CLAN FORUM: ‘MOVING FORWARD’ 16th August 2005

Developing a response to the recommendations of the Forgotten Australians Report.

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C-BERS Services

The Journey and the Learning
Introduction

- The Four Christian Brothers' Homes for Children
- Origins of C-BERS Services
  - The ISERV Panel and recommendations
  - 3 Dimensions of Reconciliation
  - Outcomes from ISERV Recommendations
- C-BERS Terms of Reference
- Potential and Actual Clients
- C-BERS: Meeting the Needs Identified by ISERV
- C-BERS and Reconciliation
- Key Milestones on the Journey
- The Future
Part 1

Where Boys and Brothers Lived
Bindoon

- Residential program 1936 to 1937
- 245 boys in Child Migration program had Bindoon as their initial destination
Tardun

- Residential program 1928 - 1967
- 220 boys in Child Migration program had Tardun as their initial destination
Castledare

- Residential program 1929 - 1983
- 212 boys in Child Migration program had Castledare as their initial destination
Clontarf

- Residential program 1898 (St Joseph’s, Subiaco) to 1983
- 188 boys in Child Migration program had Clontarf as their initial destination (9yrs+)
The Potential Service Users:
(Tardun, Bindoon, Clontarf, Castledare)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Migrants from UK</td>
<td>1160</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Migrants from Malta</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Former Child Migrants</td>
<td>1460</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Ex-Residents</td>
<td>4000?+</td>
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<td>(Former Students of CB schools WA and SA; also private children and State Wards)</td>
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Part 2
Recognising the Pain

The Establishment of ISERV
Independent Support for Ex-Residents & Victims
ISERV

- July 1993: Statement published in *The West Australian* in which Christian Brothers apologised and offered practical assistance to victims of abuse in their childcare institutions.
- October 1993: ISERV Established as an initiative of the Christian Brothers.
ISERV

- Managed by Independent Advisory Panel chaired by Ms Jane Brazier
- Panel Members:
  - Ms Jane Brazier – Chairperson
  - Dr Dianne McCavanagh
  - Dr Paul Carman
  - Mr Bill Budiselik
Recommendations of ISERV

- That strategies aimed at reconciliation constitute a part of future services.
- That in the event of a Judicial Inquiry the psychological impact on ex-residents be given primary importance.
- That provision of services take into account the special support needs of men involved in or affected by judicial processes
- To provide for counselling, travel assistance, literacy, health and welfare of ageing client population.
- To establish independent management committee
- To provide funding on an annual basis.
- To regularly review the services provided.
- Independent Management Committee to implement recommendations.
ISERV’s 3 Dimensions of Reconciliation

1. Individual

- although unlikely on a personal level between individual Brothers and individual ex-residents, abused clients can achieve personal reconciliation through therapy to help them deal with past issues.

- may be possible to reconcile with Christian Brothers congregation through their representative acknowledging abuse occurred and desiring to help past victim overcome the effect of abuse.
2. Organisational

- May occur between organisations representing the interests of individuals e.g. Old Boys organisations, VOICES etc and the Christian Brothers.

- The Christian Brothers and Church have acknowledged needs of victims are paramount – important that the need to avoid scandal does not occur – the practical outcome of this acknowledgement must be apparent to victims and general public.
Spiritual

- It is a sad reflection on the lives of so many of the men ...that they have little or no spiritual dimension to their lives and have felt abandoned by their Church. There is a need to have their pain and suffering acknowledged by the Church and the community.

- The Catholic Church in Perth has a role to play in establishing regular opportunities for worship directly addressed to ex-residents. A number of men’s experiences have left them embittered with formal religion but for others the opportunity is important. This profound loss of faith in the Catholic Church experienced by some men may not be able to be addressed.
Part 3

Responding to the Pain

Accepting the ISERV recommendations, the Christian Brothers undertook to establish C-BERS Services
C-BERS Services

Independent Management Committee

- Dr Maria Harries, Chairperson (1995 - current)
- Dr Paul Carman (ISERV – 1997)
- Prof David Plowman, Member (1995 – 1996)
- Dr Debbi Rosser (1997 – current)
- Mr George Horton (1998 – current)
January 1995: C-BERS
Terms of Reference

- To implement ISERV recommendations
- To liaise with all parties to establish and develop services
- To provide avenues for dialogue for those interested in reconciliation.
- To establish mechanisms for prioritising and providing services and for publicising them
- To ensure that services are functionally independent from Christian Brothers but financially accountable to them.
• To establish professional & confidential internal management & recording systems.
• To engage staff, and put in place systems to manage and support daily operations.
• To determine an appropriate budget and develop accounting systems.
• To organise a review of all Management Committee activities in October 1995 with a view to evaluating progress and determining and recommending ongoing.
Initial and Ongoing Principles

- Mutual respect between C-BERS’ staff and management committee, ex-residents, former teachers and other concerned agencies and persons
- The provision of services on a confidential basis
- The provision of services shaped by client needs
- The development of services in consultation with interested persons and organizations
- Professional accountability to ex-residents
- Financial accountability to the Congregation of Christian Brothers
- The employment of qualified, competent and committed staff
- The delivery of best practice professional services
- The development and implementation of policies and procedures which are made public
- The separation of the management committee functions and the day-today professional service delivery
- The improvement of operations and services by way of periodic reviews and evaluations.
Challenges faced by C-BERS

- Lack of Trust
- Cynicism as to its independence from Christian Brothers
- Anger, often expressed as verbal abuse, and hostility
- Bitter factionalism
Meeting the Concerns and Challenges

- Judicial Inquiry
  - Demand has abated.

- Citizenship
  - Pressure by ISERV and C-BERS led to Australian Government waiving Citizenship fees.

- Removal of Br Keaney's Statue
  - Now historical
• Lack of Criminal Charges
  • Few men still raise this issue.
• Desire for info, records, photos
  • Photo and document library at C-BERS. CD of photos collected by the men and available to all.
  • Aust. CM Project a source of immense comfort to those seeking family.
• Restoration of Graves
  • Few men still raise this issue.
- Lack of Trust
  - C-BERS had to prove itself as trustworthy: this took time (around 2 years).
  - C-BERS "Independence"
    - took somewhat longer and is now rarely questioned.
  - Anger
    - Acceptance, listening and acknowledgement.
  - Hostility
    - (at "having to come to access travel funding" etc). Took time, overcome mainly by staff/client/agency relationship
Actual Clients 1994 to 2005

- 53 clients on ISERV register
- 528 individuals registered for services
- 61 are currently "active" (contact in last 3 months)
- 42 Australian born (8.75%)
- 35 Women
Services Accessed by Clients

- 36% Occasional Support
- 33% Reunification Assistance
- 22% Advocacy
- 22% Counselling
- 13% Family Tracing Requests
- 1.5% No Interest Loans
- 0.75% Photographic Records

*(Many clients present with multiple needs)*
Travel

Between 1994 and 2005

- 247 former Child Migrants Overseas
- 30 Accompanying Carers
- 12 ex-residents within Australia
Key Milestones on the Journey

- 1993: ISERV
- 1995: C-BERS established
  - Counselling, reunification travel assistance, assistance in locating photographic and childhood records, advocacy on part time basis
- 1997: C-BERS operates full-time service
  - Publishes quarterly newsletter C-BERS Ex-Press, No Interest Loans; literacy; telephone reimbursement; service to former students
- 1999: establishes web site www.cberss.org
- 2002: provides services for Sisters of Mercy
- 2003: broadens services on contract basis for those from other Congregational groups
C-BERS and Reconciliation
Reconciliation at Individual Level

- Counselling
  - has been an effective means of achieving some degree of personal reconciliation.

  "Saddest thing I did, but it opened the door to the future and all the possibilities."
  "I unlatched the trailer load of my hatred and started to live again"
  "She chose healing over grief"
• Travel
  • has provided a means of meeting and reconciling with long lost family in many cases.

  "Although I was too late to find my mother alive, I have found so many relatives and my children now have a history too"
• Family Tracing
  • Has provided some healing of the wounds of separation and perceived rejection and gives a real sense of identity and belonging.

• Literacy
  • Not a large take-up of this
  • Some men can now read letters from family.

• Maintenance of family relationships
  • by reimbursing such call costs if needed.
Reconciliation at Organisational Level

- Christian Brothers have acknowledged that abuses have occurred and set up service to help address needs
  - Understanding of this has had steady growth
- Between ‘Old Boys’ and CBs
  - considered good
- Between ‘Old Boys’ Associations and with each other
  - Some division still present
• Church & CBs
  • through Toward Healing achieving sense of justice and reconciliation

• Church and Men
  • Church in Perth still perceived by some as "not wanting to know"
Reconciliation at Spiritual Level

- There is not perceived to have been a wholehearted public acknowledgement by the Church in Perth of the pain and suffering experienced.
- Some men have expressed their spirituality in relationship to Nature which was often their refuge as children.
Part 4

The Journey continues
Ongoing Needs

- Some men have not yet traced family – and may never do so
- For some people, the results of early trauma remain profoundly disturbing
- The search for reconciliation continues for many – they want healing and a way forward
- Ongoing need for some individuals to be acknowledged and to receive an apology
- Some individuals need access to information about services
- The need for redress by some people remains present
- The need to contribute to policies that reduce the trauma of loss of family for the next generation of children
Client identified needs:

- Access to accurate information
- Family reunification issues
- Belonging
- Supportive counselling
- Literacy issues
- Being heard, believed and receiving an apology for past abuse
Access to accurate information

- A lack of available documents and poor record keeping practices in the past are a source of frustration and sadness for many CBERSS clients. Missing information has meant that some people have been unable to locate family or to find out what happened to them in their early lives.
Information: Ongoing

- We access the services of archival experts and specialists in family tracing.
- Ensure that the problem stops here – systematic maintenance of family history documents and records of family tracing.
- Balance this with a respect for the individual rights of clients to decide the future of their own records and documents.
Family reunification

- Some wonderful ‘success stories’ and meaningful ongoing relationships have been established
- Meeting family is always emotional, and sometimes does not meet expectations. Often people are angry, and want this to be heard and acknowledged by their families.
- Families sometimes report feeling helpless, guilty and responsible, especially if abuse occurred. They don’t know how to deal with ‘an angry stranger’. 
Family reunification: ongoing

- Working with both the client and family before and after reunification
- Practical help with travel arrangements and family meetings
- Respect the wishes of all parties involved — often clients don’t want to hear that families have rights too.
Belonging

- Many clients belong to old boys and girls associations, and enjoy the ongoing connection with fellow former residents and classmates.
- Some interstate and country clients can’t participate in group activities, but like to be kept informed of current news and matters of concern.
- Some clients don’t want to have anything to do with these networks, or with CBERSS.
Belonging: ongoing

- Encourage the strengths of peer support networks and associations.
- Act as a neutral point of contact for the different groups.
- Maintain a mailing list and provide relevant news and information to former residents and associated groups.
- Respect the wishes of people who don’t want to maintain this connection with the past.
Supportive counselling

- Being heard, believed and receiving an apology for past abuse
- Clients report a sense of relief that their stories are believed
- Continually reliving abuse experiences in counselling may cause ongoing trauma, and can result in people feeling ‘stuck’ in the past.
Supportive counselling: ongoing

1. Listen, and believe people’s childhood experiences. Work with them towards a positive experience in the present.

2. Many clients say that an in-person apology from a Christian Brother was a valuable part of their healing process.

3. Financial compensation can represent a concrete and official gesture of apology.
Supportive counselling: ongoing

4 Clients who were denied an education can be help adult literacy classes and other occupational training.

5 Clients with literacy problems can be assisted to deal with official forms, applications, and bureaucratic processes.

6 We can learn from the mistakes of past institutional care and use this knowledge to provide better care for children.
Current Situation

- Very few men and women referring themselves to C-BERS 2004-2005.
- Senate Inquiry into Children in Residential Care only raised few referrals.
- Australian Travel Fund ceased 2005.
- Pressing need is for friendship and support.
Future Options

We have reviewed the services regularly and four options have presented themselves:

- Expand on a fee for service basis
- Incorporate and move to more commercial-based agency with identified expertise
- Outsource services to a mainstream welfare agency
- Maintain a smaller counselling service alongside a supported peer help facility
Near Future

- Reference Group working to ‘morph’ the organisation into something that fits current needs
- Working Together: ‘Old Boy’s’ Associations and the Child Migrant Friendship Society involved in the planning
- ‘Creating Communities’ working with us to develop new ideas
Thankyou