

GORDON LYNCH *

Catholic Child Migration Schemes from the United Kingdom to Australia: Systemic Failures and Religious Legitimation

Between 1938 and 1956, an estimated 1,147 children were sent from the United Kingdom to Australia through child migration initiatives delivered by Catholic organisations. Whilst experiences of child migrants varied, there has been a growing public recognition over the past thirty years of the trauma experienced by many. Although the suffering of child migrants occurred in the context of wider policy failures, this article argues that there was a particular pattern of systemic failures characteristic of these Catholic schemes. After providing an overview of the complex organisational structure through which Catholic child migration operated, the article identifies six systemic failures in this work relating both to organisational processes and the institutional conditions to which child migrants were sent. It goes on to argue that these occurred in a framework of religious legitimation which emphasised the unique role of the church as a mediator of salvation, the need to safeguard children's faith, the child as a member of a corporate body more than as an individual and the relative moral authority of the church over secular institutions. Within this framework, these systemic failures were either unrecognised or seen as tolerable in the context of wider organisational and theological priorities.

Introduction

Between 1938 and 1956, an estimated 1,147 children were sent from the United Kingdom to Australia, unaccompanied by parents, through child migration initiatives operated through Catholic organisations.¹ These schemes functioned within a broader history of the use of child migration as both a form of welfare intervention and empire settlement policy, through which an estimated 100,000 children were sent from the United Kingdom to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the former Southern Rhodesia between

1. Operating parallel to these schemes, an estimated 310 Catholic child migrants were sent to Australia from Malta between 1950 and 1965.

*Gordon Lynch is Michael Ramsey Professor of Modern Theology, Department of Religious Studies, University of Kent, Canterbury g.lynych@kent.ac.uk

1869 and 1970.² Supported by funding from the United Kingdom and overseas governments, these wider programmes were delivered by leading British charities, by churches, and by religious orders, in partnership with either overseas branches of their organisations or other bodies with which they had some form of affiliation.

Although the experiences of British child migrants varied significantly, there has, since the late 1980s, been a growing documentation of trauma experienced by children sent overseas through these schemes. In addition to memoirs and histories by former child migrants,³ books by journalists and others,⁴ and oral histories,⁵ there have been nine separate reports, inquiries or commissions of investigation since 1996 which have in some way examined the experiences of post-war British child migrants.⁶ Forms of trauma recorded in these include experiences of physical and sexual abuse, the effects of growing up in large, impersonal, and isolated institutions, and the pain of separation from family members in the United Kingdom or siblings also sent overseas. Former child migrants' accounts of their lives after leaving the residential institutions in which they spent their childhoods often provide evidence of considerable resilience. Alongside this, however, are other testimonies of struggles to form intimate relations with others in adulthood, broken relationships with spouses and children, addiction and, in some cases, suicide.

2. See, e.g., Ellen Boucher, *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); G. Lynch, *Remembering Child Migration: Faith, Nation-Building and the Wounds of Charity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). Children continued to be sent to the Fairbridge Farm School at Pinjarra on schemes where one or both of their parents would later emigrate to Australia until 1980, see G. Sherington and C. Jeffrey, *Fairbridge: Empire and Child Migration* (London: Wobrun Press, 1998), 264.

3. See, e.g., D. Plowman, *Our Home in the Bush: Tales of Tardun* (Como, WA: Tardun Old Boys Association, 1994); D. Hill, *The Forgotten Children: Fairbridge Farm School and Its Betrayal of Australia's Child Migrants* (Sydney: Random House, 2008); J. Hawkins, *The Bush Orphanage* (Docklands: JoJo Publishing, 2009).

4. P. Bean & J. Melville, *Lost Children of the Empire* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); M. Humphreys, *Empty Cradles* (London: Doubleday, 1994); A. Gill, *Orphans of the Empire: The Shocking Story of Child Migration to Australia* (Sydney: Random House, 1998).

5. Former Child Migrants and Forgotten Australians Oral History Project, National Library of Australia, completed 2012. See also oral histories available at Mitchell Library, State Library for New South Wales: MLOH 539.

6. See Legislative Assembly, Western Australia, Select Committee into Child Migration, *Interim Report* (Perth: State Government of Western Australia, 1996); UK Parliament Health Committee, Third Report, *The Welfare of Former British Child Migrants* (London: HMSO, 1998); *Preliminary Report on Neerkol for the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions* (Brisbane: Commission of Inquiry, 1998); *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions* (Brisbane: Commission of Inquiry, 1999) also known as the Forde Report; Australian Senate Community Affairs Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record, Report on Child Migration* (Canberra: Australian Commonwealth Government, 2001); Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, *Report of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry* (Belfast: HIA, 2017); Australian Royal Commission, *Case studies 5 (on Salvation Army institutions in Queensland and New South Wales), 11 (on Christian Brothers institutions in Western Australia) and 26 (on St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol)* (Canberra: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse); Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *Child Migration Programmes Investigation Report* (London: IICSA, 2018).

This article will explore how systemic failures in Catholic child migration from the United Kingdom to Australia gave rise to particular forms of suffering and how these systemic failures might be understood in the context of the religious cultures of the Catholic organisations involved. In pursuing these questions, there is no intention to imply that the failure to safeguard Catholic child migrants was solely the responsibility of Catholic organisations. The United Kingdom child migration programmes to Australia operated through a complex administrative system involving three bodies within the United Kingdom Government (the Home Office, Commonwealth Relations Office, and UK High Commission in Canberra), Australian immigration officials at Australia House in London, the Australian Commonwealth Government Department of Immigration, and State Government immigration and child welfare departments, as well as the numerous voluntary organisations involved in sending and receiving children. Systemic failures within these child migration programmes need to be understood not only in terms of the cultures and working practices of voluntary organisations undertaking this work, but as arising out of a flawed system of government administration in which competing departmental priorities, an aversion to challenging powerful stakeholder organisations, fragmented communication, and the complexities of overseeing trans-national programmes contributed to conditions in which children's welfare was insufficiently protected.⁷ Whilst the suffering of child migrants was by no means limited to children sent overseas through Catholic programmes, there was nevertheless a particular constellation of serious systemic failures within these Catholic initiatives which can be associated with the religious cultures of the organisations involved. This article therefore seeks to contribute to a critical understanding of that history.

In offering this account, it is important to recognise that such a critique is not offered simply from the perspective of hindsight or more contemporary psychological understandings of children's well-being. Post-war child migration schemes operated in the context of the growing influence of popularised understandings of psychological understandings of the importance of the emotional care of children and of the significance of the child's parental (and particularly maternal) relationships — an influence amplified by the recent experience of children's separation from parents through war-time evacuation schemes.⁸ Such ideas influenced not only the 1946 Curtis Report, discussed further below, but also contributed to public statements in the early post-war period by national organisations such as the British Federation of Social Workers and the Women's Group on Public Welfare which emphasised that if child migration were to be allowed, it should only operate on the basis of the highest standards of children's selection, preparation, overseas care, and

7. See, e.g., Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *Child Migration Programmes Investigation Report*.

8. See, e.g., Mathew Thomson, *Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture and Health in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Michal Shapira, "'Speaking Kleinian': Susan Isaacs as Ursula Wise and the Inter-War Popularisation of Psychoanalysis," *Medical History* 61, no. 4 (2017): 525–47.

post-migration monitoring.⁹ In this context, the operation of the Catholic migration schemes described below can be understood as reflecting a growing tension between Catholic and other denominational approaches to childcare (which stressed the importance of formation within religious settings) and more “secular” psychological approaches (which saw the emotional care of children as being of more primary importance than religious formation within a specific denomination).¹⁰

This article will approach this subject first by giving a brief overview of the history and organisational structure of Catholic child migration from the United Kingdom to Australia between 1938 and 1956. It will then consider six systemic failures within these initiatives before the significance the religious cultures of the organisations for these failures is then addressed.

The Structure of Catholic Child Migration to Australia

Although a small number of girls had been sent to Australia by the Sisters of Nazareth in 1928, the first main wave of Catholic child migration occurred in 1938 and 1939, when the Archbishop of Perth collaborated with the Christian Brothers on a plan to bring 110 boys from the United Kingdom to residential institutions operated by the Brothers in Western Australia.¹¹ This scheme was administered by a senior Christian Brother, Br Conlon, who is alleged to have been aware of incidents of sexual abuse at Christian Brothers’ residential institutions and poor organisational responses to this before undertaking this work.¹² The boys selected at this point were largely taken from residential homes in the United Kingdom run by the Sisters of Nazareth, who also sent a small number of nuns to support the work at the Brothers’ farm school at Tardun though they only remained there a short time.

Conlon pressed for the Australian Commonwealth Government to fund the migration of 500 more children during the Second World War, despite no clear evidence that the proposed receiving institutions had the necessary space to accommodate them. He continued to press for this even after the loss of life of seventy-seven child evacuees with the torpedoing of the SS *Benares* had demonstrated the risks of child emigration work under war-time conditions. Conlon’s request was refused by the Australian Commonwealth Government on the grounds of the lack of security on shipping routes.¹³

9. See, e.g., “Letter from British Federation of Social Workers,” *The Times*, 24 March 1948, 5; Women’s Group on Public Welfare, *Child Emigration* (London: National Council of Social Service, 1951).

10. This was exemplified in the minority opinion published as an Appendix to the Curtis Report (*Report of the Care of Children Committee*, cmd.6922 (London: HMSO, 1947)).

11. See correspondence and other documents in: A659/1945/1/499, National Archives of Australia, Canberra (henceforth NAA) and DO35/690/4, DO35/690/5, and DO35/691/1, UK National Archives, Kew (henceforth TNA).

12. B. Coldrey, “*Reaping the Whirlwind*”: *The Christian Brothers and Sexual Abuse of Boys 1920 to 1994* (private report submitted to the General Council of the Christian Brothers, no date).

13. Conlon to Honeysett, 1 December 1940, Carrodus to Conlon, 20 December 1940, A659/1945/1/499, NAA.

No further child migrants were sent through Catholic organisations until 334 children were sent to residential institutions in Western Australia in the autumn of 1947 after shipping berths were obtained for them through direct intervention by the Australian Commonwealth Minister of Immigration, Arthur Calwell, who had a long-standing association with the Christian Brothers.¹⁴ This post-war migration work took place in the context of a more concerted policy effort by the Australian Commonwealth Government to use assisted child migration as a tool for increasing the Australian population, both to preserve its security and to ensure the country's viability in the face of longer-term demographic threats.¹⁵ Child immigrants had a particular policy appeal in the early post-war period as it was argued that they would be more able successfully to assimilate to Australian life and would not create immediate demands for house-building or employment in the challenging economic context of post-war reconstruction. Initially conceived as a plan to bring 50,000 war orphans from the United Kingdom and parts of continental Europe to state-run residential care in Australia (a policy frame which contributed to the misconception in Australia that post-war child migrants were orphans), this policy proposal was suspended when it became clear that neither shipping berths on this scale nor this number of war orphans would be available.¹⁶ Instead, the aspiration to build the Australian population found expression through a revised policy of providing more substantial maintenance and capital building funding to support the child migration work of voluntary organisations than had been available in the inter-war years. For the Catholic Church, the immigration of children held a similar attraction for building up the minority Catholic population of Australia, and the prospect of child migrants being sent to non-denominational State-run cottage homes through the Government's original policy proposals may also have stimulated Catholic organisations to undertake more concerted efforts to ensure that Catholic children sent to Australia were maintained in Catholic residential institutions.¹⁷

The children sent to Catholic institutions in Western Australia in 1947 were again recruited through a visit to the United Kingdom by Br Conlon, and again were mostly recruited from homes run by the Sisters of Nazareth. Numbers of Catholic child migrants sent in subsequent years fluctuated considerably with the largest numbers migrating during periods when two administrators of the Australian Catholic Immigration Committee, Fr Nicol

14. See correspondence and other documents in A461, M349/1/7, A445, 133/2/8, NAA and DO35-1140-M1131-1 and DO35/3386, TNA; also C. Kiernan, *Calwell: A Personal and Political Biography* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1978), 128.

15. See, e.g., A. Calwell, *How Many Australians Tomorrow?* (Melbourne: Reed & Harris, 1945), especially 52–53.

16. See, e.g., *Report of the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Committee*, Presented 27 February, 1946, A446, 1960/66716, NAA.

17. It is notable, for example, that in the months after the Australian Commonwealth Government began to publicise its original plans for migrating children to State-run institutions, much larger-scale plans for the migration of children to Catholic institutions began to be developed (see Craven to Wiseman, 21 September 1945, DO35/1139/M1126/2, TNA).

and later Fr Stinson, were again involved in direct recruitment activity in the United Kingdom.¹⁸ There are indications that, by the mid-1950s, some dioceses in England and Wales were no longer willing to send more children to Australia, possibly because of the lack of reports they had received about children already sent.¹⁹ The last significant party of Catholic child migrants was sent in late 1956, around the time when the United Kingdom Government was proposing to introduce closer checks on the selection methods and administrative processes of sending organisations.²⁰

Catholic child migration from the United Kingdom to Australia operated on the basis of a complex system of relationships between dioceses, religious orders, and national Catholic organisations that undertook their work in the wider policy context of funding from the United Kingdom and Australian Commonwealth Governments.

Catholic organisations sending children from the United Kingdom included several diocesan child rescue societies, religious orders, and a small number of private individuals. Around two-thirds of all Catholic child migrants to Australia were sent from residential institutions run by the Sisters of Nazareth.²¹ The substantial involvement of the Sisters of Nazareth was the result of particular collaborations that the order had with the Christian Brothers (to whose institutions in Western Australia most boys from the Sisters of Nazareth were sent) and its own Nazareth Houses in Australia. The Sisters of Nazareth also, at different times, accommodated Australian Catholic administrators at their head house in Hammersmith who were visiting the United Kingdom to recruit child migrants.

²²

The process of administering this child migration work was undertaken by two national bodies. One, the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee, was a body created under the auspices of the Episcopal Conference of Catholic Bishops in Australia in 1947 to support Catholic immigration into Australia.²³ This body established a branch in the United Kingdom from the autumn of 1948 until autumn 1952, named the Australian Catholic Immigration Committee, which became the only voluntary organisation not based primarily in the United Kingdom to be approved as a sending organisation for

18. Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *Child Migration Programmes Case Study*. Day 15 transcript, 17 July 2017.

19. Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *Child Migration Programmes Case Study*. Day 16 transcript, 18 July 2017, 77–78.

20. On the development of these informal monitoring systems by the UK Government, see correspondence and other documents in DO35/6382 and DO35/6383, TNA. Fr Nicol had previously informed representatives of other child migration organisations in the United Kingdom that he thought his organisation would be reluctant to continue its child migration work if it were subject to any greater regulation (see minutes of the meeting of the Council of Voluntary Organisations for Child Emigration, 8 July 1952, H6/1/2/1, University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives, Fairbridge collection).

21. See Health Select Committee, *The Welfare of Former British Child Migrants*, vol. II, Third Report (London: HMSO, 1997/98), 160–61.

22. See, e.g., Simonds and Conlon to Calwell, 21 May 1946, DO35-1140-M1131-1, TNA.

23. F. Meacham, *The Church and Migrants, 1946–87* (Haberfield: St Joan of Arc Press, 1991), 18.

funding purposes by the United Kingdom Government.²⁴ After the closure of the its London office in 1952, the organisation no longer had any direct presence in the United Kingdom and appointed English diocesan child welfare administrators to act as agents on its behalf.²⁵ The other main national body involved was the Catholic Child Welfare Council for England and Wales, a consultative body of diocesan child rescue administrators, which also sought to act as a central administrative hub for processing child migration applications.²⁶ Between 1946 and 1948, the migration of Catholic children from Scotland and Northern Ireland operated through a network of organisational relationships between the Scottish Hierarchy, the Social Services Committee of the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh, and the Catholic Council for British Overseas Settlement for Scotland and Northern Ireland. From 1948, child migration work from Scotland and Northern Ireland was directly administered by the Australian Catholic Immigration Committee, although some Scottish children also appear to have been sent under the auspices of the Catholic Child Welfare Council for England and Wales.

Child migrants sent to Australia through these Catholic initiatives were, like the vast majority of child migrants to Australia, placed in residential institutions with only very few being adopted or fostered out. Residential institutions receiving Catholic child migrants were run by religious orders, notably the Christian Brothers (for boys), Sisters of Nazareth (for girls), the Sisters of Mercy (both boys and girls), and the Salesian Brothers (for boys), with small numbers also sent to institutions run by other religious orders.²⁷ ‘Custodian’ responsibilities for child migrants were usually given either to the diocesan bishop who had formally submitted the group nomination for their immigration, or to the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee.²⁸

This brief organisational and historical overview provides a context for understanding the more specific systemic failures in this work to which this article will now turn.

24. See correspondence and other documents on the UK Government recognition of the Australian Catholic Immigration Committee as a sending organisation for child migrants in DO35/3386 and DO35/3387, TNA.

25. These UK-based agents, Canon Flint (1952–1956) and Canon Flood (1956 onwards), were also during these periods the child migration administrators for the Catholic Child Welfare Council.

26. See evidence by Mary Gandy, Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *Child Migration Programmes Case Study*. Day 16 transcript, 18 July 2017. Although the Catholic Child Welfare Council was identified by Bernard Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster, as the body which should administer child migration from England and Wales, the body which liaised with the UK Government about these arrangements until 1948 was the Catholic Council for British Overseas Settlement. Given that the latter organisation had been constituted so that membership of its child migration sub-committee was the same as the membership of the Catholic Child Welfare Council (See Griffin to Wiseman, 3 July 1939, enclosing the new constitution of the Catholic Council for British Overseas Settlement, DO35/691/1, TNA) this ambiguity over organisational roles may not have had much practical significance for the actual operation of these schemes.

27. See Health Select Committee, *The Welfare of Former British Child Migrants*, vol. II, 160–61.

28. See, e.g., Garnett to Nutt, 25 February 1948, A446, 1956/67269, NAA. The formal role of the custodian was to ensure that appropriate standards of care were provided for the child.

Systemic Failures in Catholic Child Migration to Australia

Suffering experienced by children who emigrated from the United Kingdom to Australia by Catholic organisations was not simply a result of the cruelty or indifference of particular individuals whom they encountered, but was caused through structural failings within the work itself. Whilst the emigration of children as young as four or five years old was a project that inherently entailed significant risk to children's emotional well-being, the particular ways in which Catholic child migration operated exacerbated rather than reduced these risks. In considering these systemic failures, it is also important to recognise that these operated alongside structural and cultural factors within Catholic organisations, noted for example by the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, that left children vulnerable to abuse and made effective action against abusive staff less likely.²⁹

Impersonal and Isolated Institutions with Unsuitable Staff

It is hard to find anything good to say about this place, which has the disadvantages of isolation, comfortless and unsuitable accommodation, and a Principal with no understanding of children and no appreciation of their needs as developing individuals. The appearance and demeanour of the boys who were seen did nothing to modify the poor impression that the establishment made on the members of the mission.

(Confidential report on Christian Brothers' institution at St Joseph's Trade and Farm School, Bindoon, Western Australia, UK Government Fact-Finding Mission, 1956)³⁰

Catholic child migration work after 1947 operated in the context of a clear set of policy expectations for standards of child-care in Britain which had been laid out in the 1946 *Report of the Care of Children Committee* (more commonly known as the Curtis Report).³¹ Whilst seeing residential institutions in England and Wales as generally offering a reasonable level of material care for children, the Curtis Committee argued that they were far less effective in providing appropriate emotional care. Emphasising the importance of "security of affection" and the valuing of the individual child, the Curtis Report recommended that child-care policy in Britain should move away from the use of residential institutions and towards prioritising adoption or foster-care. If some forms of residential care might still be needed, the Report recommended that these be smaller "cottage-home" units with up to ten children cared for by a single "cottage-mother." Such residential units should be integrated into local communities so that children living in them could enjoy something as close to a "normal" childhood as possible —

29. See Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Final Report* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2017), Book 16.

30. Copy of memorandum at BN29/1325, TNA.

31. *Report of the Care of Children Committee*; see also G. Lynch, "'Pathways to the 1946 Curtis Report and the Post-war Reconstruction of Children's Out-of-home care,'" *Contemporary British History*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2019.1609947>, 1–22.

attending the same schools as other local children, taking part in other organised community groups, and being able to make their own friends outside of their home. With regard to child migration, the Curtis Report concluded that such schemes should only be allowed to resume if they offered standards of care overseas that were comparable to those which it had recommended for England and Wales.

The care of children outside the family home by Catholic organisations either in Britain or Australia in the decades immediately following the war did not generally fit the model recommended by Curtis. In 1956, a UK Government Fact-Finding Mission undertook a substantial review of residential institutions receiving child migrants in Australia.³² Amongst the twenty-six visits it made to residential institutions, ten were made to homes run by Catholic religious orders.³³ These were found to all be large institutions, most with dormitories accommodating between twenty-five and sixty children. Staffing levels varied, with the worst staffing ratio found at Castledare where four Christian Brothers were found to be responsible for the direct care of 120 young children. In most cases even if there were sufficient staff to pay more individual attention to children, the ethos of most of these institutions remained rigid and impersonal. Whilst some of the Catholic residential institutions were located in suburban areas, many were geographically isolated from any neighbouring communities. In most cases, though, even residential homes in suburban areas gave children limited opportunities for regular, informal contacts in their local community. The fact that these institutional conditions were not inevitable was illustrated by one Roman Catholic residential home at Newcastle, New South Wales, which unlike the other Catholic homes visited by the Mission was said to have a staff with understanding of children's needs and a culture in which children had far more freedom to develop their own activities and interests in the local community.³⁴

Shortcomings in institutional conditions and environments was made worse by children's exposure to many staff in these institutions who were physically abusive, and to some who were sexually abusive. In the case of the four institutions run by Christian Brothers which received child migrants, allegations of sexual abuse have been made against twenty-nine Brothers who worked in them in the period 1947-65, two of whom have been reported to have sexually abused more than fifty children each.³⁵ Unsuitability of staff extended beyond abusive individuals to staff groups with little understanding

32. Commonwealth Relations Office, *Child Migration to Australia: Report of a Fact-Finding Mission*, cmd.9832 (London: HMSO, 1956), also known as the Ross Report.

33. Reports of these individual institutional visits were produced as confidential appendices to the Ross Report, see BN29/1325, TNA.

34. Confidential appendix on Murray Dwyer RC Orphanage, BN29/1325, TNA.

35. G. Lynch, *Possible Collusion Between Individuals Alleged to Have Sexually Abused Boys at Four Christian Brothers' Institutions in Western Australia, 1947-1965: A Secondary Analysis of Material Collated by Historical Abuse Inquiries* (online paper accessible at <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/79274/>, first published, 12th December, 2019). See also Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Case Study 11, *Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2014); also Coldrey, "Reaping the Whirlwind."

of, or commitment to, psychologically minded approaches to child-care advocated by the Curtis Committee. Similarly, those managing these institutions were also found by the UK Fact-Finding Mission to be, in many cases, unsuited to their roles. In the case of the Christian Brothers' residential institution for younger children at Castledare, the Principal was reported to have told the Mission that "in his opinion, children did not think about what was happening to them and were not disturbed by moves." The Principal of St John's Bosco Boys' Town, run by the Salesian order, in Glenorchy, Tasmania, was similarly said to have made an "unfavourable impression" on members of the Mission through his insistence on an institutional culture in which boys at the institution were kept under constant surveillance to guard them from "corruption" and the involvement of women in caring responsibilities for the boys was prohibited.

Unprepared Institutions

We were worked like grown men, doing hard labour, but we were just boys doing men's jobs; clearing the scrub, building roads, putting up fencing, making a quota of 100 bricks a day. On top of that was the farm work. At times, after heavy workloads, I walked like a cripple because of the back breaking work. I suffer degenerative spinal injuries to this day.

(Former child migrant sent to St Mary's Agricultural School, Tardun, Western Australia)³⁶

Whilst all the Catholic residential institutions in Australia to which British child migrants were sent were of the large institutional type rejected by Curtis, the quality of their physical infrastructure varied. In the case of Christian Brothers' institutions in Western Australia, however, there was a repeated pattern of child migrants being sent to institutions before they were physically equipped to receive them. In 1938, the Bishop of Geraldton assured an official from the Australian Commonwealth Department of Immigration that no child migrants would be sent to the Brothers' farm school at Tardun until suitable accommodation had been built. Br Conlon did not adhere to this, however, and boys sent to Tardun had to undertake the majority of the required construction work at the site after their arrival.³⁷

In the spring of 1947, the Catholic Episcopal Migration and Welfare Association asked for 340 child migrants to be sent to six Catholic institutions in Western Australia.³⁸ Subsequent inspections of these by State Government officials found, however, that one did not have space because it had received elderly residents during the war, another was in very poor repair after having

36. Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, Module 2 Child Migration, witness statement for HIA338.

37. See extract from report by R. H. Wheeler, 21 July 1938 and Conlon to Lyons, 11 August 1938, A659/1945/1/499, NAA.

38. On the administrative process for this including reports on institutional inspections, see correspondence and other documents in A445/133/2/8, NAA. The Association had been formed under the authority of the Archbishop of Perth to oversee matters relating to Catholic immigration and was a constituent member of the national Federal Catholic Immigration Committee.

been seconded to the Royal Australian Air Force during the war, a third lacked the necessary space for the proposed numbers, and a fourth did not have the necessary teaching equipment or staff on site. Despite the obvious flaws in the Association's request, the United Kingdom and Australian Commonwealth Governments did not raise serious questions about the Association's fitness as a custodian organisation for Catholic child migrants in Western Australia. After assurances about necessary improvements from the Archbishop of Perth, revised inspection reports, and support from Arthur Calwell, approval was given for up to 340 British children to sail to these institutions that autumn. The following July, the first child welfare inspection of Castledare since the arrival of the child migrants indicated serious concerns. Dormitory floors were found to be badly stained by urine, which in a number of places had been left in pools without being mopped up. Wire bedframes under the mattresses had begun to rust because of sustained bedwetting. Mattresses were filthy, damaged, and in one case still being used by a young boy, despite being nearly torn in half. Some children were sleeping on external verandahs with inadequate bedding to keep them warm. The schoolrooms were overcrowded and the only room suitable for indoor recreation was also being used as a classroom and its fireplace was not currently usable. The state of the accommodation and the lack of medical checks on children were judged to constitute a significant health risk. Staffing was judged to be inadequate even for basic physical care of the young children, let alone emotional nurture.³⁹

Earlier that year, inspectors also found child migrants of school age at Bindoon were engaged in substantial building work.⁴⁰ An inspection later in the year recommended urgent improvements in the conditions of dormitories and bathrooms at Bindoon, but this work had still not been completed two years later.⁴¹ This reflected a wider pattern in which State Government inspectors indicated the need for improvements in accommodation at Christian Brothers' institutions ranging from improved teaching space to the completion of proper dormitories and sufficient, sanitary bathrooms, which indicated that the buildings were not adequately prepared for the children being sent to them and which were not properly resolved for several years.⁴²

In addition to the unsafe working conditions to which many child migrants were exposed when undertaking building work at the Brothers' institutions, the reliance on their labour had significant effects on their education with some entering adulthood functionally illiterate. By 1949, the extent of use of boys' labour at Bindoon had become a sufficient concern to Australian Commonwealth and State officials that they feared that the United Kingdom

39. Report on visit to Castledare Junior Orphanage, 9 July 1948, A445, 133/2/47, NAA.

40. Report on Bindoon, 22 January 1948, A445, 133/2/8, NAA.

41. Report on Bindoon, 3 August 1948, and Report on Bindoon by Denney and Bartley, 6 July 1950, A445, 133/2/8, NAA.

42. See, e.g., inspection reports on Clontarf at K403, W1959/96, NAA and on Castledare at K403, W1959/89, NAA.

Government might terminate child migration to Western Australia if they learned about it.⁴³

The Use of Child Migration for Organisational Purposes

[Canon Craven] also said that he was quite aware that Brother Conlon required watching and that it was necessary to see that the Christian Brothers did not try to absorb the children into their own Institutions, rather than allow them freely to choose their own vocation.

(Note of meeting between UK Dominions Office civil servant and Canon Craven, 13 February, 1945)⁴⁴

I, for one, worked up at the nursery with two other girls ... We girls did all the work like dressing, bathing, feeding, and putting babies on pots ... Yes, we had babies in cots and we bottle-fed them too and cleaned up ... We girls worked very hard, even got up throughout the night to the babies. Not only did I work up at the nursery, I also worked in the convent laundry. This was before and after going to school.

(Former child migrant sent to St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol, Queensland)⁴⁵

As will be discussed further below, Catholic organisations understood a significant benefit of child migration to be the removal of children from families or social backgrounds that could be morally damaging for them and to “safeguard” their individual faith by placing them in institutions where they would be maintained in a Catholic religious ethos. Alongside this understanding of protecting the individual faith of the child, however, there were also organisational benefits from participating in this work.

At its broadest level, Catholic child migration was seen by the Catholic Church in Australia as both a means of increasing the Catholic population of the country in the context of a society experienced as dominated by an Anglo-Protestant elite and of building up the bulwark of a Christian presence in Australia against the threat of powerful, non-Christian neighbouring countries.⁴⁶ The hostility towards British imperialism felt in parts of Irish-diasporan Australian Catholicism marked these broader Catholic motivations for child migration as being very different to the enthusiastic support for the empire given by other organisations involved in child migration work such as the Fairbridge Society and the Overseas League. For individual religious orders, child migration could also offer a way of increasing their organisational footprint in Australia. The quote cited above, from Fr George Craven, a priest involved in the United Kingdom administration of the first parties of Catholic child migrants to Western Australia in 1938/1939, is

43. See Minute on conference, 20 October 1949, K403, W1959/88, NAA.

44. Note of meeting with Craven, 13 February 1945, DO35/1139/M1126/1, TNA.

45. Senate Community Affairs Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record*, 87.

46. See, e.g., P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia: A History* (West Melbourne: Nelson, 1977), 354–405; T. Truman, *Catholic Action and Politics*, rev ed. (Melbourne: Georgian House, 1960), 70–97.

indicative of a perception that the Christian Brothers might use child migrants to build up the human and material resources of their order. This seems further borne out by the Brothers' use of child migrants' own labour to build up the physical infrastructure of their institutions at a lower cost than would have been incurred through the use of a paid work-force as well as the retention of some boys to continue to work unpaid at their institutions when they would normally be placed out in paid employment.⁴⁷ Excessive use of children's labour also applied to many female child migrants who were variously used to do domestic work in their institutions and in some cases required to work in nurseries or wards for the elderly attached to their residential home before reaching school leaving age.⁴⁸

More tangible financial benefits were also available. For Catholic residential institutions in the United Kingdom there were few direct financial incentives to provide children for emigration. However, as Arthur Calwell put it, child migration could have the financial benefits of lowering the costs of Catholic residential homes by reducing the number of children whom they were having to maintain.⁴⁹ For religious orders in Australia, child migration provided an opportunity to access Commonwealth and State capital funding that would not have otherwise been available.⁵⁰ Both the Christian Brothers and Sisters of Nazareth made use of these capital grants to expand their physical infrastructure. In the case of the Christian Brothers, it was recognised by State and Commonwealth officials that Br Keaney, who served as Principal for the Brothers' institutions at both Clontarf and Bindoon, adopted an idiosyncratic approach to calculating their costs (for example through sourcing materials through informal contacts without clear financial records) which made external checks difficult.⁵¹ In the case of the Sisters of Nazareth, there is some indication that the leveraging of capital funding from the Australian Commonwealth Government affected operational decisions made by the order about the migration of particular children. In a report submitted in October 1953 to the Secretary of the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee by Fr Stinson about his recent recruitment of child migrants, Stinson made the following comments about his attempts to overcome difficulties in recruiting female child migrants:

I then called on the Mother General of Nazareth [i.e. the Sisters of Nazareth] again pointing out to her that her Sisters in Melbourne had received A£90,000 from the Australian Govt. for their Extensions, and that if the Migrant girls were not forthcoming it was quite likely they would be asked to refund the money. Once again I emphasised to her that the Mother Superior in Melbourne had assured the Govt. that she had an undertaking from the Mother General in England that their Houses in Britain would make the children available. Mother General then promised me to

47. See, e.g., DO35/1138/M1020/2, TNA for examples of boys retained at Tardun after school-leaving age.

48. See, e.g., Senate Community Affairs Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record*, 87.

49. Calwell to Simonds, 15 September 1946, DO35-1140-M1131-1, TNA.

50. See, e.g., M. Fox, "British Child Migrants in New South Wales Catholic Orphanages," *History of Education Review* 25, no. 2 (1996): 1–17.

51. See Senate Community Affairs Committee, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record*, 91.

circularize the Houses again and promised to treat the matter as a No. 1 priority in all her Visitation. I then wrote again to all the Nazareth Houses for girls appealing to them to make every effort to fill this nomination. The result of all this was a further 25 names and from the whole of the 45 names submitted 20 were approved.

(Report by Fr Stinson to the Secretary of the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee, October 1953)⁵²

Poor Practice in Recruitment and Selection

I recall [people coming] to speak to us about Australia. I think they had Australian accents. They asked who wanted to go and I put my hand up as did fourteen other boys. We had no idea where Australia was and I thought it was a picnic spot somewhere in Belfast.

(Former child migrant sent to Australia from Nazareth Lodge, Belfast)⁵³

The Curtis Report's view that child migration should be reserved only for those children who would benefit from it was shared both within the United Kingdom Government Home Office's Children's Department and by other child-care professionals.⁵⁴ With this in mind, both the Home Office and a report undertaken by the Women's Group on Public Welfare recommended that children should only be sent overseas if their case had been reviewed by a suitable case committee that would take into account the views of the child and their family as well as the child's personal history.⁵⁵ Both the Curtis Report and Home Office had also taken the view that preserving children's contacts with family members should take a high priority when considering their out-of-home care arrangements.

There is little evidence that Catholic child migration adhered to these standards. In part, this was because the group nomination system for approval of immigration applications sometimes operated in such a way that many child migrants were recruited to fill quotas in receiving institutions.⁵⁶ This was not unique to Catholic schemes, with the Church of England body responsible for post-war child migration explicitly encouraging its supporters to help to fill "requisitions" for specific numbers of children for individual institutions in Australia.⁵⁷

52. Report by Fr Stinson, 1 October 1953, A445, 133/2/124, NAA.

53. Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, Module 2 Child Migration, Witness statement from HIA322.

54. *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, paragraph 515; memorandum from Maxwell, 26 June 1947, MH102/1553, TNA; Women's Group on Public Welfare, *Child Emigration* (London: National Council of Social Service, 1951), 20–29.

55. See Women's Group on Public Welfare, *Child Emigration*, 59; see also draft regulations for the child migration work of voluntary organisations under s.33 of the 1948 Children Act, MH102/1784, TNA.

56. Unfilled vacancies were also monitored by the Australian Commonwealth Government, not least because of capital funding given to institutions to enable them to expand to accommodate child migrants, see, e.g., memorandum from Castle, 4 February 1954, A445, 133/2/124, NAA.

57. Church Assembly, *Report of the Church of England Advisory Council of Empire Settlement for the Year 1 January 1948, to 31 December, 1948*, CECES-2-CA935, 3, Church of England Records Centre.

There were also distinctive shortcomings in the recruitment of Catholic child migrants. During his recruitment visit to Britain in 1938, Br Conlon had selected children from religious orders' institutions without liaising with the relevant Catholic child-care administrators for the dioceses in which those institutions were based.⁵⁸ When Conlon returned to the United Kingdom in 1946, he was told that the Catholic Child Welfare Council would support his recruitment work on the condition that he would now undertake this in collaboration with diocesan officers. Although Conlon appears to have complied with this to some extent, both Fr Nicol and Fr Stinson subsequently broke this agreement in later years when they found diocesan officials too slow in helping to provide children for emigration. Their failure to adhere to this agreement was known to the Catholic Child Welfare Council who, nevertheless, continued to collaborate with the Federal Catholic Immigration Committee, for which Nicol and Stinson were working.⁵⁹ It remains unclear whether the failure to consult diocesan officers about the emigration of individual children in institutional care in their dioceses means that some children, for whom those officers may have been their de facto guardians, were sent overseas without their proper legal consent. This system of direct recruitment of children from religious orders' institutions by Nicol and Stinson also meant that there was relatively little oversight and accountability for the selection of children from those institutions. In a number of cases, the immigration application form for children recruited in this way shows Fr Stinson signing the form both on behalf of the Australian Catholic Immigration Committee as the sponsoring organisation, and then witnessing the signature of the Mother Superior of an institution for the consent for the migration of that child.⁶⁰ In practice, this meant that Stinson was able to recruit children to try to fill the quotas raised by Catholic institutions in Australia without any formal case review of the appropriateness of emigration for each individual child. Former child migrants' recollections also indicate a lack of any serious discussion with them about the implications of emigration. Many remember either volunteering to go to Australia in a group talk which presented life in Australia in a romantic light or simply being told they were being sent overseas with no consultation of their wishes.⁶¹ None recall any proper discussion with them of the implications of emigration. Evidence of parental consent is far lower for children sent from the Sisters of Nazareth than for other British voluntary organisations involved in child migration work. In a number of cases former child migrants and their families have argued that

58. For a fuller account of these recruitment practices see Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *Child Migration Programmes Case Study*, Day 15 transcript, 17 July 2017.

59. See Flint to Haydon, 14 January 1955, DO35/6377, TNA.

60. Copies of these LEM3 forms are held in a series of files at NAA: PP93/10. References to files on individual child migrants are not given here given the personal nature of this material, but further information on this can be obtained if required from the author.

61. See, e.g., examples of this in Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, witness statements for HIA301, HIA278, HIA283, HIA286 and HIA299.

there were family members whose consent should have been sought before these children were sent overseas.⁶²

Failure to Undertake Effective Monitoring of Children Sent Overseas

She asked one nun to hold my shoulders down and the other nun was to sit on my legs. In those days, the nuns wore habits that came down to the ground and they were very heavy, very heavy habits. So one sat on my shoulders and held me down, and the other sat on my legs ... She thrashed and thrashed and then said, "Get up to your dormitory", and my back was so sore, I could barely climb the stairs. My back was so sore. That's when I changed. I changed. I changed. I lost — I lost something.

(Former child migrant sent to Goodwood Orphanage, Adelaide, South Australia)⁶³

The United Kingdom Home Office, child-care professionals, and several other British voluntary organisations undertaking child migration work recognised that those organisations sending child migrants overseas had a responsibility to continue to monitor their welfare.⁶⁴ The Commonwealth Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act of 1946 placed child migrants under the guardianship of the Commonwealth Minister of Immigration. This responsibility was usually devolved down to State child welfare departments with varying levels of monitoring from State child welfare and immigration officials taking place of child migrants both whilst they were in residential institutions and in subsequent work placements. Irrespective of these inspections by Australian officials, which in practice often failed to safeguard children from abuse,⁶⁵ it was nevertheless generally accepted that British organisations should undertake their own monitoring to satisfy themselves that children they had sent overseas were receiving appropriate standards of care and to inform their future decisions about the emigration of other children.

Catholic organisations in the United Kingdom did not, however, establish such systems, despite concerns particularly about residential institutions run by the Christian Brothers in Western Australia. During the Second World War, Catholic child-care administrators, including Bernard Griffin who was to become Archbishop of Westminster in 1943, were made aware of critical

62. For example, an analysis by the author of 99 currently available LEM3 forms for child migrants sent to Australia by the order in 1947 (see files in PP93/10, NAA) indicates that only just over 20 per cent had parental consent (see also the same consent rate noted for Catholic child migration more generally in Senate Community Affairs Committee, *Lost Innocents*, 59). Accounts of parents not consented about the migration of their children are given, for example, in Humphreys, *Empty Cradles*.

63. Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *Child Migration Programmes Case Study*, Transcript Day 5, 3 March 2017, 28–30.

64. See Niemeyer to Dixon, 12 June 1945, DO35/1133/M803/41, TNA; "Emigration Of children who have been deprived of a normal home life," K403, W59/63, NAA; Women's Group on Public Welfare, *Child Emigration*, 20–61; draft regulations for the child migration work of voluntary organisations under s.33 of the 1948 Children Act, MH102/1784, TNA.

65. On the reasons for systemic failures in child welfare inspections see, for example, Commission of Inquiry, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions*.

reports about standards of management, care, and accommodation particularly at the Brothers' residential institutions at Tardun and Castledare. Although initially discouraged from taking any direct action by the United Kingdom Government, Canon Craven gave repeated assurances to civil servants that no further children would be sent to the Brothers' institutions in Western Australia until Catholic officials from Britain had undertaken their own direct inspection of these institutions. No such inspection visit took place, however, and with Griffin's support the Catholic Child Welfare Council agreed to collaborate with Conlon's recruitment of children for these institutions from the summer of 1946.⁶⁶

In addition to failing to undertake institutional inspections of the children's homes to which they were sending children, Catholic organisations in the United Kingdom also failed to establish any effective system for checking on the welfare and progress of individual child migrants despite such systems existing for other major sending organisations of child migrants such as Dr Barnardo's Homes and the Fairbridge Society. The Catholic Child Welfare Council only began to initiate such a system in 1953, six years after its first child migrants arrived in Western Australia, and at no point thereafter did it or other Catholic sending organisations in Britain receive comprehensive or regular reports about the children sent through it and the Australian Catholic Immigration Committee.⁶⁷ Whilst the presence of such systems was not in itself a sufficient safeguard to protect children from abuse — as demonstrated by cases of abuse of children at Fairbridge's farm schools — the failure to implement such a system arguably reflected a wider organisational culture in which insufficient attention was paid to the welfare of the individual child.

Poor Practice with Regard to Record-Keeping

I have been deceived by the State Government of Western Australia and by the Catholic Church. They informed me that I was an orphan ... I found my mother through the Child Migrants Trust ... My mother and I were able to spend only six years together before she passed away.

(Witness to the Australian Royal Commission case study on Christian Brothers'

Institutions in Western Australia)⁶⁸

From 1945, there was a range of views about the appropriateness of sending children's case histories to the organisations receiving them in Australia. In 1945, for example, the London Secretary of the Fairbridge Society indicated that the view of their charity up to that point had been that it was not

66. See DO35/1138/M1120/1 and DO35/1139/M1126/2, TNA; Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *Child Migration Programmes Case Study*, Day 15 transcript, 17 July 2017.

67. Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *Child Migration Programmes Investigation Report*, 122–48.

68. Oral evidence from John Hennessey, *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*, Case Study 11, transcript of hearing on 28 April 2014, 24.

appropriate to send on such information on the grounds that it might be used with children in ways that were insensitive and unhelpful.⁶⁹ In the immediate post-war years, however, a growing consensus was to form against this view. Whilst recognising that there were risks with the provision of such information, civil servants and child-care professionals increasingly argued that such information was essential both to ensure that the child was given appropriate care overseas and that staff could answer questions from the child about their family background as they judged appropriate.⁷⁰

Despite this consensus, record-keeping practices on individual children by Catholic organisations — particularly the Sisters of Nazareth and Christian Brothers — were minimal. Whilst failures to transfer case records were not entirely unique to Catholic organisations,⁷¹ the UK's 1956 Fact-Finding Mission noted numerous cases of Catholic residential institutions in Australia which had received minimal information about the children sent to them. Individual monitoring reports on child migrants back from Australia also seem to have been made less likely by the fact that neither the Christian Brothers, nor it appears the Sisters of Nazareth, kept significant records on individual children received into their care. Aside from the issue of children whose names or other personal details appear to have been changed deliberately, the more general absence of information about many child migrants in Catholic institutions in Australia contributed to the context in which it was possible for them to be told inaccurately that they were orphans and had no surviving family members in the United Kingdom. This was, in the majority of cases, not true, as former child migrants were to discover when they began to try to trace their families later in life.⁷²

Taken together it is possible to see how these systemic failures created organisational contexts in which child migrants were subjected to significant loss of identity, trauma resulting from poor preparation and support through the difficult transition of emigration and abuse and neglect from staff, isolation and institutionalisation, unsuitable physical environments and exploitation of their labour. The defensiveness of receiving organisations about their standards of care for child migrants further contributed to institutional environments in which failures in the care of children were not adequately addressed. It is unsurprising, given this range of organisational factors, that

69. See Green to Wiseman, 31 August, 1945, and Report on Farm Schools in Australia by Mr W. Garnett and Comments of the General Secretary of the Fairbridge Farm Schools, Inc.; a similar view is taken in William Garnett, "Report on Farm Schools in Australia"; all of these documents are held in DO35/1138/M1007/1/2, TNA.

70. See "Emigration Of Children Who Have Been Deprived of a Normal Home Life," K403, W59/63, NAA; Women's Group on Public Welfare, *Child Emigration*, 31–32; J. Moss, *Child Migration to Australia* (London: HMSO, 1953), 4–5; draft regulations for the child migration work of voluntary organisations under s.33 of the 1948 Children Act, MH102/1784, TNA.

71. See, e.g., the reference to lack of records being sent by the Church of England Advisory Council for Empire Settlement in Report on St John's Church of England Home, Canterbury, Melbourne, 1 March 1956, BN29/1325, TNA.

72. Numerous accounts of family tracing for child migrants are given in Humphreys, *Empty Cradles*, including both cases in which former child migrants re-established contact with surviving parents or discovered that their parents had died in the decades after their migration but before they had been able to renew contact with them.

allegations of abuse and other complaints relating to their institutional treatment have been received particularly frequently from Catholic child migrants by the various public inquiries and investigations into these programmes since 1996.

The Religious Legitimation of Catholic Child Migration

These systemic failures in Catholic child migration work occurred in organisational contexts shaped by particular assumptions about the church, the child, and secular society. They were not simply poor organisational decisions, but practices reflecting underpinning religious assumptions about the church's unique role in the revelation of truth, as the mediator of salvation, and of the importance of the sacraments for the individual's eternal soul.⁷³ Allied with this was a strong sense of Catholic distinctiveness, sharpened both through sectarian tensions with Protestant churches and elites and (particularly in Australia) concern within the church about anti-clerical forms of the political left.⁷⁴ Whilst individual organisations involved in this work had their own organisational micro-cultures,⁷⁵ these broader religious assumptions provided a shared interpretative framework through which transnational collaborations between these different Catholic bodies could be experienced as necessary and meaningful.⁷⁶

Within this wider theological milieu, the individual child was understood as in need of safeguarding primarily in terms of the protection of their faith. In evidence to the Curtis Committee, members of the Catholic Child Welfare Council emphasised that the safeguarding of the child's faith was the key concern informing all aspects of their child-care policy.⁷⁷ This led members of the Council, for example, to adopt the practice of placing children in Catholic foster-care until the child was aged five before removing them from foster parents and placing them in an institution run by a religious order. The rationale for this policy — criticised in the Curtis Report⁷⁸ — was that the limited numbers of Catholic foster placements meant that these should be prioritised for very young children. The church was not prepared to contemplate putting children's faith at risk by placing them with foster carers who were not Catholic. The placement of children in large institutions run in accordance with the Catholic faith — including for child migrants sent

73. See, e.g., R. Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia 1806–1950* (Carlton, VA: Melbourne University Press, 1957), vol. II, 391–92; T. O'Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith: The Process of Education in Catholic Schools in Australia 1922–1965* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 41–70.

74. See, e.g., O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia*, 392–99; Paul Ormonde, *The Movement* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1972), xi–xx; B. Niall, *Mannix* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2015), 268–80.

75. See O'Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith*; T. O'Donoghue, *Catholic Teaching Brothers: Their Life in the English-Speaking World, 1891–1965* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

76. On the role of systems of moral meanings and historic child-care practice, see G. Lynch, "Saving the Child for the Sake of the Nation: Moral Framing and the Civic, Moral and Religious Redemption of Children," *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 2, no. 2: 165–96.

77. Transcript of evidence from the Catholic Child Welfare Council to the Care of Children Committee, 26 May 1945, MH102/1451D/C14, TNA.

78. *Report of the Care of Children Committee*, para 461.

overseas to protect them from the “moral risk” posed by unmarried or separated parents — appeared far preferable.⁷⁹

Whilst the child was seen as an individual with regard to their spiritual standing before God, children in the care of Catholic religious orders were also simultaneously seen as members of a corporate body to be shaped for the good of the wider Catholic community. This could be reinforced by religious language and practices which constructed Catholic communities as families stretching between heaven and earth within which children-in-care were incorporated members rather than individuals temporarily under the charge of a charitable organisation.⁸⁰ This corporate understanding of the child may, for example, be seen in the limited individual records on children. Whilst failures to keep records about children’s pre-admission histories may have been understood in some cases in terms of protecting them from backgrounds that clergy or religious saw as morally undesirable, the lack of records once the child was in the care of a religious order could be seen as indicative of a broader lack of organisational focus on the kinds of individual development that had been emphasised by the Curtis Committee.⁸¹ This corporate ethos would certainly have been reinforced by the large impersonal dormitories in which many Catholic child migrants slept or the lack of their own personal clothes or possessions in some institutions.⁸² This corporate ethos is further reflected in an extensive publicity brochure produced by the Christian Brothers and the Archdiocese of Perth to support Conlon’s recruitment work in 1938.⁸³ Photography was extensively used in this, as it was in other similar publicity materials produced by voluntary organisations in that period, in ways that reflected both organisations’ ethos and their priorities for public self-representation.⁸⁴ Images in the Christian Brothers’ publicity material included a much higher proportion of images of the physical infrastructure of receiving institutions than of children, emphasising the grandeur of vision encapsulated in these buildings’ facades. Where children were pictured, in posed long shots, they were disciplined, attentive, and formal. By contrast, the Fairbridge Society, whose public appeals for its work rested on romanticised ideas of the benefits of removing children from slum areas to

79. A common entry route for many children placed in Catholic residential institutions who were subsequently sent to Australia was for them to have been come to these institutions from single parents (either unmarried or who had lost a partner through death or separation) who were unable to manage to care for them and undertake paid employment.

80. See, e.g., A. Harris, *Faith in the Family: A Lived History of English Catholicism, 1945–82* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 10–14.

81. Although the lack of individual records could also be seen as a consequence of understaffing, the consistent lack of records for child migrants compared to other voluntary organisations in that period also appears to reflect a wider organisational culture (on this comparison, see, e.g., Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, *Child Migration Programmes Investigation Report*, 65–147.

82. See, e.g., Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Case Study 11, transcript of hearings on 29 April 2014, 26–36.

83. See *The Christian Brothers Associated Schemes for the Training of Poor Boys in Western Australia*, ED11/384, National Records of Scotland.

84. See J. Fink, “Inside a Hall of Mirrors: Residential Care and the Shifting Constructions of Childhood in Mid Twentieth-Century Britain,” *Pedagogica Historica* 44, no. 3 (2008): 287–307.

farm schools in the open countryside, used close-up shots emphasising an individual child's sense of joy, absorption or achievement in their new environment.⁸⁵ In comparison to the romanticised images of Fairbridge children (which problematically excluded any references to the families from which they were sent overseas), the children in the Brothers' images were represented as disciplined group members rather than developing individuals.

A third aspect of the culture underpinning this work was a trans-national Catholic imaginary in which different Catholic bodies were experienced by their members as broadly sharing a collective identity and mission. Whilst British child migration schemes have often been understood in terms of policies of Empire and Commonwealth settlement,⁸⁶ the Irish-diasporan leadership of many Catholic organisations in Australia had little sympathy with the project of building up a greater Britain.⁸⁷ Catholic child migration operated as a system of managing the human and material resources of the trans-national body of Christ, just as the British Government had originally understood child migration to Australia in terms of the management of the human and material resources of the Empire.⁸⁸ Within this shared religious trans-national imaginary, a sense of common religious purpose appears to have encouraged a willingness for collaboration — not always universally shared⁸⁹ — amongst British Catholic leaders and representatives of Australian Catholic organisations seeking to recruit child migrants. This presumption towards collaboration is evident both in Archbishop Griffin's active support of child migration as well as in the willingness of a number of members of the Catholic Child Welfare Council to continue to work with Australian administrators, despite evidence of their recruitment work by-passing the Council and their failure to provide sufficient progress reports on children sent overseas. Whilst bonds of organisational trust operated to varying degrees between other British and Australian voluntary organisations undertaking child migration work, this did not always lead other British organisations to fail to check on the welfare of those children they had sent overseas or the suitability of institutions receiving them.⁹⁰ Whilst there clearly could be disagreements between officials in the Catholic Church in the United Kingdom and Australia about the appropriateness of child migration as a welfare intervention (see footnote 89), such a degree of uncritical trust appears to have been premised on the

85. See *Annual Report of the Fairbridge Farm Schools for the Year Ending 1939*, 362.732FAI, Batty Library, Western Australia.

86. See Boucher, *Empire's Children*.

87. See, e.g., strong criticisms of British colonialism particularly in the context of Irish politics by Archbishop Daniel Mannix in Niall, *Mannix*, 85–89, 156–76, and O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church in Australia*, 341.

88. See, e.g., *Final Report of the Royal Commission on the Natural Resources, Trade and Legislation of Certain Portions of His Majesty's Dominions*, cmd.8462 (London: HMSO, 1917).

89. See Report by Fr Stinson, 1 October 1953, A445, 133/2/124, NAA in which it is noted that by 1952 some dioceses in England and Wales such as Liverpool and Newcastle were refusing to participate any further in providing children for migration.

90. For example, in the post-war period Dr Barnardo's Homes, the Fairbridge Society, and the National Children's Home all operated different systems for monitoring the welfare and progress of children they had sent overseas.

assumption that children's well-being would be safeguarded if they were sent to an institutional setting in which their Catholic formation would be continued.

A fourth element of the religious ethos supporting this child migration work was a belief in the moral authority of the church to pursue its mission and the greater force of this authority relative to that of secular organisations. In the context of the child migration schemes, this is evident in the attitudes of Catholic clergy and religious who saw inspections of its child migrants by State child-care officers, or the United Kingdom Government, not as a necessary part of a system of safeguarding children's welfare, but an unwelcome intrusion into the realm of their organisational authority.⁹¹ This sense of Catholic exceptionalism reflected a theological assumption about the unique role of the church in mediating truth and salvation. In this spirit, known incidents of the sexual abuse of child migrants were not reported to external authorities by Catholic religious orders in Australia — as happened in some other child migration organisations — on the basis that these were primarily matters of individual discipline and formation within the religious order and not a matter for secular bodies.⁹²

It was far from unique for organisations involved in child migration work to be insufficiently critical of their work because of moral assumptions underpinning their work.⁹³ In the context of Catholic organisations involved in child migration to Australia, however, it is possible to identify a particular configuration of religious assumptions which provided a context for systemic failures in many of their organisational practices. A belief in the church's exceptional mission and moral authority, in its responsibility to safeguard the eternal soul of the Catholic child, and in the child as corporate member of the Catholic community rather than individual in a process of psycho-social development, all contributed to organisational environments in which systemic failures were either unrecognised or tolerated in the context of the church's greater moral mission. Where strategic choices were made to encourage child migration under conditions in which children's welfare was at risk, in contradiction of standards set out in the Curtis Report, this could appear legitimate given the need to fulfil a more pressing sense of religious responsibility to protect the child from assimilation into non-Catholic organisations or households and to build up Catholicism in Australia in the face of wider social threats.

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91. See, e.g., interactions with external inspectors described in Report on Bindoon, 9 April 1948, Report on Bindoon, 13 November 1956, and Note on conversation with Wheeler, 20 November 1956, K403, W1959/88, NAA, which include attempts either to negotiate less rigorous assessments by inspectors or aggressive reactions to suggested changes.

92. See, e.g., Australian Royal Commission, *Case Study 11*.

93. See Lynch, *Remembering Child Migration*, 83–114.