CBERS Management Committee Meeting

Agenda for Meeting on 21st February 1996
between
Management Committee, Staff, and Christian Brothers

Meeting starts at 8.30am

1.0 Apologies

2.0 Management Committee Report
   2.1 Service Hours
   2.2 David Plowman's membership of the Management Committee
   2.3 Australian Child Migrant Foundation and CBERS
   2.4 Evaluation process

3.0 Other Business

4.0 Next Meeting date
Christian Brothers Ex-Residents Services

Minutes of Meeting on 21st February 1996 between Management Committee, Staff, and Christian Brothers

The meeting commenced at 8.30am

1.0 Attendance: Maria Harries, David Plowman, Paul Carman, Br Faulkner, Br Shanahan, Woody Wolf, Rod Corby.

2.0 Management Committee Report outlined and discussed. Points made included:

2.1 Discussion on Child Migrant Trust tensions with CBERS

2.2 Increasing workload due, inter alia, to: increasing experience of Senior Social Worker enabling a higher quality service that takes more time; complexity of some cases; low drop-off of service users; and increasing client numbers which will most likely continue.

2.3 VOICES/CBERS relationship and the extent of VOICES' involvement in ex-residents' dealings with CBERS.

2.4 Issue of reconciliation as part of the whole process of reunification.

2.5 Financial advice, support, and counselling being offered by CBERS.

a) Difficult to assess real needs.

b) Requests for financial help are generally indicative of the need for financial counselling.

c) Concern raised that VOICES would use that element of the service to drain the finances.

d) The Brotherhood of St Lawrence combine no-interest loans with financial counselling.

2.5a) The Good Shepherd Sisters have a similar focus to their assistance.

f) CBERS are not enthusiastic to assume a financial assistance program but there are benefits in not splitting assistance between CBERS and the Christian Brothers.

(g) DECIDED:

1) Br Faulkner will search for documentation on the Good Shepherd Sisters financial assistance program.

2) A policy for CBERS will be developed, including a budget figure.

3) Br Faulkner will supply an estimated budget figure based on the Christian Brothers experience.

4) There will be a meeting on 1st May between the Management Committee and Br Shanahan to specifically discuss a financial assistance policy and the Evaluation Report.

2.6 Legal Issues: CBERS services being offered "without prejudice" needs a legal opinion to allay concerns of service users jeopardising their legal rights.

Other Issues Discussed:

3.0 Update on the legal case against Christian Brothers outlined for information.
4.0 Australian Child Migrant Foundation relationship with CBERS. The ACMF's constitution has been written. They have received a promise of $120,000/3 years from the Australian Catholic Bishops. Cardinal Hume of the UK and the Nazareth Sisters are supportive. Kim Beasley's office is supportive but the forthcoming election has deferred action.

Some people in the Catholic church oppose involvement and some see it as a national issue, not merely a WA issue.

A benefit of the ACMF is that all child migrants will be served and it involves more of the original parties. It is also non-denominational.

There is the question of the CBERS/ACMF relationship. Options include:

(i) CBERS being subsumed by ACMF with the Christian Brothers simply contributing to the overall budget—but non-migrant ex-residents must still be catered for;

(ii) ACMF could contract CBERS to do that segment of its work;

(iii) ACMF and CBERS can both exist independently.

The Child Migrant Trust oppose the ACMF so ACMF may use other agencies to locate families. CMT's "defence of excellence" has become exclusivity.

5.0 Operating Hours: any increase will increase budget requirements. No decision until the Evaluation has been completed.

6.0 Budget: The 1995 figure excludes rent on the building and does not include some costs which are carried by the Provincialate.

7.0 Next Meeting: Wednesday 1st May, 8.30 at CBERS.
This report continues to be based on the Terms of Reference for CBERS as have previous reports. It covers the period from October 1995 - February 1996.

General update:

CBERS continues to operate two days a week. The location of these premises has now changed to Coghlan St, Subiaco - a necessary move with a good outcome. The new location appears to suit everyone. The new office is very central and the facilities are better than those at the previous address (despite ongoing teething problems with structural matters such as air conditioning). CBERS continues to be open every Monday and Wednesday. The two staff members are working an additional half day a week in order to deal with the administrative demands of the job. Also, negotiations are underway to engage a contract person to undertake some additional work with the social worker in order to deal with the backlog of referrals.

The principles which underpin the agency have been used to guide our work and relationships and have proved very valuable - they appear to have stood the test of time. We may need to review these in the light of the evaluation currently being undertaken. These guiding principles and the working policies were printed and publicised at the launch of the CBERS pamphlet. An additional policy concerning financial assistance is being developed.

We now have an efficient filing system for the administrative work in the office as well as the confidential filing system which records individual requests for service. The need for us to develop a database to manage the records has become clear as the referral rate has increased. The working policy for the CBERS' staff is that records are open only to the individual concerned, that is, any file notes on any one person should be accessible to that person alone. We are still developing the policy on record keeping - the guiding principle that continues to inform our practice is that the service is set up for the ex-residents and they and the counsellor should be the only ones to know the content of any file.
The working relationship with other relevant organisations has taken considerable attention and time in the last months. In particular, we are working out our relationships with the new Foundation, VOICES and the Child Migrant Trust. A meeting with the Child Migrant Trust has been requested.

The four major issues with which we are currently dealing are:

- the need to expand our activities to include financial advice and assistance
- the evaluation of the service
- the implications of the setting up of the Child Migrant Foundation.
- the need to address the increased demand for services

The Management Committee and staff have operated with enormous dedication and commitment. The following progress report is testimony to their work. The Management Committee would like to pay a special tribute to the staff whose hard work over the last year has enabled us to feel confident that ex-residents are getting the best service possible.

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1. **To implement and operationalise the recommendations of the Interim Report and the Final Report of the Independent Advisory Panel to assist former residents of Christian Brothers' Child Care Institutions.**

The Report and its recommendations continue to provide the important backbone, information and ideas for CBERS planning. However, the service demands have gained a momentum of their own at present. In order to keep revisiting the Report recommendations we will need to liberate some time for this. The expectation is that this will occur when the evaluation report is delivered in March.

**Planning**

- Negotiations with reference groups of ex residents continue as the demands of the service dictate. One of the problems we face is that the staff time is currently taken up by day to day individual referrals rather than planning. This has meant that we have not been able to develop our outreach programme in the way that we had previously hoped. We need to decide how to we can continue to meet the demand as well as reach those men who do not easily access our service.

- The Senior Social Worker has made contact with significant allied agencies such as St Vincent de Paul
• The procedure manual is still being developed.
• The evaluation report will be finalised in the near future.

2. TO LIAISE WITH ALL RELEVANT PARTIES TO ESTABLISH AND DEVELOP THE NECESSARY SERVICES.

Update:
There has been considerable individual contact with key people who are concerned with services for ex-residents. The meetings with the representatives from Old Boys' Associations, VOICES, the Child Migrant Trust and individual ex-residents continue to provide vital input to our service planning. Ideas about the present and emerging needs of ex-residents members continue to be canvassed. The limitations are set by time constraints.

There have been meetings with some relevant organisations and increased correspondence with them. These activities have been aimed at establishing closer working relationships and implementing such important activities as facilitating family reunions.

Contact has been made with the major national, state and international agencies involved in working with Child Migrants. Relationships will be further developed in the coming months.

Planning
• More formal working relationships are to be developed with the relevant organisations such as the Child Migrant Trust.

• The need, or otherwise, for the Reference Group(s) to CBERS to be more formalised and the structure and membership of the Management Committee will be a part of the evaluation which is currently being undertaken.

• Professor Plowman continues to work closely with the group who are establishing the Child Migrant Foundation.

3. TO PROVIDE AVENUES FOR DIALOGUE FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN RECONCILIATION.
Update:

All of the planning and service activities of CBERS' staff and Management Committee members are being undertaken in the spirit of reconciliation. Reconciliation is one aspect of the process of healing for all individuals to whom CBERS offers assistance. The principles of our service reflect the reconciliation process of all that we do. The staff are finding that two and one half days per week leave little time for planning, let alone implementing, more structured reconciliation ideas.

Planning

- Reconciliation will continue to be an item for discussion at the reference group consultations.
- Reconciliation is a major item for Committee planning in the next months.

Activities to date:

The priorities that remain are firstly travel, and secondly, counselling. As such, the staff's attention has continued to focus on these two priorities. The Committee anticipates that other and different priorities will gradually evolve once the travel component lessens or becomes more administratively streamlined.

There has been increased demand for emergency financial support. Originally, the plan was that CBERS staff refer requests for financial assistance to other appropriate mainstream services. However, it is clear that the demands on these services have increased in recent months. Following discussion with the Provincial, the Management Committee has agreed to develop a policy on financial assistance. The current referrals for such assistance are a very useful opportunity for us to develop our understanding of the parameters of the need. A costing for this will need to be thoroughly undertaken.

Planning
The new pamphlet has been an effective means of advertising. Feedback on the pamphlet has been very positive.

The backlog of travel applications is being processed and assessments are proceeding.

The evaluation which has commenced will provide important feedback on our progress.

5. TO ENSURE THAT SERVICES ARE FUNCTIONALLY INDEPENDENT FROM THE CONGREGATION OF CHRISTIAN BROTHERS, BUT FINANCIALLY ACCOUNTABLE TO IT.

Update:

The Committee has continued to maintain a functional independence from the Christian Brothers' Provincialite while also maintaining an important level of dialogue and accountability about tasks and financial arrangements. This interim report represents an important accountability measure. The Committee is aware of our mutual commitment to functional independence.

The policy of documenting policy decisions and advising the Provincialite has proved effective and helpful. It has also facilitated clear communication. In these instances, no identifying information is provided. There are a number of outstanding issues which, it is hoped will be addressed in the next meeting:

- financial advice, support and counselling
- clarification of legal issues
- interface with the Foundation
- operating hours

Planning

- Continue close liaison about policies and procedures.
- Discussion with Provincialite about above issues.
- Review the budget in line with demands and agreed plans.
6. TO ESTABLISH PROFESSIONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL INTERNAL MANAGEMENT AND RECORDING SYSTEMS FOR ALL SERVICES.

Activities to date:

Confidential internal management and recording systems have been established and are vigilantly observed.

Planning

- Consultation continues to take place about how to refine guidelines on recording and confidentiality

7. TO ENGAGE SUCH STAFF AS ARE REQUIRED, AND TO PUT IN PLACE SYSTEMS FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT OF THE DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES OF ALL SUCH STAFF.

Activities to date:

Two part-time staff continue to be employed. The Management Committee is concerned about the workloads of both of these staff members. It appears clear that we will either need to develop a waiting list for referrals, reduce our service quality, take on additional staff or increase the amount of hours worked by current staff.

Ms Sue Gillieatt has been contracted to undertake an evaluation of CBERS. Her Interim Report should be available at the next meeting.

Both staff members are supported by members of the Management Committee individually and collectively. Ms Wolf has access to external supervisory support on a monthly basis and she works very closely with Mr Corby. Staff appraisals have been undertaken. Tentative plans are underway to take on a contract worker to assist with the backlog of referrals while we await the outcome of the evaluation of the service.

Planning

- The Management Committee still meets fortnightly and will continue to do so. The Chair of the Committee continues to be as available as possible and to meet weekly with staff when required.
• A contract worker has been interviewed to assist with the back log of work.

8. **TO DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE BUDGET FOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES AND PROVISION OF SERVICES.**

The budget for the Management Committee has been refined. Attached is a budget summary to date.

**Planning**

• We need to have a serious discussion about the budget indicators particularly in relation to travel and to the implications of any policy about financial assistance.

9. **TO DEVELOP APPROPRIATE ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS FOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES.**

A refined accounting system has been developed and is being used for budgeting and reporting. It is managed by the Administrative Officer who works closely with Management Committee member, David Plowman.

10. **TO ORGANISE A REVIEW OF ALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES WITH A VIEW TO EVALUATING PROGRESS AND DETERMINING AND RECOMMENDING ONGOING WORK REQUIRED.**

The evaluation is being undertaken by consultant Ms sue Gillieatt and the Interim Report will be presented at the February 1996 meeting of CBERS' Management Committee with the Provincialite. The Final Report is due in March 1996.

Maria Harries
February 1996