NEEDS SURVEY - ACCOMMODATION NEEDS OF FORMER RESIDENTS OF CHRISTIAN BROTHERS' INSTITUTIONS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

Brenda Clare: BA (Hons), MA, MSW, CQSW

May 1998
CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................ 3

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE ............................................................................. 4

3. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS ...................................................... 5

4. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES ............................................................................ 6
   A. The Concept of Need ......................................................................... 6
   B. The Concept of Accommodation Needs .......................................... 7

5. THE REVIEW PROCESS ............................................................................. 8

6 REPORT ON TERMS OF REFERENCE ...................................................... 11
   6.1 Term of Reference One ................................................................. 11
   6.2 Term of Reference Two ............................................................... 13
   6.3 Term of Reference Three ............................................................. 13
   6.4 Term of Reference Four ............................................................... 17
   6.5 Term of Reference Five ............................................................... 18
   6.6 Term of Reference Six ................................................................. 20
   6.7 Term of Reference Seven ............................................................. 20

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................................. 22
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In late 1997, the Christian Brothers' province leadership team was approached by people concerned about the accommodation situation of ageing and aged former residents of their children's' homes in WA. In response to these statements of concern, the province leadership team commissioned a Needs Survey in order to provide an informed framework for further discussion and action in this area. The aim of this survey is to assess the present and future needs for accommodation among former residents of the Christian Brothers' childcare institutions pre-1965.

1.2 The need to consider possible accommodation, and care, needs of ageing former residents had previously been raised in the Final Report of the Independent Advisory Panel to Assist Former Residents of Christian Brothers' Childcare Institutions (1994). In this report suggestions were made for the provision of:

- Hostel accommodation specifically for ex-residents in their old age;
- Commune-type accommodation for ex-residents who are 'down and out' (p40)

1.3 A telling comment from one ex-resident in relation to accommodation reported in the 1994 Report (p40) was:

"one of my greatest fears is growing old alone".

Having completed an interim survey, the results of which will be presented below, my opening comment in relation to the accommodation needs of former residents of Christian Brothers' institutions is that it is insufficient to think in terms of housing needs alone; the broader needs for a 'community of care' is symbolised rather by the term 'accommodation'. It is to this broader definition of accommodation that I will refer in my report.
2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 The terms of reference of the survey are as follows:

1. To establish criteria for determining levels of need in the area of accommodation and in relation to ex-residents of Christian Brothers' childcare institutions pre 1965.

2. To consult with a representative cross section of former residents and with agencies serving them (especially in relation to accommodation needs).

3. To identify the nature and extent of accommodation needs among former residents in Western Australia.

4. To profile present and projected trends in accommodation needs as former residents move towards 'retirement' and 'old age'.

5. To examine identified needs in the light of current and planned provision of accommodation by public and private agencies.

6. To consult with agencies working in this field e.g. Perth Inner City Housing Association, Homeswest, Housing Advocacy Support Service.

7. To make recommendations about appropriate and cost-effective ways of responding to needs, including ways of enabling former residents to utilise fully existing provisions and facilities.
3. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation One: That the emphasis of CBERS services be explicitly expanded to include a role in accommodating the needs of an ageing population of ex-residents, with a particular focus on the needs of prematurely ageing and marginalised men.

- An outreach / liaison service could be developed with CBERS staff liaising regularly with professionals in other agencies working with marginalised and transient males.
- In conjunction with other accommodation agencies, CBERS staff could develop an accommodation brokerage service, developing and maintaining small group accommodation made available through Homeswest tenancy schemes.

Recommendation Two: That the Christian Brothers planning team identify the areas of accommodation need that they perceive to be part of their continuing responsibility towards ex-residents of their childcare institutions.

Recommendation Three: That, as a short-term measure, specific, formalised arrangements be made to support and subsidise the informal networking and support provided by ex-residents through the Old Boy Associations.
4. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

A. The Concept of Need

4.1 There are two inter-related problems which arise when considering the question of need: how to define needs and how to measure them. George and Wilding (1985) argue that one way of defining needs is to plot them on a continuum ranging from the 'basic' needs required for survival - food, warmth and shelter - at one end, through 'relative' needs such as transport and entertainment to 'luxuries' at the other end. Three difficulties arise with this categorisation: Firstly, it is not always possible to agree where needs should be located on this continuum, particularly when considering relative needs and luxuries. Secondly, even basic needs - such as food are defined in a relative way and are coloured by preference and beliefs. Thirdly, what are relative needs for some are basic needs for others - eg. private transport may be a relative need in an area where public transport is easily available and a basic need in an isolated area where there is no public transport. As George and Wilding state, (p133)

We are led to the inescapable conclusion that all needs are relative but some are more relative than others.

4.2 The essential relativity of needs means that measurement is an inherently difficult and subjective process which is inevitably coloured by the purpose for which measurements are taken. Bradshaw (1972) identifies two approaches to the measurement of need - the popularist and the expert - and argues that a balanced analysis needs to take into account both perspectives.

4.3 The popularist approach relies on the public's view; what people want is defined as need. However, the difficulty in seeking the public's perception of need lies in defining what constitutes the relevant 'public', particularly when considering sectional needs - such as is the case in this survey. The various stakeholders in any needs analysis will perceive, and feel, needs, but their views may be neither shared nor compatible. In addition, people do not always know what they need and the limited horizons of lower income groups, such as those to be considered below, frequently restrict their demands. Despite these difficulties, however, the concept of felt need is fundamental to the identification and measurement of needs for social planning purposes.

4.4 The expert approach relies on the views of professionals in a particular field for the identification and measurement of relevant needs. This expert view can confirm or oppose the populist view of need. As with the populist view, the expert view is subjective and value-laden, and is open at times to the criticism of being elitist.

4.5 To counter criticisms of each of these perspectives, a third way of measuring need - the comparative approach - is relevant. This measure looks at patterns of expenditure and consumption, and at expectations in other sections of society. Once again, difficulties arise in deciding which sections of society should be included for comparative purposes. In part this decision depends on whether the goal is to seek variation or similarity between the populations considered.

4.6 Ife (1995) addresses some of the difficulties posed in Bradshaw's taxonomy by identifying four groups of people who are involved in need definition: the population at large; consumers, or potential consumers, of the service or facility that is 'needed'; caretakers, those whose 'business' is community need, such as welfare workers, clergymen, politicians etc.; and researchers and planners who infer need on the basis of statistics, survey results and other data. Ife argues that the four different definers of need have different interests, expertise and information on which to base their judgements about need and that frequently their views differ.

4.7 Both Bradshaw and Ife argue that the views of all players are necessary when defining need, particularly when, as in this survey, the goal is to identify the current and future needs of a population already identified as relatively disadvantaged in terms of previous experiences. As will be shown below, (Survey methodology) approaches were made to ex-residents, both with and without immediate accommodation needs, thus providing the 'popularist' view; professionals working in the area were approached for the 'expert' or 'caretaker' view which was supplemented by a range of documented material; the comparative view was also obtained from professional sources and through case studies in the literature of other males from the cohort in question.

B. The Concept of Accommodation Needs

4.8 As with the concept of need, the concept of accommodation needs is problematic. As stated above, the need for shelter is universally accepted as a basic need. However, the quality of shelter which is felt or perceived to be acceptable is a relative need and is dependent on both wants and values and on the particular situation and broader constellation of 'care' needs of the individual or family in question - and moving beyond 'shelter' raises the issues of sufficient space, quality and upkeep of the interior and of the neighbourhood etc. in an expanding cycle of subjectivity.

---

5. THE REVIEW PROCESS

5.1 I was able to access the following comprehensive range of sources of information in conducting the survey. The individuals and agencies approached and the documentation made available comply with Terms of Reference Two and Six:

- To consult with a representative cross-section of former residents and with agencies serving them (especially in relation to accommodation needs).
- To consult with agencies working in this field.

The information provided from my consultations is incorporated in discussion under the other Terms of Reference

5.2 Ex-residents who are current or previous office holders in ex-residents Associations:

I spoke with the following representatives of ex-residents, all of whom provided me with valuable background information and also with some idea of the current circumstances and living arrangements of many ex-residents.

- Mr Laurie Humphreys, Bindoon and Voices
- Mr Frank Marshall, Tardun
- Mr Maurice Whitfield, Clontarf
- Mr Joe Hawkins, Australian Child Migrant Foundation. Mr Hawkins was able to provide a very helpful rural perspective

5.3 Professionals working primarily with ex-residents of Christian Brothers' Institutions:

- The staff of the Christian Brother's Ex-Residents Service were able to provide current information about the known welfare needs of former residents. They were also most helpful in considering possible ways in which current and future accommodation needs might be addressed.

- Sister Tanya, Catholic Migrants' Service was able to advise on the situation of former residents from the United Kingdom and introduced me to one of the ex-residents who is currently in receipt of accommodation services.

- Brother Pat O'Doherty, who acts as a significant reference person for ex-residents, provided helpful background information about residents from all four institutions

- Ms Maureen Colgan. Ms Colgan has played an important role in promoting and facilitating reunification between ex-residents from the United Kingdom and their families. From her extensive contact with ex-residents she, too, was able to provide important background information.
5.4 Barnardo's, Sydney (NSW):

This organisation was approached because of its involvement in Child Migrant Programmes and the likelihood that it is facing similar issues to those of the Christian Brothers. The information about ex-residents of this institution matches that provided by professionals working with former residents in Western Australia.

5.5 Professionals working with 'homeless' and transient males:

Staff from the following organisations provided general information about the cohort of males, 45 to 65, which forms the main focus of this survey. They were able also to provide specific information about the small number of ex-residents known to them.

- Alma Street Social Centre, Fremantle. This centre provides day care facilities for community members with a psychiatric disorder;

- St Patrick's Day Centre, Fremantle. St Pats provides some accommodation, social facilities and meals for transient and homeless males. It also has a brokerage and referral service.

- Marillac Centre, Northbridge. Marillac is a drop-in day centre which provides meals and support services.

- Housing Advocacy and Support Service, Anglicare. HASS offers both short and long-term services to adults on low incomes who have accommodation difficulties.

- Belmont Accommodation Outreach Service. This agency offers a support programme for the aged or prematurely aged who are homeless or in insecure accommodation.

- South West Outreach Service, Fremantle. This service also works with older people in insecure living arrangements to prevent unnecessary or premature entry into residential care.

- The following agencies were also approached but were unable to offer any information about the population in question. All indicated that questions about previous circumstances are not asked, and if information is provided, it is not recorded by the agency.

  - The Salvation Army
  - Perth Inner City Mission
  - The Society of St Vincent de Paul
  - Wesley Mission
5.6 Professionals addressing the generic accommodation and care needs of the ageing and aged:

Staff from the following organisations involved in the assessment and provision of accommodation and care needs were approached for information.

- Homeswest
- The Aged Care Assessment Team, Commonwealth Department of Health
- Mental Health Section, State Health Department
- Catholic Homes for the Aged
- Anglican Homes

5.7 The following documents were also valuable sources of information:


Options for the Accommodation and Care of Older Homeless Persons: Council to Homeless Persons (WA) Inc. (1994)

Services to Perth Inner City Homeless Men: Council to Homeless Persons (WA) Inc. (1997)

6 REPORT ON TERMS OF REFERENCE

6.1 Term of Reference One: To establish criteria for determining levels of need in the area of accommodation and in relation to ex-residents of Christian Brothers' child care institutions pre 1965.

6.1.1 Given the difficulties in outlining need in general, and accommodation needs in particular, my first task was to seek to identify the extent of both felt and perceived need from representatives of the relevant 'public' - ie ex-residents of the Christian Brothers institutions. Five discreet populations were initially identified within the target group of ex-residents:

Aboriginal boys: At all periods in their history, the institutions housed a number of Aboriginal children. However, I have not considered the accommodation needs of this group as a discreet population because of the complex cultural and political issues surrounding current social policy and planning for Aboriginal people.

Boys admitted to institutions prior to World War II, predominantly Australian born and referred through the State Welfare Department or the Children's Courts. Little is known of the current circumstances of this group and, given their age, it is likely that a large proportion have died. The accommodation and welfare needs of this population have not been considered as part of this study.

'White' Australian boys admitted to the institutions during and after World War II. Once again, there is little information about the circumstances of these boys after they left the institutions. However, they fall within the identified age range of 45 - 65.

Child migrants from Malta who arrived in the 1950's and early 1960's, many of whom rejoined their families who followed them to Australia. Once again, little is known about this population as a group.

Child migrants from the United Kingdom, most of whom arrived in the late 1940's and 1950's. This population is perhaps more easily identified as a 'group' because of the common history of displacement and complete loss of family of origin and community. (The extent to which these are issues for Australian born residents or Maltese child migrants is unknown).

6.1.2 However, the group of UK Child Migrants is by no means uniform. The four residential institutions each had their own culture and membership, and the ex-residents with whom I spoke primarily identified with their institution. There appears to be considerable variation in the educational level and life opportunities of children in each of the institutions, particularly in the early years of Bindoon's operation when that institution was attempting to develop its educational infrastructure. This variation in educational level and employment possibilities at the point of exit appears to reflect in part also an earlier policy of assessment and segregation on the basis of perceived intelligence and 'suitability' in terms of behaviour and fitness at the point of entrance; the most able boys going to Tardun and Clontarf, and the least able / most troublesome being sent to Bindoon. (Coldrey 1994)
6.1.3 The UK Child Migrants, with all their historic and current diversity, is the group about which most evidence is available. The Old boys Associations of all four institutions consist primarily of ex-migrants from the United Kingdom, although each of the other groups is represented, and this is the primary source of information about the current circumstances of former residents.

6.1.4 The 'officers' of contact groups with whom I spoke reported that the former residents are as diverse in their socio-economic and family circumstances as are any other population within the broader community. All spoke of emotional and social problems with which a proportion of former residents were coping, and of the educational difficulties which they and others had to overcome. However, the accommodation needs, if defined in the narrow sense of housing, of the large majority of ex residents was not an issue of concern to those residents with whom I spoke. Former residents who are coping, have families and are in employment were perceived to be served to an acceptable level by the universal services available to the general population. They were aware that these services are subject to government policies and the rules of the market place. However, the Christian Brothers were not perceived to have a potential role in addressing this need. Rather, their concern was for those former residents, now in their fifties and early sixties, who have been damaged to such an extent by their childhood and subsequent life events that they have been unable to develop or maintain a support network to sustain and support them, and whose lifestyles have resulted in premature ageing and the breakdown of their health.

6.1.5 This group is not perceived to be large, although information is very anecdotal and it is impossible to specify a number. Nor is accommodation as such the major focus of concern, but rather the need to accommodate the premature ageing process of a number of ex-residents towards whom they feel a sense of loyalty and commitment. The housing situation of these men is no more than a symptom of their other social and psychological difficulties. The identified group about whom concern was expressed is men, now in their mid-to-late fifties and early sixties, who have lived transient life-styles, experienced long-term relationship difficulties, and who have significant health problems associated with chronic alcohol abuse. All the residents and others associated with ex-residents groups with whom I spoke were able to name one or two men they knew in these circumstances, and they expressed the view that others in their network would also know such people. Their concerns have been raised in recent months because of the premature deaths of three men suffering from chronic alcohol abuse and related problems.

6.1.6 The group identified as being in need of accommodation and care fit with the criteria for prematurely aged people identified by Purdon and Associates (1991). Purdon identifies three categories of inter-related needs: personal needs; needs relating to age; and needs relating to homelessness. These categories of need are confirmed in the

---

4 Purdon and Associates (1991) Needs of Homeless Older People, Commonwealth Dept. of Community Services and Health, quoted in Options for the Care and Accommodation of Older Homeless Persons: Council of WA (Inc)
1996 study undertaken by the Council to Homeless Persons (WA) into the characteristics and needs of inner city homeless men. In this study, older men form a significant proportion of the population and their life experiences include poor literacy and numeracy skills, broken relationships, unemployment, high levels of institutionalisation, and impoverished personal and community support networks. The particular problems identified amongst older men in this group are: generally poor health; increasing need for hospitalisation and very high mortality levels; long-term effects of drugs prescribed for psychotic conditions; alcohol addiction; and a general level of physical and mental health which makes working almost impossible.

The statements of concern made by residents to whom I spoke about their fellow residents thus appear to fit closely with the population identified by 'experts' as at risk and in need of services. For the purposes of this survey, therefore, the criteria for determining current levels of need in the area of accommodation relate to those ex-residents who have aged prematurely and who have failed to manage successfully the transitions from childhood to adulthood.

6.2 **Term of Reference Two**: To consult with a representative cross-section of former residents and with agencies serving them (especially in relation to accommodation needs)

6.2.1 Addressed above in section four: The Review Process

6.3 **Term of Reference Three**: To identify the nature and extent of accommodation needs among former residents of Christian Brothers' institutions living in Western Australia.

6.3.1 In seeking to assess directly the accommodation needs of the group of men identified, I was faced with three dilemmas:

- Those men for whom and about whose condition others have a concern had not themselves sought to have their situation explored.
- An invitation to assess current circumstances and reflect on unmet needs can raise expectations which are unable to be met.
- The ex-residents of the Christian Brothers' childcare institutions have recently been exposed to considerable amount of intrusive attention to which I did not want to add.

6.3.2 In order to avoid unnecessarily intruding upon their privacy, or raising erroneous expectations, I decided not to approach directly any former residents identified as being in need of accommodation-and-care services, but to rely instead on the information provided by others in their network and on the professionals offering services to this population. As a result, my information is anecdotal and uncertain. The accuracy of data is further compromised by, on the one hand, the desire for privacy of many ex-residents,
who have chosen for a range of reasons not to maintain contact with the Christian Brothers or the Old Boys Associations, and, on the other, by the ‘invisibility’ of the targeted population of prematurely aged and ‘homeless’ males.

6.3.3 The ex-residents with whom I spoke each mentioned two or three men known to them, but there was some overlap in the names given, and some of the information was also both second-hand and dated. It appears that the network tends to hear of men primarily when they are experiencing crises or become terminally ill when it becomes significantly activated. At other times, the men ‘drift off’ and contact is lost. In all, twelve ex-residents were named as having accommodation as well as other social/emotional needs, some of whom were already dead. A significantly larger number of men were known to be coping with long-term emotional and relationship problems, but the socio-economic and housing situations of these men were all described as adequate to good.

6.3.4 The professionals with whom I spoke reported that ex-residents known to them form only a small proportion of their agencies’ clientele. They emphasised, however, that they know the histories of very few of the clients because this group is typified by the absence of any sense of either past or future, living very much on a day-by-day basis. They commented also on the desire for privacy and dignity amongst their clients which prevents them from dwelling on past difficulties; their emphasis is, rather, on presenting a ‘good face’ to the professionals. Those clients with whom they develop longer-term relationships are the ones about whom they gain a sense of history and, given the transience of many clients, this proportion is small.

6.3.5 In Fremantle, South West Community Options has offered services to ten known ex-residents over the past two years all in their fifties or sixties (a number were vague about their exact age). The social worker from St Pats also identified six known ex-residents, some of whom were also clients of Community Options. Housing Advocacy Support Services staff reported that they are aware of very few ex-residents of Christian Brothers’ institutions (no more than three or four). They could not be more specific, because they do not record such information. This number was also suggested by the staff of Marillac Centre.

6.3.6 In total, the number of these men identified by professionals in the area and by other residents is low - no more than 20. This number is likely to be an underestimation because of the transience and ‘invisibility’ of this group but it is not possible to specify more accurately numbers involved because of the policies of the several welfare agencies providing accommodation:

- To maintain primarily financial rather than personal information about clients - eg. Homeswest were unable to provide any demographic information about clients, even for their hostel accommodation;
- To protect the privacy of their clients by refusing to provide personal information where it is collected.
6.3.7 All of the agencies who were able to identify ex-residents indicated that their profile was similar to that of other older males using their services: they are socially and emotionally damaged, unable to manage their finances and suffering from the long-term effects of alcohol abuse and general neglect of their health. They are also very isolated, without a single person whom they can identify as close or significant. Many have lived transient lives throughout their adult years, but with the breakdown in their health and associated reductions in their employability and mobility, they have gravitated to the inner city areas of central Perth and Fremantle because of the availability of services. These men now live in private boarding and lodging houses in the inner city, or in accommodation provided through SAAP programmes or Homeswest. Under current SAAP guidelines the men in short-term private lodgings would be categorised as homeless because of the absence of security of tenure and poor physical conditions under which they are living. However, this accommodation is 'home' to them and provides them with a community of fellowship with other men who share similar histories and life styles and who offer acceptance without judgement.

6.3.9 The staff of support agencies with whom I spoke reported that the clients with whom they work would be unlikely to describe themselves as having accommodation needs. For many, their lifestyle is now one of choice as well as a reflection of the limited options available to them. This perception is confirmed by the stories of the two former residents, 'Tom' and 'Joe' (names changed), who provided me with their stories.

### Tom's Story

Tom is 56. He was born in the United Kingdom. He spoke little about his past beyond stating that he had made some mistakes and that he regrets never marrying. He has a history of mental health problems, and was admitted to psychiatric hospital a number of times in his teens. He describes himself as having a past problem with alcohol, but reports that he no longer drinks.

An ex-resident of Clontarf, Tom led a highly transient lifestyle, working mainly on cattle stations, until he lost a leg ten years ago. He has since been unable to work and has remained in Perth. He now lives in accommodation provided through St Patrick's.

St Patrick's has never experienced difficulty in finding somewhere to stay, but appreciates the stability and privacy of his current accommodation. He describes himself as comfortable and well looked after, by the family of an ex employer who helps manage his finances and by the church - he is visited regularly by nuns from a local convent.

### Joe's Story

Joe is in contact with a small number of ex-residents living in the Fremantle area, and describes their living arrangements as similar to his own, in lodgings or in Homeswest units. His view is that there are adequate services available in the Fremantle area for men in his situation. He was particularly positive about the community of which he feels part through St Patrick's, he described himself as "not very good at making friends" and "very proud, and hard to help" and expressed his appreciation at finally having "found a place".
very much lives day-to-day, and has no fears about the future. He believes that the people looking out for him now will continue to do so.

**REDACTED**

**REDACTED’s Story**

**REDACTED** is also in his fifties. He was placed in Bindoon when he was eleven having previously been cared for in an institution in “Sussex by the Sea”. He remained at Bindoon for two years before being placed with a family. As an adult, **REDACTED** employment opportunities were limited because of his low level of academic achievement. He found work on the railways and reports that he was beginning to “better himself” when a car accident resulted in a significant loss of sight. **REDACTED** is now completely blind. **REDACTED** continued to work for the railways until approximately ten years ago when he moved to Perth.

**REDACTED** reports that he has always had “mates” but that he has never managed to maintain a relationship with a woman, much to his sadness. He has had a series of very brief relationships, and he did marry and father two children. He now has no contact with his family and does not know where they live.

When he first moved to Perth his accommodation was very unstable. However, after living in a number of short-term situations, he was offered a room in a St Paul’s hostel. He is still at this hostel and reports himself to be very satisfied with the services and care provided by hostel staff, the level of privacy available to him, and the company of his fellow residents, some of whom are also long-term.

**REDACTED** showed me his accommodation with great pride and reported his view that this will be his final home. He was unable to identify any other living arrangement which would be preferable.

Having completed this preliminary survey, I am unable to provide a definitive statement about the nature and extent of accommodation needs in general of ex-residents. Nor do I believe such a statement, if it were possible, would be helpful because of its inherent subjectivity on the one hand and the absence of a context for the question on the other.

The stories of **REDACTED** highlight the enormous relativity of the question of accommodation needs. A wider survey of the felt needs of other residents in accommodation which provides both greater security of tenure and a higher material standard might indicate that a some of these men are unhappy with their current living arrangements for a range of reasons, personal, social, economic or environmental. However, as indicated above, such an exploration would be potentially unhelpful, since no resources are available to address any expectations of changed circumstances which might result. Nor is it clear that the Christian Brothers would or should assume any responsibility for addressing any needs expressed. The question is less one of level of need per se, but rather one of needs relevant to the social planning strategies of the Christian Brothers, the criteria for which are yet to be identified.
6.4 **Term of Reference Four**: To profile present and projected trends in accommodation needs as former residents move towards 'retirement' and 'old age.'

6.4.1 In the light of the concluding comments to Term of Reference Three, it is impossible, once again, to project forward in any detail the level of accommodation needs of ex-residents.

6.4.2 However, in relation to the specific sub group of highly marginalised residents identified above, it is possible to predict that the needs of these men will continue to grow as they age. It may be also that the numbers increase as other men who are slightly younger, and therefore able to continue in employment and/or remain transient and independent, also become reliant on the services found primarily in the inner-city areas.

6.4.3 There are some indications that the group most at risk within the community of ex-residents of Christian Brothers' institutions are those men placed in the late 1940's and early 1950's. As stated, these men were primarily UK residents who had:

- lost all previous ties;
- frequently suffered prolonged institutionalisation in the United Kingdom and therefore had very little experience of living as part of a family;
- experienced the traumas of war;
- were placed in institutions when the culture, world-wide was one of discipline and conformity rather than remedial care and therapeutic intervention.

6.4.4 A significant proportion of these men in the general population of marginalised males and therefore predictably amongst this group also appear to have participated in the Korean and Vietnamese Wars, suffering further dislocation and trauma, and, in the case of Vietnamese veterans, experiencing further marginalisation because of the community response upon their return to Australia.

6.4.5 For these reasons, it is possible to predict that the level of personal and social damage experienced by these men is greater than that experienced by either previous or later residents of the institutions, and their capacity to care for themselves into old age is accordingly less. This view is supported by a number of recent reports commissioned by the Christian Brothers.5


6.4.6 In particular, the absence of a caring network is of particular significance to this group. The Maltese migrants who arrived in the 1950's and 1960's appear to have greater access to such a network because of the reunification of many boys with family, and the access of others to this community. As a result, it is less likely that this group will require services specifically for marginalised, isolated and prematurely aged men, although the absence of specific data prevents this hypothesis from being tested.

The demand on services is likely therefore to increase for the next five-to-ten years and then to decline as the group of highly marginalised men in question:

- succumb to the health problems and mortality rates of this population;
- or

- reach pensionable age and have access to the full range of services available to adults of 65 and older.

6.5 **Term of Reference Five**: To examine identified needs in the light of current and planned provision of accommodation by public and private agencies

6.5.1 At present, professionals working in accommodation agencies agree that there is an adequate provision of accommodation services for marginalised, prematurely aged men. Both short and long-term options are still available, with SAAP agencies able to provide crisis and interim accommodation and both private and public services able to meet the needs of the population. Staff report that a Homeswest unit is generally available within six weeks for their clients. However, there is growing concern about the continued supply of accommodation for several reasons:

*Current government funding policies* have impacted on the money available to non-government agencies working in this area. The growth of 'market-place' principles and consumerism in welfare and the assumption that individuals should be self-reliant into old age has further marginalised and stigmatised this population.

The Report on Services to Perth Inner City Homeless Men⁶ states

> At a meeting of the inner city agencies in August 1995, it was estimated that there were approximately 48 men who were in [the category of prematurely aged]. This is a conservative estimate. With the ageing of the population the number of men who fall into this category will increase over the next five years. As men who are currently living in boarding houses or rental accommodation age they generally get to the stage where they no longer live independently but in a situation where there are more supports and supervision if required. Usually these men move into SAAP accommodation. With the government cutting the hostel

subsidy in June 1997, men who are aged or prematurely aged will find it increasingly difficult to access frail aged hostel accommodation unless they require personal care. There also needs to be recognition that men who are chronically homeless age prematurely because of lifestyle factors. (p20)

The development of the Northbridge tunnel, the 'gentrification' of inner Perth and the shift in use of some low-cost hotels from lodging houses to back-packer accommodation has reduced the units of accommodation available. Although accommodation continues to be available, it is running at approximately 95% full, which means there is little spare capacity, and individuals now have less choice in location or accommodation type than previously.

A new, and growing population of younger, transient males is competing for the accommodation. In addition to competing for increasingly scarce accommodation resources, this population has reduced the sense of safety and security of older men because of the greater prevalence of drug abuse, mental illness and violence amongst them. Thus accommodation which once was perceived as a viable long-term option despite insecurity of tenure no longer provides either a sense of community or of personal privacy and safety. As a result, accommodation-and-care standards are falling.

The policy of moving into the community, patients currently residing in total-care institutions. The growing trend towards 'community care' will inevitably increase further the pressure on the accommodation available to this group of men.

For men over 65, there is a wider range of services available, subject to assessment by the Aged Care Assessment Team. Government funds have been identified to increase the availability of hostel and nursing home facilities for this population from the current level of 40 low-care and 10 high-care beds per 1000 to 40 low-care and 12 high-care beds per 1000 within the next seven years. The private aged-care agencies all have a quota of beds available - approximately 30% - 35% - for low-income clients assessed by ACAT as in need of personal care.

However, the population of men in question are below the target age for these services. They are also unlikely to find acceptable, or to be accepted by the population of 'retirement village' style care. Many are fearful of 'institutional' care of any sort because of their previous experiences, and professionals argue for the development of small-scale units providing care for groups of four-to-six men with arrangements for similarly small-scale hospice care when home care is no longer a viable option.

There are a range of schemes which make such arrangements feasible, eg the special housing programmes available through Homeswest. For professionals working in the area, however, the lack of funds for staff, particularly outreach workers, pose significant difficulties in either accessing potential clients or servicing these semi-independent living options.

6.6 Term of Reference Six: To consult with agencies working in this field, eg. Perth Inner City Housing Association, Housing Advocacy Support Service (Anglicare)

6.6.1 Addressed above in section four: The Review Process

6.7 Term of Reference Seven: To make recommendations about appropriate and cost effective ways of responding to needs, including ways of enabling former residents to utilise fully existing provisions and facilities

6.7.1 Three recommendations arise from this preliminary survey:

Recommendation One: That the emphasis of CBERS services be explicitly expanded to include a role in accommodating the needs of an ageing population of ex-residents, with a particular focus on the needs of prematurely ageing and marginalised men.

This shift in focus could involve two extensions in work undertaken by CBERS staff:

An outreach / liaison service could be developed with CBERS staff liaising regularly with professionals in other agencies working with marginalised and transient males, making known the welfare services already offered by CBERS and using this established network of care to assess any needs currently unmet.

Professionals working with marginalised and homeless men would welcome such a link with CBERS. There would then be a clearer purpose in identifying those clients who have historical links with Christian Brothers Institutions.

One particular need which a number of professionals highlighted was that to provide “dignity in death” and to undertake the tasks fulfilled by kin - such as posting death notices and providing headstones. The Christian Brothers currently respond positively and generously when they are made aware of ex-residents who have died, but a more consistent response could perhaps be developed through CBERS in partnership with other agencies.

In conjunction with other accommodation agencies, CBERS staff could develop an accommodation brokerage service, developing and maintaining small group accommodation made available through Homeswest tenancy schemes. The viability of developing such a programme would depend on obtaining a clearer indication of the need for such a service amongst ex-residents, but this need can be assessed only after a commitment has been made to participating in the provision of such accommodation by the Christian Brothers’ planning team.
Recommendation Two: That the Christian Brothers planning team identify the areas of accommodation need that they perceive to be part of their continuing responsibility towards ex-residents of their childcare institutions.

Until the parameters of their ongoing responsibility have been clarified, it is not possible for social policies to be developed, and as stated frequently in this report, care needs cannot be identified without a context for care provision because of the relativity of the concept of care. Purpose must precede definition and measurement.

Recommendation Three: That as a short-term measure, specific, formalised arrangements be made to support and subsidise the informal networking and support provided by ex-residents through the Old Boy Associations.

It appears at the moment that some ex-residents are incurring out-of-pocket expenses in the process of assisting other former residents who are in marginalised situations and need emotional support. These costs could possibly formally recognised and reimbursed through CBERS.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Catholic Migrant Centre (1997) : Twelfth Annual Report


