The Senate

Community Affairs
References Committee

Forgotten Australians

A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children

August 2004
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Upwards of, and possibly more than 500 000 Australians experienced care in an orphanage, Home or other form of out-of-home care during the last century. As many of these people have had a family it is highly likely that every Australian either was, is related to, works with or knows someone who experienced childhood in an institution or out of home care environment.

Children were placed in care for a myriad of reasons including being orphaned; being born to a single mother; family dislocation from domestic violence, divorce or separation; family poverty and parents' inability to cope with their children often as a result of some form of crisis or hardship. Many children were made wards of the state after being charged with being uncontrollable, neglected or in moral danger, not because they had done anything wrong, but because circumstances in which they found themselves resulted in them being status offenders. Others were placed in care through private arrangements usually involving payment to the Home. Irrespective of how children were placed in care, it was not their fault.

Children were placed in a range of institutions including orphanages, Homes, industrial or training schools that were administered variously by the state, religious bodies and other charitable or welfare groups.

The Committee received hundreds of graphic and disturbing accounts about the treatment and care experienced by children in out-of-home care. Many care leavers showed immense courage in putting intensely personal life stories on the public record. Their stories outlined a litany of emotional, physical and sexual abuse, and often criminal physical and sexual assault. Their stories also told of neglect, humiliation and deprivation of food, education and healthcare. Such abuse and assault was widespread across institutions, across States and across the government, religious and other care providers.

But the overwhelming response as to treatment in care, even among those that made positive comments was the lack of love, affection and nurturing that was never provided to young children at critical times during their emotional development.

The long term impact of a childhood spent in institutional care is complex and varied. However, a fundamental, ongoing issue is the lack of trust and security and lack of interpersonal and life skills that are acquired through a normal family upbringing, especially social and parenting skills. A lifelong inability to initiate and maintain stable, loving relationships was described by many care leavers who have undergone multiple relationships and failed marriages. Many cannot form trust in relationships and remain loners, never marrying or living an isolated existence.

It is not just the impact that tragic childhood experiences have had for the care leavers. Their children and families have also felt the impact, which can then flow through to future generations.
The legacy of their childhood experiences for far too many has been low self-esteem, lack of confidence, depression, fear and distrust, anger, shame, guilt, obsessiveness, social anxieties, phobias, and recurring nightmares. Many care leavers have tried to block the pain of their past by resorting to substance abuse through life long alcohol and drug addictions. Many turned to illegal practices such as prostitution, or more serious law-breaking offences which have resulted in a large percentage of the prison population being care leavers.

For far too many the emotional problems and depression have resulted in contemplation of or actual suicide. Anecdotal evidence has shown an abnormally large percentage of suicides among care leavers.

Care leavers harbour powerful feelings of anger, guilt and shame; have a range of ongoing physical and mental health problems – often directly associated with beatings or lack of health care as a child; and struggle with employment and housing issues.

A large number of positive stories were heard by the Committee from people who with a great deal of love and support from partners, families and friends are now able to better come to terms with their past and live fuller and more satisfying adult lives.

The Committee considers that there has been wide scale unsafe, improper and unlawful care of children, a failure of duty of care, and serious and repeated breaches of statutory obligations.

The Committee further considers that many comments in recent years by governments, churches and care providers reveal a complete lack of understanding of or acceptance of responsibility for the level of neglect, abuse and assault that occurred in their institutions.

The Committee believes that governments, the Churches and agencies should issue formal statements acknowledging their role in past institutional care policies and practices and the impact this had on the lives of many care leavers. These statements should express sorrow and apologise for the physical, psychological and social harm caused as a result of the care leavers' experiences as children in institutional care. The Committee also considers that these acknowledgments must be accompanied by other positive measures as recommended in the report to ensure that they are not regarded as merely 'empty gestures' by the care leavers and the community generally.

The Committee considered various reparation and redress schemes including access to civil litigation and the legal and other barriers to pursuing claims through the civil system. The Committee examined international and Australian reparation schemes before concluding that a national reparations fund for victims of institutional and out of home care abuse should be established.

The Committee also considered the internal church processes for dealing with allegations of abuse and their commitment to address past grievances. Such processes need to be open, rigorous and accountable; however many of those that do exist are
deficient in these areas and so the Committee has made a number of recommendations to improve transparency and accountability.

Questions of identity both for themselves and of other family members through locating and accessing records has become very important for many care leavers. A range of issues are discussed including locating and accessing records (overcoming FOI hurdles and barriers), the lack of or destruction of personal files, the quality of record keeping at the time and the nature of information and personal comments contained in records, and the need for support when care leavers are viewing their records.

The provision of services to address the needs of care leavers is seriously lacking at many levels. The Committee discusses many issues surrounding what services need to be provided or improved, and how and by whom should they be provided. In particular, support and advocacy services, counselling and the need for specialised counselling services, and programs to tackle health and ageing, housing and homelessness, and adult literacy and numeracy and other education services are addressed.

Recognition of care leavers and their history in Australia in more tangible ways is discussed through the erection of memorials, creation of memorial gardens, construction of heritage centres and in other forms such as reunions. To ensure that the experiences of care leavers are not lost to current and future generations, the Committee recommends that an oral history project be undertaken to collect life stories and that the Museum of Australia should consider the establishment of a permanent exhibition as part of its collection.

Finally the Committee recommends that research needs to be undertaken into a number of areas including the role of institutional care in Australia's social history, the social and economic impact and cost, and interdisciplinary research into the relationship between child protection and welfare dependency. This research needs to be combined with the establishment of courses of study at the tertiary level focusing on these and a range of related subject issues, since the links between how a child is raised and their totality as an adult will continue to influence the creation of policies affecting all Australians.

This report is not just concerned with the past, it is very much about the present and it informs the future of our nation.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 7

Statements of a acknowledgment and apology

Recommendation 1

7.110 That the Commonwealth Government issue a formal statement acknowledging, on behalf of the nation, the hurt and distress suffered by many children in institutional care, particularly the children who were victims of abuse and assault; and apologising for the harm caused to these children.

Recommendation 2

7.111 That all State Governments and Churches and agencies, that have not already done so, issue formal statements acknowledging their role in the administration of institutional care arrangements; and apologising for the physical, psychological and social harm caused to the children, and the hurt and distress suffered by the children at the hands of those who were in charge of them, particularly the children who were victims of abuse and assault.

Chapter 8

Addressing legal barriers

Recommendation 3

8.67 That State Governments review the effectiveness of the South Australian law and consider amending their own statutes of limitation legislation to achieve the positive outcomes for conducting legal proceedings that have resulted from the amendments in the South Australian jurisdiction.

Recommendation 4

8.68 That in recognising the difficulty that applicants have in taking civil action against unincorporated religious or charitable organisations, the Government examine whether it would be either an appropriate or a feasible incentive to incorporation, to make the availability of federal tax concessions to charitable, religious and not-for-profit organisations dependent on, or alternatively linked to, them being incorporated under the corporations act or under state incorporated associations statutes.

Recommendation 5

8.69 That the Commonwealth Government examine the desirability and feasibility of introducing whistleblower legislation for the not-for-profit religious and charitable sectors.
**National reparation fund**

**Recommendation 6**

8.125 That the Commonwealth Government establish and manage a national reparations fund for victims of institutional abuse in institutions and out-of-home care settings and that:

- the scheme be funded by contributions from the Commonwealth and State Governments and the Churches and agencies proportionately;
- the Commonwealth have regard to the schemes already in operation in Canada, Ireland and Tasmania in the design and implementation of the above scheme;
- a board be established to administer the scheme, consider claims and award monetary compensation;
- the board, in determining claims, be satisfied that there was a 'reasonable likelihood' that the abuse occurred;
- the board should have regard to whether legal redress has been pursued;
- the processes established in assessing claims be non-adversarial and informal; and
- compensation be provided for individuals who have suffered physical, sexual or emotional abuse while residing in these institutions or out-of-home care settings.

**Internal Church redress processes**

**Recommendation 7**

8.170 That all internal Church and agency-related processes for handling abuse allegations ensure that:

- informal, reconciliation-type processes be available whereby complainants can meet with Church officials to discuss complaints and resolve grievances without recourses to more formal processes, the aim being to promote reconciliation and healing;
- where possible, there be independent input into the appointment of key personnel operating the schemes;
- a full range of support and other services be offered as part of compensation/reparation packages, including monetary compensation;
- terms of settlement do not impose confidentiality clauses on complainants;
• internal review procedures be improved, including the appointment of external appointees independent of the respective Church or agency to conduct reviews; and

• information on complaints procedures is widely disseminated, including on Churches' websites.

Recommendation 8

8.171 That the Commonwealth establish an external complaints review mechanism, such as a national commissioner for children and young people who would have the power to:

• investigate and mediate complaints received by complainants dissatisfied with Church processes with the relevant Church authority;

• review the operations of Church sponsored complaints mechanisms to enhance transparency and accountability;

• report annually to the Parliament on the operation of the Churches' complaints schemes, including data on the number and nature of complaints; and

• publicise the existence of Church-sponsored complaints mechanisms widely throughout the community.

Recommendation 9

8.172 That the Churches and agencies publish comprehensive data on all abuse complaints received to date, and then subsequently on an annual basis, and that this information include:

• numbers of complainants and type of complaints received;

• numbers of Church/agency personnel involved in complaint allegations; and

• amounts of compensation paid to complainants.

Recommendation 10

8.173 That information on the above matters be provided annually (including any reasons for non-compliance) to the national commissioner for publication in a consolidated form in the commissioner's annual report.

Royal Commission

Recommendation 11

8.223 That the Commonwealth Government seek a means to require all charitable and church-run institutions and out-of-home care facilities to open their files and premises and provide full cooperation to authorities to investigate the nature and extent within these institutions of criminal physical assault,
including assault leading to death, and criminal sexual assault, and to establish and report on concealment of past criminal practices or of persons known, suspected or alleged to have committed crimes against children in their care, by the relevant authorities, charities and/or Church organisations;

And if the requisite full cooperation is not received, and failing full access and investigation as required above being commenced within six months of this Report's tabling, that the Commonwealth Government then, following consultation with state and territory governments, consider establishing a Royal Commission into State, charitable, and church-run institutions and out-of-home care during the last century, provided that the Royal Commission:

- be of a short duration not exceeding 18 months, and be designed to bring closure to this issue, as far as that is possible; and
- be narrowly conceived so as to focus within these institutions, on
- the nature and extent of criminal physical assault of children and young persons, including assault leading to death;
- criminal sexual assault of children and young persons;
- and any concealment of past criminal practices or of persons known, suspected or alleged to have committed crimes against children in their care, by the relevant State authorities, charities and/or Church organisations.

Chapter 9

Location, preservation, recording and access to records

Recommendation 12

9.113 That government and non-government agencies holding records relating to care leavers, implement and fund, as a matter of priority, programs to find, identify and preserve records including photographs and other memorabilia.

Recommendation 13

9.114 That all government and non-government agencies immediately cease the practice of destroying records relating to those who have been in care.

Recommendation 14

9.115 That all State Governments and non-government agencies, which have not already done so

- provide dedicated services and officers to assist care leavers in locating and accessing records, both government and non-government; and
- compile directories to assist in the locating and accessing of records relating to care leavers and the institutions into which they had been placed.
Recommendation 15

9.116 That a dedicated information and search service be established in each State and Territory to:

- develop a complete register of all records held by government and non-government agencies;
- provide assistance to care leavers to locate and access records;
- provide advocacy and mediation services to care leavers accessing records; and
- ensure that all agencies holding records identify, preserve and make available all surviving records relating to care leavers and the institutions that housed them.

Recommendation 16

9.117 That all government and non-government agencies agree on access guidelines for the records of all care leavers and that the guidelines incorporate the following:

- the right of every care leaver, upon proof of identity only, to view all information relating to himself or herself and to receive a full copy of the same;
- the right of every care leaver to undertake records searches, to be provided with records and the copying of records free of charge;
- the commitment to a maximum time period, agreed by the agencies, for the processing of applications for viewing records; and
- the commitment to the flexible and compassionate interpretation of privacy legislation to allow a care leaver to identify their family and background.

Recommendation 17

9.118 That all agencies, both government and non-government, which provide access to records for care leavers, ensure adequate support and counselling services are provided at the time of viewing records, and if required, subsequent to the viewing of records; and that funding for independent counselling services be provided for those care leavers who do not wish to access services provided by a former care agency.

Recommendation 18

9.119 That the Commonwealth request the Council of Australian Governments to review all Federal and State and Territory Freedom of Information regimes to ensure that they do not hinder access by care leavers to information about their childhoods and families.
Chapter 10

Advocacy and support groups

Recommendation 19

10.58 That the Commonwealth fund a national conference of service providers and advocacy and support groups with the aim being to establish a professional national support and advocacy body for care leavers; and that this body be funded by the Commonwealth and State Governments and the Churches and agencies.

Recommendation 20

10.59 That the Commonwealth and State Governments and Churches and agencies provide on-going funding to CLAN and all advocacy and support groups to enable these groups to maintain and extend their services to victims of institutional abuse, and that the government and non-government sectors widely publicise the availability of services offered by these advocacy and support groups.

Provision of support services

Recommendation 21

10.77 That all State Governments, Churches and agencies provide a comprehensive range of support services and assistance to care leavers and their families.

Recommendation 22

10.78 That all State Government funded services for care leavers be available to all care leavers in the respective State, irrespective of where the care leaver was institutionalised; and that funding provisions for this arrangement be arranged through the Community and Disability Services Ministerial Council.

Counselling services

Recommendation 23

10.106 That all State Governments, Churches and agencies fund counselling services for care leavers and their families, and that those currently providing counselling services maintain and, where possible, expand their services including to regional areas. The counselling services should include:

- the extension of specialist counselling services that address the particular needs of care leavers;
- their provision to clients on a long-term or as required basis; and
- the provision of external counselling as an option.
Recommendation 24

10.107 That specialist higher education courses be available for the training of health professionals in areas related to the particular psychological and psychiatric effects of institutional abuse.

Health care, housing and aged care programs

Recommendation 25

10.133 That the Commonwealth and State Governments in providing funding for health care and in the development of health prevention programs, especially mental health, depression, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol prevention programs, recognise and cater for the health needs and requirements of care leavers.

Recommendation 26

10.134 That the Department of Health and Ageing fund a pilot program under the Aged Care Innovative Pool to test innovative models of aged care services focussing on the specific needs of care leavers.

Recommendation 27

10.135 That the Home and Community Care program recognise the particular needs of care leavers; and that information about the program be widely disseminated to care leaver support and advocacy groups in all States.

Recommendation 28

10.140 That the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program recognise the particular needs of care leavers; and that:

- data on the usage of the Program by care leavers be collected; and
- information about the Program be widely disseminated to care leaver support and advocacy groups in all States.

Education

Recommendation 29

10.150 That the Commonwealth and State Governments widely publicise the availability of adult literacy and numeracy services and associated adult education courses to care leavers and care leaver support groups.

Recommendation 30

10.151 That State Governments investigate options for alternative entry pathways to higher education courses for ex-residents of institutions and their children.
Data collection

Recommendation 31

10.159 That the Commonwealth, in conjunction with the States, develop procedures for the collection of data on people who have been in care on forms that are already used to elicit client information such as Medicare and Centrelink forms and admission forms to prisons, mental health care facilities and aged care facilities.

Recommendation 32

10.160 That Commonwealth and State programs across a range of social policy areas, including health and aged care and social welfare services generally, explicitly recognise care leavers as a sub-group with specific requirements in the publications and other material disseminated about programs.

Whole of government approach to program and service delivery

Recommendation 33

10.164 That the Commonwealth and the States commit, through the Council of Australian Governments, to implementing a whole of government approach to the provision of programs and services for care leavers across policy areas such as health, housing and welfare and community services and other relevant policy areas.

Chapter 11

Recognition through memorials and exhibitions

Recommendation 34

11.46 That the Commonwealth and State Governments, in conjunction with the Churches and agencies, provide funding for the erection of suitable memorials commemorating care leavers. Where possible, memorials could take the form of:

- memorial gardens constructed in conjunction with local councils;
- the placement of plaques at the site of former institutions; and/or
- the construction of heritage centres on the site of former institutions.

The Committee further recommends that the appropriate form and location of memorials should be determined after local consultation with care leavers and their support and advocacy groups.
Recommendation 35

11.47 That the National Museum of Australia be urged to consider establishing an exhibition, preferably permanent, related to the history and experiences of children in institutional care, and that such an exhibition have the capacity to tour as a travelling exhibition.

Oral histories

Recommendation 36

11.48 That the Commonwealth Government provide funding for the National Library of Australia to undertake an oral history project to collect the life-stories of former residents in institutional and out-of-home care.

Research

Recommendation 37

11.49 That the Commonwealth Government fund research either through the Australian Institute of Family Studies or other relevant research body or university into the following areas:

- historical research into institutional care, including the role of institutional care in Australia’s social history; the history of institutions and the commissioning of personal histories of former residents;

- the social and economic impact and cost of institutional care; and

- inter-disciplinary research into the relationship between child welfare/child protection and areas such as welfare dependency, social problems such as drug and alcohol abuse and family relationship breakdowns.

Recommendation 38

11.50 That the Australian Institute of Family Studies National Child Protection Clearinghouse be funded by the Commonwealth Government to collect publications related to historical studies of institutional and other forms of out-of-home care and that this information be widely disseminated.

Tertiary study courses

Recommendation 39

11.51 That the Commonwealth, in co-operation with State Governments, establish courses of study at selected tertiary institutions that focus on child protection and related issues, especially early childhood and family studies, psychology, conflict management, the impact of institutional care and social policy to address issues in these areas.
the girls across the face or ears for nothing, and loved telling us if it wasn’t for them we would be in the gutter, where we belong. We had no shoes for every day wear, we would get chilblains on our toes and fingers. (Sub 180)

2.117 Another person wrote about the Anglican Swan Homes in Western Australia and recalled instances of extreme punishment of the boys, including the following:

In January 1946, when I was just 12 years of age, my three younger brothers, a younger sister and myself were committed to care...and placed in the Swan Homes at Middle Swan then operated by the Anglican Church...I am now over 70 years of age but still find my experiences of this Institution remain with me, and some of the traumatic things I experienced still bother me, and I believe have had a profound effect on my life. (Sub 414)

**Salvation Army**

2.118 The Salvation Army has run children’s homes in Australia for over a century. Victorian establishments have included: the Bayswater Boys’ Home, Box Hill Boys’ Home, Kardinia Children’s Home, East Camberwell Girls’ Home, Glenroy Girls’ and Pakenham Boys’ Homes. Its homes in South Australia include the Kent Town Boys’ Home, Mt Barker Boys’ Home and Woodville Girls’ Home, while the organisation conducted homes in Western Australia in Cottesloe, Seaford and Nedlands. In Tasmania, Salvation Army homes have included the Barrington Boys’ Home and Maylands Girls’ Home, and in New South Wales the Kolling Memorial Boys’ Home at Bexley, Manly Boys’ Homes, Lyndon House Girls’ Home, Canowindra and Goulburn’s Gill Memorial Boys’ Home are other examples. In Queensland, the Salvation Army homes include Kalimna Vocational Centre for Girls, Toowong, Indooroopilly Boys’ Home, the Riverview Girls’ Industrial school and the Riverview Boys’ group of homes, Ipswich.¹²⁰

2.119 The Committee received many submissions regarding abuse in Salvation Army homes. One woman recalled the home in Cottesloe, Perth, in the 1940s where she lived when her young mother was unable to care for her and her siblings:

I found it very traumatic as I was a bed wetter and had to wash my own sheet in the mornings and got into quite a deal of trouble for the bed wetting...I would need to use the toilet during the night and this got me into trouble for being out of bed and I was made to stand in the cold hall until the carers went to bed...this occurred on a regular basis. (Sub 184)

2.120 A New South Wales care leaver described treatment at the Salvation Army’s Gill Memorial Home, Goulburn, from 1966:

I was in my innocence, entering these dimensions of the so called home from early childhood, to which I experienced and witnessed abuse from my early years to September 1974...For the first two years in the boys home

¹²⁰ Submission 46, (Salvation Army – Australia Southern Territorial Headquarters).
influences affected my behaviour/personality, as I learnt the discipline of the home, and the hypocrisy of Christian ethics and morality from the age of about 8 to 15. (Sub 326)

2.121 He further described life at Gill, including being made to sweep the toilet with a toothbrush, having to stand outside in all weather conditions, sometimes without shoes and being punished for speaking about one of the officer's sexual misconduct. He left the home, totally disenchanted with the Salvation Army and its officers:

What annoys me the most is the two faced presentation of Salvation Army officers who pride themselves as upstanding citizens in the community while in SA uniform, the other face of abuse hidden from the community...The Salvation Army officers acted as wardens, not devoted fathers to us all. There was a lot of mental abuse in the so-called home that I had no experience of before I entered this place. (Sub 326)

2.122 In writing about the Gill Boys' Home and recent remarks in the media of a senior Salvation Army officer about 'tough love' for the boys, another man said:

I have difficulty in reconciling...'love' with: Being physically abused particularly by one officer who enjoyed punching boys in the mouth and hitting them across the face with his open palm...on a regular basis...As a child at the Gill Home for Boys at Goulburn, the abuse...was constant. There were obviously some officers who tried to uphold the principles of the founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth, but they were not able to stop, or have much of an impact upon those officers who choose to ignore humanitarian beliefs, ideals and concepts...as a teacher I ended up teaching one an ex-Gill Home officer's sons. This particular officer did try his hardest to make life as pleasant as possible for the boys. When I asked him why we were treated so badly he said that although he tried his hardest he was told that as a junior officer it was not his role to interfere and that if he didn't like it then he should pack his bags and leave. The arrogant, abusive and purposeful humiliation methods of the Salvation Army are still in existence today, and are still impacting on my life. (Sub 286)

2.123 Other care leavers wrote of the lack of compassion at the Gill Home:

After lights went out at night you would be quite often awakened by younger boys crying for their parents. If this wasn't sad enough, if the officer heard it, the doors would be flung open, the lights turned on and everyone had to stand at the end of their bed until the boy who had been crying was found. The officer then flogged the boy. (Sub 336)

2.124 Many stories about the Queensland Salvation Army home, Riverview, emerged, such as the following outline that included sexual and physical abuse. In describing a particularly abusive officer, this care leaver said:

On the way home, Captain Gilliam would often stop at a pub to buy alcohol and we were threatened with a flogging if we told anyone. On return to Riverview, approximately 12 boys were made to sort through this truckload of food and push the best of it in a wheelbarrow approximately 1.25 miles to the kitchen...Fights were a common occurrence during shower time at
Riverview... On one occasion I had my eye split open when Captain Spratt took a swing at one boy who ducked, leaving me to receive the blow. (Sub 75)

2.125 Located at Indooroopilly in Brisbane, the Salvation Army home, Alkira, was also the subject of criticism:

Boys were punished for sitting next to girls at little lunch... these punishments would range from going to bed without TV, the strap or the cane. The manager... would occasionally punch boys with a closed fist. The dairy officer... would hit you with a stock whip if he caught you talking during milking. (Sub 90)

**Uniting Church**

2.126 The Uniting Church in Australia is a union of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches and was inaugurated in 1977. The Methodist and Presbyterian Churches were 'relatively small players' in children's institutional care in Australia. Included in Uniting Church homes in Victoria have been the Dhurringile Rural Training Farm (Tatura) for boys; Kilmany Park Family Home for Boys in Sale; the Presbyterian Sisterhood for babies and homeless mothers in Melbourne; and the Orana Family Services which commenced in 1888, changing its name and location several times over the years.¹²¹

2.127 A number of care leavers submitted positive stories about Uniting Church homes in Victoria:

I was transferred to 'Tally Ho Boys' Home 20/5/1939 aged nine years and five months. I remember that when I went to Tally Ho I started wetting the bed for about eighteen months until I settled down. I was never punished for this. At Tally Ho they taught you to make your bed, wash your clothes, and we shared laundry duties, farm duties, cooking, separating milk, harvesting. I found the homes to be a good environment... The only fights I saw were between the boys. (Sub 153)

2.128 However, the Committee received contrary evidence about Uniting Church homes, for example, Kilmany Park:

From Baltara I was sent to Kilmany Park in Sale... When I did go to school and spoke to my family, and the home found out, I was constantly belted... We showered together and our penises were measured. I was abused by the superintendent's son and, when I told the superintendent, I was constantly pulled out of bed – probably at about 11 o'clock at night – for telling lies, made to do a three or four-mile run, made to swim in a freezing cold swimming pool and sent back to bed... this was a Presbyterian home. We went to church every Sunday and were told of this God of love and understanding who was watching over us. I could not understand, because I thought: 'Jeez, what's happening? He's not watching over me.'

¹²¹ Submission 52, pp. 3-4, 16-17 (UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania).
children could jeer! I was 8 or 9 (Presbyterian). Parkerville Anglican children's potties were tipped on me to revive me. (Sub 363)

2.177 Contrasting his life in Cornwall, England, before coming to Australia, this person described Fairbridge Farm School in Western Australia, a far cry from happier days. His experiences included being bullied, having monotonous food, experiencing hard labour, being constantly hungry and having very few personal possessions:

[Of Fairbridge]...I have only memories of fear, anger and resentment. When I left Fairbridge, I had become an uncaring, selfish, fearful loner. I had been dehumanised...We were assigned...a cottage mother...More of a sadistic prison warden than a surrogate parent. Among her less endearing ways of showing her displeasure was the full fist punch to the face. (Sub 375)

Experiences of various homes and orphanages

2.178 The following extract from a submission shows this person's wide experience of Queensland religious homes:

Silky Oaks, Wynnum [Plymouth Brethren]. At pre-school age I got a very bad dose of the mumps my ears ached so badly my mouth was swollen...for this I was punished. I was placed in a wooden crate and taken down to the cow shed there I stayed until morning...they forgot me.

WR Black Home, Graceville [Presbyterian]. The matron was a cruel woman, I had my vomit shovelled back into my mouth not only was I swallowing it I was also swallowing my blood as the matron scraped my gums with the spoon making sure I ate the lot.

Nudgee Orphanage [Catholic]. The lack of footwear and warm clothes in winter and of course the slop we all had to eat.

The Salvation Army Home, Toowong. This was the most barbaric home I was in...I spent many nights and weeks and months locked in solitary confinement...I went mad raging like a wild animal.

Holy Cross, Wooloowin [Catholic]. Locked in a broom closet...pitch dark and sleeping on a dirty mattress on the floor which I shared with the mice.

Mitchelton Good Shepherd Home [Catholic]. The food was so bad it was plain slop. The hygiene was appalling. (Sub 120)

2.179 Some people's experiences entailed a combination of government and non-government homes including training schools and centres for people with a disability:

I was born on 28th November 1941 in Sandringham, Victoria. I spent the first two years at home with my parents. Then I went into the first of the institutions. I was in: Royal Park Receiving Home; St Joseph's Home, Carlton; St Anthony's Home, Kew; St Joseph's Babies' Home, Broadmeadows; St Joseph's Boys' Home, Surrey Hills; St Augustine's Boys' Home, Geelong; Royal Park Receiving Home; Turana, Melbourne; Bendigo Training Centre; Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne. (Sub 283)
I have been placed in a number of ward establishments due to being a neglected child and mental homes due to mental abuse and physical abuse. The first home was Royleston, state ward home Glebe at the age of four years of age...1962...in 1965 I spent time in Royleston. North Ryde Psychiatric Centre children's unit, in the year 1967...I was returned to Royleston, Glebe – November 1967. State ward home Mittagong, Turner or Suttor Cottage, year 1968. Rydalmere Hospital, in adult ward 21/01/70...Yasmar Boys' Shelter 8/4/70...Toombong special central school, year 1970 – Mittagong training school Mackeller. Yasmar Ashfield NSW boys' shelter...Returned to Royleston...8/9/71...Berry Training Farm...1971...Callan Park and Gladesville Psychiatric hospitals 15/1/73. Metropolitan Boys' Shelter 26/2/74. (Sub 318)

I spent time...with my twin sister Sandra in 5 different orphanages and children's homes around Sydney, NSW for the first 14 years of my life. They are...St Anthony's Foundling Home, Croyden 1950-1962; St Joseph's Home, Croyden 1952-1956; Narrellan Girls' Home 1956-1957; St Martha's Girls' Home, Leichhardt 1957-1963; St Anne's Orphanage, Liverpool 1963-1964. (Sub 374)

I was placed in departmental care at the age of 7½ and spent the next 10 years in 8 different homes...Thornby Lodge, Baulkham Hills; Protestant Federation Girls' Home, Dulwich Hill; Palister Girls' Home, Greenwich; Bidura Orphanage, Glebe; Glebe Shelter, Glebe; Minda Remand Centre; Ormond Institution, Thornleigh; Parramatta Girls' Institution at Parramatta.

During this time I was bashed, had my face cut, locked in a broom cupboard, in...solitary confinement, the dungeon, told I wasn't worth the dirt under their feet, dumb, an idiot, not worth the clothes on my back. (Conf Sub 119)

Comparisons of homes with jails

2.180 The most damaging comment on certain institutions came from a few care leavers who compared the conditions in children's homes unfavourably with that of jails, the latter in some instances considered to be more endurable:

Westbrook was another hell hole but much worse than Neerkol no human beings should ever have to go through what I went through in Westbrook.

There were guards screwing boys, bashing, threats, older boys standing over younger boys, older boys used by guards to hold other boys down while, they, the guard, bashed them and boys taken out of the dormitory at night to be used by the guards or the older boys for their sexual pleasure. I would lie awake listening to other boys sobbing in misery and I cried myself to sleep every night in sickening fear...After the hell holes of Neerkol and Westbrook I found Boggo Road a paradise. (Sub 217)

2.181 One care leaver made similar comparisons about a Melbourne Salvation Army home and Pentridge Jail:

Turana was pretty scary at first. I was a truant among petty criminals. It was hard at first, but I adapted...Then came the nightmare. In 1958 I was sent to Bayswater, another home run by the Salvos...We were bashed savagely,
not by officers, but by a large group of trustee prisoners. From then on it was nightmare after nightmare. We were then belted on a regular basis by the warders. They were savage beatings. Boots and all. Time and time again...Even being in Pentridge at the age of seventeen was bad but nowhere near as bad as Bayswater. Even H division wasn't as bad. (Sub 148)

2.182 As well, this care leaver compared life at a Salvation Army home unfavourably with later experiences at a South Australian 'reform school' for boys:

I was placed in the Salvation Army Boys Home...Mt Barker...about mid-1967. I was 10½ years old...I only spent 18 months in this place, but the legacy from the physical, emotional and psychological abuse, I took with me from there has basically destroyed my life...Strappings and canings came thick and fast, sometimes deserved, sometimes not...We received some pretty rough treatment in the remand home, this scared me when I was sentenced to the reform school...Reform school was nothing like I perceived it to be...The worst punishment was standing at attention for a couple of hours. The staff were more interested in finding the person and building on it...You had the opportunity to work your way up through the ranks...becoming a captain of a dorm, then an honour boy...If the Salvos had the same kind of program, I wouldn't have the problems I have today. (Sub 291)

Experiences of other homes

2.183 Amid the many negative stories, the Committee received positive ones:

Then when I was 13 I was sent to St Augustine's in Geelong and made a ward of the state...I spent time in Baltara Boys' Home and then a hostel run by Tally-ho for a couple of years. I was shown how adults should be and that not all are bad. I learnt a lot and met a lot of boys just like myself. (Sub 342)

2.184 Irrespective of a home's size or configuration, a common theme was the overlay of a harsh unloving environment. One care leaver described the small institution that was her 'home', run by two women, more as a commercial enterprise, principally because they had no men to support them financially:

The lives of these women...were shaped by the deaths or desertion of men, demonstrating the importance in these years of having a male breadwinner and the limited life and work choices if none were available. For my 'foster mothers' the sandwich shop had been hard work...hence the decision to set up a 'Children's Holiday Home', as they called it...There were also four other long-term inmates...We grew up together, but apart from my own sister, I never saw any of them again except for a chance meeting with one, years later...we lived under a totalitarian regime though obviously I would not have described it like this at the time...my sister and I and the other children - lived according to an iron-clad routine, in constant fear of doing the wrong thing and of the threatened (catastrophic) consequences of such transgressions...Materially we were very well cared for...It was an isolated and insular life...My feelings about the Home were complex. It was all that I knew and having in effect lost my parents, it represented security...I
CHAPTER 4

TREATMENT AND CARE OF CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONS

Do I often wonder what it would have been like to have been left in a loving home with my family intact, to share Christmas morning with all my brothers, sisters, grandparents and mother? Sure I do! I do not delude myself that it would have been all roses and always loving. We would have had many trying situations but we would have had the only unconditional love that is available, that of the love of family.

4.1 The highly evocative and emotive language that is constantly repeated through the submissions and evidence received from across Australia is testimony to the nature of the treatment of children in institutions over many decades. Language such as 'my sentence', 'concentration camp', 'prison', 'hell-hole', 'felt like a convict', 'entombed in institutions', 'inmates', 'incarcerated', 'internship', 'tortured', 'nightmare', 'release', 'outside world', 'victims', 'survivors' graphically describe the feelings that remain about the treatment received at an early age of their lives.

4.2 It must be remembered at the outset of this chapter that a large number of the children placed into the 'care' of the state, especially during the 1950s and 60s, were status offenders who had been charged with neglect, no visible means of support, being uncontrollable or exposed to moral danger. These were not crimes of the child. They were crimes of the parents or, in a sense, crimes of a society that at the time was not providing anywhere near sufficient help and assistance to families living in underprivileged social circumstances and often desperate poverty. As one witness succinctly said: 'We were not bad then and we are not bad now'.

4.3 Yet these children were placed in receiving depots and institutions with other children who were guilty of various misdemeanours or more serious criminal activity. The many submissions and evidence from those children who found themselves in this situation at such a young and vulnerable age can only give a sense of the full extent of the trauma and horror they experienced when confronted with this totally foreign world and way of life.

4.4 One of the most tragic consequences of this time that was expressed in so many submissions is a powerful feeling of guilt and shame that has haunted people throughout their life. These unnecessarily mistaken feelings are the result of attitudes beaten, both psychologically and physically, into children during their time at so many of the institutions. But the children were not guilty. The events and experiences of that time were not their fault.

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1 Submission 272, p.4.
4.5 As will be seen in this chapter such events and experiences included being repeatedly and constantly subjected to deliberate and callous cruelty, humiliation, abuse and deprivation of basic necessities of life such as healthy food and diet, proper clothing, medical care and education, and most tellingly the emotional support, love and psychological necessities required by a young maturing child. A breakdown by type of abuse described by care leavers in their submissions is in Appendix 7.

Receiving children into care

Arrival

I snatched at each shaft of the iron fence as the policeman pulled us towards the great double gate. The gravel crunched under our feet as we drew near the dark-red building. Looking up to the balcony on the second floor, Billy read to us the cast iron words 'ORPHAN ASYLUM 1865'. This was a grim place, this Ballarat Orphanage. Solid, like a fortress. (Sub 18)

The very first thing I saw of my destination was a very large steel gate. I remember the clang it made when it was shut and the sound of a bunch of keys being turned. (Parkside Baltara – Sub 278)

'I arrived at a large grey depressing looking building which was Bidura.' Being taken to Bidura was a revelation to many – 'Bidura was our first stop and what a culture shock it was coming to this cold dismal institution'.

I felt my life had come to an end after the door was closed behind me. I missed my mother enormously and used to cry myself to sleep at night, the feelings of loneliness and isolation were terrifying. I was scared and I wondered what would become of me. (SA Nedlands – Sub 231)

They took me to that terrible place called Parramatta Girls' Home...I am quite sure that I was in shock – with the big high wall around it and all gates and doors all locked, no way out no one with a smile or a bit of kindness – I was there for a long time. (Parramatta – Sub 377)

Health checks, delousing and body searches

4.6 Reception at some institutions involved a number of health and hygiene procedures. Delousing by cutting and washing hair in kerosene was commonly practiced. However, the manner by which procedures such as internal examinations were performed was most traumatic, especially for young girls who in some instances were not even teenagers.

Upon arrival each individual was stripped searched in the full sense of the term, made to take a shower and had delousing solution applied to their hair. You were then issued with a shapeless uniform, some underwear and sandals with no laces or thongs. The institutional programming had begun. (Wilson – Sub 58)

I was subjected to a humiliating, distressing, and painful internal examination by a doctor, who used heavy stainless steel instruments. I had never been examined internally prior to this, and was absolutely destroyed. (Parramatta – Sub 284)
On arrival back at Bidura I was given the standard vaginal tests... When I protested I was told they knew "how quickly I would open my legs for a boy!" I was 9 years old! I had no idea what they were talking about.

(Sub 258)²

4.7 Dr Joanna Penglase, in her thesis Orphans of the Living, under a section titled 'State-sanctioned rape' notes there was a provision in the NSW Child Welfare Act 1939 for certifying wards were free of venereal disease. However it appeared thousands of girls were given vaginal examinations on the pretext of testing for 'promiscuity'. Dr Penglase quotes from an interview with a child welfare department field officer who in referring to this procedure commented it 'was just straight out assault, there's no doubt about it, it's a wonder somebody hasn't complained about being assaulted all those years ago'.³

Removal of belongings and clothes

I was taken to a room where my bag containing everything I owned in my life was taken away and nothing was ever returned. Even the clothes I had on were taken from me as I was told to put on the stock clothing. (Bidura – Sub 351)⁴

Royleston was a terrible place to find yourself, at any age. Each time you entered, you were reduced to a manageable unit, private property was removed and never seen again, Government day clothes were issued and you were given a number, this number was your tooth brush number. (Royleston – Sub 321)

She confiscated all my clothes, all my belongings, then used a pair of large black shears to cut off my shoulder length hair. There was no care taken to style the hair, it was HACKED.... I was issued with regulation clothing, a number (43), horrible long dresses made of rough material, clumpy shoes and disgusting bloomers and singlets. I was not given a bra. (Parramatta – Sub 284)

The state wards...were sent to Winlaten remand centre. This had a deeply emotional effect on me, as I was treated like a prisoner. I had to strip, then I was required to put on clothes they provided. I was confined to an exercise yard during the day then locked in a bedroom on my own at night. (Sub 166)

I was sent to Lynwood Hall at Guildford. Every thing that my foster parents had given me, clothes, jewellery, shoes, my treasures and my bank account were taken from me. I never saw any of them again. (Lynwood – Sub 325)

² Graphic stories of internal examinations, especially at Bidura where the doctor was nicknamed Dr Finger, were reported, eg Submissions 272, 315, 407 – Bidura; 39, 298, 325, 377 – Parramatta.

³ Submission 63, Orphans of the Living, pp.237-240 (Dr Penglase).

⁴ Removal of personal belongings, toys and clothing to be replaced by standard issue was common, eg Submissions 217 – Neerkol; 231 – SA, Nedlands; 297 – St John's Goulburn; 382 – SA Bexley; 413 – Royal Park.
4.8 Many care leavers reported presents and other gifts being routinely removed from the children; of being searched upon return from outside visits and having food packages, clothing and comics taken.

I received a parcel from an Aunt, it was a beautiful hand-knitted red jumper which I never wore as it was taken away from me and I didn't know what happened to it until I saw it being used to wash the floor. For a little girl who was so pleased with her new jumper it was devastating. (Salvation Army, Cottesloe – Sub 184)

We were never allowed to keep the presents as the nuns used to take them off us when we got back to the orphanage and would sell them at their fetes. (St Joseph's Subiaco – Sub 172)

My mother used to visit us every 2-4 weeks. I can still visualise her coming up the hill carrying two shopping bags with some goodies and toys for us, but they were always taken off us when she left. (Parkerville – Sub 181)

I never owned a Doll or Teddy Bear. Those that did had to leave them in a "Special Room" on the top floor, where they would be shown to visitors, but rarely taken down for us kids to play with. (WR Black – Sub 409)

4.9 Letters were regularly censored at best or simply not delivered. The Committee heard of one 70 year old lady who accessed her DOCS file only to discover that 'inside were letters, letters that her Father had written to her and which she never received, letters also from her siblings which she never received and letters that she had written to her Father that hadn't been posted...Ivy has always wondered why her Father didn't reply to her letters'.

Physical environment and living conditions

Buildings and accommodation

The buildings we grew up in were unsuitable. They were architecturally marvellous castles, but growing up in huge cold empty spaces that did not resemble family homes at all was quite traumatising...for little children. (Burnside – Committee Hansard 3.2.04)

What a shock! This place had bars on the windows every door was locked, the staff all jangled when they walked as the keys hung from the waist. (Lynwood Hall – Sub 258)

I was sent to Mittagong. Mittagong was a large property Federation style buildings with contemporary add on schoolrooms and a relative modern building for small children. Mittagong was a horror show. (Sub 321)

Now my life lay within the walls of the convent. These walls were at least ten feet high with a thick wrought iron gate at the front. I guess I had become institutionalised because I rarely thought about life on the outside and concentrated more on survival where I was. (GS Oakleigh – Sub 423)

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5 Submission 220, Additional Information 24.6.04 (CLAN).
Food

The best that could be said about the food was that it was regular and recurrently basic. Bread and dripping ('flop') was our common breakfast with a mug of lukewarm tea. The main meals were routinised: you could tell what day of the week it was by what we were eating. The menu was totally predictable. And there was never enough. (Ballarat Orphanage – Sub 18)

I have become a vegetarian as a result of often vomiting up meat that was off and we could smell was off before we ate it, but were forced to eat it anyway. (Protestant Federation Home, Dulwich Hill – Sub 311)6

My first memory of Goodwood is of the food – the lack of it. I can now only recall being hungry all the time. I can remember licking plates but I could not have been much older than 4 or 5. (Goodwood – Sub 419)

We were always kept near starvation point at Westbrook. All the best produce that we grew was sent to the markets to be sold. We were left with only the maggoty, the mouldy, the weevilly and the stale. I am not exaggerating. I wish I were. We were not allowed to have butter on our bread (even though we produced our own), while the warders and their families received all the milk, cream and butter they wanted. The animals we raised – mainly cows and pigs – were better fed than us boys. (Sub 141)

The freshest part of the food actually moved. (Box Hill – Sub 148)7

My memories of meal times at the orphanage were all very similar to this – being forced to eat food we did not like, being hit and removed from the table if we objected and being separated from my siblings. (Sandgate – Sub 412)

Many compared the standard of their food with that which the nuns or other staff were served.

I was made to work every morning and evening in the nun's dining room and kitchen...They ate wonderful food; fresh peaches and roast lamb. I had never tasted anything like this before. I used to steal all the scraps and give them to my sister (St Joseph's Lane Cove – Sub 95)

The officers did not eat the same food as us. They were seated on a stage looking down at us eating their lovely roast meals, whilst we were eating horrible stews. (Salvation Army, Nedlands – Sub 231)

Many also reported, especially in Catholic and Salvation Army institutions, that at meal times there was strictly no talking allowed. To talk would result in a strike across the back or head with a cane or other implement.

6 Being forced to eat vomited food was not isolated, Submissions 5 and 108 – Nazareth Houses, Vic; 120 – WR Black; 142 – Blackwood House; 266 – SA Camberwell.

7 Having to eat food that was rancid or containing weevils was reported by many care leavers.
4.12 With food and diet being basic and insufficient, children learned to scavenge or supplement their diet through other means.

While we worked in the garden there was always the chance of a bit extra to eat, and we thought it well worth the risk. We’d break the tops off carrots then put the top back in the ground, after consuming the carrot. Potatoes were eaten raw as well. With them it was just a matter of digging at the side of the plant and pulling out the potato. This was called ‘bandicooting’.

(Ballarat Orphanage – Conf Sub 6)

There were lots of orchards around the place, so we would raid them when we could. Also used to drink the milk before it went through the separator, and would also swallow raw eggs when I could get hold of them from the chooks. One thing we did learn as kids was to be crafty, that’s how we survived. (Parkerville – Conf Sub 44)

**Clothing**

All my clothes were hand me downs from the other kids and given out daily from a pile on the table. (Kardinia House – Sub 157)

We were known as 'home' or 'orphanage kids' just by our clothing – I felt very stigmatised. (Sub 111)

Clothing 200 growing children was almost as great a task as feeding them. Uniformity was best, for reasons of economy and practicality. Most of our clothes were hand-me-downs, and like the boots, were expected to last for ever...Saturday mornings we lined up for fresh clothes. Socks and singlets every Saturday; clean pyjamas and shirts every second Saturday; fresh pants once a month...Underpants were unknown until we were at secondary school. (Ballarat Orphanage – Sub 18)

We were not allowed to wear our shoes and were barefooted the whole time we were there, except when we were in a public place ie, outside the confines of the home. (Salvation Army, Nedlands – Sub 231)

4.13 The non-wearing of shoes was common-place across institutions, with many recollecting the pain of going to and from school in bare feet on gravel roads. The only time many children were allowed to wear shoes was on special outings or if important visitors came.

I can remember crying all the way to school in winter as my feet really hurt – chilblains were common – and in summer we would get blisters because the road was so hot. (Sub 181)

**Personal hygiene**

I remember while we were there that we only got a bath once a week and that the same bath water was used for all the boys. (Ardill House – Sub 199)

At Nazareth House we had a bath once a week, this bathing ritual was performed with me wearing a calico gown so as I wouldn’t look at my body or see my reflection in the water. (Sub 111)
Friday night was bath time in the toddlers' block. We soaked ten at a time in a big raised bath. The big girls scrubbed and polished us one by one and pushed us out quickly to make way for the next lot... When we graduated to the big kids' block, we had a shower on Saturday mornings. The system was as efficient as a factory assembly line: six shower outlets to each of five rows, thirty boys at a time. Sixty boys could be done in ten minutes flat. No privacy, no dressing gowns and you shared a towel with the mob. (Ballarat Orphanage – Sub 18)

To stop us getting tinea (athlete's foot) we had to all wash our feet in a bathtub before we got into the showers, that was exactly the way to spread it and I would (after contracting it a few months after I arrived) spend nights tearing my feet & toes to pieces, they were so raw & bloody at times, I could barely walk on them...(King Edward Newcastle – Sub 351)

In the early years we cleaned our teeth with salt rubbed on our fingers. Later, in our teens, we got a toothbrush. Even then, there was no toothpaste. The dentist was called in emergencies only. (Ballarat Orphanage – Sub 18)

4.14 Many girls complained of the lack of education when menstruation commenced and described how they had thought there was something terribly wrong with them. Access to sanitary items was heavily controlled – 'when we wanted one we had to ask a staff member and wait til she unlocked the cupboard and gave us one in front of other children' – 'we had to ask the staff (males included) for one pad at a time and it was written in a book'. The humiliation of actually having to show a soiled pad before receiving another was vividly recalled by many care leavers. No allowance was made for girls who had heavy periods – 'for 18 months I had to stuff toilet paper, lots of it down my undies especially at school'.

When we had our periods we were given a bag with 6 large pieces of rag in it and with our name on it. Once used we had to scrub these until spotless...

(Newtown, Hobart – Sub 208)

Depersonalisation and other forms of psychological abuse

The whole time I was in the institutions all I wanted to do was not to be seen, I just wanted to disappear so I wouldn't be singled out.

4.15 The impact on an impressionable child of being constantly told they were good for nothing, would amount to nothing, were evil, were the devil's child, were worthless, were scum of the earth and not fit for normal society, were a nobody, were not wanted by their mother or anybody else, were sluts, whores and prostitutes, had come from the gutter and would end in the gutter cannot be overemphasised. It is little wonder that such abuse and negative reinforcement destroyed the self esteem of so many who have remained scarred through their adult lives.

All my life, as a child in those dreadful homes I was told I was 'ugly', 'would end up a prostitute' and 'should never have been born'. It took me years of struggle to even realise I was a person... It is only recently I have gained enough confidence to believe I am a decent person and as good as everyone else...we really never knew what we were. (Sub 95)
Most of the Christian Brothers made sarcastic remarks to destroy one's innate personality and self-worth. The perpetual drive to snuff out the spirit of the individual by inflicting them with senseless brutality and humiliation to conform to the grinding regimented life of the institutions was in the main successful. This would ensure the full potential of many kids in these institutions would be snuffed out. (Sub 365)

Because of being constantly told I was nothing & would end up in the gutter & no one wanted me or ever would, the core negative beliefs I have are my reality. They are the deepest most profound assumptions and expectations I have of myself, & therefore I find it hard to function as a 'normal' human being, beyond my front door. This is just the way life is to me now, & these negative core beliefs continue to govern my life & reality. (Sub 124)

[The officer] then gave me 4 straps across each hand. He then made me run around a yard 5 times yelling at the top of my voice, very ugly things about myself. I was yelling things such as, I'll never be any good, I'm useless, I'm pathetic, I'm a sook etc. ... Out of everything I took with me from that place, that has been the one thing that has stopped me on many occasions from getting anywhere in life. (SA Eden Park – Sub 291)

4.16 The loss of childhood, of having what would be regarded as a normal childhood taken away, was poignantly described in many submissions. For many there was no time for childhood play with daily life so structured and regimented.

I have come to realise that we were never children. We were an unpaid workforce, with no reward just punishment...At the beginning I said I don't remember being a child, I am saddened that most of the memories of my youth are pretty grim. (Sub 169)

Due to the period in the Home I lost my complete childhood. I never knew my Uncles, Aunties, cousins. I have no happy memories of my childhood at all the Salvos robbed me of that (Sub 198)

We lived in fear during most of our childhood. And our childhood was stolen from us. (Sub 266)

**Lack of love and affection**

4.17 The most fundamental need for the emotional development of a young child is to be shown love and affection, to be nurtured and wanted. The lack of these essential human qualities was pervasive in institutions and was commented upon or referred to in literally every submission and story. Growing up and developing as a person without receiving love and affection has possibly been the single most influential and tragic legacy of life in institutional care for every care leaver.

I feel like I grew up as a worm, as I felt I was beneath everybody. (Sub 367)

I was never shown any love at all you were just a number to them not even a name. (SA Kent Town – Sub 198)

We had no nurturing, no love, no hugs, no kisses all necessary in ones upbringing, it was nearly 45 years before we could hug each other when we
met and talk openly about what we had been through. A lot of Hopewoods are still mixed up and still having problems and no one to turn to. For a lot there are still no answers. (Hopewood – Sub 93)

I was trying to get some caring or love from anyone. I remember talking to the laundry lady and trying to get some caring from her but it seemed that all the adults in the place were totally cold to the children. (Royleston – Sub 150)

My biggest complaint is that I was never offered or given anything that even vaguely resembled nurturing. No affirmation of the person I was becoming, no encouragement, no warmth, and absolutely no affection, not under any circumstances… The Manager lived upstairs with his family, providing all 16 residents with a tantalising but extraordinarily painful glimpse of the loving family life we so desired… He and his family made absolutely certain that we all knew our station in life, and reinforced our collective worthlessness. (Raith – Sub 28)

The emotional abuse I received was demeaning and humiliating, it undermined my confidence and self-worth. The continual taunting of being told that I was nothing and would amount to nothing, that I was stupid and that I would be just like my mother who came from the gutter. (St Catherine’s – Sub 111)

The special training I was to receive at Brougham was designed to make me believe I was unloved and unlovable, unwanted, worthless and a burden on society who would never amount to anything. Many of these thoughts I still carry. (Brougham – Sub 20)

The most difficult part of all this is the fact that you had no one to turn to for some form of comfort. You just bury it, no way to deal with it… You’d learn to hide emotions in this place, because you might get strapped for it as I did. (SA Eden Park – Sub 291)

There was no one to trust, to confide in, to cuddle, to read us bedtime stories. No one gave us an affectionate 'goodnight' or stopped for a chat. And yet all the while I ached with a question that would not go away. *What can be so wrong with our parents that makes it better to be brought up by such cruel and uncaring people as this?* (Ballarat Orphanage – Sub 18)

4.18 In all institutions over all periods of time, the lack of love was a fundamental constant. Stories emerged that in some instances there were different levels of treatment in care over different eras at the same Home. Even in those few submissions that had positive comments about childhood experiences in care there were still comments about the lack of love and warm human emotion.

**Suppression of identity and individuality**

4.19 It was common practice in many institutions to give each child an identification number which they kept throughout their time at that particular place. 'No one was referred to by name – usually it was "you" or your number was called out'.

It was here in Parkside I was given the name "NUMBER FIVE". The number you are given is what you answer to, it is sewn on all your clothes, it is your locker number and your bed and cell number. I ceased being Alan and became number five. (Sub 278)

4.20 The impact this had on individual identity could be seen by the number of care leavers who remembered their number or signed off their submission so many years later with the inclusion of their identity number.  

4.21 If calling a child by a number is not dehumanising enough, the lack of recognition and celebration of birthdays is the ultimate suppression of identity.

I never had a birthday party or cake. (St Catherine's, Brooklyn – Sub 8)

there were so many children the Orphanage did not celebrate birthdays. (Ballarat Orphanage – Sub 18)

No Birthday parties, no presents no kindness, just fear and regimentation to keep us in line. (Murray Dwyer – Sub 364)

4.22 The lack of recognition of celebratory days including birthdays, Christmas, Mother's and Father's day has had a profound impact on future life, especially for the partners and children of care leavers. Many people have grown up without feeling for these family days and they now pass with little or no recognition.

The absolute sadness I still have is the loss of family, never receiving or giving presents, having birthdays and all that family stuff. That is all I ever wanted. (Sub 181)

4.23 Other care leavers said that their name had been changed while in institutions, which they did not discover until many years later when searching for records. One person recalled having her name changed because they already had a child with the same name in the Home.

I can still remember standing with my Father, Gracie [stepmother] and Matron Gennon. 'We already have a Shirley here. What are we going to call her?' Gennon asked. 'What about Lurline then?' answered Gracie, and that was that! (WR Black – Sub 409)

4.24 Changing a child's religion or forcing them to attend services of a different religion to that which they were baptised both between catholic and protestant and between protestant faiths was also reported in some stories.

we discovered a record on microfilm that I had indeed been baptised as a Church of England in 1937. Although Child Welfare Department Records of my detention...records my religion as being a Presbyterian. I believe that something as important as changing my religion while in the care of the Child Welfare Department should have consulted my father for his approval for such an important decision. (Sub 319)

4.25 A particularly effective form of depersonalisation was the total regimentation of everyday life – the ultimate suppression of any individuality in a child. Many submissions, particularly those from people who had been in Salvation Army homes, describe a spartan existence where the whole day was governed by bells – 'bells to get up, bells for school, bells for each meal' – or whistle blows and having to march to all activities including meals, showers, school.

4.26 A common theme was not just the separation of children by gender into separate homes or for all daily activities but the constant reinforcement of differences. This inability to relate and interact with the opposite sex as a child has been at the base of many relationship difficulties in adult life, as discussed in the next chapter.

Staff at both homes discouraged boys from having anything to do with the opposite sex, boys were brainwashed that talking about girls was filthy and were punished if they were heard by an officer... I now believe this is why I seem to have trouble starting a relationship with the opposite sex. (Salvation Army Riverview and Indooroopilly – Sub 90)

Lack of privacy

4.27 The absolute lack of privacy in showers and toilets was frequently raised, especially the embarrassment of being constantly watched and taunted by carers, often of the opposite gender and during adolescent years.

The shower cubical consisted of half doors where an officer would be continually watching you; again you were given no privacy. (Ormond)

These showers were on a wall and open for everyone lined up to see there was no privacy at all, it was embarrassing (Kent Town)

The toilets had no doors either, and I found this aspect of life at Parramatta most upsetting, particularly during menstruation. This might be difficult for men to comprehend, but a woman likes her privacy in the toilet.

Visits by family members

4.28 Having parents or family members visit was a keenly anticipated occasion, although highly regulated in many institutions. Stories were told of children getting dressed up on visitors' days, more out of hope than expectation that they would receive a visitor in many cases, only to be let down. This had a shattering psychological affect, reinforcing feelings of abandonment and not being wanted. The situation was equally so for those not expecting visitors.

Visitor's days were traumatic for children who had no parents or for those not receiving visitors that day, no counsel or support was provided to children who experienced abandonment every visitors Sunday. (Goodwood – Sub 89)

The emotional harm was much worse, visiting day once a month, sitting and waiting all together in the sewing room, listening to the noise on the driveway outside the window, hoping someone would visit me. Sitting there
all alone pretending it didn't matter that no one came to see me, this was a common occurrence. (Lynwood Hall – Sub 407)

On my arrival at the home [Gill] I was informed by the management that my boys were unavailable to me that weekend due to as the Salvation Army officer explained, that their refusal to grant me access to my children on this weekend was that it was the wrong weekend on which they accepted children in their care to be taken out of the home by parents or family members. I was unaware of these rules being explained to me, rules that did not allow parents or other family members to take out their children, on some weekends but not others. I was not allowed to take my sons out that weekend or allowed to see them. I returned to Moss Vale. (Sub 317)

**Forms of Punishment**

4.29 Children were punished for a wide range and often the most trivial of reasons. Talking during meal times, if somebody laughed or giggled out of place, not standing still when spoken to, answering back, getting answers wrong in class or being left-handed, playing out of bounds and not doing daily chores properly or to a supervisor's satisfaction were commonly mentioned behaviours that often resulted in severe punishment. Punishments ranged from beatings with straps, canes, cricket bats, bunches of keys; being forced to perform additional and often repetitive tasks; withdrawal of privileges such as watching television or being allowed visits; food rationing; forced immobility for long periods; isolation and humiliation.

Punishment, we were caned with cricket stump...If you spoke out you were caned. If you let your hair grow and a nun didn't like it, she would make you have it cut like a boy, as well as cane you. No one had long hair. (Nazareth house, Camberwell – Sub 169)9

...the superintendent at that time ran her school for girls like some sort of Nazi officer making us scrub and polish floors for hours on our hands and knees for being disobedient which might I add was for minor things such as loosing your hair brush, talking when you were not supposed to be talking, answering back etc. (Lynwood Hall – Sub 272)

Punishment could mean extra duties, a good talking to, withdrawal of privileges, or if the Superintendent was involved you could be in for a good beating especially if he lost his temper. (Dalmar – Sub 136)

Every day from 6am when [the nun in charge] would sort out the girls who wet their bed...to belting girls who's bed was not up to scratch, shoes not shined enough, chores not perfect, lockers untidy, going too fast or too slow, talking. It seems she would find fault just because we were there. She hated us. (Goodwood – Sub 406)

At Ormond the punishment there for being disobedient, such as talking when you weren't supposed to consisted of scrubbing cement courtyards on your hands and knees with a tooth brush (I have always been curious, with

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9 The trauma for young girls of cutting long locks 'to look like a boy' was often described. A comment was made that is why so many Homies have long hair today.
the amount of girls scrubbing courtyards with toothbrushes why the department never wondered why so many were needed). (Ormond - Sub 272)

I loved to climb trees and walk along the fence tops. For this I was caned. The joy of climbing the trees outweighed the pain of the caning. (Burwood - Sub 192)

Any glancing sideways or looking up was met with what Ben said was the standard punishment that occurred at Tamworth Boys Home. This was the loss of a meal or the loss of all meals over a period of 24 to 48 hours. The punishment for boys who habitually broke the rule was being made to wear a cardboard cereal box that had two holes cut for eyes. The boy had to keep wearing the box until it fell to pieces. Ben recalls that later a set of leather blinkers was made, similar to those that a horse would use, and the boy had to wear these for a set number of days. (Tamworth Boys Home - Sub 329)

The punishment inflicted was to have her hair shaved off, and she [a young girl of 7 or 8] was compelled to wear a sugar bag as a dress all day for a period of time...she even wore it to school, which was a public school some distance from the institution, and the children had to walk along public streets to get to this school. It would be difficult to imagine the trauma, that this child was compelled to suffer, or the effect it would have had on her in later life. (Swan Homes - Sub 414)

4.30 A particular punishment practiced at many institutions was not to simply withdraw privileges from the individual child, but from all the children. This would make the individual highly unpopular resulting in ostracism or beatings from his or her peers. Another form of punishment commonly referred to was hours of bed drill consisting of stripping the bed of each sheet and blanket and remaking it with 'envelope corners and no wrinkles' and repeating the procedure over a period of many hours.

4.31 A form of punishment practiced in some institutions was to force younger boys to have fist fights or boxing matches with older and stronger boys, thereby enlisting older boys to inflict the punishment. Holding mismatched boxing bouts was also seen as 'entertainment' for the staff at some institutions.

4.32 The handing out of punishment was also seen as a method of controlling the children. Those children perceived as leaders or simply highly respected by their peers would be 'targeted' and regularly punished so as to serve as an example to the others.

**Bedwetting**

4.33 The overwhelming number of submissions that referred to punishments for bedwetting indicates the traumas this condition engendered. Bedwetting is commonly

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10 The use of toothbrushes to scrub clean toilets and corridors as a punishment was referred to in many submissions, especially from NSW and Victoria, eg Submissions 271 – Mittagong; 278 – Parkside; 279 – Winlaton.
a sign of a distressed child. Yet the greater the incidence of bedwetting the greater the incidence of abuse and trauma the child was subjected to. A variety of punishments were inflicted including beatings, cold showers in winter (often combined with a beating) and a range of humiliations so traumatic and severe to a young child that the condition was exacerbated.

As I was a bed-wetter, I used to be belted daily. They used to throw me under a cold shower then belt me really hard with a large strap while I was wet. This was extremely painful — especially in winter — and left big red marks on my body. They also used to rub my face in the wet sheets and then my brother had to wash them. (Parkerville – Sub 181)\(^\text{11}\)

The bedwetters received such humiliation, they would have to parade around the room with their wet smelly sheets draped over their shoulders. (St Catherine's, Geelong – Sub 111)\(^\text{12}\)

If you wet the bed, you were made to wear a potty strapped around you rear end all day — thus dis-allowing you to sit for meals and become the brunt of much humour. (Parkville – Sub 379)

If any boy wet his bed, he would be ridiculed in front of everyone, and at times be dressed as a girl. (St Joseph's, Kincumber – Sub 364)

They used to grab us and put nappies on us and then send us off to school. The school was on the premises...I'd have been eight or nine at the time. (Salvation Army, Box Hill – Sub 296)

4.34 It never seems to have been considered that the problem may lie in a range of other reasons such as the child being stressed due to separation from a comforting and loving home environment with parents and family or that they were now living in a state of constant fear.

4.35 As a preventative measure in some institutions drinking was forbidden well before bedtime. This was especially harsh in Queensland.

I have memories of being hungry. But the worst was being thirsty in the summer not allowed to have water long before bedtime. (Riverview – Sub 339)

The master made us or you could say let us have no water after 2pm so that you would not wet your bed. (Brougham – Sub 333)

4.36 More bizarre preventative measures were tried.

\(^\text{11}\) Rubbing noses in wet sheets, beatings and cold showers were commonly reported punishments, eg Submissions 101, 409 – WR Black; 203 – Dalmar; 297 – St John's Goulburn; 411 – SA Bexley; 415 – SA Stanmore.

\(^\text{12}\) Draping wet sheets over the head and standing for lengthy periods or parading ('Kangaroo Hopping'), and forced nappy wearing were favoured humiliations, eg Submissions. 89, 406 – Goodwood; 141 – Westbrook; 166 – Abbotsford; 169 – Nazareth House, Camberwell; 201 – Lismore; 217 – Neerkol; 237 – Nazareth House, Wynnum; 322 – St Joseph's Croyden.
If you wet the bed more than once a week, you got a machine put under your bed, it gave you a shock, you flew out of bed to go to the toilet. (Ballarat Orphanage - Sub 103)

**Isolation, including locking in cupboards and cells**

[Lynwood Hall] also had an isolation room which apparently the Child Welfare Department was aware of. The room consisted of a mattress on the floor, a metal potty, a window that was boarded up from the outside and a small opening in the bottom of the door where meals were passed through three times a day, the light switch was on the outside of the room. I spent many 24 hour periods locked in isolation at the age of twelve to sit and stare at a wall. (Lynwood Hall - Sub 272).

We were often locked in a dark room for hours, mice were running around our feet. We would miss meals. It was very scary. (WR Black - Sub 101)

[The Superintendent] would lock her under the staircase in a narrow dark room, and leave her there for ages, all day and even over-night. She was left there until she was either prepared to apologise or own up to something she didn’t do or say what he wanted her to say. (Dalmar - Sub 203)

I was taken down to the dungeon under the home where there is no windows just the dungeon and told by the sisters the Devil is going to come and punish me. She then closed the door it was pitch black I could not see my hand in front of me I was very frightened as I was waiting for the Devil to come. (St Joseph’s, Largs Bay - Sub 106)

4.37 The 'Training Schools' had their own isolation cells.

I couldn’t handle being placed in isolation, this was a building away from main building constructed in concrete with 4 or 6 cells...Isolation cell punishment had 2 time zones, 24 hours or 48 hours, the 24 hours you were given bread and water three times a day and a mattress at night to sleep on the floor with 1 blanket, (I still remember the cold and my house as we speak has cupboards full of beautiful wool blankets). I didn’t experience the 48 hour number but I believe after 24 hours, you received food...

REMEMBER, WE WERE CHILDREN IN THIS COLD DARK LONELY PLACE. (Parramatta Girls Training School - Sub 299) 4

4.38 The Committee was provided with extracts from the punishment book from Karrala House which records children being locked up in solitary for periods of 30, 40

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13 Isolation for long periods by locking in cupboards, dark rooms, attics or cellars for minor misdemeanours was a common punishment, eg *Submissions* 5 and 237 - Nazareth House; 105 - Wilson; 120 - Holy Cross Woolloomin; 146 - Abbotsford; 192 - Burnside; 268 - Bayswater; 278 - Parkside; 279 - Brighton; 318 - Royleston; 322 - St Joseph's Lane Cove; 329 - Tamworth Boys Home; 356 - St Joseph's Cowper; 406 - Goodwood; 421 - SA Fullerton.

14 Many submissions about Parramatta especially recalled the panic and trauma of being locked in isolation and detention, eg *Submissions* 250, 263, 284 ('There were rat droppings in the cell, and the mattress on the floor smelled of urine and vomit'), 293, 304.
and 60 days during the mid 1960s. Lengthy periods of isolation, which breached provisions of child welfare legislation, were common in many other institutions.

4.39 In a bizarre twist, isolation could be sought as an escape from the trauma of daily life.

The inmates formed groups with a leader and younger inmates were required to obey the group. Failure to obey resulted in being bashed which occurred frequently...There were frequent riots by the inmates and invariably everybody was punished including me although I took no part. Punishments included being thrown fully clothed under a cold shower and locked in my room...

To me the only safe place in the home was "the cabin", a room used as punishment by solitary confinement. To be put in the cabin it was necessary to have committed some misdemeanour, which I would deliberately do. (Vaughan House, Adelaide – Sub 273)

**Standing on spot for hours**

The matron made the children stand for hours with their arms stretched up high above their heads. When our arms fell we were beaten. If this happened in a war prisoners camp it would be called torture by the international community. (WR Black – Sub 87)

There were many other humiliations too numerous to mention...standing for hours on end facing a wall for talking out of line. (Parramatta – Sub 284)

The form of punishment would be standing in line for hours on end without movement and if a boy fainted, he was left lying there until he recovered and resumed his place in the line... A more severe variant to this of standing in line was that the boys had to stand up on the sitting benches, which were around the walls of the playroom, and face the wall and press the nose against the wall. Any boy who took his nose off the wall would have his face pushed into the wall by the officer. (SA Gill – Sub 282)

The white line was the worst punishment... We were required to stand to attention, without bending the knees. No one was allowed to talk to or look at a child on the white line because those children were "a disgrace," to the nuns. No-one wanted to be friends with anyone who had been sent to the white line. Those children were isolated and vilified by the other terrified children. (Goodwood – Sub 419)

**Secondary abuse**

4.40 Many people referred in submissions to their abuse in institutions as a form of secondary or systemic abuse. Children were taken from their parents who it was claimed could not adequately support or maintain them. The implication was that 'welfare' would be able to provide the care and opportunity that the parents were unable to provide. How then could it be that for many of these children the abuse perpetrated upon them whilst in care in the institutions was far greater than that
committed by their parents? To many this is seen as a failure of 'government' to monitor their needs and well-being during the time they were in care.

4.41 Another form of secondary abuse has been the treatment of these children as adults over a range of issues from the attitudes of supposed support people and counsellors, the lack of programs and services, to the barriers encountered in trying to obtain records and information about their families and childhood.

The reason we have suffered this lack of programs and effort is that the agencies responsible for creating our problems in the first place have sought to hide that fact. They have done that by denying our experiences as children and our existence as adults.¹⁵

**Discipline and physical assault**

4.42 Many of the severe beatings handed out as punishment went way beyond the sort of corporal punishment which was acceptable at the time. They often took the form of extremely severe physical violence – what can only be described as criminal assault.

He would hit you with a stock whip if he caught you talking during milking...he [also] had a leather strap, which appeared to be from the stirrup of a saddle. The strap would be approximately quarter of an inch thick one to one and quarter inches wide and about twelve to eighteen inches long, this would be used to hit and flog boys with. Our nickname for this was the "horse harness". (Riverview – Sub 90)

This man seemed to take great pleasure in humiliating us publicly, flogging us with his heavy leather belt while we knelt naked at his feet. You could receive anything up to 60 lashes and you always ended up bleeding profusely. Sometimes boys lost consciousness. They were the lucky ones. (Westbrook – Sub 141)

We were then belted on a regular basis by the warders...They were savage beatings. Boots and all. Time and time again. They would get you when you were laying in your bed. Come in, grab you, get you on the floor and kick and beat you till you were badly hurt. It was a nightmare. I often wished I were dead. This happened so often it was frightening thinking about when would be the next time. (Bayswater – Sub 148)

Four kids would hold the offender down and a nun would hit the bare buttocks with a leather belt, anything up to six times. Once I was hit so hard I could not sit down for two days. (Murray Dwyer – Sub 364)

I had my hands held behind my back, hair held and my head bashed into a lot of sinks in the shower block and lost quite a few teeth. (Parramatta – Sub 280)

She'd thrash and thrash looking coldly into your eyes, I could see the hate in her face. Her face would go red the white mantle around her face would get

¹⁵ *Committee Hansard* 4.2.04, p.31 (Positive Justice Centre).
tighter and her face would puff up. I would see how determined and mean and cruel she could be. (Goodwood – Sub 89)

She did not give me a reason for what was about to happen, I was forced to pull up my dress exposing my bare back from my shoulders to my waist. She then struck me anywhere between 10 and 15 times across my waist, very forcefully with the strap. The strap itself was square, thin and very long much like a horse whip. Because of its length, they used to double it, so in effect you were getting a double dose. The force of the blows caused my back to go black in colour. We used to change in front of the other children in the dormitory, but I was so ashamed because of my back, I used to change away from the other children. (Nazareth House, Wynnum – Sub 237)

Matron was an extremely cruel woman, she would hit us with the copper stick, chair or whatever she could pick up at her time of rage. (WR Black – Sub 101)

Absconding

4.43 Absconding was a widely reported practice. Punishment took many severe forms, though one of the most common was being beaten in front of the other children or even by the children.

if any girls ran away, when they were caught they were publicly flogged. Us girls used to have tears in our eyes watching this, but we couldn’t do anything. (St Joseph’s Subiaco – Sub 172)

...you knew who ran away because when you got up the next day, the boy was standing in the ‘quad’ with his hands on his head. The punishment for this was not carried out until that night when he was caned on the hands in full view of the rest of us. If you pulled your hand away you were then whacked on the legs. (Salvation Army, Nedlands – Sub 231)

Whilst at Riverview I witnessed two boys flogged. For running away, they used a thick leather strap across their backs. (Riverview – Sub 339)

We were all assembled in the gymnasium where we were told to form up in a line in the shape of a horseshoe, the three boys being punished [for absconding] were instructed to remove their clothing... each of the boys was then told to get on to his hands and knees and they had to scuttle across the floor in this fashion to where the line began, as they did this they were lashed with a rattan cane across their buttocks, as they reached the start of the line they had to crawl between the legs of the other boys and were unmercifully bashed and kicked... When they reached the end of the line they had to remain on their hands and knees and were flogged back to the start. (Swan Homes – Sub 414)

4.44 Many absconders were locked in cellars or rooms for many days and with minimal or no food. Regular offenders would be sent to the harsher, more secure training schools such as Parramatta or Mt Penang in NSW.
4.45 Nobody bothered to inquire why children continually ran away. Those who reported abuse as a reason for absconding, especially to police, were simply not believed and returned to the institution – usually to be summarily punished.

I was a persistent runaway – nowhere to go, no one to see but I would runaway just the same. I now know the sadness and devastation I felt but no one in the Department ever seemed to notice. (Sub 344)

Even after repeated ‘running away’ episodes by many of their [Child Welfare Department] wards, they never once asked the simplest question ‘WHY’. Nor for that matter did police officers. In my own case, with five boys 'on the run' and being described on local radio as 'armed and dangerous' was that simple question raised. NO! (Sub 11)

Sexual assault

While at Bayswater I was abused sexually by an officer, and thought by now this was the normal thing for us boys to endure. (Sub 278)

The night times were hard on us as the brothers would come in and have their ways with us. There were other kids besides us all getting the same things done to them. We just didn’t know when it was our turn to be raped, so that’s why I still cannot live with the nights. (St Joseph's – Sub 371)

I can’t get some of the terrible things he did to me out of my head, they loom in the shadows of my life and haunt me. This man took my virginity, my innocence, my development, my potential (Sub 239)

All the time while the priest was assaulting me (or other children) the sister would stand at the door looking the other way. If another sister came she would flash her torch on the ground and the priest would stand behind the partition until the sister flashed her torch again. After this he would resume his abuse. I don’t know how often this occurred but would estimate that the priest came 3 – 4 nights per week and would assault several children on the one night. I was raped on a regular basis. The older children were picked more often than the younger ones. (Sandgate – Sub 412)

4.46 Submissions and evidence to the Committee provided many accounts of extremely graphic and disturbing descriptions of sexual abuse and assault on girls and boys by a wide range of perpetrators. Sexual abuse was widespread with reports covering all States and type of institution – government and non-government, and between religions and in foster care. Care leavers retold being sexually abused or assaulted as very young children and through their teenage years. Stories were received of males assaulting males and females, and also of females assaulting females and younger males. Mostly the predators were staff members, including religious and lay, or adult workers.

4.47 However, some submissions recorded sexual assaults by the older children as well as by staff. The activities of older children were undertaken with the staff simply turning a blind eye.

Most of the time I couldn't sleep, it wasn't possible to shower either. In time I lost the count of the times I was sexually assaulted in the showers. The
place was sickening the cruelty and violence coming from both the older boys and the guards. (Westbrook – Sub 217)

4.48 A number of patterns emerge from the descriptions of those sexually assaulted of the predatory behaviour of the perpetrator. The child's confidence is gained through kind words and actions – 'I thought I had a friend, and as I had never been shown affection by another human being that I could remember, I welcomed it'. Bribes of lollies, biscuits, cigarettes and alcohol were often used.

4.49 Some care leavers indicated paedophiles targeted children who did not receive visitors. One care leaver, speaking from personal experience of the Salvation Army's Box Hill orphanage, confirms that paedophiles singled out 'the ones they know never get visits because they know that the other kids will talk to their parents and that sort of thing'.

4.50 Those desiring sexual favours also applied psychological pressure in the form of withdrawal of privileges, the removal and destruction of personal belongings. The threat and carrying out of physical beatings if the sexual assault was mentioned to other people was a common practice.

4.51 The social arrangements existing in some institutions were favourable for predatory behaviour.

I slept in a dormitory with thirty or more other girls. We were locked in of a night with a guard outside our door. There were night watchmen who would give cigarettes to girls for sexual favours. The place we were placed in for protection was the most dangerous for any young girl with young male security officers taking advantage of these girls. (Bidura – Sub 271)

4.52 The Committee referred in its report on child migration to the accounts of systemic criminal sexual assault and predatory behaviour by a large number of Brothers over a considerable period of time at the Christian Brothers institutions Bindoon, Castledare, Clontarf and Tardun in Western Australia. The Committee received a number of submissions from men who had been in these institutions, and who were not child migrants, describing similar assaults being perpetrated against them. As one wrote 'the Brothers did not distinguish between types'. The operation of these institutions and the impact that it has had on the lives of so many was graphically described:

The Brothers were unusually adept at turning loose upon society a huge number of social misfits, low in self esteem and life knowledge (except of the perverse kind), who would pay society in criminal and anti-social behaviour over many years. I personally met plenty of them in various prisons (known individually to me), observed a number in mental

16 Committee Hansard 3.2.04, p.103.
institutions, and knew of the attempted and successful suicides of others (including a brother of mine). Their commitment to ‘save souls’ was bastardised into a system whereby they ‘stole our souls’; whereby they made us into mere ciphers, to be seized and used whenever the need for sexual gratification was upon them. We meant no more to them than the moment’s pleasure.

These institutions were totally devoid of love, had little compassion, and very little understanding of the needs of young boys. True, a few Brothers had all these attributes, and some boys experienced them. I believe them to be in the minority. These were punishment regimes.  

Separation of families

4.53 One of the most forceful issues that became apparent through this inquiry was the destruction of families that occurred through the institutionalisation of children. As described in an earlier chapter, children were placed in care for a number of reasons. The vast majority came from large families. Families would be split with children sent to different institutions. Many would not see their parents again and with minimal or no effort made to keep siblings informed of each others whereabouts, let alone arrange meetings, families inevitably drifted apart, often permanently.

I never ever had the opportunity to say goodbye to either of my parents. They were taken out of my life & circumstances never returned them. (Sub 341)

...not to have seen my mother again after we were taken away and not to have been able to find my brothers has been quite traumatic for me, especially when I got a little information so late in life only to be slapped down again when I found that both my brothers and my mother had all died (Sub 184)

Our entire family was ripped apart and we can never get back together. They split me away from my 1-week-old brother and we never knew each other until we were old. I had cousins in St. Aidans and the nuns never told me. I never knew my family. How can you get back together when you don’t know each other? (Sub 264, p.4)

4.54 Some care leavers have discovered from records that extended family members offered to provide a home for the child to prevent the child from going into care or after having been in care, yet these offers were usually denied by the department or agency.

4.55 Access visits by parents or grandparents were often denied due to apparently subjective decisions of departmental officers and as a form of punishment for a child's behaviour or their parent falling behind in fee payments. As CLAN noted family visits to children were regarded as a privilege to be withdrawn, rather than a right. Little

18 Submission 11, p.1. Other submissions providing graphic descriptions of these WA institutions include Submissions 25, 34, 41, 85, 251, 365.
CHAPTER 5

WHY ABUSE OCCURRED AND WAS ABLE TO CONTINUE

We had no one to turn to... No one believed us, not the teachers at school, not the police, no one.

5.1 When faced with graphic descriptions of abuse and assault is it difficult to conceive that such actions were able to continue unchecked and unpunished. It is also apparent that abuse continued for many years: it was not an isolated, one-off occurrence, rather it was endemic in some institutions over long periods of time. The following discussion looks at the lack of public and official responses to allegations of abuse; the part played by staff employment practices in allowing abuse to continue; and reactions to disclosures of abuse.

Stories only recently coming to light

5.2 In recent years more and more care leavers have come forward and told their stories. In some cases the stories go back to the 1930s, 1940s and 50s. This is a result of a number of factors. First, the media has taken up stories of specific groups, for example, child migrants with the Leaving of Liverpool television documentary. Public interest was also heightened through various State inquiries such as the Forde Inquiry in Queensland. In addition, there have been a number of high profile events overseas including the establishment of an inquiry into abuse in homes in Ireland, the Canadian inquiry into residential care and the law suits brought against the Catholic Church in the United States. Care leavers have also become a more cohesive group with the establishment of various lobby and support groups.

5.3 As a result of these factors, the move to tell stories of abuse while in care and to seek redress has gained momentum. However, while at first glance, it would appear that stories of abuse have only recently come to light, this has not been the case. Reports of inquiries into care and conditions in institutions have appeared regularly over the decades. The Committee has referred to some previous inquiries in chapter 1 and the apparent lack of action taken to implement the findings of some of those inquiries. One problem was that these inquiries focused on the problems of a particular institution, for example, the inquiry into the Parramatta Girls Home after the riots of 1941 rather than institutional care in general.

5.4 Media reports have also appeared regularly. The Committee received copies of a number of articles which exposed abuses in various homes. The Sun in 1957, for example, reported the escape of four girls from Lynwood Hall who detailed the harsh

1 Submission 336.
2 Committee Hansard 3.2.04, p.113 (Mr Quinn).
conditions at the home. There was also extensive coverage of the riot at Parramatta Girls' Home in 1961. However, in general there seems to have been a reluctance by the press to report abuse allegations in orphanages.

The Goulburn Penny/Evening Post's editors, reporters and staff all knew of the terrible happenings in this orphanage [Gill Memorial Home] and even though they received letters, signed and unsigned, they suppressed it all. After I left the orphanage, I wrote a letter to this paper, outlining the activities within the orphanage. I received no response apart from a reply that to publish such a letter would be bad for the Salvation Army's money appeal.3

Such inquiries seemed to localise the problem as being the behaviour at a particular institution. There did not appear to be any extrapolation nor thinking that if such problems are occurring at one place, could such problems have also been occurring elsewhere. In any event, such press stories had limited life and little follow up of stories eventuated.

**Culture of the institutions, organisations, churches**

5.5 Abuse seemed to be able to thrive and survive in institutions over such a long period due to a combination of reasons that centred around a culture of silence, of power and personal control.

5.6 A constantly recurring issue was that children would not be asked for their view or opinions on anything. If any complaints were made or issues of abuse raised by children with those whom they considered to be responsible adults, they were summarily dismissed. The child was not believed and usually accused of lying – often accompanied by a beating. The maxim that children should be seen and not heard reigned supreme!

...these unfortunate things occurred over a long period of time and if you said anything, you were lying and were told that if you said anything it will be worse. So what were the children to do but to take it. (Sub 324)

5.7 Children were rarely given any information about what was happening, where they were going, where their parents and siblings were and when they would next see them.

I was taken back to the homes, I was taken to Lynwood Hall at Guilford. Again it was traumatic for me. Just sleeping with bars on the windows and having to line up to go to the dining room for your meals. Just going back to an institution and being treated as a number. Living with fear and just wanting to be with my brothers, sisters and mother. I wish I would know where they were. Why? Why? Why didn’t anyone in the child welfare department ever feel that it would benefit these children if they knew why they were where they were! And for what reason. The system chose the

worst possible way to treat these children. I know it wouldn’t be ideal to tell younger children too much but as teenagers I would have loved to hear anything, to know why I was where I was at that time. (Sub 271)

**Bullying**

5.8 Bullying seemed a prevalent part of the culture in many institutions. It was not just the behaviour of older, more experienced children, in some institutions it was seemingly sanctioned as a form of control. Often bullies had a brother or senior staff member as a patron. One care leaver stated:

Older girls who were favourites of the nuns – women entrusted to care for us – would bash the younger children when ordered by other members of the staff.4

5.9 Certain children would be given jurisdiction over groups of younger children for chores or other work tasks, and abuse them in a manner that replicated the abuse that had been inflicted upon them in earlier days. Stories were told of these bullies being given the run of the institution, operating in packs that singled out younger children who they would brutalise.

5.10 In some institutions there was an almost cyclical tradition whereby older children would punish and abuse younger children because that was what had happened to them and it was possibly the only way they knew how to behave.

I had a letter from the child of a girl I used to bully fearsomely— I am ashamed of it now. She said that her mother had all sorts of problems because of her upbringing in Burnside. I think that a lot of it was because we bullied her. There was never a staff member about and we could easily find a place to go and bully her. There was no staff member there to intervene and say, ‘That’s not the way you behave.’ We were only behaving in the way they behaved to us. We were always told to be grateful for the care that we were given and that we were so lucky to be there, blah, blah, blah. ‘Ungrateful wretch’ is a term that I heard regularly.5

5.11 There were also many stories of those who were just bullies throughout their childhood and who assaulted younger or weaker children in the institution.

5.12 Bullying also continued when children were retained or employed as handymen or to work on the property after concluding their time in care and who subsequently abused and assaulted the next generation of children placed in that institution.

5.13 Other sub-groups within institutions that were described in submissions were the 'squealers' and the 'pets'. Squealers were those who reported any misbehaviour or negative comments to the senior staff in the hope of gaining rewards of extra food or

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4 Committee Hansard 12.3.04, p.4.
5 Committee Hansard 3.2.04, p.75.
favourable treatment. The pets were the favourites of a particular staff member and would be shown kindness in public and given lollies or other rewards. In many cases there was a sexual motive behind the adoption of a pet.  

*Isolation*

5.14 One particular feature of institutions was their isolation. They were isolated in the community as buildings and grounds were either hidden behind high fences and gates or placed at a distance from towns and other dwellings, for example Bindoon in Western Australia. Often the younger children were provided with schooling at the home. While older children where sent to government or religious schools there were very few instances of children joining in any out-of-school activities except those provided at the home. For example, the Committee received evidence that students were bussed to and from school and were thus prevented from having any interaction with other students.

5.15 In the church homes, the isolation was exacerbated by the employment of members of church congregations whether they were lay or religious members. Few 'outsiders' were employed or visited homes. This resulted in a very closed community with very few external influences being allowed. There was excessive trust in the 'goodness' of the religious administering homes and they were allowed to operate virtually without question.

5.16 A lack of government regulation added to the isolation of care establishments. The Committee received evidence from witnesses whose recollections of visits or inspections by welfare officers to institutions and foster homes are varied. Some care leavers do not recall welfare ever visiting; others remember being dressed up for the occasion but never spoken to; and others commented that they did speak with visiting officers but with little or no result.

Whenever VIP's would attend, Mrs Davies would have a quarter of an apple and orange handed out to the girls and we were instructed to make sure we behaved ourselves whilst they were there or we would be in trouble when they left. It was the only time we saw a piece of fruit. (Lynwood Hall – Sub 272)

when welfare came, you never told them about the beatings etc as you wouldn’t be believed and would just get flogged again. When welfare did come, they used to dress us up and give us shoes to put on. They would also put dolls on the beds and cloths on the tables in the dining room. (St Joseph's Subiaco – Sub 172)

No one came out from the children Services to talk to the kids as we were all dressed up when visitors came and got back in our yard clothes again as soon as they left. (Neerkol – Sub 361)

The Child Welfare Department of the day contributed to this abuse and neglect by its own carelessness in never properly examining the moral and

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6 Submission 365, pp.21-3;
psychological conditions under which its charges were incarcerated. They may have examined the physical aspects, perhaps even the health (though doubtful) aspects; never to my knowledge did they ever question any of their wards, in private, or for that matter even in the presence of the Brothers, about the moral actuality of their (for many) miserable existence.\(^7\)

5.17 The lack of inspections allowed poor practices to continue. When inspections did occur, a lack of in depth investigation also hampered change. For example, it was quite common that those care leavers who recollect inspections, indicated that they were always in the presence of institutional representatives or a foster parent. As VANISH asked, 'How could they verbalise their concerns or discontent?' If they did they were seen to be lying, ungrateful or being troublesome and in some cases retribution was swift and brutal. Departmental officers were often younger social workers with less developed views who arguably made decisions coloured by their own value judgements rather than what may have been in the best interest of the child.\(^8\) The Committee makes further comments in relation to inspections in chapter 7.

**Institutional staff and other carers**

I can honestly say that none of the [carers] were a good role model or compassionate, they were an authority figure to be feared and obeyed at all times or you would be punished severely. (SA, Camberwell – Sub 266)

I found it very much a fact of life that people who were put in charge of the welfare of others were of two kinds – those who had problems themselves and were totally unsuited to their work or those who just wanted to vent their anger or frustration on someone else. (Sub 320)

The so-called staff carers responsible for our wellbeing as children have a lot to answer for where our care and nurturing were concerned. It is simply a joke but with a very sad and very dark punchline.\(^9\)

5.18 Dr Joanna Penglase in her thesis on home children in NSW from 1939 to 1965\(^10\) examined staffing in homes and noted that:

> the attitudes of staff to children set the tone of the environment in which they lived...the person in charge has the power of total disposition of inmates and the power to make their lives bearable or not.\(^11\)

While staff were the key to the treatment and care provided in a home, in many instances the staff lacked the training and vocation necessary to provide care for large numbers of children. Homes, particularly in the non-government sector, were also

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\(^7\) Submission 11, p.2.

\(^8\) Submission 167, p.4 (VANISH).

\(^9\) Committee Hansard 12.3.04, p.68.

\(^10\) Submission 63, Orphans of the Living (Dr Penglase).

\(^11\) Submission 63, Orphans of the Living, p.185 (Dr Penglase).
significantly under funded and offered only low pay. Thus, they could not attract or keep suitable staff or maintain an appropriate level of staffing.

5.19 The evidence presented to the Committee provided many views about those who staffed children's homes. Submissions commented that many carers were decent people who had the children's best interests at heart. Reference was made to specific people including cottage parents, religious and other staff workers whose kindness was still remembered many years later and who were very good hardworking people doing an extremely difficult job and who devoted their lives to the care of children over many years. The Committee does not wish nor intend to denigrate the work undertaken by these good people. However, more commonly staff were described as authoritarian, cold and uncaring at best, or brutal, sadistic predators at worst.

Lack of staff education and training

5.20 It is evident that many of the staff employed in homes were untrained and unsuited to the work they were undertaking. It appears that often people sought employment in homes when no other employment was available and homes would turn a blind eye in order to have a vacant position filled. Dr Penglase interviewed a number of staff for her thesis and found that there were instances where church Homes in rural areas approached locals 'not necessarily with any particular qualifications' or accepted people who approached them. None of the interviewees had received training in any branch of child care or child welfare, although some had been trained as nurses. She commented 'this is not surprising, given the period' and includes a comment from the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies:

> there was no award and no training for child care workers, and agencies weren't keen on an award because costs would go up. Staff didn't organise either as there was a charitable aura about the work – you were supposed to be doing it out of love for children, as 'good work', if you were religious. 12

5.21 The lack of appropriate qualifications or training was exemplified in comments by a person who worked as a cottage supervisor:

> "Don't ever forget this is an institution." These are the first words of advice the Superintendent gives me, brandishing his keys like a sword. "Tie them to your belt and never forget this is an institution."

Reiby Training School has called me on the phone this afternoon to say I have the job as youth worker. The interview was over a week ago and I'm surprised they called me. I'd thought the interview was a disaster. 'What are your qualifications for working in a residential institution?' they asked me. I have none. My Diploma of Teaching another zero. Three years' training for nothing. I can't even get a teaching position! But surprise, surprise, here I am, being escorted around my new workplace. Not on duty yet, just checking out the scene. (Sub 389)

12 Submission 63, Orphans of the Living, p.182 (Dr Penglase).
5.22 Wesley Dalmar also commented that:

The necessity for detailed scrutiny and training of applicants for jobs involving the care of vulnerable children has only been recognised in recent years. Our records seem to indicate that in the 1950s and 1960s there was a belief that references from upright citizens were sufficient to ensure that suitable people were recruited to do this work. 13

5.23 In other cases, former residents were employed in the home once they had completed their time in care:

The Orphanage staff had no training in childcare and knew little about raising children. Most of them lived in at the Orphanage full-time, and had little or no time off. Many were themselves graduates of the Orphanage or others like it doing a status U-turn in their late teens. These attendants – I struggle to find the right term: 'carers' is not right – were merely doing a job, arranging the routines to get through each long day with the least trouble to themselves. With such a large number of children, there was no sense of purpose other than to keep kids in and lock parents out... 14

5.24 It appears that government also did not place too great an emphasis on the need for properly trained staff. For example, under the New South Wales Child Welfare Act 1939, training for children institutions' staff was not necessary:

...the Department of Child Welfare in this period required nothing other in the way of qualifications. Training of any description is not specified in either the Child Welfare Act 1939 (NSW) or in its Regulations. 15

5.25 Dr Penglase also pointed to the licensing practices in New South Wales under section 28 of the Child Welfare Act which related to the running of private homes. She commented that any person could apply to run a home for children, provided they met the legal requirements of the Act. The licence would specify how many children could be accommodated, according to the space available, amenities of premises and number of staff employed. Regulations stipulated the type of registers that had to be kept.

5.26 As to suitability, an application for a licence to run a private home, had to be accompanied by a certificate signed by a justice of the peace, medical practitioner, minister of religion, member of the police force or 'other responsible person'. The certificate attested to the fitness and respectability of the applicant, her husband (it was assumed that the applicant was a woman), family and home. It had nothing to do with their capability to actually manage a children's home. Dr Penglase noted that 'there is no reference in the Act or the regulations to any personal or professional qualifications required of applicants' apart from fitness and respectability both of

13 Committee Hansard 4.2.04, p.4.
14 Submission 18, p.4.
15 Submission 63, p.2.
which were 'measurable by reference to others deemed respectable because of their position in society'.

**Suitability of staff**

5.27 In some homes, the staff provided a level of care and attention for the children but in others, staff were totally indifferent to the children's needs. The evidence received points to an emphasis on orderliness, respect, discipline and 'toeing the line'. Dr Barry Coldrey noted 'control was paramount; care was not and the welfare of the child as an individual was a secondary consideration'. The staff were for the most part unaccountable for their actions as inspections by child welfare authorities were infrequent and ineffective. When children did complain they were usually not believed, even where there was evidence of physical and sexual abuse.

5.28 The Forde Inquiry also noted that the problem of staffing was linked to funding. Many homes were run by voluntary organisations and the organisations received little funding from State governments. As a consequence, agencies were reliant on volunteers prepared to work long hours in the homes for minimal remuneration.

5.29 Residential care held a low status and there was an inability for these institutions to recruit and hold quality staff because of poor salaries, poor accommodation, unsocial hours and the isolation of the institutions. Dr Coldrey wrote:

> In the world of idealised fantasy surrounding the carers, and in view of the pervasive difficulty of recruiting staff for residential duties, it is clear that some of those hired were maladjusted, anti-social and deviant. In the isolated world of the institutions it was all too easy for the misfits, the sadists and the perverts to mistreat and exploit the children. The consequences were many and severe.

5.30 The personality defects of those attracted to work in institutions was also commented upon in a number of submissions:

> The people put in charge had controlling personalities that would not be tolerated anywhere else. They only got away with it as they were dealing with children. (Sub 344)

> Although I behaved myself, some of the officers managed to find fault, because they had a sadistic streak. I'm afraid it is a fact of life, that the sort of work they were doing attracts people who want to lord it over others in a vulnerable position. (Sub 284)

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5.31 Children in institutions were isolated and vulnerable. Dr Coldrey noted that 'the scene was ripe for the penetration of residential care by paedophiles or homosexuals seeking partners among the older teenagers'.

5.32 Dr Coldrey commented that many Catholic institutions were poor and relied on the religious congregations, supported by voluntary lay assistance. The church relied on the congregate care model while other agencies relied on the cottage system. Abuse still occurred 'but the risks were less' in the latter model. Brothers found themselves caring for small boys, a role for which they had neither training nor aptitude. Nuns, on the other hand, could find themselves looking after teenage boys with only the assistance of groundsmen. Both situations ran the risk of physical and sexual abuse.

5.33 Churches also had a tendency to place their least qualified members on the staff of children's homes. In the religious orders it was often the unqualified 'lay' brothers and sisters who formed the majority of the staff of institutions. In addition, Dr Coldrey noted that:

In addition before the Brotherhood established specialist aged care facilities for their own members: old, sick, odd and mentally unstable members were commonly "hidden" in institution communities, where a limited form of care could be provided by the orphanage domestic and medical staff. Brothers and sisters who worked long years "on the orphanage circuit" had low status within their Congregations.

The Brothers and Sisters had little power in their own lives and a great deal of power over the children. In this atmosphere the abusers appalling misuse of power was itself a response to the lack of freedom in the rest of their lives.

5.34 One example of inappropriate staffing outlined by Dr Coldrey was the case of the chaplain (1959-63) at St Vincent's Orphanage. The chaplain was placed in the orphanage and it was clear that this priest was an acute embarrassment to the church authorities throughout the 1950s – if not before. He had been accused of "spiritual neglect, financial dishonesty, drug addiction, forgery and sodomy" and had been forced to leave parish work in 1954. The Committee heard stories of brothers or other staff being simply moved when complaints were made about them.

5.35 In some instances, those who entered the traditional congregations of teaching Brothers did so under duress, through family pressure, an inability to find employment or the economic stress of the depression and as a consequence could take their frustrations out on the children in their care.

20 Coldrey, p.16.
21 Coldrey, p.31.
22 Coldrey, pp.19-20.
23 Coldrey, p.32.
5.36 A very graphic and disturbing account was provided to the Committee of life trained in an order, the influence on carers and the long term impact on their lives.

During my childhood and teenage years, I spent time in church run institutions (Catholic Nuns Novitiate and Convents).

My experience of institutional life has left me with health and wellbeing problems. I was recruited as a child straight from school into a lifestyle of harsh living conditions, sexual repression, social isolation from my family and friends and constant humiliating practices aimed at breaking my will and destroying my self esteem. This Church "sanctification" process caused me much pain and disillusionment until I left the Order penniless, homeless and disorientated.

I believe some answers to the abuse of children in Church care may come from the harsh, repressive religious formation of the nun, brother and priest carers, teachers, pastors and novice mistresses themselves – a cycle of harshness and abuse.

After much thought I submit my story as a gateway for many more children and minors in my situation to tell their stories and receive a hearing. These children including my late father – recruited among hundreds by the Brothers at 14 years of age and other colleagues who began priesthood training at 12 years of age...

I am in contact with others who were in Catholic institutions, many of whom are left scarred by this experience and are now over fifty and suffering poor mental and physical health, unemployment, insecure housing and social isolation etc. A significant number prior to leaving were treated in Catholic psychiatric hospitals with shock treatment, lobotomies and drug therapy. Others took their own lives or died younger than average from stress related disorders. Their birth families, husbands, wives and children suffered also and need to be heard.

The Catholic Church has never publicly researched the wellbeing of those it recruited, used for unpaid labour and allowed to leave without support.24

5.37 Dr Coldrey observed that many nuns 'were so personally and educationally deficient that they were inadequate to care for children'. Both Dr Coldrey and the Forde Report commented on the large number of Irish nuns (for example, the Sisters of Mercy at St Vincent's, Nudgee) who were not only untrained but also came from an environment that experienced harsher living conditions than those of Australia and who were accustomed to the rigorous discipline of their Order. Most, although not all, carried this over to the duties in relation to the children in their care.25

5.38 It was often raised that irrespective of these rationalisations of poor education, lack of training, and foreign and harsh conditions for carers, they nevertheless were looking after children, and especially for the religious, they should have been expected

24 Submission 383.
25 Forde, p.92; Coldrey, p.32.
to show some degree of compassion. Many care leavers commented that irrespective of these failings, they were no excuse for the humiliations, punishment and abuse they received at the hand of these carers. 'The system' itself could also exercise a form of control over even the most well-intentioned. These carers could either toe-the-line or they could leave powerless and disillusioned, as was reported in a few submissions.

...there were some kind nuns who tried to help us, but they couldn't do much to change things. (Sub 172)

A hard core of staff stayed forever but otherwise there was a high turnover and constant shortages of staff. Anyone with any humanity couldn't bear to stay after they saw what the Orphanage was like and what they were expected to do to keep the children under control. (Ballarat Orphanage – Sub 18)

5.39 Dr Coldrey also commented on the inability of those who did not take part in the abuse to curb or expose those 'who were doing the wrong thing, those whose behaviour was illegal or beyond the standards of the day'. He pointed to fear of retaliation and fear of not being believed as some of the reasons that abuse was not reported. 26 Many care leavers commented that they believed staff would just turn a blind eye to the treatment of children by other staff:

Some of the Brothers and Nuns were nice to the boys, but you can't honestly tell me that they wouldn't have known what these depraved cowardly adult men were doing to the most vulnerable of children, and yet they turned a blind eye to it. When there were too many complaints about a certain brother...he was just up and sent to another Boys Home to wreck a few more children's lives. (Sub 359)

I know one woman that I met up with after I got out of Parramatta. I was invited around to her place; she was lovely. She left, and the reason she left was that she could not handle seeing what was happening. But she still did not speak out. I backtracked and went to Hay about 15 years ago, or it could be longer. I saw someone there who was an officer. I got invited into his home because I was one of the girls. He was a good officer, but it was his job. What happened there happened. That was the way it was run. He was from Hay and that was his job, but he did not like what happened. 27

5.40 Reports of church officials at least occasionally pointed to problems with staff in homes. Dr Coldrey referred to a report from the Superior General of the Christian Brothers in 1948 about Bindoon which noted that the staff were very weak. Three years later another report on Bindoon stated 'this place has a staff of oddities and if they knew I was writing this they wouldn't much care.' 28

26 Coldrey, p.36.
27 Committee Hansard 3.2.04, pp.9-10.
28 Coldrey, p.31.
5.41 Official action against perpetrators of abuse and assault was rare to non-existent although there were some care leavers who remembered action being taken.

One carer at the Home...was often cruel to us girls. She would pick on them, especially on my sister. I remember her beating Marlene one day and she had bruises all over her. But she was sacked for doing this. (Launceston Girls Home – Sub 182)

5.42 Mr Peter Quinn, a former long-time DoCS officer, advised the Committee that in New South Wales staff accused of assault would be allowed to resign before a formal inquiry.

I think that the department followed a double standard in relation to this. Superficially, anybody who was caught assaulting a girl would be dealt with under the Public Service Act and there would be an inquiry. My view is that, unofficially, it was permitted as long as you made sure you did not do it in public. I have been unable to find a single instance of anybody being charged criminally with assaulting an inmate of an institution, even though there was provision in the legislation from 1905...Typically there would be a move towards establishing an inquiry under section 56 of the Public Service Act, but quite often the person would be allowed to resign ahead of the inquiry.  

However, Mr Quinn recollected only one incident in the 1960s and one in the 1970s when this happened. A further example was also given to the Committee by a resident of Philip House, Gosford, who had been told that a former House Parent 'was given the opportunity to retire early or he would be sacked'.

5.43 The lack of training of staff not only meant that there was minimum of care and nurturing but also staff were unable to help children who were traumatised or came from an abusive family. This resulted in children being doubly harmed: not receiving care and not receiving assistance to overcome their trauma. One care leaver stated:

For me personally and also, I suspect, for a lot of other women--and, probably, men – staff were not trained to deal with disclosures of sexual abuse...I was abused by my father on a visiting day and systematically abused after that and I played out a disclosure but the staff did not know how to deal with that and did not believe that it had happened. I was labelled a filthy little wretch and no other children were allowed to play with me, because it might be contagious. Because I was four or five years old, I believed them.

5.44 The Forde Inquiry noted that it was not until the mid 1960s that the need for support and attention for children who had come from dysfunctional families was
recognised. The sisters on the staff at St Vincent's Nudgee, for example, were largely untrained in child care until the late 1960s, 'a situation common throughout the child welfare sector prior to that date'. Forde concluded:

The lack of specialist training in child care and adequate resources, as reflected in low staffing levels, militated against providing a loving and caring environment for individual children within the orphanage system.\(^\text{32}\)

5.45 While there was increased training of staff from the late 1960s, the Forde Inquiry found that problems still existed throughout the 1970s. Although there was a move to the cottage system, financial constraints and the lack of suitable houseparents were common. Excessive use of corporal punishment and high turnover of staff was noted by Forde. In addition, chronic under-funding of institutions was reflected in 'staff-child ratios that were inconsistent with proper care'.\(^\text{33}\) The lack of staff was commented on by one care leaver who noted:

There were 500 children in Burnside at any one time but not all in one building; they were in about 12 different buildings. The little kids homes had 30 children with three staff and the older kids homes had 30 children with two staff. In each case one of the staff members was the cook and so was not actually involved much in care. There was one boys home that for some reason had 50 boys and two staff...

There was the occasional kind staff member but because the child to staff ratio was so ridiculous, kindness was spread fairly thinly.\(^\text{34}\)

5.46 The impact that an individual superintendent in a home could have was shown regularly in evidence to be crucial, with some witnesses noting that homes were not too bad in certain periods but at other times the regime was very strict or harsh. One witness stated of a particular superintendent 'they were petrified of the man. That period of time was like a 14-year window in Dalmar. Before and after that superintendent was there, they did not suffer to the same extent.\(^\text{35}\)

**Deception of parents and children**

5.47 An especially telling reason why abuse was able to continue in institutions was the power they wielded in deceiving parents who knew of abuse not to take the matter further.

I showed my mother when she came for a visit, the welts and bruises, she was going to complain, but was told by another mother not to as it would make it worse for us. (St John's Goulburn – Sub 297)

\(^{\text{32}}\) Forde, p.92.

\(^{\text{33}}\) Forde, p.93.

\(^{\text{34}}\) Committee Hansard 3.2.04, pp.81, 84.

\(^{\text{35}}\) Committee Hansard 3.2.04, p.16.
My mother used to visit us when she could, sometimes with my Gran. She knew we were being beaten and saw the bruises on us but couldn't do anything. (Parkerville – Conf Sub 44)

**Reaction to disclosures about institutions**

5.48 The theme of the forgotten Australians comes very much to the fore in society's attitude to children raised in care over a period of many years. If these children were considered at all it was usually in a negative manner. One care leaver argued this strongly:

> It was also my experience of an unfriendly callous society that looked down on Homeboys as the dregs of society, by-products of a decaying social fabric, troublesome, illegitimate, and mostly bullied at school, a class destined to the bottom of the social economic ladder. All quite logical if one accepts that history is littered with examples of the need to dominate through suppression and coercion. As such children raised as orphans, and or in institutions, don't rate high on the radar of social sympathy. (Sub 401)

5.49 When society does become aware of stories about care leavers through media stories that are becoming more prevalent, commonly encountered responses of people to the stories of abuse of children in institutions have been:

- the children were better off, lucky to be there and should not complain;
- the times were different in 'those days', standards of discipline were different then and what is now perceived as 'abuse' was then 'discipline'; and
- these people should get on with their lives.

5.50 It is argued that these responses seek to justify treating vulnerable children as second class citizens. All children are entitled to the same standard of care – that a child should be treated differently on the basis of his or her parents or socio-economic circumstances at birth is abhorrent. No child should be expected to be grateful for the opportunity to be abused. 36

*Children were better off in care*

5.51 That these children were better off in homes than they were with their own families or previous life and were lucky that well-meaning churches, charities or governments had stepped in is a common response to stories of institutional abuse and neglect. It is arguable that a majority of children placed in institutions did require care, and were catered for materially by being fed, clothed and educated, albeit to varying levels and standards. However, CLAN has asserted that:

> But to use this as an argument to deny the effects of institutional care is to conflate two aspects of the story that do not go together. Children were emotionally neglected in institutional care regardless of the intentions of the

36 *Submission 207, p.7 (Ms Gaffney).*
organisations which set up the institutions, and the effects of that emotional neglect continue to have profound consequences for those who experienced it. 37

5.52 Apparently good intentions do not cancel out bad outcomes, nor can they be used to excuse blatant abuse of children. This raises the huge irony underlying the treatment and care of children in institutions. It is an unanswered and possibly unanswerable dilemma that was raised by many care leavers. For children to be taken away from parents or family because they were neglected or uncontrollable or were placed in care by a parent who had problems coping financially or socially, why did they not receive the improved life that was the intention behind their removal rather than the treatment they did in these institutions or homes? If not physically beaten and sexually assaulted, they were totally deprived and neglected emotionally. The expectation that the 'well meaning' welfare would provide appropriate care and nurturing that was not possible in the family or previous environment proved to be far from the reality.

A child who suffers at the hands of his parents, such that he has to be removed from them, is all the more entitled to a caring childhood which attempts to compensate him for that devastating loss. It does not mean that he should be grateful that he is cared for at all and should therefore put up with whatever else comes along with that care, subject to the whim of his carers. 38

Standards were different then

5.53 The response that times were different and that standards and people's thinking and understanding of children's needs have changed, fails to explain or recognise the severity of the documented behaviours. Corporal punishment may no longer be in vogue. But when do a few whacks with a ruler become assault? When do the oft documented beltings and floggings become criminal assault? When did the 'standards of the time' change that condoned the perpetration of neglect, cruelty, psychological abuse, sadism, rape and sodomy?

In response to the statement that standards were different "back then". The acts which it has been alleged to have occurred in institutions were the very same standard of acts which, if perpetrated by a parent or relative, would have resulted in the child being taken into state care in the first place. Parents were not allowed to deny their children education or send them to work or allow them to mix with known criminals, yet the protection system did this on a regular basis. Many institutions did not have educational facilities and therefore, a child who had been taken into care due to truancy, may well be denied an education even when taken into state care. A child taken into care because their parents kept them from school in order to work may well find themselves at the age of eleven or twelve working in an

37 Submission 22, p.17 (CLAN).

38 Submission 22, p.17 (CLAN).
industrial laundry for a religious order. Finally, a child taken into care because one of his or her parents was a convicted criminal may well be accommodated in an institution where they mixed with, indeed lived and worked with, children committed to state care as a result of criminal activity.

Many of the policies which led to children being placed in institutions were short sighted and hypocritical in effect. Hindsight will enable the current generation to understand and accept where past policies were flawed. Hopefully we can use this information to create better and more effective child protection systems which do not simply involve repeating past mistakes.39

They should get on with their life

5.54 Many care leavers recounted to the Committee that they had received little sympathy for the abuses suffered while in care and that they were usually told that they should forget the past and get on with their life.

Society continually tells victims to 'get over it', or 'it's in the past'. I can assure you that the treatment of those of us who survive will not be 'in the past' as long as one of us draw breath, for we suffer the consequences every second of our existence. (Sub 20)

And for those who say it was in the past and should get on with life, should take a close look at many families who find it hard to let go of family hurts and disappointments. As a child raised in an institution, I have no sense of belonging or a family experience to share. (Sub 166)

People who haven't had this life don't understand. Your life is ruined as a child and then when you grow up it is still with you, it never leaves you. I would not like my life all over again! (Rebecca, aged 89 – Sub 367)

I thought to myself..."Shouldn't we move forward and leave that garbage behind?" Now aged seventy one I find that I have not advanced one bit away from that physically, emotionally and sexually abused little boy (Sub 320)

Some people may say others have had a harder bringing up and have gone on to achievement in life. The point is this. We are individuals and what one can endure could be the death of another because we are all different. (Sub 405)

5.55 The argument that people should get on with their lives totally fails to comprehend the severity of the impact that the childhood experiences have had in shaping the adult person. It is not just a matter of ignoring some 'events' in the distant past. These events have fundamentally shaped and are seminal to the adult person. Their whole personality, their emotional and psychological being and in some cases physical condition, are a manifestation of these past events. To move forward requires

39 Submission 207, p.8 (Ms Gaffney).
recognising, confronting and addressing the demons of the past into a manageable form.

Many boys will assert that despite what happened to us in the institution some have succeeded but we were not able to achieve our full potential. It was hard and is still hard. The nightmare is always with us and will follow us to the grave. (Sub 282)

I'm at a standstill in life now not knowing where this journey will take me. We all have to know our past before we can continue into the future. And if I can't get answers, this is where I will stay, for ever. (Sub 303)

The cumulative effect of this experience, is so pervasive, that today, I'm 52 years old, and still a state ward! (Sub 321)
Acknowledgment and apology

7.64 The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines an apology as a 'regretful acknowledgment of fault or failure; assurance that no offence was intended; an explanation; or vindication', whereas to 'acknowledge, by contrast, is to 'agree to the truth of; own to knowing; take notice of; or recognise the authority or claims of'.

7.65 One study noted that an apology can be described as an expression of 'deep and profound regret for causing another person serious anguish and regret'. The study noted that an apology made for causing serious harm to another person is a moral or ethical act, as well as an act of good conscience and a demonstration of respect with the overall goal being to restore dignity and social harmony. 49

7.66 A Senate Committee report has defined an acknowledgment as involving a public recognition that an event happened and 'that this was the result of policy, as well as practice, and that these policies and practices created devastating consequences. In addition, acknowledgment involves an acceptance of responsibility for these policies, practices and consequences'. The report noted that an expression of acknowledgment may be seen as something less than an apology as it is only one aspect of a complete apology. 50

Apologies to ex-residents

7.67 With the exception of the Queensland Government, Australian Governments have been notoriously reluctant in issuing apologies for their role in the abuse and harm experienced by care leavers while in their care. Yet an overwhelming number of care leavers indicated in evidence the importance and power that an acknowledgement or apology would have in helping their healing process and in them moving forward.

7.68 In Queensland, the Forde Inquiry into the abuse of children in Queensland institutions recommended that the Queensland Government and the responsible religious authorities issue a formal apology to former residents of Queensland institutions 'acknowledging the significant harm done to some children in Queensland institutions'. 51 In August 1999 the Government and the responsible religious authorities in that State issued the apology referred to earlier in this chapter.

7.69 The Committee understands that the Tasmanian Government is in the process of finalising the text of a formal apology in relation to abuse allegations in that State and that that apology should be released within months.


7.70 In evidence to the Committee, the WA Department for Community Development supported the issuing of an apology on behalf of the Western Australian Government – 'anything that is going to help the healing process for people who have been abused in care would be appropriate'. The Department noted that in 1997 the Western Australian Government, in response to the *Bringing them home* report, apologised to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for the past policies under which indigenous children were removed from their families. In 1998 the WA Legislative Assembly passed a motion apologising to former child migrants on behalf of all Western Australians for past migration policies and the subsequent maltreatment many experienced.

7.71 The Victorian Government argued that any formal acknowledgment by State Governments of abuse and neglect of children in institutional care 'would need to be carefully considered and would ideally [need to] be acceptable to all state and territory governments'.

7.72 Public apologies by governments have been common in overseas countries. In Canada both the Federal Government and various provincial governments have apologised to Aboriginal children and/or other children who suffered abuse while in institutional care. In May 1999, the Irish Government apologised to victims of institutional abuse in industrial schools and orphanages. The apology, delivered by the Prime Minister, was in the following terms:

The time has long since arrived when we must take up the challenge which the victims of childhood abuse have given us all. A new, comprehensive approach is required to dealing with both the effects and prevention of this abuse. The starting point for this is simple but important: to apologise. On behalf of the State and of all citizens of the State, the Government wishes to make a sincere and long overdue apology to the victims of childhood abuse for our collective failure to intervene. Abuse ruined their childhoods and has been an ever present part of their adult lives, reminding them of a time when they were helpless. I want to say to them that we believe that they were gravely wronged and that we must do all we can to overcome the lasting effects of their ordeals.

7.73 At the same time the Irish Government announced a package of measures aimed at addressing the issue of past institutional abuse. These measures included the establishment of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Laffoy Commission); the establishment of counselling services specifically dedicated to victims of past

52 *Committee Hansard* 9.12.03, p.13 (WA Department for Community Development).
53 *Submission* 55, p.34 (WA Department for Community Development).
54 *Submission* 173, p.22 (Victorian Government).
55 Alter, pp.8-11, 36-38.
56 'The Response of the Irish Government to Past Institutional Child Abuse' at www.publications.parliament.uk; and www.politics.ie
abuse; and changes to the Statutes of Limitations in respect of sexual abuse with a
review by the Law Reform Commission of the situation with respect to physical
abuse.

7.74 In the Australian context, a number of Churches and Catholic religious Orders
involved in the care of children in institutions have made formal statements of
apology and regret acknowledging abuse of children while under their care. Similar
apologies have been made by Churches in overseas countries. In Canada, for example,
the four Churches involved in the residential schooling of Aboriginal children have
made public apologies.57 In Ireland, the Sisters of Mercy issued an unreserved apology
in May 2004 acknowledging abuse of children in its care. The Order had apologised
previously but admitted that that apology was seen by many victims as 'conditional
and less than complete'. Other Catholic religious orders have also issued apologies.58

7.75 In Australia, the Catholic Church, as part of its Towards Healing process, has
apologised for abuse in Catholic institutional care and other settings.

As bishops and leaders of religious institutes of the Catholic Church in
Australia, we acknowledge with deep sadness and regret that a number of
clergy and religious have abused children, adolescents and adults who have
been in their pastoral care. To these victims we offer our sincere apology.59

7.76 A number of Catholic religious Orders have also issued separate apologies. In
July 1993, the Christian Brothers acknowledged that physical and sexual abuse took
place in their institutions in Western Australia and published a statement of apology to
former residents who had been in their care. The apology stated, inter alia, that:

...the fact that such physical and sexual abuse took place at all in some of
our institutions cannot be excused and is for us a source of deep shame and
regret. Such abuse violates the child's dignity and sense of self-worth...We,
the Christian Brothers of today, therefore unreservedly apologise to those
individuals who were victims in these institutions.

7.77 In 1997, the Sisters of Mercy in Rockhampton and the Catholic diocese of
Rockhampton also issued a public apology for abuses that occurred to children under
their care.

7.78 The Salvation Army has issued a number of formal apologies acknowledging
abuse of children under its care. An apology was issued in August 2003 in relation to
abuse allegations in the ABC's Four Corners program. The Salvation Army stated that:

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57 Alter, pp.8, 36-37.
58 Statement of Sisters of Mercy Central Leadership Team, 5.5.04 at www.mercyworld.org. See
also 'Orders testify at abuse commission', RTE News, 30.6.04.
59 Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Towards Healing, June 2003, p.1 at
www.catholic.org.au
We have apologised in the 4 Corners program to the people who have come forward and acknowledged the severe and tragic impact that this betrayal of trust has on the lives of those who have been abused by people with power over them.\(^{60}\)

The Salvation Army recently issued an apology to residents of its Riverview home in Queensland, the spokesman noting that there was 'inappropriate behaviour and activities and we have apologised for that'.\(^{61}\)

7.79 A number of submissions commented on the conditional nature of Salvation Army apologies and their failure to fully acknowledge past practices.\(^{62}\) The Committee notes that in the apology given in relation to the Four Corners abuse allegations, the Salvation Army appeared not to fully recognise the extent of past failures of care. The statement noted that:

> We believe that the great wrong that was done to children abused in our care is that they were abused while the majority of children in our care were having life enriching experiences, making their trauma all the more difficult to bear.\(^{63}\)

7.80 The Salvation Army has also issued personal apologies to individuals who have come forward with abuse allegations. In its submission to this inquiry the organisation stated that 'the Salvation Army itself regrets the human anguish arising from any abuse and neglect suffered by children while in its care'.\(^{64}\)

7.81 Barnardos stated at a Committee hearing that 'we give an unreserved apology for any abuse that took place in Barnardos care'.\(^{65}\) Barnardos noted that 'we understand that an acknowledgment of suffering can be helpful in the healing process for the individual who has suffered and for those who suffered criminal abuse or did not have their developmental needs adequately met'.\(^{66}\)

7.82 Wesley Mission Dalmar at a Committee hearing expressed 'our deep regret and sympathy for people who were exploited and abused as part of our care system'. The Committee questioned the organisation as to whether this expression of regret constituted an apology on behalf of the organisation and Wesley indicated that it did.\(^{67}\) The Wesley Mission acknowledged that 'while in our care, some children were beaten, exploited, kept apart from their siblings or from visiting parents, denied educational

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60 Submission 46, Supplementary Information, 8.6.04 (Salvation Army).
61 'Riverview abuse: Salvos say sorry', The Queensland Times, 17.6.04.
62 Submissions 286, pp.5-6; Additional Information, 13.8.04; 336, pp.3-7.
63 Submission 46, Supplementary Information, 8.6.04 (Salvation Army). (emphasis added).
64 Submission 46, p.2 (Salvation Army).
65 Committee Hansard 4.2.04, p.24 (Barnardos).
66 Submission 37, p.6 (Barnardos).
67 Committee Hansard 4.2.04, p.25 (Wesley Mission).
approached it as a legal process rather than a mediation and critical information about the victim has not been shared with the victim. In case after case, victims were required to sign confidentiality agreements until this was exposed on the TV program "60 Minutes".\textsuperscript{93}

8.148 One submission noted that he felt pressured into accepting a payout for a claim against a religious Order – 'I found that I had nigling doubts about the offer that was made to me and the injustice of my being virtually forced to accept what the church had offered. I came to see that the payout to me was unfair'.\textsuperscript{94}

Other Churches/agencies

8.149 Other churches have also instituted similar internal complaints processes. The Salvation Army and Barnardos have uniform procedures in place. Uniting Church agencies have separate procedures, but in NSW and the ACT there are moves towards uniform processes across agencies in those jurisdictions. The Anglican Church has no national procedures but is moving towards a standardised approach across all dioceses. The complaints procedures outlined below apply to both past and current abuse allegations.

\textit{Salvation Army}

8.150 Under the Salvation Army’s protocol for sexual and other abuse the complainant is directed to an 'independent contact person', who is a local, impartial person experienced in handling complaints, independent of the Salvation Army. A report on the complaint is provided by the contact person to the Chief Secretary (Salvation Army’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO)) and/or his delegate. On receipt of this report, the Chief Secretary or his delegate determines how the complaint is to be dealt with, including the scope of any investigation required. The way a complaint is dealt with depends on a number of factors including the nature of the alleged misconduct; the confidentiality required by the complainant; and whether the alleged offender is or is not still a Salvationist, living or working in the Salvation Army’s jurisdiction. With the agreement of all parties concerned, mediation which involves the establishment of a panel of outside professionals, such as a psychologist, lawyer and/or minister from another church may be used to resolve the dispute. Both parties generally agree to abide by the decisions of the mediation panel. The panel also serves as a mechanism for review of outcomes if claimants are dissatisfied with the process. However, the Salvation Army will not automatically assume liability for the costs of the mediation unless special arrangements are made – however, the Salvation Army noted that in most cases it agrees to pay these costs.

8.151 The outcome of a complaint may include reporting the complaint to the police or other authorities; a written response to the complainant; a written apology from the

\textsuperscript{93} Submission 79, p.17 (Broken Rites).
\textsuperscript{94} Submission 144, p.2.
alleged offender; counselling for the complainant or other assistance; counselling for the alleged offender; and/or warning, suspension or termination of the alleged offender; or no further action. In cases where monetary payments are made, no confidentiality clauses are imposed on complainants.95

8.152 Many critical comments were received during the inquiry about the lack of support offered by the Salvation Army to ex-residents. One care leaver noted that:

Over the last few years I was humiliated and offended by the Salvation Army as on many occasions I have asked for counselling for this problem and been denied access to this unless I was alcoholic or drug addicted...At another time another [Salvation Army] officer said after begging for help "yes it is awful we have to admit even through we have caused the problem we can't help you". (Sub 266)

8.153 Another care leaver argued that the Salvation Army should offer more support to ex-residents, asking rhetorically 'what can the Salvation Army and the Government do to assist me now and in the future'? 96

Barnardos

8.154 Under Barnardos complaints policy the CEO or the Senior Manager, Youth Services and Aftercare, contacts the complainant to ascertain the facts from the ex-client's perspective. Advice is given to the complainant on referring the matter to the police, seeking legal advice, obtaining professional counselling, and/or seeking peer support, through an organisation such as CLAN. For some complainants, ongoing counselling is provided and for others, Barnardos have offered, and paid, compensation.97

Uniting Church

8.155 Agencies of the Uniting Church, such as UnitingCare Burnside and Wesley Dalmar, have separate complaints procedures. The NSW Uniting Church is currently developing uniform procedures for dealing with complaints from ex-residents of institutional care in NSW and the ACT. The Uniting Church noted that this will provide a 'consistent response' to allegations of abuse and will include the type and amount of counselling to be provided, the circumstances under which compensation payments would be considered appropriate and the format of any agreement relating to compensation.98

95 Salvation Army, Procedures for Complaints of Sexual and Other Abuse Against Salvationists and Workers, November 1996.
96 Submission 336, p.7. See also Submission 286, Additional Information, 13.8.04.
97 Submission 37, Supplementary Information, 17.6.04 (Barnardos).
98 NSW Uniting Church, Additional Information, 1.7.04.
Committee heard similar stories from witnesses outlining cases of abuse, often by the same perpetrators in the same institutions (or other institutions where the perpetrators had been 'moved on'), and were told that various authorities were informed, often over many years, of abusive practices. The Committee considers it is almost beyond belief that the relevant authorities did not know that such practices were occurring at least in several institutions where a consistent pattern of abuse should have appeared evident.

8.200 In relation to institutions operated by the Catholic Church, the example of Neerkol is illustrative of a pattern of concealment and collusion between authorities. It is evident that the Catholic Church and the State Government must have known of the various forms of abuse that occurred in the orphanage. One detailed submission from a number of ex-residents of the orphanage noted that ex-residents made complaints regarding abuse to the Mother Superior of the orphanage; the priest resident at the orphanage; child welfare officers; Rockhampton police (especially those who ran away from the orphanage); families when taken in for the holidays; families in cases where ex-residents went to live on farms; and on leaving the orphanage, the Catholic Bishop of Rockhampton. The submission noted that 'to our knowledge all reports were ignored'.

8.201 Regarding the Christian Brothers it is apparent that the Christian Brothers authorities must have known of illegal practices. Dr Coldrey refers to a letter from Brother Conlon to the Dublin headquarters of the Order that Brother Keaney had been made aware of an indecency charge against a particular Brother. Conlon writes:

I tried hard to get this Brother transferred from Clontarf during the past six months, but have failed...I know it is a delicate matter to deal with...I do not wish to be critical of the Provincial, as I know only too well his many difficulties. Still, I think he should be more prompt in dealing with offences of this kind.

8.202 A similar pattern of concealment is evident with respect to orphanages operated by the Salvation Army and the same reluctance of the hierarchy – in this case the Salvation Army – to take action against abusive officers.

Even to this day [Captain] Morton parades around in his Salvation Army uniform...The hierarchy of the Salvation Army were then and still are fully aware of his atrocities against the boys in the orphanages. Letters have been written to the headquarters complaining of his behaviour but nothing has ever been done to make him account for his behaviour...When I got out of the clutches of the Salvation Army, I complained about the orphanage and what I had suffered whilst I was in there and in particular, I complained of Morton and [Captain] Patteson...When I asked if they [Salvation Army] had ever taken action against Morton, the reply was, "You or anyone else cannot do anything; the law will not allow you".

122 Submission 225, p.5.
123 Cited in Submission 40, p.28 (Dr Coldrey).
I know of one boy, and there were others, a very young boy named Norman Stenning who wrote, and bravely signed the letter, to the Salvation Army headquarters in Sydney and brought to their attention the activities of Captain Stan Morton and asking the senior officers for help. Norman Stenning's letter was returned to the orphanage and to Captain Morton and Captain Patteson. These two officers then set upon this brave young boy and I know that it is a nightmare to him even now, and he is over seventy years of age. So do not accept any denial of knowledge from this organisation. (Sub 282)

...I think that it is a disgrace that those of us who complained years ago were never taken seriously...So can I ask when is justice going to roll – could you please tell me why my complaints all those years ago were ignored?...Can I ask when is the Salvation Army going to ask those officers that it knows committed abuses to apologise? (Sub 286)

8.203 One state ward also noted that 'information has filtered down to me, as indications of a massive cover up of abuse over thirty years by the Salvation Army of knowing of high incidence of child abuse occurring in the Gill Memorial Home for Boys – Goulburn, in which they managed and failed to take appropriate action to constrain, or restrain the nature of this abuse'.

8.204 The familiar pattern of 'cover up' of abusive practices was evident in State-run institutions, as is illustrated below in a care leaver's experience of Parramatta Girls Home and Hay Detention Centre. Neither the staff nor inspectors took action against clearly criminal behaviour inflicted on residents.

Parramatta and Hay – where was the monitoring?

Senator MURRAY – In your written submission and in your verbal submission you have concentrated on the men and the things that were done to you. Where were the women staff in all this?

Ms Robb – The women were around, but they did not do anything. They saw a lot. There were a few nasty women there too—cruel women. I never, ever got hit by a woman. But the men had their places: they had shower blocks, they had isolation, they had their offices. They did it in front of muster. We were made examples of in front of everyone.

Senator MURRAY – In your submission you say:

'I could barely lift my head. I was so sore I was in agony—busted lips, black eyes, bruised, teeth missing'. The women staff would have seen that.

Ms Robb – But that was their job.

Senator MURRAY – What did they do about it?

Ms Robb – Nothing. The odd one felt sorry for you, but that was their job. They knew what happened, but they kept their jobs...

124 Submission 326, p.3.
Ms Robb – Yes, they did. But if you look at the photos that were taken at Parramatta, that was all glorified.

Senator MURRAY – Say somebody like you had been bashed and had black eyes and bruised lips and so on, would they hide such a person from the inspector? How was the physical treatment concealed?

Ms Robb – The only time that anyone came in there was when someone was going to Hay. I was in isolation when I got bashed, and I did not see anyone. I saw the officers that came up to me, but I never saw anyone higher than that from outside. Until I tried to abscond, I never saw anyone. I was not ready to go to Hay then. What they put me through was just torture. But they never sent me to Hay after I got my teeth busted. It was not until I tried to abscond, and then they came in. But, no, no-one saw me except the officers, female and male, and some of the girls.

Senator MURRAY – In your submission you record something which I think must come out of your file—some remarks by a consultant psychiatrist. Were you interviewed by a psychiatrist whilst you were there?

Ms Robb – Yes.

Senator MURRAY – And did you report to him or her what was happening?

Ms Robb – The psychiatrist who was there that interviewed us was the criminal who put us on Largactil.

Senator MURRAY – But you mentioned things like being assaulted. What I want to get out of you is whether anybody in authority was ever told by either the girls or the staff about these dreadful things that were happening.

Ms Robb – I could not answer that.

Senator MURRAY – But did you tell anyone?

Ms Robb – No, I did not tell anyone—because they were people who were there all the time. They had to know what was happening; they did know what was happening. Why go and say anything and get a bashing for it?

Committee Hansard 3.2.04, pp.9-10.

8.205 Other submissions from care leavers recorded a pattern of concealment and a lack of action in addressing concerns they raised. These included a failure to address serious concerns when raised with, among others, welfare officers, health personnel and teachers.

_Welfare officials_

One lad was belted on the bare buttocks by [Brother] Doyle with a fan belt. He absconded and on being picked up by the Welfare he showed them the black and blue state of his bottom. They enquired of Doyle what caused such damage. His reply, "the boy inflicted such on himself". The lad in question never returned to Clontarf, however the Welfare never stepped in to protect the other kids still at risk from this sadist. (Sub 25)
Health personnel

Ben also spoke of a local Tamworth doctor who visited the centre [Tamworth Boys Home]. Any complaint about mistreatment or injuries received as a result of a beating were responded to by the doctor with the query, "How did you say this happened again?" If the boy replied with the same answer then the doctor would call the guard and state that the boy was gaining too much weight and that a certain number of meals would have to be missed. (Sub 329)

Teachers

The Major...gave me another 12 "cuts" for telling lies. The next day at school the teacher asked me "what is wrong with your hands, why can't you write?" I told him why. He told me to go to the headmaster and I explained to him. All the headmaster said was "GO BACK TO CLASS". Nothing was done. We were all alone. We had no one to turn to. All we could do was suffer and bare it. (Sub 336)

The teachers at South Goulburn Primary School and the teachers at Goulburn High School all knew of the terrible happenings in the [Gill Memorial] orphanage. They saw the damaged boys; they were told of the happenings at the orphanage but they did nothing to help. (Sub 282)

8.206 Police were also informed of abuse occurring in homes yet apparently no action was taken.

...the boys used to abscond or run away from the orphanages and the police would capture them. The police would then give them a hiding and deliver them back to the home. The Salvation Army officers in the home would then give the boys a hiding. That is the way it was. The police knew what was going on up there, but they did absolutely nothing.125

I ran away from there when I was 12 years old. I got charged with uncontrollable behaviour at Goulburn Police Station. I reported the sexual assault to the Goulburn Police. I got 6 to 8 months at Doruke Training Centre Windsor. (Sub 312)

8.207 Evidence to the Committee indicated that perpetrators of abuse and paedophiles freely operated in many homes and were often moved between institutions operated by the various Churches.

8.208 Broken Rites claimed a number of paedophiles worked in the two Christian Brothers orphanages in Victoria – St Vincent's, South Melbourne and St Augustine's, Geelong and that these Brothers 'appear to have been able to move between the two locations'.126 A state ward resident at St Augustine's, Geelong confirmed that one Brother referred to as the 'red terror' because he carried round a red strap and a

125 Committee Hansard 3.2.04, p.91.
126 Submission 79, p.6 (Broken Rites).