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1. **INTRODUCTION:**

a) The Christian Brothers welcome the establishment of the Select Committee "to enquire into and report on the action necessary to assist former child migrants in the tracing of their family history and research, the tracing of their relatives and reunification with them". We welcome this initiative because the broader needs of former child migrants have for too long been neglected. In recent years there has been a lot of attention given to the experiences of physical and sexual abuse by some former child migrants. However, important as these matters are, all this has meant a certain neglect of something that is of fundamental importance for a much greater number of former child migrants, the matter of family origins.

b) We also welcome the Select Committee's work as a step towards the State Government assuming its rightful share of responsibility for the welfare of former child migrants. Public controversy about the institutions conducted by the Christian Brothers has tended to overshadow the fact that other agencies, especially Governments, were centrally involved.

c) The potential value of this Committee's work is in being able to take a coordinated and overall view of the needs of former child migrants in relation to family origins. The Christian Brothers have attempted to respond to the needs of their former students in a number of ways over recent years, but many of our students were not child migrants. Hence, our responses haven't had the needs of child migrants as their exclusive focus. Moreover, there are many other former child migrants in addition to those who came to our institutions.

d) The Christian Brothers believe that the child migration scheme and the way in which the child migrants were cared for in W.A. must be viewed in a way that does justice to all facets of the reality. The concept of migrating children from Britain and Malta to Australia, and the type of child care offered to the children...
once they arrived, need to be understood in their historical context before being judged. It seems clear that these systems and schemes were, in the context of the day, "well intentioned". It is also clear, especially in hindsight, that these systems and schemes had some appalling deficiencies and created dreadful dislocation and trauma in the lives of many.

e) However, it is also clear that much good was done for many child migrants by many devoted and caring people, despite the systemic deficiencies of the institutions. We believe it important that the laudable and overdue attempt to identify the harm done by the system, and to remedy this, should not lead to the devaluing or discounting of the experience of many former child migrants, who received good care and education and who have made successful lives for themselves.

f) The Christian Brothers have always sought to understand better the story of the child migration scheme as well as the individual stories of the child migrants themselves. Over the years many former child migrants and the Christian Brothers have had continuing contact and friendly relations, and the Christian Brothers have always tried to promote an open relationship with their former students.

g) A further expression of this openness to better understanding was our move in late 1990 to commission a professionally researched history of the Christian Brothers' involvement in childcare in Western Australia. At a time when allegations of abuse in our child care institutions were being raised in the media and some horrifying anecdotal accounts were being given wide exposure, we felt it imperative to provide as good an historical understanding as possible of the work of the institutions and the context in which they functioned. The resultant work, "The Scheme", by Dr. Barry Coldrey, a Christian Brother historian from Victoria, was ground-breaking research in this area. As a history of our institutions, its central focus is not child migration as such, but much of the material in the book, as well as the associated monographs produced during its preparation, provide essential material for a balanced understanding of child migration issues. The book is a first foray into this territory by an historian and does not offer the last word on the subject. However, it is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to understanding and offers essential insights.
h) The Christian Brothers have made other, more practical responses to the needs of the former child migrants among their students. After a public apology in 1993, we established a free, confidential Helpline counselling service, and we commissioned a panel of independent professionals to profile the needs of former students and make recommendations about services they needed. This Independent Services for Ex-Residents and Victims (ISERV) produced its Final Report in October 1994. The Helpline and services were remodelled in the light of the Report and, as Christian Brothers' Ex-Residents' Services (CBERS), have been in operation since early 1995. The first year of CBERS' operations was formally reviewed in March 1996. Both the ISERV Final Report and the CBERS Evaluation Report are part of our Submission to the Committee.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE - (a): NUMBER, ORIGINS AND DESTINATION OF CHILDREN REMOVED OR DEPOR TED TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA:

a) The child migration scheme itself was the responsibility of the British and Australian Governments. The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference became actively involved with the national governments in promoting child migration, especially in the post war era.

b) Prior to World War II, the question of child migration had been an element in continuing discussions involving members of the Christian Brothers, the Catholic Church and the State and Commonwealth Governments. From the Christian Brothers' point of view, the interest in child migration began with the establishment of Tardun in 1929 and the associated concept of a land settlement scheme. However, it was some years before the first group of child migrants came to Tardun in August 1938. Br. P. A. Conlon had been instrumental in bringing about this first involvement with child migrants, and he was also involved on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops in arranging the resumption of child migration after WWII. His personal enthusiasm for child migration did not always represent the attitudes of his congregational superiors who had made him available to the Bishops for these duties.

c) Those children who came to Catholic institutions in WA were formally accepted from the State Government into Catholic care by the Catholic Episcopal Migration and Welfare Association (CEMWA) an incorporated body formed for this purpose by the Archbishop of Perth, the Bishop of Geraldton and the Abbot of New Norcia. Thus, the four Christian Brother institutions and other Catholic
institutions received child migrants at the end of a line of arrangements involving Governments and the CEMWA.

d) All four of our childcare institutions received child migrants from the U.K. and Malta in the period 1947 to 1963.

e) It is difficult to determine precise numbers, origins and destinations of children due to the inadequacy of record keeping even at the time, as well as the effect that the passing of forty or fifty years has had on the surviving records. Br. Coldrey's research put the number of child migrants who came to our institutions in W.A. at about 450 from Britain and 230 from Malta. This may be an underestimate of the number of British child migrants, as a recent analysis of a database from the Catholic Child Welfare Council in the U.K. indicates 508 child migrants came from Britain to our institutions. A more accurate estimate would be about 750 child migrants in all coming to the Christian Brothers' institutions in W.A.

f) The Catholic Migrant Centre in Perth holds files for 617 male child migrants who came to our institutions from the U.K. and Malta. This would indicate that more than 100 of the child migrants who came to our institutions don't have files at the Catholic Migrant Centre and this is indicative of the gaps in the files and information at our disposal.

g) The analysis of the CCWC database referred to above also gives further information about children who were migrated to Australia, including a breakdown of ages, the institutions from which they came, and their destination institution in Australia. A copy of this database analysis is enclosed with this Submission. The CCWC have indicated that an updated version of this may be available soon, and it will be forwarded to the Committee when we receive it.

h) Files on child migrants were kept with the Child Welfare Department and the Catholic Migration Office. The Brothers who looked after the children in the institutions did not know details of family background and knew only the students' names, ages, dates of arrival and, in some cases, the name of the ship that had brought them. The only records currently in the possession of the Christian Brothers are the admissions registers of the four institutions, which
record the basic information referred to above and the movements of boys from one institution to another where this occurred.

i) The information and files accompanying child migrants were often inadequate, in some cases non-existent. One of the major deficiencies of the child migration scheme seems to have been the dramatic inconsistencies in the standard of record-keeping and passing-on of information. This hampered effective care of the children at the time, and has since then bedevilled the attempts of some former child migrants to trace family origins.

j) The Christian Brothers are currently in contact with other religious orders in Australia who received child migrants to establish what can be done to make files and personal information more accessible. We are also seeking the advice of the CCWC in Britain about the usefulness of computerising our own admissions' data and/or compiling a database of child migrants who came to our institutions (and perhaps all the Catholic institutions in Australia). Our know-how and resources in this area are limited and the Government may have a role to play in facilitating more efficient and more comprehensive co-ordination of files especially through computerisation or compilation of databases.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE (b)(i): EFFORTS MADE DURING THE OPERATIONS OF THE SCHEMES OR SINCE TO INFORM CHILDREN OF THE EXISTENCE AND WHEREABOUTS OF PARENTS OR SIBLINGS.

a) To our knowledge, informing child migrants of the existence or whereabouts of parents or siblings was not a normal part of childcare practices in those days. The logic of the child migration scheme was to give children a new start in life, and to that extent, the system was predicated on children not knowing, and not needing to know, about their "shameful" family origins.

b) We need to bear in mind that some child migrants (especially those from Malta) came with the consent of parents and were well aware of the existence and whereabouts of parents and siblings. However, most of the British child migrants came from institutions where they had been placed because of circumstances like illegitimacy, poverty or abandonment by parents.
c) To our knowledge, information which we were in possession of has never been
denied to former child migrants who have come to us with enquiries. However,
as has already been indicated, the information we had about them was
extremely limited, and most of their files were in the possession of the CWD or
the Catholic Migration Office.

d) Over the years approaches and enquiries from various individuals were
responded to by us. For example, a number of former child migrants
themselves entered the Congregation of Christian Brothers, and they have been
closely supported by our Order in their efforts to find family, and have been
enabled to travel to the U.K. to be reunited with family members. There are
other examples of former students who have been assisted by us over the years
to locate family members and to meet them.

e) As the needs of former child migrants have emerged more clearly in recent
years, our efforts in this area have become more systematic and professional.
Since early 1992 we have paid for the services of a qualified search worker in
the U.K. assisting with efforts by former child migrants to trace family there.
This person works under the supervision of the CCWC.

f) Since July 1993 we have funded a service run by the Catholic Migrant Centre
which assists former child migrants with access to personal information, in the
tracing of family and with associated counselling. The chief service provider is
Sr. Tania de Jong RGS, a qualified social anthropologist, cross-cultural
counsellor, family therapist, immigration adviser and a registered migration
agent (Reg. No. 67835).

g) More recently, the Christian Brothers have also funded the CCWC in the U.K. to
extend several particularly difficult family searches by accessing a commercial
database in the U.K.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE (b)(ii): EFFORTS MADE TO REUNITE OR ASSIST IN
THE REUNIFICATION OF CHILD MIGRANTS WITH RELATIVES:

a) As noted in Section 3 above, assistance rendered by the Christian Brothers to
assist former child migrants tracing family have included not only assisting with
access to information, but also in facilitating reunification with relatives. Such examples extend back over the last twenty to twenty five years at least.

b) From the late 1980’s the Christian Brothers were in contact with the Child Migrant Friendship Society Inc., a self-help organisation founded by child migrants. The Christian Brothers’ financed the establishment of their office and drop-in centre at Maylands and paid its rent for about four years.

c) We also gave personal support and various forms of practical assistance to another self-help group called Children from Catholic Institutions.

d) Since about 1992, financial assistance has been extended to former child migrants to enable them to travel to the U.K. or Ireland to be reunited with family members. At first this assistance was given on an ad hoc basis in response to approaches from individuals. A travel assistance fund was established by us in 1993 to put this form of assistance on a more organised footing. In early 1994 administration of this fund was transferred to ISERV (Independent Services for Ex-Residents and Victims), since known as CBERS (Christian Brothers’ Ex-Residents’ Services). In the time that travel assistance has been administered by ISERV and CBERS, 119 applications have been received. Of these, 58 men have been assisted to travel for family reunion, 49 applications are in various stages of being processed, 6 applications are “dormant” and 6 applications were rejected.

e) To our knowledge, we have been the only group involved in the child migration scheme to provide financial assistance for former child migrants to travel for purposes of family reunification. We have always maintained that the responsibility for the initiation of the scheme was not ours, and have always viewed this travel assistance as an ex gratia gesture. However, this opportunity for contact with family is so obviously valuable for former child migrants, and is such a central part of any sort of healing process for many, that it has become the centrepiece of the services offered through CBERS and it is one that we happily continue to fund.

f) It has been a frustration and a disappointment to us that efforts by the Christian Brothers directly, or from the Catholic Migrant Centre and CBERS, to establish cooperative relations with the Child Migrant Trust have largely met with
suspicion, hostility and rejection by the CMT. We acknowledge the excellent results achieved by the CMT in tracing family members for former child migrants. It is regrettable that there has not been more cooperation between agencies providing complementary services, e.g. CMT providing search work, CBERS providing supportive counselling and funding for former child migrants to travel to meet newly discovered family members.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE (b)(iii): PROVISION OF COUNSELLING OR OTHER SERVICES WHICH WERE NEUTRAL AND INDEPENDENT ENOUGH TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO FORMER CHILD MIGRANTS AND WERE OR ARE DESIGNED TO REDUCE OR LIMIT THE TRAUMA CAUSED BY THEIR REMOVAL OR DEPORTATION:

a) Both the Helpline run by the ISERV Panel and the services of CBERS have offered counselling. This has been provided either by referral or by ISERV/CBERS staff, as indicated by individual need. Counselling has been in connection with family reunification and/or about other issues important to the individual.

b) Given questions about the independence of ISERV and CBERS, it seems appropriate to note here the names and backgrounds of those people whom the Christian Brothers engaged to run these services -

i) The Helpline counselling service was established in late 1993 and was operated by Mr. Les Harrison, on secondment from the Department of Community Development. He was a senior clinical psychologist in the department and is a prominent professional working with survivors of sexual abuse.

ii) His work was overseen by the ISERV Panel, who were also commissioned to profile the needs of former students and to make recommendations about the services that should be provided. The Panel consisted of:

Ms. Jane Brazier (Chair) - Social Worker and Human Service Administrator with expertise in the area of child abuse. At that time she had a senior public service position in Disability Services.
Dr. Dianne McCavanagh - Clinical Psychologist and the then Director of Health Strategies in the Health Department of W.A. Extensive involvement with children and adults who have been abused.

Dr. Paul Carmen - Consultant Paediatrician at Princess Margaret Hospital and Lecturer at UWA. Has been a member of the child protection team at PMH since 1986 and was responsible for the management of the Hospital's child sexual abuse unit. Was for some years a member of the Advisory and Co-ordinating Committee on Child Abuse (ACCCA).

Mr. Bill Budiselik - Social Worker with extensive experience in several States and Territories. At that time he was Director in the Department for Community Development.

iii) When the ISERV Panel made its Report and the service was re-established as CBERS, a new Management Committee was set up to oversee the service:

Ms Maria Harries (Chair) - Senior Tutor in the Department of Social Work, UWA, and the then President of the W.A. Council of Social Service (WACOSS).

Dr. Paul Carmen - See above.

Professor David Plowman - Old Boy of Tardun and Director of the Graduate School of Management at UWA.

c) The independence of ISERV and CBERS has been attacked at different times over the last few years. We believe that any fair minded examination of the qualifications of the members of the ISERV Panel and the current Management Committee of CBERS, as well as of the staff who have operated the services, would reveal the highest standards of professionalism and independence. The running of these services has been in the hands of the best professional people that we could find. The Christian Brothers provide the funding for these services and receive only general and non-identifying information about the functioning of the services and financial accountability. The Management
Committee of CBERS meets on a quarterly basis with representatives of the Christian Brothers in order to present a financial report and a general report on the functioning of the service.

d) With the public controversy that has preceded it, and especially with the constant attacks of the lobby group VOICES, former child migrants and other former students of ours have been encouraged to view ISERV and CBERS as not being independent and as prone to breach confidentiality and so to compromise the welfare and best interests of the men. These unfortunate and unfounded slurs on the professionalism and independence of the people involved in the operation of ISERV and CBERS have prevented or delayed some men from accessing services from which they could have benefited greatly. We accept that some former child migrants who went to our institutions are so alienated from the Christian Brothers that they would be reluctant ever to approach an agency with which we were connected. However, this leaves us with the dilemma of knowing what it is we can do to assist such men if an independent agency funded by us is going to be "tainted" in their eyes by its financial connection to us.

e) In reality, many former child migrants have found the services provided by ISERV and CBERS neutral and independent enough to be acceptable, and have derived great benefit from these services (see especially the Evaluation of CBERS conducted earlier in 1996).

f) The Christian Brothers wish to underline the importance that they, on the advice of the staff of ISERV and CBERS, attach to the provision of adequate counselling to accompany the search work for family members and travel assistance to meet them. The discovery of family members and the experience of subsequently meeting them has been traumatic for some men, sometimes due to a lack of adequate preparation and pre-counselling. Furthermore, however well or badly reunions go, these events are nearly always highly significant and emotional experiences for the person, and once again, pre and post counselling are essential if these experiences are to be as beneficial and helpful for the person as possible.

g) The Christian Brothers believe they have established their bona fides in providing counselling and other services for former child migrants who were in
their care. However, we are ready to consider what other initiative might be needed to provide services "neutral and independent enough to be acceptable to former child migrants" and we remain open to the possibility of committing further resources to the support of such initiatives.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE (c) : ACTION TAKEN ON COMPLAINTS BY CHILD MIGRANTS IN RELATION TO THEIR MIGRATION AND SUBSEQUENT CARE:

a) The various initiatives of the Christian Brothers detailed above also apply to this term of reference, especially the establishment of the ISERV Panel and the confidential counselling services associated with ISERV and CBERS.

b) The Christian Brothers philosophy in responding to complaints by child migrants in relation to their migration and subsequent care has been to focus on responding to present needs in as wholistic a way as possible. For this reason we have tried to base our responses on present need rather than on any attempt to quantify harm or damage done in the past. The services we have set up have been available to all former students of our institutions, and not just to those who could in some way "prove" that they had been abused.

c) Over the years the Christian Brothers have found it much easier to deal with complaints where individual men have approached us and spoken directly about their experiences. Our experience has been that such direct contact has produced a much stronger sense of being heard and understood on the part of the former child migrant, a better basis for responding to the person's needs, and an interaction that is more likely to produce a sense of healing and reconciliation.

d) A major difficulty over recent years has been the situation where various former students, especially through VOICES, have made generalised and sweeping accusations about their experiences through the media. It has been very difficult, if not impossible, for us to respond to such complaints when we had no contact with the individual complainant nor details of the person's experience. It was partly for this reason that we chose to establish independent professional services which would enable individuals to be listened to in confidence, their experiences to be understood and acknowledged, and concrete assistance to
be offered. However, the role of VOICES and the litigation that was instigated in the New South Wales Supreme Court in August 1993 have both served to keep a substantial body of men at a distance from the Christian Brothers or the agencies that we fund, with the result that we were hearing about their complaints in sensationalised form through the media, but were unable to make any other response.

e) The work of the ISERV Panel involved receiving submissions from former students and related groups, and was a significant time of listening to the needs of former students.

f) The Christian Brothers have tried to take professional and independent advice to inform their responses to the complaints of recent years. In addition to the ISERV Panel and the Management Committee of CBERS referred to above, we have also had our own advisory committee since early 1993. We have genuinely tried to listen to people with expertise from outside our organisation in determining how best to respond to the needs of our former students, including former child migrants.

7. **FURTHER COMMENTS:**

a) During the years of our involvement in the care of former child migrants, 1938 - 1963, and especially in the ten years after WWII, our institutions struggled to achieve their task despite a chronic shortage of recurrent financial support from Government, the scarcity of the sort of professional childcare expertise that we take for granted these days, and large numbers of children to be cared for by limited members of overworked staff.

b) There was constant effort to improve amenities and facilities at our institutions through such means as Field Days, Street Appeals, Applications to the Lotteries Commission, and the generous voluntary work of many people from the wider communities.

c) The reports of the time indicate that the post-war child migrants to our institutions, especially the first group in 1947, contained many children with severe educational needs and behaviour problems. The needs of these children further stretched the limited resources of the institutions.
d) During the 1950's plans were made to find families in Perth where the boys at Clontarf and Castledare could experience family life by visiting a family on one Sunday per month. All of the institutions made arrangements for each boy to be given a holiday with a family at the end of school terms and at Christmas. All of this was an enormous undertaking, but one that attempted to offer some sort of experience of family to offset the lack of normal family experience for most of our students. These family contacts were rewarding and beneficial for many boys, and many former students are still in contact with their "mums and dads" of former years.

8. CONCLUSIONS:

a) The Christian Brothers were founded in Ireland in 1802 to care for and educate poor children. It is this founding ethos that was at the basis of our long involvement in child care in Western Australia (1901 - 1983). It was this ethos that helped bring about our involvement in the care of child migrants.

b) The Christian Brothers recognise that the whole concept of child migration was fundamentally flawed, despite the good intentions with which it was undertaken. That system has brought enormous dislocation and loss of identity into the lives of many men and women. The Christian Brothers' institutions were the recipients of children brought to Australia under a scheme that was not of the Christian Brothers' making. Insofar as the Christian Brothers and their institutions were part of this system and in some way contributed to the harm that it did, we express our sincere and unreserved apology and regret.

c) Similarly, the model of childcare prevalent in our institutions in those days can be seen with hindsight to have been deficient. Once again, the system was run with the best of intentions and achieved much good. However, for the harm that flowed from the intrinsic deficiencies of the childcare system in use, we also express our profound regret.

d) The Christian Brothers are proud of the good work that was done for many boys. Awareness of the deficiencies of the system should not lead us to forget the care, integrity and self-sacrifice of so many Brothers, staff and helpers in our childcare institutions.
e) It is now known that there were acts of physical and sexual abuse perpetrated by some individual Christian Brothers on the students in their care, including some child migrants. The Christian Brothers have several times publicly apologised to anyone who was a victim of such abuse, and we stand by this apology and maintain our commitment to assist former students.

f) The Christian Brothers believe that a crucial step in addressing the needs of former child migrants is the proper recognition of the role of governments at all levels of the child migration scheme, and the assumption by governments of their responsibilities. Governments controlled child migration by

- legislation and regulations
- subsidies and payments of various kinds - rarely adequate
- parliamentary debates and other process
- inspections

Other agencies involved in child migration, like the Christian Brothers and the Catholic Church, are now taking appropriate steps to address the situation. The major obstacle now is the inaction of governments.

g) In particular, we believe that the prime responsibility for funding family search work and reunification trips should be with the governments who ran the scheme which took children to the other side of the world. This should not be left solely to self-help efforts and private groups, like the Christian Brothers.

h) We are acutely aware that the services we offer are for our former students, not all of whom are former child migrants. Moreover, many child migrants went to other institutions. We are also aware that there are gaps in services and that more effective coordination is needed to enable all the needs of former child migrants to be met adequately. It seems to us that Governments are in a good position to be an "honest broker" in bringing together the various groups and agencies concerned with the welfare of former child migrants, in bringing about better coordination and effectiveness of services, and in ensuring that gaps in services are attended to.

i) We have already welcomed the possibility of action by the Western Australian Government in regard to the needs of former child migrants. We salute the efforts already made by various parties to persuade the Commonwealth and
U.K. Governments to assume their share of the responsibility for the welfare of former child migrants. Once again, the State Government is much better placed than any private or community groups to exert pressure on the Commonwealth and British Governments to acknowledge their responsibilities in this area.

j) The Christian Brothers believe that calls for Government action are more likely to be taken up if what is being requested is not just to duplicate what other groups and agencies are already doing. In this regard, we believe it important that the efforts being made by groups like CBERS, the Child Migrant Trust and the Australian Child Migrant Foundation should be noted, and that Government intervention should focus on coordination and filling of gaps rather than taking over and "centralising" existing efforts.

k) One area that may need Government action immediately is in the area of files and personal information. Urgent expert attention should be given to the current state of files and personal information of former child migrants, and resources provided to enable the coordination and appropriate accessibility of such information.

l) One area of particular need among some former child migrants is accommodation. Those men who have had very disrupted lives are sometimes living on the streets or in boarding houses, and their needs for appropriate accommodation, especially as they grow older, are acute. Urgent attention needs to be given to the adequacy of existing community resources in this area and to whether further initiatives by Government are needed to provide for these men.

m) Some former child migrants have encountered difficulties with various citizenship issues (see the Final Report of the ISERV Panel). While some of the anomalies and injustices in this area may have been resolved, every effort should be made to ensure that the Commonwealth Government rapidly resolves any remaining problems in this area.

Br. Tony Shanahan, cfc
Province Leader

Submission to Select Committee
on Child Migration - August 1996
km 6041
REFERENCES


N.B. A copy of each of these works have been forwarded with this Submission.