic establishments for children in Australia compare very favourably with those in this country."[20] "Enjoying special attention to the size of bedrooms, I do not wish to infer that the conditions prevailing are peculiar to Roman Catholic institutions in Australia. They also exist in Britain".[21]

"I am satisfied generally as to the thoroughness with which the interests of migrants are safeguarded. Not unnaturally there are various standards of child-care between the different States as there are between local authorities in Britain."[22] Moss's comments were accepted and expanded upon by the report on *Child Migration and the Voluntary Societies,*[23] a further fact-finding mission under the chairmanship of John Ross, which reported in 1956.[24]

60. Amongst the comments made by SR 2 on behalf of the Sisters of Nazareth, Londonderry, on the practice and need for child migration were that:

"This [migration] is a good opening for the boys as so little work can be found in Northern Ireland at the present time."[25]

61. SR 2 also wrote:

"At that time there were 170 boys cared for in the Home. It would have been seen as a positive step towards their future to avail of the opportunity to send

---

[20] Page ii.
[21] Page 10.
[22] Page 37.
[23] [Cmnd 9261] House of Commons 1953-1954.
[24] Cmnd 9832.
[25] Personal correspondence to the author from Sister Teresa, Nazareth House, Londonderry, June 1992.

some boys to Australia where I understand at that time the work situation was bright."[26]

62. I understand that the Inquiry will itself be examining the circumstances in which individual children were selected for migration and I therefore do not express any opinion on this although the following observations and assertions made at various times on behalf of the Roman Catholic Agencies may be of assistance to the Inquiry.

63. The Roman Catholic agencies tried to encourage as many as possible of the children in their care to take advantage of the "wonderful opportunity" offered to them. In the initial stages of the Catholic scheme, the only children considered eligible were voluntary cases, "most of whom had been deserted by their parents, and children under the old Poor Law system and from the old Industrial Schools."[27] Later, all children in the care of the Catholic agencies were offered the choice.

64. In the voluntary cases,

"There was considerable reluctance on the part of Catholic authorities to send children overseas if they were not genuine orphans and parental consent was unobtainable. That reluctance had to be balanced against what were perceived to be the considerable advantages of growing up in Australia rather than in Britain. It is also the case that each child was interviewed by officials from Australia House in London before being accepted for migration. This was in part to establish parental consent, or the validity of reasons for its absence."[28]

---

[26] Ibid.
[27] Canon Bennett, Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of the Catholic Child Welfare Council London, 13/6/1946 Page 2.
[28] CCWC, Post-war Child Migrants to Australia: some background information in preparation for the BBC TV mini-series "The Leaving of Liverpool", July 1993.

65. Notwithstanding, there was concern expressed that although parents and staff might agree on the desirability of emigration, there was little to show "whether the child himself wants to emigrate."[29] It was suggested

"The Crusade [of Rescue] should require of any home or society suggesting candidates for emigration that the child should have been interviewed by a trained social worker who would enquire in detail into all the family circumstances."[30]

66. Given that all concerned agreed to the migration, safeguards remained in place:

"From 1947 all children were interviewed personally at least twice by Australia House officials plus a further medical examination. They were always asked if they wished to go to Australia."[31]

"Permission was sought from a parent or guardian. No one was considered without full consent. Months beforehand a lot of work went into this preparation, Birth certificates and Baptismal certificates had to be procured. A medical clearance and school report obtained."[32]

67. There are several examples in the archives of the various societies of consent being withdrawn by parents or grandparents, even after migration had been arranged.

"I have had to make a last minute substitution as [name withheld] mother has withdrawn her consent."[33]

---

[29] CCWC (CoR Archives) letter from G.H. McConnell to Canon Flood, 15/4/1958.
[30] Ibid.
[31] CCWC, report of Mrs. Clayton, 27/7/1987, page 2.
[32] SR2, Nazareth House, Londonderry 1992 to the Author.
[33] CCBOS Archives, letter to Monsignor Crennan from William Flint (Secretary of the Emigration Committee), 1/9/1954.

"From Nazareth House in Londonderry three boys out of twelve approved had to be withdrawn because consent was not forthcoming."[34]

68. A common complaint by children sent under the child migrant scheme is that siblings were separated by gender on arrival. Sometimes this was required by the state government, as in New South Wales. In 1957 T.F. Tucker of Barnardos reporting on conditions at the Greenwood in New South Wales reported

"Greenwood...comprises four houses, three for boys and one for girls. This division indicates the most important difference of opinion that exists between us and the NSW Child Welfare Department. Under no circumstances will the Director [of NSW CWD] allow the mixing of sexes under one roof. The reason, in the light of English experience, seems inadequate, it being that the dangers are too great. It is sometimes added that the staff of children's homes in NSW are not sufficiently experienced to cope with possible awkward situations which might develop."[35]

69. However, there were no such restrictions imposed by the Government of Western Australia. Here, however, the Roman Catholic agencies held sway. It was policy in all Catholic institutions to segregate the sexes, particularly when young. They applied equally in matters of education, recreation, and even on which side of the Church children sat. In the homes, schools and orphanages, the distinctions were rigidly adhered to.

70. However, from time to time the Roman Catholic authorities claimed a desire to keep brothers and sisters close to each other. This may be seen from the following statement published in the Roman Catholic periodical, *St. Peter's Net.*

---

[34] From the private records of the Nazareth House Home Londonderry, referring to boys circa 1947.
[35] Barnardo Archives, D239/10/3, Tucker Report (February 1957) page 2.

"It is our intention to send out girls as well as boys to Western Australia, and we have recently had the satisfaction of learning that the Sisters of Nazareth have begun the erection of a Nazareth House in Geraldton,...this new development is of the greatest importance. It will enable us to keep brothers and sisters in touch with each other; make it possible for girls to follow a career other than that of domestic service; and enable them to become useful wives to Catholic farmers."[36]

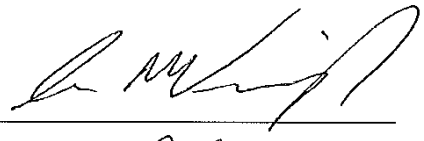
71. In the Church of England Swan Homes, boys and girls were brought up together, and the National Childrens Homes also tried to place siblings as near each other as possible. In the Fairbridge farm schools, brothers and sisters normally went to the same school, but were allocated to different cottages. Cottages were, as a rule, single sex.

72. In my thesis I dealt with a number of other issues that may be relevant to the consideration of how children were treated on arrival in Australia, I also give various figures relating to the numbers of children sent to Australia after WWII and by the various institutions. I have not included these in this statement as I have been informed by the Inquiry that, since I wrote this thesis in 1995, a number of official and other publications have provided more up-to-date information on many of these areas that the Inquiry will be considering in its public sessions.

73. I would also like to state that, given the work was undertaken over twenty years ago, most of the notes, letters and preparatory work I used in the process has since been disposed of as I saw no further need to retain them after the thesis was completed and accepted. Three house moves in the intervening years have also played their part. I have cited as accurately as possible the sources I used at the time of writing but would point out that I no longer have access to these sources. I would therefore like to reiterate that this statement is an

[36] Vol.19, 3, September 1939, page 76.

abbreviated version of my thesis, to which reference should be made by those who wish to consider the matter in greater detail.

Signed 

Dated 29 July 2014