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British Child Migration Schemes to Australia: A Historical Overview

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One of the most striking things about the history of the UK child migration schemes is that just as child migration work to Canada was being criticised as a welfare intervention and being formally wound down, child migration schemes to Australia were expanding and were to continue operating for more than another four decades. This chapter will consider the initial development of child migration work to Australia, noting its differences to the Canadian schemes, and examining how it persisted long after it had come to be seen as out-of-keeping with more widely accepted standards of child welfare.

Australia was not the only country to which UK child migrants were sent after the formal ending of Canadian schemes in 1928¹. Around 300 children were sent to the Fairbridge Memorial College in Rhodesia from 1946 to 1956, in a scheme intended to train middle-class children whose families had fallen on hard times as future leaders of the native population². In 1948, the New Zealand government also began to recruit child migrants, receiving around 550 children until it would down the scheme in 1954. In contrast to Australia, the New Zealand welfare system was already strongly emphasising care within the family or foster-care in preference to residential care, and child migrants were placed in foster homes with varying results. The greater administrative complexity of setting up foster-care placements through Government agencies, and desire to encourage child migration in cases where other family members might later follow them to New Zealand, made the scheme slower to operate and contributed to the decision in 1954 to concentrate on older youth emigrants who would not require foster care³. There remains less information in the public domain about the Rhodesian and New Zealand schemes, partly because of the destruction of records in the case of Rhodesia⁴ and partly because there has been no formal inquiry on the schemes in New Zealand⁵. Despite sharing the ambitions of the Rhodesian and New Zealand schemes to strengthen its white, British population, the scale of the Australian schemes was far greater. More than 3170 UK child migrants were sent to Australia after the Second World War, with an estimated 6500-7000 sent between 1912 and the late 1960s⁶. Of these, roughly 2,700 were sent by Dr Barnardo's Homes, 2300

¹ UK child migrants were also sent to South Africa, but prior to the development of the mass schemes to Canada after 1869. As noted in chapter 1, the Children's Friend Society had sent 1300 young apprentices to the Cape before its work was publicly discredited. A later offer of land in South Africa to Thomas Barnardo, in 1902, to establish a training home for child migrants did not lead to further children being sent there, however, after a scoping visit by Barnardo's eldest son indicated that the social and political conditions were far less promising for child migration than in Canada (see Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp.43-50).

² The Rhodesian scheme was therefore very different in intent to the Canadian and Australian schemes which place a stronger emphasis on vocational training for manual labour, and ran as a separate initiative to the Fairbridge Society's main emigration work (Boucher, *Empire's Children*, p.151). In practice, though, poor after-care for children after they'd left the school meant that few went on to higher education or to adopt elite roles within Rhodesian society (Bean & Melville, *Lost Children of the Empire*, pp.106-7).

³ Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp.164-5.

⁴ Bean & Melville, *Lost Children of the Empire*, p.98.

⁵ Such an inquiry in New Zealand was specifically recommended in the 1998 UK Parliamentary Health Select Committee report on child migration (see *UK Parliamentary Select Committee on Health Third Report 1998*, London: House of Commons, Recommendations, 115).

⁶ There is no single authoritative figure on the number of UK child migrants to Australia. For a range of figures on the possible number of child migrants sent, see *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record on Child Migration Report*, Canberra, Parliament of Australia Senate, 2001, pp.263-5. A good indication of the numbers of children sent after the Second World War are the numbers of children sent to Australia by British Government subsidy,

by the Fairbridge Society, 1300 by Catholic organizations, 400 by the Church of England and around 100 children each by the Methodist Church, the National Children's Home, the Salvation Army and the Presbyterian Church⁷. Proportionately, though, Catholic organizations contributed more substantially to early post-War child migration. Of the 2,324 child migrants sent to Australia between 1947 and 1955, 912 children were received through the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee of Australia, substantially more than any other child migration agency⁸.

The first child migrants sent to Australia arrived in June 1834, sent by the Children's Friend Society, who eventually less than a hundred children in migration parties before it ended this work in 1842⁹. The Ragged School Union had, by 1849, begun its own small-scale migration work to Australia sending children from some of its UK schools and providing some of the earliest examples of organizational literature extolling the value of child migration as a welfare policy¹⁰. Apart from these initial schemes, however, child migration to Australia remained relatively undeveloped during the late Victorian period with most child migration work from the UK concentrated on Canada.

In the early twentieth-century, however, a new wave of child migration schemes to Australia began to develop against the backdrop of considerably increased levels of immigration to Australia compared to the nineteenth-century¹¹. The turn of the twentieth-century was marked by stronger calls for the British Government to adopt systematic policies to encourage emigration to British dominions, exemplified by the creation of the Royal Colonial Institute's Emigration Committee in 1910, which both co-ordinated the work of voluntary organizations and lobbied central Government for greater support for imperial migration¹². In 1922, the British Government's Empire Settlement Act established a recurrent funding scheme for assisted emigration to British dominions, including the migration of children under the auspices of recognised organizations. The legislation arose both out of British concerns for managing the problems of unemployment at home and a commitment to strengthening 'Greater Britain' and Australian concerns for increasing its population and economic development through the preferred immigration of 'good British stock'. Coinciding with the era of the 'White Australia' immigration policy¹³, such migration was strongly encouraged by Australian

which Constantine, 'British Government', has calculated to be 3170. That is not likely to be a comprehensive figure as it only relates to children for whom Government funding was sought, and some children may have been sent without this.

⁷ The lack of clarity about these exact figures is indicated by the *Lost Innocents* report (pp.264-5) which gives ranges of numbers for these organizations based on different date ranges and sources of data. The numbers given here are therefore intended to be illustrative of the relative proportion of child migrants sent out by each organization.

⁸ Child Migration to Australia: Report of a Fact-Finding Mission, Commonwealth Relations Office, (Ross Report), 1955, DO35/6381 (NA), p.14. The fact that the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee of Australia's receipt of Government-assisted child migrants ended, with the exception of a handful of children, by 1957 meant that by 1965, the Fairbridge Society had sent and received slightly more post-War child migrants than this – 997 children compared to the Catholic agency's eventual 946 (see Constantine, 'Child migration to Australia after 1945').

⁹ Alan Gill, *Orphans of the Empire: The Shocking Story of Child Migration to Australia*, London, Vintage, 1998, kindle edition, loc.951, states that the Children's Friendly Society sent 71 children aged under 16 to Australia, but doesn't give the source for this.

¹⁰ Give examples of these.

¹¹ See Harper & Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, pp.56-7.

¹² See Andrew Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, c.1880-1932*, London, Pearson International, 2000, pp.46-9.

¹³ The 'White Australia' policy was initially given a legal framework through the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, which gave immigration officers powers to deny migrants entry to Australia which were primarily used along racial lines. The 'White Australia' principle also found wider public support as a central element of

authorities through widespread marketing campaigns. As one 1924 pamphlet aimed at post-school leaving age, juvenile migrants put it:

‘Boys! Australia makes you an attractive offer. She places before you an opportunity of coming to a new land, a rich land and a healthy land; and upon your arrival, of immediately putting you in the way of earning a good living and of soon becoming a prosperous citizen... You will learn the business of farming, your wages will increase as you acquire experience, and after some years, provided you have been thrifty, you will be able to take up land of your own and become your own masters.’¹⁴

Against this background, an Oxford Rhodes scholar from Rhodesia, Kingsley Fairbridge, formed an organization that was to play a major role in twentieth-century child migration to Australia. Initially called the Child Emigration Society, it later reverted to the name of its leading founder, becoming known as the Fairbridge Society. Fairbridge, whose great-grandfather had emigrated to the Cape from England and been a committee member of the Children’s Friend Society, developed a strong affinity with the idea of the British Empire as a colonial citizen. In his autobiography, he claimed to have had a visionary experience as a teenager in which he came to realise that the emptiness of colonial lands cried out for British settlers to cultivate them¹⁵. After returning to Rhodesia from his first visit to England in 1903 in which he was exposed to sights of urban poverty in the motherland, Fairbridge’s ideas began to focus more clearly on child migration as the means for colonising and cultivating the open spaces of imperial lands:

‘I saw great Colleges of Agriculture (not workhouses) springing up in every man-hungry corner of the Empire. I saw little children shedding the bondage of bitter circumstances, and stretching their legs and minds amid the thousand interests of the farm. I saw waste turned to providence, the waste of unneeded humanity coveted to the husbandry of unpeopled acres.’¹⁶

By 1908, Fairbridge’s commitment to this idea led him to write to Earl Grey, the Governor General of Canada, with the outline of a scheme for an agricultural college in Rhodesia¹⁷. The letter sets out the ethos that was to define the farm schools that he eventually established in Australia. Emulating the migration work of the Salvation Army, Fairbridge intended to take children from workhouse schools, migrate them to Rhodesia, ‘bring them up in an atmosphere of energy, endurance and cleanliness’ and train them in farming methods. The environment of the college was intended to cultivate both a sense of imperial duty and sense of vigour in them. Describing his scheme as ‘a large eugenic concern having certain commercial principles’, he claimed that workhouse children, without

Australian national identity. Opposing the conscription of Australian soldiers during the First World War, on the grounds that this would encourage an influx of cheap, non-white workers to fill gaps in the labour market, the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, declared that ‘we, a handful of whites in a huge continent, insist on White Australia policy. Our coloured fellow-citizens of the Empire ask for entry. But no, not even for Empire’s sake do we lift the embargo. Australia is first and the Empire, with its coloured people, and its allies, has to fall into second place’ (Eric Richards, *Destination Australia*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2008, p.68.

¹⁴ *Australia’s Offer to British Boys*, 1924, pp.2-3, M189/7/6/3 (MCA).

¹⁵ This experience was commemorated later in the Kingsley Fairbridge memorial at Umtali, Rhodesia, unveiled by Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother on 8th July 1953 (see *The Times*, 9th July 1953, p.7).

¹⁶ Sherrington & Jeffery, *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration*, loc.491.

¹⁷ *Letter from Kingsley Fairbridge to Earl Grey, 5th August, 1908*, D296/A1/1 (L). Earl Grey was already well known to the Fairbridge family, and the letter appears to have been an attempt if not to solicit funding from Earl Grey for this initiative, then at least to enlist his support as ‘one of half a dozen, prominent influential men’ who would actively support it.

intervention, would only grow up to produce further generations of ‘mental and physical weaklings’. The risk of ‘physical degeneration in a land where cheap native labour is available’ led him to advocate allowing only white children to undertake farming on the college land. The children’s labour should make the college economically self-sufficient, whilst they received religious and moral instruction that would ‘bring furthermore to their notice the acknowledged duty of individuals towards God and Man; the glory of England; the essential unity of the Empire’.

That same year, Fairbridge took up the offer of a Rhodes scholarship at the University of Oxford, and here, in a wider environment of enthusiasm for empire, found the first network of supporters that enabled him to bring these ideas to fruition. Speaking at the University’s Colonial Club, he delivered a speech on 19th October 1909, outlining his idea of using child migration as means of colonising the wider Empire¹⁸. This advocated the migration of children between the ages of eight to ten, ‘before they have acquired the vices of “professional pauperism” and before their physique has become lowered by adverse conditions’. Fairbridge argued that this would ease the problem of over-population in England as well as the need for increased population in the colonies, ‘both for economical reasons and as a safeguard against the possibility of foreign invasion and foreign immigration of low types.’ ‘To bring the great overseas dominions within the circle of the British Empire was the achievement of the last century,’ he declared, ‘to people them with British stock is the task that faces the race in this.’ A motion successfully proposed after the speech that the Colonial Club become the core support for Fairbridge’s project created the basis on which the Child Emigration Society could then be formed.

By the time he made this speech, Fairbridge had already learned that his child migration plans to Rhodesia were, in their current form, impractical as the use of white children’s manual labour would provoke local opposition and a training college there might only work in the future if aimed at higher-class settlers¹⁹. Instead, he presented his audience with news of an offer from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland of 50,000 acres of land on which the farm school could be built. This plan also quickly ran into difficulties, however. Fairbridge was advised about the unsuitability of the location and social conditions of Newfoundland. Turning to other senior contacts in the Canadian government, Fairbridge found a cooler response to his plans, with now Earl Grey also advising him to follow the model of other child migration organizations and place his children out with individual households rather than in a training institution²⁰. By 1911, the Child Emigration Society had two options for its work – to create its farm school in Newfoundland or to locate it, instead in Western Australia. In the event, the Premier of Newfoundland was prepared to offer land but no additional financial assistance for child migrants, whereas the Western Australian government was prepared to offer land at a minimal rent, pay the children’s shipping costs and provide their compulsory education at no charge. On the strength of this offer, Western Australia was chosen and plans set in place to create a farm school at Pinjarra near Perth. Run by Fairbridge himself and his wife Ruby, this received its first party of children in 1913. The early years of the farm school were made difficult both by the effects of the war in preventing child migrants from being sent out and the problems in securing more direct financial support for the scheme from the Western Australian Government. By 1920, protracted negotiations between the Child Emigration Society and the British and Western Australian Governments eventually led to a financial agreement to enable the expansion of the Pinjarra farm school to enable it to receive 200 children. The British Government contributed capital

¹⁸ *The Emigration of Poor Children to the Colonies: Speech Read Before the Colonial Club at Oxford, October 19, 1909* by Kingsley Fairbridge, D292/A2 (L).

¹⁹ Sherrington & Jeffrey, *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration*, loc.624.

²⁰ Sherrington & Jeffrey, *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration*, loc.754.

funding and a one-off capitation payment (making the Fairbridge scheme the first child migration initiative into which it had made a capital investment) and the Western Australian Government contributed a recurrent capitation payment²¹. The consolidation of an executive committee in London and a local organising committee in Western Australia further developed the scheme's administrative structure such that the work was able to continue and expand even after Kingsley Fairbridge's death, at the age of 39, in 1924. The re-named Fairbridge Society subsequently went on to open another farm school at Molong, in New South Wales, in 1938, and a residential home at Tresca House, Exeter in Tasmania, in 1957, in addition to its Prince of Wales farm school in Canada²².

Kingsley Fairbridge's work was significant not only for opening up Australia as a point of destination for British child migrants in the twentieth-century – with Barnardo's, for example, placing child migrants in Australia through the Fairbridge Society until they had established their own receiving institutions for child migrants²³. Fairbridge's commitment to child migration also had noticeably different emphases to those of the earlier generation of child migration philanthropists such as Thomas Barnardo, Annie McPherson and William Quarrier. Reflecting the social and political environment of his time²⁴, Fairbridge's work was framed far more explicitly in terms of goals of empire settlement than the late Victorian migration schemes to Canada. The earlier Canadian schemes were primarily conceived by their founders as humanitarian interventions, undertaken within the imagined shared geography of the British Empire, in which migration to British colonies was perceived as an extension to the existing principle of placing children out within Britain itself. Both these earlier philanthropists and Fairbridge shared the notion that child migration was a responsible social intervention because it removed children from areas of over-population and under-employment to colonies in which the demand for manual labour was high. But for Fairbridge, this rationale was framed far more explicitly in terms of a sense of the building up of the British Empire as an inherent good and one which, in his writings, appears more strongly emphasised than humanitarian concerns for child welfare. As he put it, in an article on the work of the Child Emigration Society in the *Daily Mail* in 1914, 'the hope of a splendid and united Empire the sole agent that has brought these little colonists to Australia... By degrees, if our driving power holds, they will come to see that they themselves are no placeless waifs but inheritors of sacred duties... It is my hope that some day, whether it be under arms or behind the plough, these children may thank Heaven for this chance of fulfilling themselves in the service of their race.'²⁵

This shifting emphasis was evident in the kinds of checks made of children before they were sent overseas. As the late Victorian schemes to Canada became well-established, it was common-place

²¹ This level of funding was still less than the farm school required to cover its running costs, making the sale of produce from the farm school, grown by the children, a source of funds on which the farm school was economically reliant (Sherrington & Jeffrey, *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration*, loc.1972).

²² Some Fairbridge children were also sent to the Hagley Farm School in Tasmania, which was run by the Tasmanian Educational Department. The Fairbridge Society also acted as the recruitment agent for children sent to the Northcote Farm School at Bacchus Marsh, near Melbourne.

²³ Barnardo's subsequently set up three institutions to receive British child migrants, all in New South Wales, at a farm school in Picton (1929), a training home and hostel in Burwood (1938) and a residential home in Normanhurst (1954). The Manchester and Salford Boys' and Girls' Refuges and Homes also sent a handful of children to Australia in the 1920s through the Fairbridge Society (see *The Children's Haven*, 1920-28, M189/8/2/9-14 (MCA).

²⁴ See, e.g., Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, London, Routledge, 2005; also Sherrington & Jeffrey, loc.807. Note also that the Bondfield Report did not rule out the value of juvenile migration, for example, and recognised the value of migration schemes as a necessary means of supporting British dominions.

²⁵ *Daily Mail*, 17 June 1914. See also Sherrington & Jeffrey, *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration*, loc.838.

for children to be selected for migration only having passed medical tests of their health. In organizational literature, the rationale for this was focused more around concerns that proper checks were being placed on the kinds of children being sent to Canada rather than primarily with the child's own health. The Barnardo's magazine, *Night and Day*, for example declared that all child migrants to Canada should be '*carefully trained* into habits of obedience, cleanliness, honesty, virtue and industry; then *carefully selected*, with a view to their moral and physical fitness.' In the context of Canadian anxieties about 'the very scum and offscouring of our great cities' being deposited in their country, such checks made it possible to re-assure the Canadian public that children sent as migrants were of the 'right sort', and not liable to be a source of moral or physical contamination for Canadian society²⁶. The practice of giving children health checks prior to migration continued on with the twentieth-century schemes to Australia. But by the 1920s, these had been supplemented with newly developed IQ tests to check the child's mental abilities. In 1921, the Australian Government made it a condition of funding child migration that children should be given medical and psychological tests at Australia House in London before boarding for Australia²⁷. Whilst the Bondfield report had commended the psychological screening of child migrants to test for any 'temperamental unsuitability' to migration, the use of psychological testing in the Australian schemes reflected a eugenic concern to promote the physical and mental strength of the Australian population²⁸.

By the end of the 1930s, the Fairbridge migration scheme had been joined by other migration initiatives and receiving institutions. The Salvation Army's Riverview Training Farm opened in 1926. Barnardo's followed suit by opening their first residential institution for child migrants in Australia at Picton in 1929, having previously sent children to the Fairbridge Farm School at Pinjarra. Trustees of the Lady Northcote Emigration Fund also opened a farm school at Bacchus Marsh in Victoria in 1937.

A significant difference between this work and that of the Canadian schemes, though, was that very few child migrants to Australia were placed out in private households. Instead, child migrants to Australia were transferred to residential institutions, either training farms or children's homes, in which it was claimed that if they worked hard they would receive the necessary vocational and educational training, as well as moral and religious formation, to flourish as Australian citizens. Some of the Australian schemes were run by charities who had previously been involved in child migration work to Canada. In addition to Barnardo's, the Salvation Army began receiving child migrants at six different residential institutions that it ran in Western Australia, New South Wales and Queensland. Most of these residential institutions were provided by churches or religious orders in Australia, with Roman Catholic orders, the Church of England, and the Methodist and Presbyterian churches also involved.

²⁶ *Night and Day*, November 1884, p.124 (B); see also Annual Report of the East End Juvenile Mission, "Dr Barnardo's Homes", 1884-5, p.15 (B).

²⁷ Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp.126-40.

²⁸ Bondfield Report, p.7; Boucher, *Empire's Children*, pp.128-9.

Name of organization	Residential Institution (NSW: New South Wales; Q: Queensland; SA: South Australia; T: Tasmania; VA: Victoria; WA: Western Australia;
Barnardo's	Dr Barnardo's Farm School, Picton (NSW) Dr Barnardo's Girls Home, Burwood (NSW) 'Greenwood' Boys' and Girls' Home, Normanhurst (NSW)
Christian Brothers (RC)	St Vincent's Orphanage, Castledare (WA) Clontarf Boys' Town, Perth (WA) St Mary's Agricultural School, Tardun (WA) St Joseph's Farm and Trade School (later known as Bindoon Boys' Town), Bindoon (WA)
Church of England	Swan Homes, Perth (WA) Padbury Boys' Farm School, Stoneville, Perth (WA) Church of England Boys' and Girls' Home, Carlingford (NSW) Burton Hall Training Farm, Tatura (VA) St John's House, Canterbury (VA) Clarendon Home for Children, Kingston, Hobart (Q)
Daughters of Charity (RC)	Murray Dwyer Boys' Orphanage, Newcastle (NSW)
Fairbridge	Fairbridge Farm School, Pinjarra (WA) Fairbridge Farm School, Molong (NSW) Hagley Farm School, Launceston (T) Tresca House, Exeter (T)
Fairbridge/Northcote Trust	Northcote Farm School, Bacchus Marsh (V)
Marist Brothers (RC)	St Vincent Boys' Home, Parramatta (NSW)
Methodist Church	Methodist Girls' Home, Mofflyn, Perth (WA) 'Dalmaar', Methodist Home for Children, Carlingford (NSW) Methodist Home, Cheltenham (V) Methodist Home of Children, Wattle Park, Burwood (V) Methodist Children's Home, Magill (SA)
Poor Sisters of Nazareth (RC)	Nazareth House, Geraldton (WA) Nazareth House, Camberwell (V)
Presbyterian	Burnside Presbyterian Orphan Homes, Parramatta (NSW) Dhurringile Training Farm, Tatura (V)
Salesians	St John Bosco Boys' Town, Hobart (T)
Salvation Army	'Seaforth Home', Gosnells (WA) Arncliffe Girls' Home, Arncliffe (NSW) Boxley Boys' Home, Boxley (NSW)

Sisters of Mercy (RC)	Canowindra Girls' Home, Canowindra (NSW) Goulburn Boys' Home, Goulburn (NSW) Riverview Training Farm, Ipswich (Q) St Joseph's Orphanage, Subiaco, Perth (WA) St Vincent's Foundling Home, Subiaco, Perth (WA) St Brigid's Orphanage, Ryde (NSW) St John's Orphanage, Thurgoona, Albury (NSW) St Vincent de Paul's Orphanage, Goodwood, Adelaide (SA) St Joseph's Children's Home, Neerkol, Rockhampton (Q)
Sisters of St Joseph (RC)	St Joseph's Home, Kellerberrin (WA) St Joseph's Girls' Orphanage, Lane Cove (NSW)
United Protestant Association	'Melrose', United Protestant Association Home, Parramatta (NSW)

[table 2: List of residential institutions known to have received child migrants in Australia 1913-71]²⁹

The Anglican and Methodist churches, and various Catholic organizations had also previously been involved in sending children to Canada through the Church of England Waifs and Strays' Society, the National Children's Homes and the Catholic Emigration Association. The involvement of these religious organizations continued into the Australian schemes, albeit it with sometimes altered administrative structures.

In the wake of the passing of the 1922 Empire Settlement Act the Assembly of the Church of England passed a motion to establish the Church of England Council of Empire Settlement. The objectives of this new organization were both to disseminate information to make people aware in Britain of potential migration opportunities to other imperial territories and to be involved in the selection, support and overseas reception of migrants. Responses to this initiative by King George V and the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, Leo Amery, strongly endorsed it, the latter commenting that the 'social and spiritual atmosphere [of Empire settlement] matters no less than the material conditions. In these respects the co-operation of an Empire-wide body like the Church of England... could only be of incalculable benefit in the success of a policy which aimed not only at helping the individual, but at the healthy up-building of the national life of the Dominions'³⁰. By the end of the decade, the Church of England Council of Empire Settlement had arranged the migration of several thousand juvenile migrants, with the economic depression causing both significant problems for these migrants and a major financial challenge for the Council as Government funding for migration was suspended until economic conditions improved [check refs]. In the post-War period that the Council, now reformed as Church of England Advisory Council for Empire Settlement, became actively involved in arranging the migration of younger children. In its annual report for 1948, it reported that it had sent 28 children to Anglican residential homes in Australia but with potential capacity to send many more. The demand for child migrants arose from the residential homes themselves, seeking to fill places, with 'requisitions' for nearly 200 children between the ages of 5

²⁹ Data taken from *Lost Innocents*, p.259-60. Many of these institutions also received children born in Australia.

³⁰ Report of the Church of England Council of Empire Settlement, 1925, CECE-2, p.3 (CE).

and 14 received by the Council from them that same year³¹. The emphasis in its early post-War reports was placed far more on the sense of the Church's duty to continue to nurture the Empire and to consolidate bonds across British territories. Maintaining the viability of Anglican organizations in Australia also appears to be a significant motivating factor. A 1954 review of its work noted the 'constant demand from the various Anglican Children's Homes in Australia for Church of England children, which the Church of England is clearly under an obligation to satisfy'³².

Alongside this Anglican initiative, Roman Catholic organizations were also proactively seeking to encourage child migration to Australia. In 1927, the Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales supported the creation of the Catholic Emigration Society, a new national organization with a very similar role to the Church of England Council of Empire Settlement to publicise migration opportunities and to facilitate migration to British dominions through financial support available from the provisions of the Empire Settlement Act³³. The similarity in remit was no coincidence. In its first publicity pamphlet, the Society noted the 'very advantageous State aided schemes which had been introduced' to encourage migration. It lamented the fact, though, that large numbers of Catholics were seeking to make use of non-Catholic emigration societies to access State-assisted migration funding and noted 'how great is the danger in such cases of loss of faith' particularly when non-Catholic organizations placed Catholic migrants in areas remote from Catholic communities³⁴. By establishing itself as a specialist migration service for Catholics, the Society thus aimed to provide migration opportunities that would not put the faith of the migrant at risk³⁵. A period of conflict arose between the Society and the Catholic Emigration Association over the remit of managing the migration of Catholic children, with this being eventually resolved through the merger of both organizations in 1939 into the Catholic Council for British Overseas Settlement³⁶. The complex network of Catholic organizations, which included the formal structures of the Church, child welfare and migration organizations and semi-autonomous religious orders, meant however that Catholic child migration continued to take place without comprehensive oversight or control from any single organization. From 1938, Brother Conlon, a member of the Christian Brothers order, began proactively to approach Catholic organizations in Britain to request that children be sent to Christian Brothers' residential institutions in Western Australia³⁷. Whilst most children were sent initially

³¹ Report of the Advisory Council of the Church of England Advisory Council of Empire Settlement for the Year 1st January to 31st December 1948, CECES-2-CA935, (CE), p.3.

³² Church Assembly: Report of the Empire Settlement Commission, 1954, CECES-2-CA1100, p.9. The 1956 Ross Report (pp.4-5) noted that receiving institutions for child migrants during this period did have around 700 unfilled places and that there was an 'erroneous' view on the part of receiving institutions that there was a large supply of children suitable for migration from the UK if only there was sufficient will to facilitate this in Britain.

³³ Immediately prior to its launch, the Oversea Settlement Department of the British Government's Dominions Office, wrote to the Secretary of the Catholic Emigration Society to welcome the launch of the organization but also to say that its request for core funding for its administrative costs would not be forthcoming from the Government until the Society had established a clear track record of facilitating migrations; Letter from J.F Plant to the Secretary of the Catholic Emigration Society, 27th January 1927, (BA).

³⁴ Of particular concern to the Catholic hierarchy was the migration work of organizations such as the Church of England, including through the Church Army, and the Salvation Army, see Circular Letter to Catholic Clergy from Francis Ross, member of the General Committee of the Catholic Emigration Society, 9th December 1927 (BA).

³⁵ Catholic Emigration Society Pamphlet, 28th January 1927, (BA).

³⁶ Letter from George Craven, Administrator, Crusade of Rescue to William Bunce, Secretary, Father Hudson's Homes, 14th October 1935 (BA); Letter from Bernard Griffin, Secretary of the Catholic Emigration Association to the Archbishop of Birmingham, 6th January 1939 (BA).

³⁷ *Lost Innocents*, p.42; see also *Health Select Committee Third Report, Document Three, Historical Background to Child Migration*.

through the Catholic Emigration Association and subsequently through the more recently formed Catholic Child Welfare Council, the Catholic hierarchy in Australia and Brother Conlon also by-passed them and continued to make co-ordinated approaches directly to religious orders in Britain after the Second World War to seek the migration of children in their care³⁸. Whilst the underpinning religious ethos of Catholic child migration work was shared, there was no single, clear organizational structure through which it took place.

Aspirations of increasing the Catholic population in British dominions, and safeguarding the faith of Catholic children, reflected long-standing concerns that had motivated Catholic child migration work to Canada. What was more evident in the context of post-War Catholic migration was that senior figures in the Anglican Church felt far more threatened by what they perceived as the relative success of Catholic migration services. In the context of Canadian child migration work, Protestant organizations had been far in the ascendancy over Catholic organizations in terms of the numbers of migrants sent out. Whether those Protestant organizations harboured antagonistic views towards their Catholic peers or not, the pattern of child migration was resolutely Protestant. In post-War Australia, the sectarian competition was much closer. At times, the Church of England body for empire settlement wrote in general terms about the importance of maintaining 'religious balance' in Commonwealth countries³⁹. At others, it was more explicit noting in its annual report for 1955/6 that it was 'very apparent that the Church of England was lagging far behind the highly organised Roman Catholic Church activities in this particular field. The Secretary was informed that the Roman Catholic population had increased by 10% in the last 5 years and, as the number of foreigners (who in the main were Roman Catholics) entering Australia last year exceeded the number of British migrants, it will be realised how important it is that the Church of England should make every effort to sponsor more people from this country.'⁴⁰

The growth of child migration work to Australia from the 1920s onwards does then raise the question as to why child migration work began to flourish there precisely at the same time when it was being wound down in Canada. It is true that many of the organizations who had previously sent child migrants to Canada continued to do so to Australia. Barnardo's had been critical of the recommendation by the Bondfield Report to suspend the migration of children under 14 to Canada⁴¹ and so it was not surprising that they, along with organizations like the Salvation Army and National Children's Home, continued the practice elsewhere. Indeed the Fairbridge Society was the only major child migration organization working in Australia that did not have prior involvement in child migration work to Canada, with both the Church of England and Catholic Church continuing their migration work albeit through different administrative structures. As noted before, the history of the British child migration schemes was one in which organizations running those schemes demonstrated a sustained institutional commitment to the work that resisted any significant self-critical reflection on it.

³⁸ Conlon had managed to arrange the migration of 100 children to Christian Brothers' institutions in select a further 400 children for possible migration to Australia in 1947, in the context of renewed Catholic plans to encourage mass migration to post-War Australia; *Health Select Committee Third Report, Document Three, Historical Background to Child Migration*.

³⁹ Church Assembly: Report of the Empire Settlement Commission, p.5.

⁴⁰ Church Assembly: The Church of England Council for Commonwealth and Empire Settlement, Report for the 15 months 1st January 1955 to the 31st March 1956, CECES-2-CA1176 (CE), p.4; on Anglican anxiety about Catholic child migration, see also *Lost Innocents*, p.34.

⁴¹ Wagner, *Children of the Empire*, pp.231-2.

These organizations were only able to shift their work to Australia, however, because of a supportive environment both in Britain and Australia. Although the Australian Commonwealth Government had initially been slow to provide recurrent per capita funding to child migration schemes to Australia, this had shifted to a more supportive approach by the mid-1920s. At the same time, child migration work also had powerful backing in the UK. Some socialists and trade unionists may have been effective in their criticisms of child migration to Canada, but simultaneously, other establishment figures gave their support to the emergent Australian schemes. Barnardo's was, by this time, a well-respected organization with royal patronage since 1902. However Kingsley Fairbridge's social connections, helped by his time in Oxford, appears to have been even more successful in embedding support for child migration in sections of the establishment. By 1914, the list of signatories to a letter commending the work of the Child Emigration Society to potential donors included the Headmaster of Eton, the President of Magdalen College, Oxford and two Oxford Regius Professors, including the Professor for Divinity, Henry Scott Holland⁴². Two years after the Bondfield Report was written, the Fairbridge Society was able to have the former Governor-General of Australia, Lord Forster, to speak in praise of their work at one of their London luncheon events⁴³. Two years further on, it was the Duke of York (the future King George VI) and the Secretary of State for the Dominions, Leo Amery, who came to give glowing endorsements⁴⁴. The former declared that the Fairbridge scheme 'to my mind has done, is doing and will do in the future untold good in producing the right kind of citizen in Australia.' Amery added that he could think of 'no work of moral regeneration, physical, moral or economic, more effective than was being done at the Fairbridge Farm' and that 'he looked forward to the time when many such institutions would be in existence'. Although the Duke of York's support was to prove important for Fairbridge in the future⁴⁵, it was Amery's endorsement of the Fairbridge Society that demonstrated the complex stance of some public figures towards child migration in that period. It was Amery, as then Secretary of State for the Colonies who had presented the Bondfield Report to Parliament in December 1924 and had refused to push against its recommendations despite an informal request to do so from Barnardo's. Yet despite this, three years later, Amery was commending Fairbridge's work during a visit to the Pinjarra, with a photograph appearing in *The Times* of him talking to boys at Farm School standing round him in bare feet⁴⁶. Whilst child migration had its critics in Britain in this period, the broad political consensus of the importance of strengthening the empire meant that child migration could be welcomed as part of the wider process of empire settlement as long as it received no strong resistance from the receiving Dominion. When such resistance arose in Canada there was little political will in Britain to challenge it. This did not, however, apply to Australia. Furthermore the Bondfield Report had focused its criticisms on the risks of placing children the age of fourteen in private households that had not been subject to prior inspection and in which there was a risk of children being abused, over-worked and deprived of educational opportunities they would reasonably expect to have in Britain or as Canadian born children living with their own families⁴⁷. For those broadly sympathetic to the value of child migration, such risks might be assumed to be much lower in the case of Australian schemes where children were being sent into the residential care of reputable organizations.

⁴² The Child Emigration Society, Appeal Letter, January 1914, D296.F1.1 (L).

⁴³ *The Times*, 3rd February, 1926, p.11.

⁴⁴ *The Times*, 29th March, 1928, p.9.

⁴⁵ The Duke of York's public pledge of 1000 pounds to Fairbridge in 1934 formed a central part of a major fund-raising campaign launched by the Society to extend its work, see *The Times*, 21st June, 1934, p.32.

⁴⁶ *The Times*, 15th November, 1927, p.20. Amery himself had close personal links to Kingsley Fairbridge, see Sherrington & Jeffrey, loc.1652.

⁴⁷ Bondfield Report, pp.9,12.

That was to change significantly, however, following the Second World War. In 1945, the Care of Children Committee was set up jointly by the Home Office and Departments of Health and Education to review current provision for children 'who for whatever cause are deprived of a normal family life with their own parents or relatives' and to investigate what future provision should be established 'to ensure that these children are brought up under conditions best calculated to compensate them for lack of parental care'⁴⁸. Its findings, published in what became known as the Curtis Committee Report, set out key working principles that were to prove definitive for public child-care provision in the post-War period. It recommended the consolidation of child-care responsibilities within local authorities. It strongly endorsed the value of keeping a child in their own home wherever possible, even in cases of illegitimacy⁴⁹. Where this was not possible, adoption of the child was generally commended as the most preferable option, with fostering the next more preferable⁵⁰. Institutional care of children was considered to have some benefits, and to be a necessary form of provision for the foreseeable future given the time it might take for improvements in the welfare system to reduce the number of deprived children. However, the Report also noted the tendency even in well-managed institutions towards 'a lack of interest in the child as an individual and to remote and impersonal relations'⁵¹. A child from a deprived background might, therefore, have a better material environment, food and clothing in institutional care, but keenly felt 'the lack of affection and personal interest', with institutional children's craving for signs of physical affection 'in striking and painful contrast' to the usual behaviour of children kept within the family home.

Given these general principles, it is not surprising that the Report's assessment of the child migration schemes was less than enthusiastic. Recognising that child migration might soon recommence after having been interrupted by the War, the Committee commented:

'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 specially 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... should be comparable to those we have proposed in this report for deprived children remaining in this country.'⁵²

Although the Report had not called conclusively for an end to child migration, it established principles that were soon to place this work under increasing pressure. On 24th March 1948, the President, Chair and Secretary of the British Federation of Social Workers had a letter published in *The Times* that noted that the Children's Bill (soon to become the 1948 Children's Act) still allowed for the emigration of children. Commenting that migration organizations' 'methods of selection of children, their welfare, training and after-care in the receiving countries are not always of a high

⁴⁸ *Report of the Care of Children Committee (Curtis Committee Report)*, September 1946, London, HMSO, p.5.

⁴⁹ Curtis Committee Report, p.148

⁵⁰ Curtis Committee Report, p.152.

⁵¹ Curtis Committee Report, p.160.

⁵² Curtis Committee Report, p.177.

standard', they recommended that a special Government commission be established to examine the whole system. Such sentiments also found support amongst Home Office staff keen to pursue the Curtis Committee Report's key principles with a mandate to monitor both child-care provision with local authorities and voluntary organizations. However, whilst children in local authority care could only be emigrated with the written permission of the Home Secretary, following the 1948 Children's Act, the Act did not provide a clear enough framework for the Home Office to be able to regulate the work of the voluntary organizations undertaking child migration work. Instead, the Home Office sought to apply pressure on the Commonwealth Relations Office, who agreed funding for child migrants under the Empire Settlement Act.

The Home Office's attempts to influence standards applied to child migration in the Commonwealth Relations Office – and through it to the Australian Commonwealth Government – began as early as 1947⁵³. Progress was slow, however, and in 1949 the Commonwealth Relations Office approved the migration of thirty girls to the Sisters of Mercy's orphanage in Thurgoona, despite the Home Office protesting about the impersonal, poorly resourced home, its remote location and lack of effective after-care provision. In 1950 attempts by the Home Office to establish conditions in residential institutions receiving child migrants in Australia through a questionnaire was rebuffed by the Australian authorities. It then turned its efforts to challenging child migration practices through an inter-Departmental review of the renewal of the Empire Settlement Act (including subsidies paid through this child migration organizations). The review deferred to the findings of a report due to be submitted by John Moss, a former member of the Curtis Committee, based on his inspection of residential institutions in Australia. Moss's report was only submitted in July 1952, and whilst reinforcing basic principles of the Curtis report also, disappointingly for the Home Office, fundamentally endorsed the value of child migration without demanding substantial reforms. The fact that the Empire Settlement Act had only been temporarily renewed in 1952 meant that in 1954 another inter-Departmental review was undertaken to decide on its further renewal. The Home Office's objections to child migration were set out very clearly during this process, with it strongly recommending that children should only be sent to Australia in the future if they were placed in adoptive or foster families rather than residential institutions. After some prevarication, it was decided that a final decision on this should be informed by a further review of the Australian institutions to be undertaken by John Ross.

John Ross had, until retiring at the end of 1955, been assistant under-secretary at the Home Office in charge of the Children's Department and had a strong record of advocating for the principles of the Curtis Committee report. Minutes of earlier meetings between him and representatives of Catholic child-care organizations in Britain show him previously to have been blunt in his criticisms of their continued use of large residential homes, lack of training amongst their staff and failures to make more widespread use of foster care⁵⁴. Before undertaking his fact-finding mission to Australia, Ross would also been aware that the Christian Brothers' children's home at St Charles, Brentwood had been threatened with de-certification by the Home Office because of its very poor standards of care. The verdict of the review team that he led was damning, and was communicated back to the Commonwealth Relations Office in two parts: an official report and a confidential appendix with more detailed comments on individual institutions.

The text of the official report contained numerous criticisms of the reception and care of child migrants. Children were often sent with insufficient information about their previous family and

⁵³ See Constantine, 'Child migration to Australia after 1945'

⁵⁴ Meeting at the Home Office on 22nd March 1955, with Roman Catholic Diocesan Administrators, Note by the Home Office, G2/64 (W).

social backgrounds in the UK. The assumption amongst migration agencies that children who had difficult early lives would benefit from new opportunities in a new country neglected the reality that 'it was precisely such children, already rejected and insecure; who might often be ill-equipped to cope with the added strain of migration'⁵⁵. The review team noted with concern stories of siblings who had been separated on arrival in Australia, sometimes to institutions far removed from each other, and recommended that children should not be migrated unless they could subsequently be ensured regular contact with each other. Warm assurances by receiving institutions that children generally settled down quickly on arrival were treated with scepticism in the Report, with it being noted that child migrants had themselves spoken to the review team about their distress at separation from their families. Whilst there were exceptions, the care in most receiving homes took an institutional form, lacking privacy or a homely atmosphere and in some cases often poor standards of accommodation. Staff were in many cases well-intentioned, but the lack of specialist training in child care work meant that they did not necessarily understand the needs of the children with whom they were working. The remoteness of many of the receiving institutions meant that child migrants often had little opportunity to assimilate with wider society before leaving the institution. Whilst adults in Australia might be used to travelling considerable distances to undertake social activities, children in receiving institutions were dependent on those institutions making external activities available to them and those arrangements were not always adequate. Even receiving homes in or near towns did not always do enough to ensure that their children had opportunities to engage in wider social interactions beyond the institution. As a result, children often left the institutions with inadequate training in everyday life skills and insufficiently familiar with the social environments they were now expected to live in.

The Report's recommendations, whilst allowing that child migration could continue and that residential care might be still be needed until fostering became the established means of care for child migrants, were nevertheless a substantial challenge to existing practice. Migration of *all* children, not just those in local authority care, should now be subject to the permission of the Home Secretary. Sending agencies should provide full information of children's backgrounds to receiving institutions. Staff in residential homes should have relevant understanding of child-care methods. Children should be given greater opportunities for assimilation into Australian life. Foster care should become the preferred method of care for child migrants. Most ominously of all, for the child migration agencies, was the recommendation that the list of establishments approved to receive child migrants should be now reviewed with these basic standards in mind.

Alongside the text of the report, Ross also submitted a series of brief confidential reports about each of the institutions that they had visited which were even more frank about their short-comings. From these 26 individual reports, it was clear that the problems described in the main text of the report were widespread with most of the residential institutions visited having some form of serious short-coming. Only five of the institutions visited by Ross' team received an entirely positive review from him: the Clarendon Church of England Home for Children, Barnardo's Farm School at Picton, the Hagley Farm School, the Methodist Home at Burwood, and Burton Hall Training Farm⁵⁶. For the

⁵⁵ Ross Report, p.6.

⁵⁶ The Home Office, by 22nd June 1956 had drawn up its own evaluation of institutions based on the Ross team's confidential reports (Letter from Whittick to Shannon, 22nd June 1956, BN29/1325 (NA)). Ten institutions were placed in 'Category A' (not fit to receive further child migrants): St Joseph's Orphanage, Lane Cove; Dhurringile Rural Training Farm; St Joseph's, Neerkol; Salvation Army Training Farm; Methodist Home, Magill; St Vincent's Orphanage, Castledare; St Joseph's Farm School, Bindoon; St John Bosco's Boys' Town; Fairbridge Farm School, Pinjarra; Fairbridge Farm School, Molong. Eight institutions were placed in 'Category B' (more information required): Melrose, Pendle Hill; Murray Dwyer, Orphanage, Mayfield; Goodwood

rest, the reports present a litany of failings. The standard of accommodation in some homes was of poor quality and created a dis-spiriting environment for children⁵⁷. Staffing in many places was insufficient, too dominated by men or involved individuals in key positions who lacked training and insight into children's needs⁵⁸.

Ross reserved some of his strongest language for the failings of staff in this regard. The attitude of committee members of the Dhurringile Training Farm towards boys in their care was 'deplorable' and Ross made a point of contrasting the bleak, exploitative and uncaring environment with a British publicity brochure for the Farm which stated that 'boys are given a splendid opportunity at Dhurringile under ideal conditions under trained experts in social work'⁵⁹. The practice of transferring boys aged six or seven from St Joseph's, Leederville to St Vincent's, Castledare, where they would be almost entirely under the care of men was 'to be entirely deprecated'⁶⁰. The views of key staff were reported where these demonstrated an obvious lack of insight into children's experiences as migrants separated from their families or a lack of sympathy for more broadly accepted principles of child-care. In some cases, staff opposition to fostering children out was noted. A staff member at the Fairbridge Farm School at Pinjarra, for example, declared himself to be against giving the children anything more than very short-term experiences of foster-care as children tended to find their exposure to life in a family home 'upsetting' when they returned to the Farm School⁶¹. At Clontarf Boys' Town, the Principal said that 'he had no information about the boy's previous background or previous history, and did not consider there would be any advantage in having such information. He did not think that the boys themselves would ever worry about their parentage.'⁶² He also expressed the view that enuresis was sufficient grounds for refusing children to have temporary placements in foster homes during the summer holidays, meaning that children who wet the bed would have to stay living at the institution during their breaks⁶³. Noting again the lack of information about boys' previous backgrounds, the Principal of St Vincent's, Castledare said that 'he thought none of them had any relatives. He said that they settled quickly and without difficulty, and that, in his opinion, children did not think about what was happening to them and were not disturbed by moves'.⁶⁴ Lack of knowledge about children's previous home backgrounds, as a result

Orphanage, Adelaide; Clontarf Boys' Town, Perth; St Joseph's, Leederville (Subiaco); Methodist Home, Victoria Park; Swan Homes, Midland Junction; Nazareth House, East Camberwell. Eight institutions were considered to 'pass muster' (although Ross had noted significant criticisms even of some of these): Dr Barnardo's Homes, Burwood; Dr Barnardo's Homes, Normanhurst; Northcote School, Bacchus Marsh; St John's Church of England Home, Canterbury; Burton Hall Farm School; Methodist Home, Burwood; Clarendon Church of England Home, Kingston Park; Hagley Area Farm School, Tasmania.

⁵⁷ Fact-Finding Mission to Australia, Confidential Appendix, BN29/1325 (NA), reports on Fairbridge Molong; Riverview Training Farm; Methodist Home, Magill; Dhurringile Training Farm; St Vincent's, Castledare; and St Joseph's, Bindoon.

⁵⁸ Confidential Appendix, individual reports on Melrose Home (U.P.A.); Fairbridge Pinjarra; St Joseph's, Bindoon; Methodist Home, Victoria Park; St John Bosco Boys' Town; Riverview Training Farm; Dhurringile Training Farm; St Joseph's, Neerkol; St Vincent's, Castledare; Clontarf Boys' Town.

⁵⁹ Confidential Appendix, Dhurringile Training Farm.

⁶⁰ Confidential Appendix, St Joseph's, Leederville (Subiaco). The transfer of children within and between institutions was also noted in a number of the other reports including for St Vincent's Castledare (in relation to children transferred from there to Clontarf Boys' Town) and the Methodist Home, Victoria Park.

⁶¹ Confidential Appendix, Fairbridge Pinjarra. See also, for example, the report on St Joseph's, Leederville (Subiaco).

⁶² Confidential Appendix, report on Clontarf Boys' Town.

⁶³ In the Confidential Appendix, report on St John Bosco Boys' Town, the Principal was reported as saying that he found it difficult that he did not have the option of expelling child migrants from his school, and noted one such difficult child who had merited such an intervention was one who was 'enuretic and abnormally timid'.

⁶⁴ Confidential Appendix, report on St Vincent's, Castledare.

of little or no information having been passed on by sending organizations, was a source of complaint from staff in a number of residential homes, suggested that particular sending agencies may have had an effective policy of withholding this in the belief that it would give children a clean break from their pasts and the opportunity for them of a fresh start. This problem was repeatedly noted by Ross in relation to children sent by Roman Catholic organizations and the Church of England Council for Empire Settlement⁶⁵.

The isolated and institutional nature of many of the residential homes noted in the main report was described in more detail in the Confidential Appendix⁶⁶. In contrast to homes dealing with smaller groups of children, many remained large scale, impersonal institutions. In a number of cases, children were reported as sleeping in dormitories accommodating twenty children or more – in some instances up to fifty children⁶⁷. These were predominantly institutions run by Catholic religious orders. Staff at St Joseph's Children's Home at Neerkol told the Ross review team that 'there had never been any need to provide lockers for the boys [in the home], as they did not acquire possessions of their own.'⁶⁸ Toys displayed at Nazareth House, East Camberwell were so pristine and tidily ordered that it seemed unlikely they had ever been played with⁶⁹. Children were subject to rigid institutional regimes and given limited opportunities for social interaction beyond their institution, with some homes allowing trips outside of the home only in organised groups⁷⁰. The Principal at St John Bosco Boys' Town told the review team that it was necessary to keep their boys under 'constant supervision to guard against corruption'. The amount of work children were expected to do at the Fairbridge Farm Schools at Pinjarra and Molong, as well as institutions such as St Joseph's, Bindoon and the Dhurringile Training Farm, was contrasted very unfavourably with the Hagley Farm School where children's manual work contributing to the running and maintenance of the school was said to be only around two hours a week. As a consequence, children produced by these impersonal, highly structured, work dominated environments tended to have 'little opportunity for independent thought or action'⁷¹ and as such, poorly prepared for life beyond the institution.

There were inevitable shortcomings in Ross' confidential assessments of these institutions given the brevity of his visits to each one. His report on the Fairbridge Farm School at Molong, for example, describes its Principal, Frederick Woods, as 'a man of good personality, kindly and interested in the children'⁷². Whilst some children at Molong did indeed have positive, or at least mixed experiences of Woods, Ross' assessment of Woods' leadership was made in ignorance of the fact Woods had already been investigated twice in relation to allegations of sexual and physical abuse of children and that his practice of punishing children by beating them with a broken hockey stick had led, in

⁶⁵ See Confidential Appendix, Melrose Home (U.P.A.); Dr Barnardo's Home at Normanhurst; the Clarendon Home; Murray Dwyer Boys' Orphanage; St John's House, Canterbury; and Nazareth House, East Camberwell.

⁶⁶ The geographical remoteness of institutions was particularly noted in the Confidential Appendix reports on Fairbridge Molong; Fairbridge Pinjarra; St Joseph's, Lane Cove; St Joseph's, Bindoon; the Northcote Training Farm; Dhurringile Training Farm; and St Joseph's, Neerkol. Social isolation

⁶⁷ Confidential Appendix reports on St Joseph's, Lane Cove; St Joseph's, Neerkol; the Murray Dwyer Boys' Orphanage; St John's Bosco Boys' Town; St Joseph's, Bindoon; St Joseph's, Leederville (Subiaco); St Vincent's, Castledare; Clontarf Boys' Town; and St Vincent de Paul's Orphanage, Goodwood.

⁶⁸ Confidential Appendix, report on St Joseph's, Neerkol.

⁶⁹ Confidential Appendix, report on Nazareth House, East Camberwell.

⁷⁰ See Confidential Appendix reports on Methodist Home, Victoria Park; Fairbridge Pinjarra; Clontarf Boys' Town; Nazareth House, East Camberwell; St Joseph's, Bindoon; St Joseph's, Lane Cove; Dhurringile Training Farm; St Vincent's, Castledare; and St Joseph's, Neerkol.

⁷¹ Confidential Appendix, report on St Joseph's, Neerkol.

⁷² Confidential Appendix, report on Fairbridge Molong.

one case, to a child's back being broken⁷³. Ross' acknowledgment in the main report of the complaint by many homes of the intellectually or physically 'sub-standard' children they received could also have been more insightful. Whilst many homes did indeed complain to the review team about children being 'dull' or 'backward' it is notable that in almost all cases these complaints came from impersonal and highly regimented homes run by staff lacking insight into children's emotional needs⁷⁴. There was no recognition that children's withdrawn behaviour or educational under-performance may have been related to their experience of separation and the on-going lack of emotional nurture in the homes they had now been placed in. Rather children found themselves further blamed for expressions of their emotional distress. By contrast, homes that provided better environments had no complaints about the children they were receiving⁷⁵. Nevertheless, despite its flaws, Ross' Fact-Finding Mission report, and the accompanying confidential appendix, constituted a more substantial challenge to the system of child migration to Australia than anything to have previously been developed within the British Government.

This challenge was quickly recognised when Ross submitted his draft report and confidential appendix to the Commonwealth Relations Office. In a confidential letter to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations on 28th March 1956, attached to his draft report, Ross noted the sensitivities of this issue with regard to relationships with the Australian authorities. He proposed that whilst institutions be allowed to keep child migrants already resident with them, periodic reviews every three years should now be established to ensure appropriate standards were maintained. Permission for receipt of new child migrants should now, he suggested, be put on a more rigorous footing with no further children to be sent to institutions that were large and impersonal or in remote areas⁷⁶. In particular, Ross suggested that no further be sent to the following five institutions: the Salvation Army Training Farm, Riverview; the Dhurringile Rural Training Farm; St John Bosco Boys' Town; Methodist Children's Home, Magill, and St Joseph's Farm School, Bindoon. The Home Office later queried why Ross hadn't included at least another five institutions on this 'black-list', though also recognised that the royal and political patronage enjoyed by the Fairbridge Society put black-listing their schools at Pinjarra and Molong 'beyond the sphere of practical politics'⁷⁷. In reality, though, Ross' suggestion of no longer sending children to large or remote residential institutions would have had the effect of extending this ban far beyond his five highlighted organizations and to have included these Fairbridge institutions.

Shortly after this, the Office of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Canberra, who had made the practical arrangements for the Ross mission's visit, contacted the Commonwealth Relations Office with its own comments⁷⁸. Had it not been, they noted, for the presence of a member of the mission known to be sympathetic to child migration, the report would doubtless

⁷³ Hill, *Forgotten Children*, pp.xi-xiii,117-20.

⁷⁴ Such complaints about the poor quality of child migrants were made in the Confidential Appendix reports for Fairbridge Molong; Fairbridge Pinjarra; St Joseph's, Lane Cove; St Vincent de Paul Orphanage, Goodwood; the Murray Dwyer Orphanage; Dhurringile Training Farm; Nazareth House, East Camberwell; St John Bosco Boys' Town (whose Principal claimed that sending agencies were dumping problem children from their own residential homes in Britain on Australia); St Joseph's, Neerkol; and St Joseph's, Bindoon, where one staff member blamed the low quality of the child migrants they were working with on their 'poor heredity'.

⁷⁵ See, e.g., Confidential Appendix reports on Hagley Training Farm; Methodist Home, Burwood.

⁷⁶ Letter from John Ross to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 28th March 1956, DO35/6381 (NA).

⁷⁷ Letter from Whittick to Shannon, 22nd June 1956, BN29/1325 (NA).

⁷⁸ Letter from the Office of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Canberra, to the Commonwealth Relations Office, 12th April 1956, DO35/6381 (NA).

have been even more critical than it was⁷⁹. Although its criticisms were a compromise, they would nevertheless come as a strong disappointment to the voluntary organizations running the schemes and it was lamented that Ross had not taken up their suggestions to give a warmer account 'of the many kindnesses some the children and the money raised in this country'. A discussion then began within the Commonwealth Relations Office, including the Secretary of State, the future Prime Minister, Alec Douglas-Home, as to whether the Ross report should be published or not⁸⁰. The main argument against publication was that the report 'contained a number of observations that will be unwelcome to the child migration societies and to the Australian Governments, both Commonwealth and State'⁸¹. In favour of publication was the sheer fact that the review had taken place at all. Both the voluntary organizations and Australian authorities were obviously aware that it had taken place, and the Fairbridge Society had already by 19th April made several enquiries about its contents. Any attempt not to publish was likely to lead to inevitable demands for its release and any attempt to formulate policy on the basis of the report would also require its publication. On 27th April, at a meeting with the Secretary of State, it was agreed that the report should be published as a guidance paper, not yet accepted by the Government, in early June after the Australian authorities and voluntary organizations had been notified of its contents⁸². Showing copies of a Government report to the voluntary organizations before it had formally been presented to Parliament was not common practice, but the House of Commons agreed to this given the 'rather unusual' nature of the circumstances⁸³.

After the contents of the report became known to the Australian Government, its publication was managed in such a way as to soften its impact as much as possible⁸⁴. By 25th May, the Commonwealth Relations Office sent a telegram to the Office of the UK High Commissioner asking them to inform the Australian authorities that the Fact-Finding Mission's report would now be

⁷⁹ The Ross mission was made up of three members – Ross himself, Miss C.M. Wanborough-Jones, the Children's Officer for Essex County Council, who had already been a leading spokesperson for criticisms of child migration from local authority welfare officers in the UK, and William Garnett, a former Deputy High Commissioner to Australia. Garnett's membership of the team was proposed by the Commonwealth Relations Office to act against Ross and Wanborough-Jones' critical stance that was more typical of the Home Office's view of the child migration schemes.

⁸⁰ Internal Minute within the Commonwealth Relations Office, Noble to Secretary of State, 19th April 1956, BN29/1325.

⁸¹ Internal communications within the Commonwealth Relations Office also show that there was also concern about the reaction of Australian public opinion to the Ross report: 'Australian public opinion, which specially resents criticism from the United Kingdom, is likely to be irritated, with consequent strain on relations only a few months before the Prime Minister's visit' (Memo from Shannon to Sir Saville Garner, 29th May 1956, DO35/1381).

⁸² Minute of Meeting on 27th April 1956 to discuss the Report of the Fact-Finding Mission on Child Migration to Australia, BN29/1325 (NA). Initially, it was decided to release only copies of the main report to Australia authorities. As the Commonwealth Relations Office formulated plans over the next few weeks to liaise with Australian authorities to begin a process that made it appear that concerns in the report were being addressed, it was then decided to release the report's appendices to them as well on a confidential basis to guide this process. These appendices were not to be shared directly with the relevant voluntary organizations, however (Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to Office of the UK High Commissioner in Australia, 25th June 1956, DO35/1381 (NA)).

⁸³ Letter from Charns, HMSO, to Johnston, Commonwealth Relations Office, 12th July 1956, DO35/1381 (NA).

⁸⁴ At an early stage, the Office of the UK High Commissioner had recognised the political sensitivities around the findings of the Ross report and had liaised directly with the Prime Minister's Department in Canberra on how to respond to this (see Letter from Fraser, Office of the UK High Commissioner, to Johnson, Commonwealth Relations Officer, 20th September 1956, BN29/1325 (NA)).

delayed until mid-July⁸⁵. This would coincide with the publication of comments on the report by the Overseas Migration Board, an advisory panel to the Commonwealth Relations Office which had been strongly supportive of child migration schemes (and who on hearing the outcome of the Fact-Finding Mission had expressed strong regret that the report had ever been commissioned in the first place⁸⁶). On 6th June, this was followed up with a further telegram in which the Commonwealth Relations Office encouraged the UK High Commissioner's Office to liaise with the Australian authorities to set up some form of review that could be referred to when the Ross report was finally published to re-assure public opinion that any problems were in hand⁸⁷. Privately, officials in the Commonwealth Relations Office now expressed concern that simply publishing the Ross report alongside critical comments on it from the Overseas Migration Board would not be enough to mitigate its criticisms⁸⁸. The Overseas Migration Board were not experts in child-care after all and they had no direct evidence themselves of conditions in the residential institutions. If publication of the Ross report were not managed more effectively, the criticisms would rebound on to organizations running the schemes and probably effect public donations to them. The revised mid-July publication date would still be before the start of the Parliamentary summer recess, and could lead to demands for a Parliamentary debate on child migration. Unresolved questions would then continue to be picked up by the press during the 'silly season' of the Parliamentary summer recess with the Government poorly-placed to respond to these⁸⁹. These problems clearly continued to concern officials in the Commonwealth Relations Office. An appeal from Sir Colin Anderson, a member of the Overseas Migration Board and director of the company that ran the *Orient Line* shipping service to Australia, not to publish the report at all was given serious consideration⁹⁰. But this course of action still seemed impractical given that the report would inevitably have to be published given that the review was known to have taken place. After further discussion with the Overseas Migration Board's chairman⁹¹, it notified the UK High Commissioner's Office on 12th June that the Ross report would now published in mid-August during the Parliamentary recess to prevent

⁸⁵ Telegram Commonwealth Relations Office to Office of the UK High Commissioner, Canberra, 25th May 1956, DO35/1381.

⁸⁶ Memo from Ewans to Costley-White, 10th May 1956, DO35/1381 (NA). See also Extract from the County Council Association's Official Gazette, October 1956, DO35/1381 (NA) for an account of the Board's later criticisms of the Ross report in terms of the 'halcyon expectations of experts' which needed to be replaced with a 'more realistic view'. This article, published for local authority staff, made the interesting point that whilst the Fact-Finding Mission may well have been justified in its criticisms of standards in Australia, standards in Britain itself were still far from ideal with over 12,000 children still resident in large children's institutions. 'It is probable that conditions in a large number of voluntary Homes in this country vary very little from those described in Australia'. The Chairman of the Board, Commander Allan Noble, one of the leading spokesmen for its criticisms of the Ross report, was also a Conservative member of the Government, MP for Chelsea and Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Commonwealth Relations.

⁸⁷ Telegram Commonwealth Relations Office to Office of the UK High Commissioner, Canberra, 6th June 1956, DO35/1381.

⁸⁸ This point had recently been made to the Commonwealth Relations Office by the chair of the Overseas Migration Board who noted their disappointment that the report would fail to achieve what they hoped it would in terms of easing the doubts of local authorities in the UK 'as to whether they would be morally justified' in allowing children in their care to be migrated to Australia. The Board's plan of weakening its recommendations by 'finding as much fault with the report as possible, so as to provide a sort of counter-irritant' was risky though given their self-acknowledged lack of understanding of current child-care standards and direct evidence of provision in Australian (Letter from Commander Noble, Chairman of the Overseas Migration Board to Commonwealth Relations Office, 4th June 1956, DO35/1381 (NA)).

⁸⁹ Confidential internal notes attached to draft telegram from the Commonwealth Relations Office to Office of the UK High Commissioner, Canberra, 6th June 1956, DO35/1381.

⁹⁰ Memo from Shannon to Sir Saville Garner, 9th June 1956, DO35/1381.

⁹¹ Memo from Shannon to Smedley, 11th June 1956, DO35/1381.

calls for a Parliamentary debate in late July when the Government was already managing a very busy Parliamentary schedule. This delay, the Commonwealth Relations Office argued, made it even more urgent that the Australian authorities be seen to be making a start on 'securing improvement of such arrangements as they agree need improvement' before publication of the report⁹². Prior to the report's eventual publication on 14th August, the media strategy was being internally discussed in which the report was to be released with 'the briefest possible announcement and no explanation' in the hope that it would attract as little attention as possible⁹³. By the time of its publication, John Ross had left Britain on a long trip to Scandinavia, unavailable for public comment, and fully aware by then that his hopes that it could affect child migration policy would almost certainly not be realised⁹⁴.

Meanwhile, discussions were underway between the Commonwealth Relations Office and the Home Office about how to proceed with future applications for the migration of children. The Commonwealth Relations Office did not send the confidential reports on individual residential institutions to the Home Office until 9th June⁹⁵. Within a week of receiving these, the Home Office suggested that the best option would be to have a temporary suspension of all applications for child migration until either a more thorough review had been undertaken or a decision taken which would render further reviews unnecessary (i.e. cease approval for child migration as a matter of general policy). To continue to send children to institutions known to be problematic was recognised as not being in the best interests of the child. To try to make approvals only to selective institutions would require making decisions in some cases based on limited evidence and would also have the inadvertent effect of drawing the voluntary organizations' attention to the fact that a secret black-list existed. In a tone characteristic of interactions in the coming months, however, the Home Office showed no great inclination to express an authoritative view or to take responsibility for any decision in the face of opposition from the Australian authorities and child migration organizations. Whilst recommending temporary suspension of all child migration applications, it was made clear that 'we do not feel that we are in a position to advise you definitely in favour of it, and if on grounds of expediency, you preferred to adopt the first course [i.e. continue to approve applications], we could not dissent'⁹⁶.

Any intention on the Commonwealth Relations Office to follow this suggestion quickly evaporated⁹⁷, both through pressure from Australia and from child migration organizations in the UK. By the end of June, the Commonwealth Relations Office had begun to share content of the confidential appendices with the Australian Commonwealth Government. John Ross, when made aware of this, expressed considerable disquiet. Ross argued that the release of this information would make it possible for the report to be marginalised by disputing facts about individual institutions and that a

⁹² Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to Office of the UK High Commissioner in Australia, 12th June 1956, DO35/1381.

⁹³ Memo Joyce to Cockram, 27th July 1956, DO35/1381. Particular concern was raised that press interest might expose differences in opinion on the report between the Home Office and Commonwealth Relations Office.

⁹⁴ Letter from Ross to Shannon, 5th July 1956, BN29/1325.

⁹⁵ Letter from Costley-White to Whittick, 9th June 1956, DO35/1381 (NA).

⁹⁶ Letter from Whittick to Costley-White, 15th June 1956, DO35/1381 (NA).

⁹⁷ Home Office staff had been optimistic in late June that the Commonwealth Relations Office would indeed opt for a temporary suspension of approval of child migration applications (Memo from Whittick to Munro, 23rd June 1956, BN29/1325). This possibility had also been encouraged by the willingness of the Australian authorities to contemplate a short-term, informal suspension (caused by 'administrative' delays in the approval process) to give them enough time to be seen to be doing something in response to the content of the Ross report (Telegram from Office of the UK High Commissioner, Canberra to Commonwealth Relations Office, 25th June 1956, BN29/1325 (NA)).

focus on the five 'black-listed' institutions would obscure the 'ignorance of child care considerations, and the complacency' that the review team had found in many of the institutions⁹⁸. His objections were to no avail, but proved prescient given the events that were to take place later that summer.

On receipt of the confidential appendices, the Australian Government's response was to argue that the main criticisms within them concerned staffing and accommodation and that these required more time and investment (as well as an on-going commitment from the British Government to child migration) to be addressed. Its suggestion was to set up its own review, focusing on three of the five black-listed institutions (St John's Bosco Boys' Town, St Joseph's Bindoon and Dhurringile Rural Training Farm) as the other two were no longer intending to receive child migrants⁹⁹. The Commonwealth Relations Office commended this plan – ever conscious of the need for something to be seen to be taking place by the time of the publication of the Ross report¹⁰⁰ – and suggested that more institutions be visited in this review to avoid drawing attention just to the black-listed ones. It also suggested attaching an observer, Anthony Rouse, from the UK High Commissioner's Office to the Australian team¹⁰¹. The date of 11th July was set for the Australian review team to begin its visits to selected institutions. The desire of the Commonwealth Relations Office to ensure this process went smoothly went so far as a telegraphed enquiry to the Office of the UK High Commissioner to check that the Australian authorities understood that they would need to share the findings of their inspections with the British Government and that the content of their reports could have a significant bearing on whether child migration schemes were able to continue or not. 'Have the Australians,' it asked, 'considered this implication, which would need to be borne in mind in preparing reports?'¹⁰² As the planned review quickly took shape, the Home Office began to sense that its fight was nearly lost. In a letter to the Commonwealth Relations Office, it expressed the hope that a constructive discussion could take place with the Australian authorities on the standards of child-care by which it would assess residential institutions to which child migrants were sent and regretted that this had not happened before the Australian review had begun¹⁰³. By this stage, however, this was little more than aspiration and lament.

At the same time as the Australian 'solution' to the Ross report began to take shape, so the British Government was coming under increasing pressure to approve more child migration applications. On 3rd July, the Commonwealth Relations Office notified the Office of the UK High Commissioner in Canberra that the Fairbridge Society and Northcote Trust were pressing for approval of another 16 and 3 child migrants respectively to be sent to Australia¹⁰⁴. Feeling unable to resist this pressure, it

⁹⁸ Letter from Ross to Shannon, 28th June, 1956, BN29/1325.

⁹⁹ Telegram from Office of the UK High Commissioner, Canberra to Commonwealth Relations Office, 5th July 1956.

¹⁰⁰ The Commonwealth Relations Office had again been urging the UK High Commissioner's Office to press the Australian Government to take some initiative on the residential institutions, just two days before the Australian Government proposed its own review (Telegram from the Commonwealth Relations Office to the UK High Commissioner's Office, Canberra, 3rd July 1956, BN29/1325 (NA)).

¹⁰¹ Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to the Office of the UK High Commissioner, Canberra, 6th July 1956, BN29/1325.

¹⁰² Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to the Office of the UK High Commissioner, Canberra, 13th July 1956, BN29/1325.

¹⁰³ Letter from Gwynn to Shannon, 12th July 1956, BN29/1325 (NA); see also Home Office minute 10th July 1956, BN29/1325 (NA).

¹⁰⁴ Permission had already been given to another child migrant, WL, to be sent to Dhurringile even though it been one of the institutions put up for black-listing by Ross. This was done on the flimsy grounds that despite the problems at Dhurringile, which it was hoped would be rectified at some point, it was better for WL to be placed there with other children sharing his national and religious background than at another institution

agreed to approve these applications but notified Fairbridge and Northcote that any future approvals would need to be considered in the light of the Fact-Finding Mission's report and any subsequent consultations on it.

The Fairbridge Society was clearly unhappy at this prospect. On 13th July, the Home Secretary, Gwilym Lloyd-George, was forced to offer a bland holding statement about future policy decisions on child migration after Douglas Dodds-Parker, MP, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had met him on their behalf¹⁰⁵. Dodds-Parker claimed that there were 'rumours' that it would be compulsory in future for the Home Office to approve applications for the migration of all children and not just those in local authority care. The fact that this was indeed one of Ross's recommendations strongly suggested that the contents of the report had already been leaked in some form to Fairbridge¹⁰⁶. Any such recommendation, Dodds-Parker argued, would effectively kill off child migration work given that any consultation that the Home Office had with local authorities would lead to individual applications being blocked because of the latter's ignorance of the benefits of these schemes. Sounding a clear note against the move towards greater local authority powers over child-care under the previous Labour Government, Dodds-Parker noted that 'we hope that a Conservative Government will encourage voluntary child welfare organizations'¹⁰⁷.

In the event, the Australian review team did extend its inspections to more institutions than the three that were originally proposed. From Rouse's private notes¹⁰⁸, later sent to the Commonwealth Relations Office, it appears that at least eight institutional visits were made. Some of these were evidently fairly peremptory, with the Australia review managing to visit three separate institutions in Western Australia in a single day. Rouse's observations accorded to a great extent with those expressed in the Ross confidential appendices. He endorsed the review team's positive assessments of the Clarendon Church of England Home, the Burton Hill Farm School, Tartura, the Methodist Home at Burwood, and noted that some improvements had been made at Castledare and Swan Homes, Midland Junction since the Ross team had made their visits. The Fact-Finding Mission's less positive assessments of the other institutions that Rouse visited were also endorsed in the case of Nazareth House, East Camberwell. For other institutions, Rouse added his own criticisms. The 'worst feature' of the Fairbridge Farm School at Pinjarra, he commented, 'was the refusal to allow adoption or the boys to go to foster homes'. Despite the State Child Welfare Officer for Western Australia, Mr McColl, having frequent arguments with the school's principal about this, it was a 'rule laid down by the Fairbridge Society in the United Kingdom and evidently nothing can be done about it locally'¹⁰⁹. At Clontarf, he discovered that Mr McColl was hardly on speaking terms with the Principal any more after he had reprimanded the Principal 'for beating one of the boys unnecessarily severely'¹¹⁰. At Pinjarra, Castledare and Clontarf, Rouse made the observation that seems so striking to anyone

where he wouldn't have this in common with others (Letter from Munro to Costley-White, 22nd June 1956, BN29/1325 (NA)).

¹⁰⁵ Dodds-Parker's wife, Lady Aileen, would later become Chairman of the Fairbridge Society.

¹⁰⁶ It is not clear how quickly and how much information about the Fact-Finding Mission's report had been passed on to the Fairbridge Society, though it is striking in this context that the Society had already made numerous enquiries about its content by mid-April. Lady Bessborough, a member of the Overseas Migration Board, who had personal links to a child migration organization had also unsuccessfully requested in May that detailed information (i.e. the confidential appendices) be provided to the Board about criticisms made of specific schools (Memo from CRW to Shannon, 25th May, 1956, DO35/1381).

¹⁰⁷ Note from A.D. Dodds-Parker MP to Home Secretary, no date, DO35/1381 (NA).

¹⁰⁸ Private, brief typed notes from Rouse on each institution are recorded in BN29/1325 (NA).

¹⁰⁹ Rouse, note on Fairbridge Farm School, Pinjarra, visited 20th July 1956, BN29/1325 (NA).

¹¹⁰ Rouse, note on Clontarf Boys' Town, Perth, visited 20th July 1956, BN29/1325 (NA).

today seeing pictures of child migrants in some Australian institutions – the children wore no shoes. This, he noted, ‘must be cold for them in the winter’¹¹¹.

When the Australian review submitted copies of its reports to the Office of the UK High Commissioner on 10th September, its comments were much fuller than Rouse’s, but reports were only presented for the three institutions that it visited which Ross had proposed for black-listing¹¹². The report on St John’s Bosco Boys’ Town focused mainly on the physical environment of the school which it found entirely suitable. It also addressed what had evidently been a primary concern of the Fact-Finding Mission in its confidential comments on the school – that it was a highly regimented institution run on the basis of constant surveillance almost entirely by men with little effective arrangements for pastoral care. Discussion of this took place in a pre-arranged meeting with the school’s Principal and the Catholic Archbishop of Hobart, Guilford Young, prior to the inspection of the school. Here, the Principal, Fr Cole, defended the ethos of the school vigorously:

‘He challenged us to name a better school of this kind in Australia or in the world. He also defends very stoutly the system of “prevention” on which the school is run. With the operation of such a system boys are prevented from sinning or getting into trouble, thus “prevention is better than cure”. The Archbishop and Father Cole pointed out that this “preventative system” operates in all Silesian homes throughout the world and both, particularly Father Cole, were amazed that it should be questioned at Bosco’s.’¹¹³

Lack of effective female presence on the staff was not considered to be a concern because the youngest boy at the school at present was aged thirteen. Whilst apparently intending to report these as robust defences of the school’s ethos in response to the criticisms of the Fact-Finding Mission, some unease seems to have persisted for the Australian reviewers. They noted that the boys seen were poorly dressed, with Fr Cole apologising that if he had not been off-sick recently he would have ensured that the boys were much better turned out for the inspection. Their conclusion that the school required no further improvements to be considered suitable for receiving more child migrants was also qualified by their recommendation that its future in-take be restricted to children ‘already familiar with the “Silesian Order” and not be aged under ten or eleven.

Dhurringile Rural Training Farm and St Joseph’s, Bindoon were given similarly (guardedly) positive reviews by the Australian team though some minor improvements to their accommodation were identified that should be completed by the institutions within a period of three months. Dhurringile was required to improve its ground-floor bathrooms used by the boys and put floor coverings and curtains in their bedrooms¹¹⁴. At St Joseph’s, Bindoon, their report went into some detail with a recommendation for a wooden frame to be built in the boys’ shower room. It was also recommended that younger children no longer sleep on a veranda but in one of the main dormitories inside the building and that mats be placed on the bare concrete floors in the bedrooms. Again, whilst strongly recommending that the school continue to receive further child migrants subject to these improvements being carried out within three months, there was also some evidence of unease. It was questioned whether the Principal, who was clear that his background was only in teaching, was necessarily the most suited person to hold this role and noted that the Archbishop of

¹¹¹ Rouse note on Clontarf.

¹¹² Letter from Bunting, Prime Minister’s Department, Canberra to Tory, Office of the UK High Commissioner, 10th September 1956, BN29/1325 (NA).

¹¹³ Report by R.H. Wheeler, Assistant Secretary, Department of Immigration, Canberra and G.C. Smith, Director of Social Services Department, Tasmania, on St John Bosco Boys’ Town, BN29/1325 (NA).

¹¹⁴ Report by R.H. Wheeler, Assistant Secretary, Department of Immigration, Canberra and J.V. Wilson, Director, Children’s Services Department, Victoria on Dhurringile Rural Training Farm, BN29/1325 (NA).

Perth had also asked the review team in a prior meeting whether they thought that the Principal was ‘the right man for the job’¹¹⁵.

The contrast between Rouse’s private comments on each of these institutions and the final reports submitted by the Australian inspectors was stark. Rouse found the material conditions at Dhurringile to be generally poor was not particularly reassured by the promises of improvements made by the head of the Presbyterian Church’s Social Services Department for Victoria. The dairy was, he noted, in a better condition than the boys’ bathrooms, probably because it was inspected more often. The boys complained of not having sufficient packed lunches, being cold at Dhurringile, not getting hot drinks before tea if they were delayed coming back from school and travelling to school in a truck that was cold, draughty and insufficiently water-proof. The elderly management committee seemed more interested in the farm than the school itself and had no understanding of current principles of child-care¹¹⁶. At St John Bosco Boys’ Town, Rouse records a series of arguments with the Principal, who seemed almost entirely unreceptive to any suggestions made by the inspection team. At one point, the Principal objected to the discussion of having a stronger female staff presence in the school by saying that ‘he would not tolerate a woman on the staff “interfering with the whole organization”’. The staff, Rouse, concluded had little understanding of general child welfare and the ethos of the school was ‘austere and severe’¹¹⁷. At St Joseph’s, Bindoon, where the Australian inspectors had been particularly exercised by the problems of damp towels, Rouse was at his most damning. The bathrooms were in a disgusting state – including one toilet for use at night which had no seat – and had left Mr Wheeler, the lead Australian inspector, feeling nauseous. Most beds were without sheets, and where sheets were in evidence they were dirty and in poor condition. Children who wet the bed slept on a veranda where there was no protection against the elements. Amidst the spartan accommodation for the boys, the Principal proudly displayed the painted pillars (made to look like marble) in the school dining room which he claimed were designed ‘to give the boys “spiritual uplift as they would not have seen anything like this from where they came”’. ‘If this remark had not been made in all seriousness’, commented Rouse, ‘it would have been laughable.’ The boys had obviously been ‘spruced up’ for the visit and were wearing their best clothes, including shoes. From footmarks around the institution, though, it was clear that they normally went around in bare feet. The boys themselves told the inspection team that they had been put to work to clean the place up prior to their visit. Rouse expressed amazement that such poor conditions had been allowed to persist for such a long time, something for which the State Director of Child Welfare made an apology to the rest of the reviewers. Despite these obvious shortcomings, ‘the Principal appeared to think that there was nothing wrong with the establishment’. ‘He struck me,’ Rouse noted, ‘as being utterly callous and lacking in all understanding of child welfare’¹¹⁸.

The Australian Government’s view of this review process was clear, however. It had reviewed conditions at institutions that wished to continue to receive child migrants but had been identified by Ross as not being up to standard (limiting its definition of that to institutions that Ross had explicitly proposed for black-listing). With the exception of remedial work on some parts of their accommodation, these institutions had been found to be suitable for this purpose. As no other institutions had been explicitly identified as unsuitable to receive further child migrants, the

¹¹⁵ Report by R.H. Wheeler, Assistant Secretary, Department of Immigration, Canberra and J. McCall, Director, Child Welfare Department, Western Australia, BN29/1325 (NA).

¹¹⁶ Rouse report on Dhurringile Rural Training Farm, BN29/1325 (NA).

¹¹⁷ Rouse report on St John Bosco Boys’ Town, Hobart, BN29/1325 (NA).

¹¹⁸ Rouse report on St Joseph’s Farm School, Bindoon, Western Australia, BN29/1325 (NA).

Government's conclusion was that 'there is no justification for your [the British] government to take any action to cause even the temporary deferment of child migration to Australia'¹¹⁹.

The British response was one of resignation, rather than attempting to press for any more substantive changes. The Office of the UK High Commissioner in Canberra forwarded on the official Australian reports alongside Rouse's private notes to the Commonwealth Relations Office, noting the obvious disagreements between them and questioning the credibility of the Australian position. There was evidently no will to challenge this, however, and an initial response of the High Commissioner's Office was to ensure that its staff would no longer be implicated in inspection visits by Australian authorities, claiming that they no longer had sufficient staffing or budget to support this¹²⁰. By late autumn, the Commonwealth Relations Office recognised that its strategy of slowing down approval of applications for migration of children through 'administrative delay' could no longer be sustained. After forwarding the Australian reports and Rouse's notes to the Home Office in early November, it again contacted the Home Office on 23rd November to ask if in the light of these documents the Home Office had any objections to approval being given to these applications. These included requests to send children to Dhurringile, Castledare and the Fairbridge Farm School at Molong¹²¹. The Home Office's response was the documents from Australian 'confirm only too clearly the Mission's view that the Australian authorities have no real appreciation of what a good institution of that sort should be like'¹²². Its suggested solution was again a temporary holding measure. With the Empire Settlement Act, and terms of assisted passages, coming up for renewal, it was proposed that the Commonwealth Relations Office informed voluntary organizations that no further assisted passages for child migrants would be agreed for a further six months. This could seem a reasonable delay, particularly as the Suez crisis was likely to hold up migration journeys during that period as well. Despite having little optimism that it could achieve even this delay, given that 'the C.R.O. have consistently ignored our advice on this subject', this suggestion was made in a meeting with Commonwealth Relations Office who responded that this would not be 'politically practicable'¹²³. The Home Office conceded that 'political considerations, which were the province of C.R.O., might well override merits and, if that were so, we should not wish to press our objections.'¹²⁴ No written response was ever given to the Commonwealth Relations Office's letter of 23rd November. The applications for child migration were approved. The Home Office adopted an unofficial policy of trying to not to approve applications from local authorities to send children to institutions criticised by the Fact-Finding Mission (which were, in any case, few and far between given the strong opposition to child migration generally felt in local authorities). Aside from this, however, no further government action was taken as a result of the Fact-Finding Mission.

There were some changes in the working methods of some child migration organizations after 1956. Recognising the decreasing number of child migrants available to them, given local authority opposition to their work, the Fairbridge Society initiated its One Parent scheme in 1957, where single parents in the UK would send their children to Fairbridge institutions in Australia on the basis that they would also emigrate at a later date, at which point their children would be returned to

¹¹⁹ Letter from Bunting, Prime Minister's Department, Canberra to Tory, Office of the UK High Commissioner, 10th September 1956, BN29/1325 (NA).

¹²⁰ Letter from Fraser, Office of the UK High Commissioner, to Johnson, Commonwealth Relations Officer, 20th September 1956, BN29/1325 (NA)

¹²¹ Letter from Gibson to Whittick, 23 November 1956, BN29/1325 (NA).

¹²² Draft letter from Whittick to Gibson, unsend, BN29/1325 (NA).

¹²³ Home Office minutes 27th November and 5th December 1956, BN29/1325.

¹²⁴ Home Office minute, 5th December.

them once settled¹²⁵. The annual report of the Church of England Council for Commonwealth and Empire for 1957/58, reported that it welcomed what it claimed was a new policy by the Australian Government that child migrants with a surviving parent would only be accepted if the parent was also accepted for immigration and would follow on in due course¹²⁶. The Council commented that this was an idea that it had long supported¹²⁷. The lack of any mention of this in its previous reports and the fact that the Ross inspection team found many children had been sent to Australia by the Council with minimal information on their backgrounds despite having been taken from family homes suggested, however, that this might not have been the case. In its 1960 annual report, Dr Barnardo's Homes similarly reported a series of gradual changes that it had made to its work in the spirit of the Curtis Committee report. In Australia, larger residential accommodation at the Picton Farm School and parts of the Normanhurst Home had been sold to fund the purchase of smaller family group Homes and a Boarding Out officer had now been employed to assist in fostering out child migrants.

Alongside these new developments, however, child migrants continued to be sent to Australia unaccompanied by parents. In several cases they were sent to institutions that had been criticised by the Ross Fact-Finding Mission. As the 1960s progressed, child migration schemes began to wind down not through decisive government action in Britain and Australia but because vulnerable children were increasingly coming into the care of local authorities who wanted to maintain them in Britain. Receiving organizations in Australia, recognising that child migration work was becoming economically unviable for them, sold their residential institutions or changed the use of them into colleges, boarding schools or other kinds of residential home. Until they became the focus of renewed critical attention in the late 1980s, the schemes faded from public view, absorbed into the institutional histories of organizations that remain some of the most important providers of children's services in Britain today.

¹²⁵ Fairbridge Society brochure, D296/F1 (L); Hill, *Forgotten Children*, pp.283-4.

¹²⁶ It is not clear whether this policy was followed consistently by child migration organizations in subsequent years. No other child migration organization mention this policy in their records at this point.

¹²⁷ Church of England Council for Commonwealth and Empire Settlement Report for the 12 Months, 1st April 1957 to 31st March 1958, p.4, CECES-2-CA1250 (CE).