



Tuart Place

Growing Strong Together



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9th August, 2013

Sir Anthony Hart
Chairman
Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry
P O Box 2080
BELFAST,
NORTHERN IRELAND
BT1 9QA

Dear Sir Anthony,

Please find attached a Report on the *Impacts and outcomes of child migration experienced by former child migrants from Northern Ireland*

This Report was prepared by Tuart Place to provide background information relevant to applications submitted to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry by former child migrants from Northern Ireland.

Each former child migrant in contact with your Inquiry will have an individual account of how they were affected by their time in Northern Irish institutions and their migration to Australia, however some impacts of child migration are common to the entire group.

This Report focuses on those impacts and outcomes that were universal, or were experienced by the very great majority of child migrants.

We hope the Report will assist in informing the Inquiry about the particular circumstances of children sent to Australia from Northern Ireland under the UK child migration schemes.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Philippa White
Director, Tuart Place

Impacts and outcomes of child migration experienced by former child migrants from Northern Ireland: A Report by Tuart Place

Introduction

This Report examines the impacts of child migration on former child migrants from Northern Ireland, and identifies common outcomes experienced by this group. Information was gathered from a series of reports and publications, and from the personal statements of former child migrants, documented by Tuart Place. The first section of the Report outlines the legislative basis for child migration, provides statistical data, and refers to three official reports on child migration published in the 1940s and 50s. These reports provide a context for the policies and practices of child migration and reveal the attitudes to child welfare and contemporary professional knowledge at that time.

The second section of the Report describes the treatment of child migrants in Australia and identifies a failure in the duty of care exercised by authorities involved in child migration. Specific harms experienced by the great majority of child migrants, such as lack of access to personal information and records, loss of connection to family and local communities, loss of personal and national identity, loss of cultural heritage, and loss of connection to country of origin are discussed in greater detail.

The Report concludes with an outline of previous responses and reparations offered to people harmed by the experience of child migration, and a summary of key issues identified in the Report.

Legislative basis for child migration

The legislative basis for child migration was provided by the *Empire Settlement Act 1922 (UK)*, which was reactivated after WWII, when the British Government, in partnership with the Australian Government, entered into agreements with each of the sending agencies. Sending agencies such as the Sisters of Nazareth, the Christian Brothers and Barnardos were responsible for the administration of the schemes. They were required to provide information to the UK Secretary of State for his authorisation to migrate children. However, as stated in the Australian Senate's report on child migration, the British Government effectively 'out-sourced' the task of child migration to the charities and religious organisations, noting that: "it appears that in practice [the sending agencies] dealt with all decision-making processes and procedures in relation to the selection of children, consents and migration arrangements"¹.

Statistical data

- Of the 1,355 children sent to Australia from the UK under post-WWII Catholic migration schemes, 1,096 were received by orphanages in Western Australia.
- Of these, 310 children were Maltese, 303 of whom were sent to WA.
- Of the 793 Catholic child migrants sent to Australia, an estimated 112 were sent from Northern Ireland, and were placed in orphanages formerly operated by the Christian Brothers and the Sisters of Mercy and Nazareth in Western Australia.

These 112 children were selected for migration by local authorities in Northern Ireland and were sent to Australia via England. Typically, children left Belfast by ferry, then travelled to London by train. All departures for Australia took place from the port of Southampton.

¹ Senate Community Affairs References Committee (2001). *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record*, Report on Child Migration, Commonwealth of Australia, August 2001. p.26.

The whereabouts of all 112 former child migrants from Northern Ireland is not known. Of the 69 known to Tuart Place, six are deceased; three live overseas; and five live interstate (four in Victoria and one in Queensland).

Motivations underpinning child migration policy

The motivation for choices made by governments, religious orders, and local authorities involved in sending children to Australia is the subject of analysis in published reports and other literature, and there is widespread consensus that motives were 'mixed'². It is well recognised that child migration policy was underpinned by a genuine philanthropic desire to rescue children from destitution and neglect and send them to a better life in the Colonies'³. However, child migration was also seen to be of economic benefit to those responsible for sending children and to the countries receiving them, and to be driven by motives other than the best interests of the child.

The Report of the *Lost Innocents* Senate Inquiry states that:

[D]uring and immediately after World War II there was a concerted effort within Australia to boost immigration to Australia of preferably British migrants, including child migrants. Dr Constantine noted, however, that in the United Kingdom, the studied effects of wartime evacuation and family separation confirmed the more widely publicised view in official and professional circles of the importance of stable child-parent relationships for the psychological well-being of children. These conclusions led to a questioning of the appropriateness of child migration as a child care practice.⁴

The Curtis, Moss, and Ross Reports

In 1945 the United Kingdom Government appointed the Care of Children Committee (the Curtis Committee) to report on the care of children. The Committee identified the conventional natural family as the unit most conducive to the well-being of children. The emphasis they placed on the psychological and not just the physical needs of children signalled an important shift in professional child care thinking. In its conclusions, the Curtis Committee emphasised that local authorities and voluntary societies caring for children 'deprived of a normal home life' should attempt to replicate the 'natural family' as far as possible in child care practice.

The Committee concluded that the emigration of children in care should remain open for those with 'an unfortunate background' and who 'express a desire for it', with the important caveat that the treatment of children sent overseas should not be less satisfactory than the care which they should receive in the United Kingdom (emphasis not in original)⁵.

Two major investigations into the situation of child migrants were conducted by British government officials in the 1950s. These led to the publication of two reports – the Moss Report in 1953 based on John Moss's visit in 1951-52; and the Ross Report in 1956 based on a UK official fact finding mission.

While the Moss Report commented favourably on several Australian institutions, as Dr Stephen Constantine of Lancaster University points out, the necessary reforms that John Moss sought to encourage were still guided by principles outlined in the Curtis Report⁶. Assessing some institutions, Moss was critical of their accommodation and facilities and of their isolation, expressed concern about single sex establishments, and drew attention to a lack of trained staff. He was keen to see more effort to encourage integration of children with the wider community and wanted to see more use of employment and vocational guidance services. He also urged the societies to abandon

² For detailed analysis, see <http://www.findandconnect.gov.au/wa/biogs/WE00473b.htm>. Accessed 8-8-13.

³ House of Commons. Op.cit. p.viii

⁴ *Lost Innocents*, Op.cit. p.49

⁵ *Lost Innocents*, Op.cit. p.39

⁶ *Lost Innocents*, Op.cit. p.41

barrack-like institutions in favour of cottage homes, boarding-out of more children, or the promotion of adoption as an option.

The Ross Report also criticised the nature of institutional care in Australia. The report noted that not all staff in these institutions had sufficient training, and was critical of the lack of educational and employment opportunities made available to the children. The larger establishments lacked a 'homely atmosphere', had too little privacy, and separated children by age and gender. The report noted that the separation of siblings indicated a failure to grasp the importance of family-focused child care. The report also noted that some boys and girls were being exploited as cheap labour.

Contemporary attitudes to child welfare

The findings of the Curtis Committee, and the Moss and Ross reports were not congruent with the standards and arrangements for out-of-home care of child migrants sent to Australia in the 1940s and 50s. The 'best practice' model outlined by Curtis included the following guidelines:

- Support children with their natural parent(s) if possible, and failing that to secure adoption or boarding-out of children with foster parents.
- Where children were to be retained in institutional care, the preferred 'institution' was to be a small group of children, looked after by a married couple, living in 'scattered homes', that is, ordinary houses indistinguishable from others in the neighbourhood.
- If, as a less desirable option, distinctive institutions were to be operated, these should allow children in small groups of different ages and both sexes to be looked after by a trained house 'mother' in purpose built 'cottage homes'.
- Far less acceptable were large 'barrack' institutions, especially those in which children slept in dormitories and dined in large groups. It was also seen as important that children should not be gathered into single-sex institutions.
- Siblings should not be separated.
- Contact with other relatives and friends should be retained.
- Conventional socialisation should occur by arranging for children, if possible, to attend normal state schools and to be involved in local sports and club activities⁷.

Despite the UK Government's acceptance of Curtis Report recommendations in March 1947, child migration to Australia continued until 1965.

Child migration from Northern Ireland

As mentioned above, only 69 of the 112 former child migrants sent to Australia from Northern Ireland have ever had contact with this agency or its forerunners. Of these, 55 are men and 14 are women. The years of arrival of the 69 former child migrants from Northern Ireland recorded on the Tuart Place database are identified in the table below:

Year of arrival	No of Children
1938/39	3
1947	32
1950	1
1952	1
1953	16
1954	1
1956	1
1957	9
1958	1

⁷ Ibid.

As this table shows, the majority of child migrants from Northern Ireland known to this agency were sent to Australia in 1947, with further peaks in 1953 and 1957. These children were sent to conditions that constituted the opposite of the 'best practice' model specified in the 1945 Curtis Report. As Dr Stephen Constantine concludes: it was 'abundantly clear' that the particular practice of child migration after 1945 was considered by most child care professionals in Britain as at best unnecessary and at worst – unless the Curtis Committee caveat was followed – damaging. Dr Constantine added that the politics of child care ensured that the caveat was dishonoured⁸.

Treatment of child migrants in Australia

Unfortunately, history has revealed that a large proportion of child migrants were not well cared for, and suffered serious disadvantages related to their involuntary migration to Australia. In 1996, the Western Australian Select Committee's investigation of child migration identified significant levels of abuse in Catholic orphanages formerly operated in WA. A number of other reports identify a disturbing level and extent of abuse and assault inflicted on many child migrants, with particular attention given to sexual abuse. Coldrey points out that: "Severity, violence, physical abuse, sexual abuse were on a continuum. The more severe the regimen the more likely the prevalence of sexual abuse"⁹.

In 1998 the UK House of Commons Health Committee reported that children sent to Australia "were placed in large, often isolated, institutions and were often subjected to harsh, sometimes intentionally brutal, regimes of work and discipline, unmodified by any real nurturing or encouragement. The institutions were inadequately supervised, monitored and inspected"¹⁰.

Types of abuse experienced by child migrants

In addition to the more well-known forms of abuse mentioned above, the *Lost innocents* inquiry found that the following forms of abuse were also widespread:

- "Depersonalisation - many former child migrants made reference to their becoming totally depersonalised in their childhood. Their names were changed, they were lied to about the existence of their parents, possessions were removed, gifts and letters were not passed on, and they were referred to by number and not by name. A lifetime lack of self-esteem resulted from such actions leaving a yearning for identity and connection.
- Psychological abuse – was manifested through deliberate, sustained cruelty and emotional deprivation. Constant reference was made to the lack of individualised care and attention, with disparaging and insulting comments about identity being common. Psychological trauma evidenced itself most frequently in high incidences of bed-wetting. Children from several, geographically separated institutions referred to the consequences of bed-wetting in terms of embarrassment, physical beatings and public humiliation in front of their child peers. Bed-wetting flashbacks have plagued mature adults. Many child migrants spoke about the feeling of exile and isolation and the yearning for close contact with a protective, human figure.
- Work practices – daily chores, especially in rural institutions, were so exhausting or time-consuming that children were too tired or had insufficient time for education. Some children were forced to undertake arduous and unsafe manual labour as part of construction work at

⁸ *Lost Innocents*, Op.cit. p.41

⁹ Coldrey, BM, (2000). *Caring and Corruption: Church Orphanages and Industrial Schools*, Studies, Vol 89, No.353, Spring 2000, p.9.

¹⁰ House of Commons, Great Britain, Select Committee on Health, *The welfare of former British child migrants*, London, 30 July 1998, Volume I - Report HC 755-I, Background, viewed 30 October 2009, <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmhealth/755/75504.htm>

the institution. Many submitted that wages earned when they were placed in work never materialised and they are still deeply aggrieved.

- Education – educational standards were so limited or virtually non-existent that some child migrants have progressed through life with minimal literacy skills.
- This educational deprivation has led to lifetime effects, especially for employment prospects and adopting itinerant job habits.
- Food and clothing – children were inappropriately clothed for the extreme Australian conditions, often cold, often lacking footwear. Children were not provided with adequate protective clothing to undertake the physical labour they were expected to perform. In many institutions there was a common experience of being constantly hungry and of being aware the nuns and brothers in charge of them always had better quality food. Scavenging and stealing food was reported as a common practice at some institutions.
- After-care – the provision of after-care services was often very poor. Constant reference was made to leaving an institution and being dumped into the alien environment of an unknown community without any experience of that community; about having poor social skills, limited life skills apart from a survival instinct, and little in the way of material and financial resources¹¹.

Outcomes of child migration

A series of investigations and reports published over the last thirty years identify a range of negative outcomes for people sent to Australia under the child migration schemes. These outcomes are the sequelae of the abuse and neglect suffered by many child migrants in Australian orphanages, in addition to the specific set of harms associated with child migration. It did not help that the UK government provided a subsistence allowance only until the child migrant turned 14, which increased the number of children who were discharged from Australian orphanages with little or no preparation for life on the outside. Some of the key problems identified by former child migrants are summarised below.

Access to information and records

A major source of frustration and distress for many former child migrants is the lack of adequate documentation and personal records.

Children were sent to Western Australia from Northern Ireland and other parts of the UK accompanied by only two documents - the Child Migration Medical Examination Report, and the 'L.E.M. 3' Child Migration form. These two-page documents were completed by the Catholic authority responsible for sending the child, and were supposed to include signed consent from the child's parent(s) or guardian. In many instances, the Medical Examination form and the LEM3 are incomplete, and lack the basic information they were designed to collect.

Copies of the two child migration selection documents were retained by the UK and Australian Immigration Departments. Child migrants generally had no access to their child migration forms or any other personal documents relating to their identity or family history. Many encountered problems when they left an orphanage and found they needed proof of identity, such as a birth certificate, and had great difficulty in obtaining even the most basic personal documentation.

Family medical histories have been largely inaccessible by former child migrants, a considerable proportion of whom have compromised physical health, and therefore have a particular need for this information. The lack of adequate documentation has denied child migrants access to

¹¹ *Lost Innocents*, Op.cit. p.73

information about the medical histories of their families of origin, and other important documents, such as vaccination records.

The false or misleading information provided to child migrants, who were often told they were orphans, has had devastating impacts:

Firstly, because they were told they had no family or that the families did not care for them, they did not try and reunite with them until many years later; secondly, some agencies for many decades clung to the view that child migrants were better off not knowing their backgrounds and therefore offered little or no assistance to former child migrants seeking records, again causing many to give up their search in frustration.¹²

Poor record-keeping practices by the sending agencies often resulted in children arriving in Australia with inaccurate information about their personal identity – including their names and dates of birth. Unless one has experienced it, it is hard to imagine the damage to identity caused by finding out that your birthdate is incorrect, or that the name you used throughout childhood was not really yours.

Records were routinely destroyed by the sending agencies, adding further frustration and distress when former child migrants have sought to find information relating to their personal identity.

There is considerable evidence that sending agencies also provided false information to families looking for children that had been sent to Australia. M's experience is typical of this:

M located her full birth certificate when she was in her 40s and needed a passport for her first overseas trip. It was at this time that M discovered the name of her mother, and felt that she had an identity.

M immediately set about tracing her family in Northern Ireland, only to be informed that her mother had died the year before.

When M travelled to Belfast she was told by an aunt that the family had tried to find her for many years but had been told by the Sisters at Nazareth House that M had been adopted.

Loss of national identity and cultural heritage

Some of the major implications of removing children from their culture and place of birth are identified in the 1997 *Bringing them Home* report, the Australian Human Rights Commission's report on the separation of Indigenous children from their families. The report reveals the shattering effects of the forcible removal policies in terms of the broken ties to family, community and country, diminished physical and mental health as a result of psychological abuse, physical and sexual abuse, the loss of language, culture and connection to traditional land, the loss of parenting skills and the enormous distress of many of its victims today. It also revealed the intergenerational impact and damaging effects that these forced child removals continue to have on the families and communities from which those children were taken¹³.

Some strikingly similar outcomes are described by people who were removed from Northern Ireland and other parts of the UK and sent as child migrants to Australia. The harm arising from this kind of removal is powerfully conveyed in evidence provided by a former child migrant to the British House of Commons Health Committee's inquiry:

For the vast majority of former child migrants the most often asked question is 'Who am I?' Most of us were born in the British Isles of British parents. Our culture, heritage and traditions are British. Our nationality, our rights and privileges were our inheritance. Unable to make a reasoned decision we

¹² *Lost Innocents*, Op.cit. p.169

¹³ Australian Human Rights Commission (1997). *Bringing them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*, April 1997. <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/hreoc/stolen/>

were transported twenty thousand kilometres to the other side of the world. Our crime for the most part was that we were the children of broken relationships. Our average age was eight years and nine months. In this one act, we were stripped of our parents and our brothers and sisters. We were stripped of our grandparents and extended families. We were stripped of nationality, culture and birthright. Many of us were stripped of our family name and even our birth date. We were stripped of our person hood, human rights and our dignity. We were referred to as migrant boy number 'so and so' or migrant girl number 'so and so'. And so we arrived, strangers in a strange land, lost and with no way back¹⁴.

The testimony of this former child migrant also highlights the issue of consent. In some instances, children were asked if they wanted to go to Australia “where they would ride to school on horses, and eat oranges picked straight from the tree”. The ‘consent’ of those children who agreed to go cannot be viewed as a legitimate, given that the children were not of legal age, and their consent was not ‘informed’. Research on the abovementioned child migration selection forms conducted by the Catholic Child Welfare Council (UK) in the 1990s found that, of 1149 child migrants, consent by birth parent(s) was given to the migration of children in only 229 instances (20%). In 920 (80%) of instances it is unknown whether or not parental consent was given¹⁵.

Many former child migrants have experienced confusion and distress regarding their national identity and a common assumption was that they were Australian citizens. J’s story is characteristic of many:

When J turned 18 he registered on the electoral roll, and voted in each election until he turned 22, when he was informed by his landlady that he wasn’t legally allowed to vote. J had believed that as a child migrant he automatically became an Australian citizen. At the time of the discovery, J felt shocked and embarrassed, and he later gained a sense of outrage that no one had ever thought to inform him of these things, or to provide him with basic identification and documentation¹⁶.

Other former child migrants recount similar experiences, and it was not uncommon for young men to be called up and complete National Service without becoming aware they were not citizens of Australia.

Loss of connection to family

Perhaps one of the most devastating outcomes for most child migrants has been the loss of connection with their families of origin, and this problem was among the first to be formally recognised by governments and other agencies. A major aim of the Select Committee into Child Migration appointed by the Western Australian Legislative Assembly in 1996 was to inquire into and report on the action necessary to assist former child migrants in the tracing of their family history and research, the tracing of relatives and reunification with them.

As mentioned above, many child migrants were told they were ‘war orphans’, leading to long delays in seeking family members. Countless former child migrants only began to search for family in the late 1980s after watching *The Leaving of Liverpool*, a televised program about work by the Child Migrants Trust to uncover the child migration scandal. L’s story is typical in this regard:

“Because information about my family was withheld from me, I did not try to find my family until I was 53. After watching a TV program I contacted the Child Migrants Trust who found out my mother was very much alive. Because of the amount of time elapsed my mother did not want to have a relationship with me or get to know my children – her grandchildren”. Like many relinquishing

¹⁴ House of Commons, Op.cit. p.xx

¹⁵ *Lost Innocents*, Op.cit. p.272

¹⁶ Unpublished statement, 2008.

mothers who had lived for decades with the secret of children born out of wedlock, L's mother felt unable to welcome him into her family, which was extremely hurtful and disappointing for L. L believes that if family information had not been withheld from him he would have searched for his mother earlier, and would have stood a much greater chance of being accepted into her life. He may also have been able to meet his grandparents, who were alive until the mid-1970s. L continues to suffer a deep sense of grief for the loss of opportunity to establish a relationship with his family of origin¹⁷.

Failure to implement proper duty of care

The lack of follow-up care by sending agencies across the UK, and their failure to monitor the well-being of children sent to Australia is a prominent theme in published literature. The House of Commons Health Committee's 1998 report states that: "A recurrent feature of child migration schemes seems to have been lack of effective monitoring of the children's welfare by either the British Government or the sending agencies. The post-War schemes, particularly to Australia, were excessively permissive. British Government supervision appears to have been non-existent..."¹⁸

The Health Committee further reported that:

In our visits we heard of very few local authorities as having been responsible for any of the child migrants we met. This bears out a statement in the Moss Report written in 1952 attached to the DoH memorandum: "local authorities have taken very little interest in the scheme ... There seems to be a feeling in some quarters that it is wrong to send a child, for whom a local authority is responsible, some 10,000 or 12,000 miles away."...[W]e consider the local authorities were correct. This also strongly suggests that it is inadequate to describe the practice of child migration as simply due to "a different social climate" as the DoH memorandum does¹⁹.

Following their visit to Australia in 1997, members of the Health Committee described being "appalled at the apparent lack of proper monitoring and inspection" in the large Australian institutions. Committee members noted that "the prime responsibility for the neglect of checking procedures rests with the state governments concerned. But the sending agencies might have been expected to have investigated more thoroughly the conditions in which children were living". There was clearly a breach of guardianship duties in sending the children in the way they were sent and in not monitoring their health and welfare sufficiently'. Furthermore, 'there was a failure to care for them to contemporary standards'.²⁰

The reports and research on child migration are consistent in their findings in this area – ie that abuse and neglect of child migrants was primarily the responsibility of Australian authorities, however, the agencies and statutory authorities complicit in sending children to Australia failed to implement a proper duty of care in regard to their welfare. As Coldrey observes: "Over the thirty years that child migration was planned and operated by Catholic Agencies in Britain and Australia, no British child care leader visited Australia to inspect the Catholic institutions"²¹.

Responses and reparations

The hardships and harm experienced by former child migrants have been formally acknowledged by various Commonwealth and State Governments and religious congregations previously involved in child migration. In 1997 the British House of Commons Health Committee accepted that responsibility for matters relating to the welfare of former British child migrants rested with the

¹⁷ Unpublished statement, 2008.

¹⁸ House of Commons. Op.cit. p.x

¹⁹ House of Commons. Op.cit. p.ix

²⁰ House of Commons. Op.cit. p.xv

²¹ Coldrey, B. (1993) *The Scheme: The Christian Brothers and Childcare in Western Australia*, Argyle-Pacific Publishing, Singapore. p.139.

British Department of Health and commenced an inquiry into child migration. The House of Commons Health Committee, chaired by David Hinchcliffe MP, took evidence in Australia in June 1998. The Committee tabled its report: *The welfare of former British child migrants*, in July 1998.²²

In December 1998 the British Health Secretary Frank Dobson accepted the report's main recommendations. He accepted the policy had been misguided and promised assistance to former child migrants by setting up a central database of information in the UK to help former child migrants trace their records and a Support Fund of 1 million pounds over three years to help pay for family reunions.

In January 2000 the Australian Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Phillip Ruddock, tabled the Australian Government response to the British Government response to the recommendations of the British House of Commons Health Committee's report of its inquiry into the welfare of former British child migrants²³. The Australian Government agreed to cooperate with the British Government in establishing a central database to help former child migrants trace their families.

In June 2000 the Australian Senate referred the issue of child migration to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee for investigation and report. In August 2001 the committee published its report, *Lost Innocents: Righting the record report on child migration*. The Committee noted that the two dominant concerns of child migrant witnesses were their loss of identity and their need to have the opportunity to tell their story, be heard and believed. It concluded that the Committee's inquiry clearly showed that issues associated with child migration to Australia had not been extensively covered and deserved the thorough Australia-wide attention the Senate inquiry was able to deliver. The report made 33 recommendations, including continued funding to assist reunions, tracing and access to records; that all state and territory governments undertake inquiries into the abuse of children in institutions; and that the Commonwealth and state governments all issue formal statements expressing deep sorrow and regret for the psychological, social and economic harm caused to the children²⁴.

In November 2009 the Australian Government delivered a formal apology to the 'Forgotten Australians' and former child migrants at a remembrance event in Canberra, ACT. A number of State Governments in Australia have also offered apologies to former child migrants. In August 1998, the Western Australian Government apologised to former British child migrants who suffered sexual, physical and emotional abuse in Western Australian orphanages and institutions. The parliamentary motion was: *That this House apologise to the former child migrants on behalf of all Western Australians for the past policies that led to their forced migration and the subsequent maltreatment so many experienced and express deep regret at the hurt and distress that this caused*. In April 2005 the Western Australian Government issued a broader apology to people who were harmed in institutional care.

²² Cited in Dow, C. & Phillips, J. (2009). *'Forgotten Australians' and 'Lost Innocents': Child migrants and children in institutional care in Australia*, Social Policy Section, Parliament of Australia, 11-11-2009, accessed 4-8-13. http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/0910/ChildMigrants#_Toc245702529

²³ For details see the Minister's press release, P Ruddock (Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs) Child migrant inquiry Minister tables Australian response, media release, Parliament House, Canberra, 27 January 2000, viewed 4 August 2009, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressrel%2FVPP06%22>

²⁴ *Lost Innocents*, Op.cit.

Forms of reparation and redress

Some of the abovementioned apologies have been accompanied by tangible gestures of regret, such as additional services for child migrants, financial reparation, and travel funds. The British Government's apology to former child migrants in 2010 was followed by a travel fund, still in operation, which is focussed on family restoration. The decision to implement another travel scheme has been widely criticised by former child migrants because many were unable to make use of the fund, either because they have never been able to locate any family in the UK; they are too ill or otherwise unable to take the long flight to the UK; or they have not made a successful connection with any family members in the UK. For this cohort, the 'take it or leave it' offer of funded travel has added insult to injury, and many have expressed a firm preference for financial reparation, which is viewed as a more respectful option.

This view has also been expressed by former child migrants who accessed the travel fund because it was 'all that was offered'. This group points out that they have already travelled under the various travel funds previously offered by religious congregations and the Australian Government, and would have preferred an offer of financial reparation, which would allowed them greater self-determination and would have represented a more respectful option than yet another travel fund.

Conclusion

The Tuart Place Report on the impacts of child migration reveals a range of harms and negative outcomes of child migration experienced by former child migrants from Northern Ireland and other parts of the UK.

The Report demonstrates that unaccompanied children were still being shipped from Northern Ireland to Australia for many years after this practice was recognised as harmful. The 'best practice' model of child care outlined in the 1945 Curtis Report recommended that children should be accommodated within small, mixed-sex 'family-style' groups; sibling connections should be maintained; and contact with other relatives, friends and local communities should be facilitated. None of these conditions were met by the Catholic receiving agencies in Australia.

Children sent to Australia had almost no chance of experiencing the kind of family life that was recognised as best practice in the UK, and migrant children were destined to spend their childhoods in regimented, barrack-style accommodation, separated from siblings, and with little or no contact with children (or adults) of the opposite sex.

Had these children remained in Northern Ireland they may have had opportunities to establish links with extended family or to be fostered or adopted, but in Australia they had no chance. As stated in the *Lost Innocents* report: "Neither private fostering nor adoption of child migrants was favoured, partly for legal reasons as the death of the parents of refugee children might be impossible to determine"²⁵. Private adoption of child migrants was very rare, and none of the 69 child migrants from Northern Ireland known to this agency were adopted by families in Australia. Some child migrants spent time with local 'holiday families', however, they were always returned to the orphanage once the holiday was over.

While some former child migrants identify various benefits to living in Australia, the negatives inevitably out-weigh the positives, primarily because of the way in which children were selected and sent away from their country of birth. There is substantial evidence that the great majority of child migrants have experienced a loss of national and personal identity as a direct result of their

²⁵ *Lost Innocents*. Op.cit. p.25

migration. Many, many former child migrants describe feeling that they do not really 'belong' anywhere – not in Australia, and not in their country of origin.

Some of the problems encountered by child migrants could have been avoided if local authorities and sending agencies in Northern Ireland had kept accurate information and been open and honest in sharing it with those formerly in their care. However, vital documents were routinely destroyed and, in many cases, information that could have helped reconnect people and reunite families was deliberately withheld.

The lack of information available to child migrants had devastating effects. Countless child migrants missed out on meeting their mothers because they died before they could be found. Family reunifications have also been fraught with problems, and the success rate among those lucky enough to find each other has been dismally low. How do you establish a meaningful connection with a person you have met once or twice who lives 15,000 kilometres away? There may be a biological connection but you have grown up in different cultures and have little in common. There have been some wonderful exceptions, but sadly they are rare, and even these 'lucky' families still face the tyranny of distance – a major obstacle to maintaining an ongoing family connection. Options for staying in touch have often been further restricted by impaired literacy skills and/or lack of access to communication technology such as email and Skype.

It is clear that the abuse and neglect experienced by child migrants in Australia was primarily the responsibility of local authorities and individuals, however, the agencies and statutory authorities complicit in sending children to Australia failed to implement a proper duty of care in regard to their welfare, and there was clearly a breach of guardianship duties.

Had these children remained in Northern Ireland they may well have suffered the types of abuse that have been reported by ex-residents of Northern Ireland's orphanages, however they would not have experienced the additional range of harms specific to child migration.

The evidence cited in this Report indicates that there was a long-standing and pervasive failure in the duty of care exercised by authorities in Northern Ireland and other parts of the UK to ensure that the children in their care were protected. Conditions in Northern Ireland's Catholic orphanages may not have been ideal, but the solution was not to send vulnerable children to the other side of the world.