GENERAL NEWS

We now have 231 members across Australia.

We want to remind all members that membership fees fall due by 30 June. Like all organisations, our subscription fees cover from 1 July in one year to 30 June in the next year. This is so that we can keep our accounts in line with the beginning and the end of the financial year. All members must re-subscribe before the end of June, whether they joined a while ago or only recently. We hope you understand this, and also how important membership fees are. We have no other funding at all to help our organisation continue to fight for recognition and justice for all Care Leavers.

Please note that our membership fees for Care Leavers haven’t gone up!

CLAN GET-TOGETHER

We are trying a change of venue for our next CLAN social gathering. This time it will be held at Nurringingy Reserve, Knox Road, Doonside. only a short walk from Doonside Station, follow the signs at the bottom of the station. Look out for the CLAN banner and Wren picnic ground as well as the Yellow and Blue Balloons.

Bring your own picnic or BBQ. There is cover if the weather is wet.

Date: Sunday 17 June Time: 10 a.m. *Note that it’s a Sunday, not Saturday.

The Library will be there on the day for CLAN members to borrow any of the resources.

Queensland Get-Together

One of our Queensland members, Sonia St Claire has kindly arranged Qld’s first CLAN get together.

Date: Sunday 24th June 2001 Time: 11 a.m
Where: “The Cascades Water Gardens” Gold Coast Highway, Broadbeach
BYO picnic lunch, chairs. BBQ facilities available. Look for the white balloons and ask for Sonia.

For further information contact Sonia on 07 55292198

If members in other states would like to get together, think of a time and place and advertise it here in the Newsletter. It only takes one brave person to start the ball rolling.
SENATE INQUIRY INTO CHILD MIGRATION

You will remember that in our last newsletter we mentioned that CLAN had put in a submission to the Senate Inquiry into Child Migration. The committee was in Sydney hearing evidence on Thursday 22 March and Leonie and Joanna appeared to speak about the issues that concern us at CLAN. If you can access the net, you can read what we said by going to www.aph.gov.au/hansard/senate/committee/comsen.htm. Then you click on 'community affairs'. You’ll find this evidence under the date of the Sydney hearing - the committee also heard evidence in other cities and you can read that as well at this site.

Speaking at the Inquiry was exciting and encouraging. There were five Senators in all, 2 Liberal, 2 Labor and one Democrat. The Democrat, Sen. Andrew Murray, in fact had been a child migrant himself, in what was then Rhodesia. We felt that all the senators were extremely supportive and interested in the issues and had done their homework - they asked very searching questions. We also got the impression that, like most people, they had previously had no idea that so many Australian-born children had suffered in the same way as the Child Migrants, through growing up in "care". Andrew Murray was particularly keen to work out how many people we might be talking about, and came up with the figure of at least 100,000 children in NSW alone throughout the 20th century. We are hoping that our evidence, along with similar evidence from other people, will convince the government that there is a pressing need for another inquiry, this time into the oppressive and abusive system that hundreds of thousands of children across Australia were subjected to in this era when their own families could not care for them. We have had the Stolen Generations Inquiry and the Child Migrant Inquiry is happening: when will be get the third Inquiry, to complete the picture?

A Queensland CLAN member wrote to tell us that he also made a submission to the Inquiry, which was accepted and published. But, he writes, "we as Australian-born have the right to expect and must have our own Senate Inquiry".

is surely speaking for all CLAN members when he says: "In all fairness, this is Australia, surely as Australian-born children we have the right to expect our Senate to be interested in what we suffered".

NOTICEBOARD
Meetings to organise CLAN’s first conference

We feel that it is very important for CLAN to have a conference which will open up to discussion all the issues which concern us and which are so few people in the community seem to know about. We are thinking of a one-day event at a location which is easy to get to by train, and at a low cost to members (with professionals paying more). We really want this conference to reach a lot of people so we will advertise and publicise it as much as we can afford to. This is a chance to make the public hear from us.

We have had one meeting so far to start organising the conference, and thanks go to Pamella Vernon for sharing her office premises and also her expertise to help get this off the ground. At this meeting we discussed how a conference might be organised, who should speak, what the theme should be, and so on. We intend to have these meetings every fortnight, on Saturdays, alternating morning and afternoon, and we welcome anybody who would like to come and who has something to contribute whether ideas, skills or legwork.

We would also like to hear feedback from members about what they think: what are the most important things to talk about? What issues should we highlight? How could be publicise this event? Any suggestions for a venue? Please write or email to CLAN’s address, or ring somebody on the telephone contact list who will pass on the message. If you’d like to come to one of the conference committee meetings, let us know by phone or email and we’ll tell you the date and where it will be held.
**Book Launch**

One of our oldest members, Win Evans OAM, would like to invite all CLAN members to the launch of her book, "A Rejected Childhood", which is about her life growing up in children's Homes in Sydney from the age of 2 years and three months until she was "turfed out" at the age of 15. The book will be launched by Wyn's local member, the Federal shadow attorney-general Robert McCloud.

Date: Friday 29 June 20001. Time: 9 am till 1 pm.
Where: Sydney Mechanics Institute, 280 Pitt Street (nr. Bathurst St.).

Light refreshments will be served. Everybody is welcome! Win would also like to meet anybody who was in the Homes she was in, Lisgar and Agincourt, so please make yourself known to Win on the day.

**Members Achievements**

One of our members, FX, was interviewed for a recent ABC Encounter Programme on Radio National, on Sunday 8 April. It was called "Bad Girls Do the Best Sheets". As the ABC publicity sheet said "In 1950s Australia, it was commonly known that "bad girls did the best sheets". The phrase referred to the inmates who worked in the commercial convent laundries operated by the Catholic order, The Sisters of the Good Shepherd....who 'took in' girls who had been deemed wayward, homeless, deviant, or 'at risk of moral danger'."

Some girls came to the homes through the courts, others were placed "voluntarily" by family or the local priest. And just like the orphanages run by charitable institutions in Australia, these 'reform schools' were overcrowded and under-funded, so they relied on the income from the laundries. The girls of course were not paid for their work and many have now begun to question the reasons for their placement and their years of unpaid labour incarcerated in these institutions.

CLAN will soon have a tape of this programme in the library if you would like to hear it.

**FEEDBACK**

CLAN member ET writes: I was very moved by your newsletter number 3, and especially by the article by ET. It was like looking in a mirror.

My son is ET age and I cannot begin to explain the pain and suffering I and many other boys endured at The Salvation Army Bexley Boys Home. From March 1965 until December 1975 I was in the care of the Salvos at Bexley. During those 10 years and 9 months I was to witness the brutal bashings and sexual assaults on the boys that were my brothers.

I like ET Dad am very protective of my son and yes all his friends think I am weird and that is weird because he always wants to give me a hug and kiss before he goes to school and when he comes home.

The home was closed at the end of 1978 but the memories will never be erased. What really upsets me is that the Salvos won't acknowledge that ever did anything wrong and because they are such a high profile organisation they are immune from media publication.
As much as a lot of us ex Bexley boys would like a reunion, the embarrassment of knowing what we witnessed and what we were part of eats away at us, and will continue to do so until we die.

My name when I was at Bexley was ET. My real name is ET and I demanded to be called by my correct name in 1975 much to the disgust of the Salvos. So if there is anyone out there who was at Bexley during my years and would like someone to talk to then I am available at

REDACTED

Thank you ET for your very moving story. I am not an emotional person, but your story did have me in tears as I read the story to two of my mates that I grew up with.

Sincerely, ET

Another of our members also wrote to us about this story:

Today I received the CLAN newsletter No 3, so full of information it took me an age to read it all. I was sitting over lunch at the time and then I came to ET's Story -

"Me and My Dad". I was so moved and was crying like a baby, tears running down my cheeks. Isn't ET's Dad fortunate to have a son like him, god love him.

The small band of volunteers are doing a magnificent job and I (and I'm sure many others thank you). At the first CLAN meeting, I met a lady, Mary, who had been at Bidura (NSW), not necessarily at the same time as myself, but it was as if I had found a lost member of my family. We hugged each other and cried. I have since spoken to her on the phone and we exchanged Christmas cards.

Thank you once again, ET

P.S. Is ET out there somewhere? Bidura 1941 or was it 1947?

PERSONAL STORIES

This month we are publishing three very different personal accounts from our members. First, ET would like to share a light-hearted look at the-

Wedding vows of a former State Ward (Female)

I (ex-ward) take thee, (unbelievably loving understanding person) as my lawfully wedded husband, to have and to hold (when I feel like it), to love and to cherish, for better or for worse (I can promise a lot of worse), from this day forward till death do part, or until I manage to push you away.

I promise to require daily affirmation from you that I am a good person.

I promise not to believe you when you say that I am a good person.

I promise to trust you.

I promise to pick fights with you because I'm feeling miserable.

I promise to provide you with more in-law, out-law, step-in-law and foster-in-law trouble than you could have ever bargained for.

I promise to not trust you.

I promise to be a lousy accountant, a terrible cook and a dreadful housekeeper.

I promise to have lots of children for you to love, because I am not capable of loving them myself.

I promise to cling to you so tightly you'll have trouble breathing.

I promise to accuse you of having an affair if you're half an hour late home from work.

I promise to not trust you.

I promise to provide more challenge than you ever imagined.

Above all, I promise to adore you for tolerating my many mistrusts and foibles.

Do you still want to kiss your bride?

ET
ET’s story

Fourteen years of orphanage life with its endless abuse and loneliness had filled me with a perpetual melancholy and an indefinable loneliness and sadness that even now at the age of 50, still leaves me with an emptiness that I do not know how to fill. I have been left emotionally and socially inept. Surely, when mother gave me up and made me a state ward for 16 years she could not know, nor could she understand, my only recollection of my existence included abandonment, unspeakable sexual and physical violence to my very flesh, pain and suffering, intolerable fear and terror, and a pensiveness that overwhelmed me. For the first 41 yrs of my life I suffered traumatic amnesia. One did what one had to do, not to remember, as I did not know how else to digest their brutality. I was terrorized by a force I could not understand. Their tyranny paralysed me. I had no natural instincts to give or receive closeness and affection. My heart had never held love and there was no memory of what love is, or may be. Love was not imprinted on my soul. I was so acquainted with endless grief it consumed my entire being. The only friend I had in St Martha’s children’s Home was my locker (my safe haven) at my bedside in which I used to hide in the darkness to escape the nuns and their violence. The hardest thing for me- was being alive. How has all this left me emotionally?

Over the years I have learned new skills to make me more adept in order to function in society (the outside world beyond the barricades) My first night alone at 17 after mother’s boyfriend asked me to leave. I laid awake for hours and pondered why I could not sleep. When I realized there was no one to turn out the light. I burst into tears and remembered the other girls in the homes and how much I missed them. they were the only family I knew. I wanted to live with them again as I felt so alone.

To escape my aloneness I moved in with a man almost 10 yrs my senior. He was handsome and charming. I soon discovered it was the biggest mistake of my life. He was a violent sadist. He raped and tortured me for three years. His violent rapes caused the deaths of 2 unborn children and almost a third. I left several times, however he always found me and dragged me back. At the age of twenty with his daughter now aged sixteen months I escaped.

I wandered aimlessly through life trying to fit in. Especially into mother’s older children’s family. but, I always felt like an outsider. I had no sense of belonging. I was moving from place to place, job to job, gathering more emotional scars and then by the time I was 24 I had a nervous breakdown and spent a month in hospital. My coping and mothering skills were nil. My daughter now aged 5, was placed in a Home when I was in hospital, hence the cycle was repeating itself. Something I did not want. I was advised to leave her in the Home and give her some kind of stability and time for me to try and get my life in order.

I visited my daughter two to four times a month and took her home with me at every opportunity, when she was 9 I took her out of the Home for good. I continued to move around Sydney and still had great difficulty in functioning on the outside world and holding down a job. Meanwhile, I still kept up contact with my mother, but she was of no support, physically, emotionally, financially or any other way, she was also very needy and found solace with men. Although, over the years I hoped and prayed she would tell me the words I always wanted to hear.

"ET, I love you and I am so sorry" That would have helped make the pain easier to bear. I never had the confidence or the courage to ask her "Why did you leave me?-Why did you not love me?- Why did you give me up ?

As a child I always thought she gave me up, because I was not pretty. Because the nuns and mother told me I was ugly.

By the time I was 30 I met a man who was a violent alcoholic. He asked me to marry him after only three months. I said yes. Why? Because he wanted me. He was also offering me the family unit and family home I was aching for. Over the next 11 years I spent most of my marriage sleeping in the car at night with my daughter parked a couple of blocks away to escape his drunken violent rages before he came home from a drinking binge and tore up the house and me along with it.

He slowly isolated me from any friends I had and did not allow even doctors or ambulance to come to our house. I was his prisoner and in his control. We had two children to the marriage. Why did I stay? I knew nothing else. Violence, isolation, and aloneness was familiar, it was all I knew. When my eldest daughter was almost 18 she left.
One day I started to think deeply about my life and felt compelled to change it. I discovered that people were not supposed to hurt you. That some people were actually nice to others. That some people were even kind to their children. I started to question many things including the catholic religion. I realized I wanted to live a positive life filled with kindness and tenderness. to know happiness and most of all- I wanted to be touched by love.

I knew I would not experience these things with my husband. So at the age of almost 41 and two children to the marriage now aged 5 and 3 years. I left.

I flew over to Perth with my children to escape anybody that ever had hurt me. I had to keep them at a safe distance as I was still vulnerable. I bought a computer and started writing down my feelings and in doing this the memories started flooding back. My childhood started to flash up on the monitor in living colour like a moving picture. I was used to being numb to the core. I did not know what to do with these memories. I asked a doctor to give me a lobotomy so that I could not have any memory of the past. Naturally, she refused. I did not know how to deal with my childhood. What do I do with the memories. Where do I put them ? I did not want to remember.

Death would have been a welcomed relief. I even planned my death down to the finest detail and was already to exist this god forsaken place but, if I did follow through - who would love my children ? There was no-one else. They would have gone into a Home God knows I did not want what happened to me, to happen to them. And this is why I am here today. This is the only reason I am still here today. Therefore, somehow, some way I had to slowly digest the events one by one that happened in my childhood.

I lived one day at a time. coped one day at a time. Stayed alive one day at a time. Tried to parent my children the way I wished I was parented one day at a time. For me again, the hardest thing - was being alive. A year and half had passed and my memories were a little easier to bear. I filled my days with my children and books on positive thinking and self help. I did a lot of soul searching. Books taught me some of the things I was supposed to learn as a child. Reading was my newfound hobby.

I was on the move again but, I was thinking with much more clarity and growing as a person. I moved to the Gold Coast, Queensland. I went into therapy every 2 weeks for nine months. I was now gathering strength and making sense of my life as apposed to gathering more emotional scars. I was making wiser choices in my life and being the best mother I could be. I stayed away from negative people and chose to be around positive people who had goals and dreams. Then, I heard my mother was in a nursing home and was pretty much at the end of her life. I flew to Sydney to visit her knowing it would be the last time I would see her. I made the decision driving to the nursing home, that I would ask her why she gave me up, and hoped she would tell me the words I never heard her speak before she died. "I love you and I am so sorry ". When I arrived, I sat down in front of her and I looked into her eyes and saw her emotional pain and her sorrow. If only she could see mine. I also saw that she was now the helpless child in the Home with no-one that cared.

The irony of it all. I said, 'Hello mum', I waited for her to answer me. I wanted mother to call out my name and wrap her arms around me, to behold me, so I could regain my lost sense of hope. To take away my melancholy and bury the deep dark hole within me. to take away the tears of which my world was made. I wanted to make my sorrow hers that it might have helped in bearing it. I wanted to feel nearer to her, with my hands, like my heart open to receive love, laughter and affection. I wanted the beauty that lay dormant within me to come to life. She looked up into my eyes and did not know who I was. I was devastated. she had dementia. Six months later she died. She was almost 82.

Her death brought back many memories and I had to deal with them all over again. I grieved what could have been. I lived in hope my entire life that while she drew breath- there was the chance that she would one day tell me, that she loved me. That hope was now gone. Although my mother loved me or showed me any tenderness or compassion. I always loved her. I could not hurt her, the way she hurt me. When she was sick I bathed her. I made her curtains for her lounge room. I cooked and cleaned for her. I tried to make her happy. I tried to make her love me. Most of all - I told her - I loved her.

Ten years has passed since I left my husband. My mother has been dead for over 7 years. My youngest children are now 13 & 15 years old. There is just the three of us. But I embrace them, I love them. I wrap my arms around them, I validate them I care about them and I am fiercely loyal to them. I tell them, I love you.
As of 7 years ago I now feel the feelings of emotions. Up until then I was numb to the core and everything I did was mechanical. I now feel for all human beings, and in my daily meditations I send "Divine love and peace" to all mankind. This especially includes all CLAN members. So know that someone does care. It is the only way I know to help others.

To every soul that reads this letter I hope you have been touched by love and kindness at some point in your life. As my youngest daughter says "Love is beautiful when you know what it means" I wish my mother knew. I wish her mother knew and her mother before her. I especially wish the Nuns knew. As a result of my growth as a person I have broken the cycle of abuse handed down from generation to generation, and for that I am immensely proud. I am also proud of my newfound strength. And to know that I have done better when I knew better. Also, I have learned to love. I have goals and dreams and aspire to do great things in my life.

Finally, Barry, a NSW state ward, wrote this moving poem about his experiences.

Fragments of shattered glass
Some very sharp
Some very blunt
Like pieces of my life
Some that cut deep
With long-lasting scars
For every little fragment
I could tell ten tales
But the pain is ten times ten
I wish to forget half the fragments
To just put them back
Into the window pane
But the fragments have shattered
Into my mind
Into my life
Where is this innocence of childhood
The happy days of youth
The closeness of loved ones
I have been deceived and abused
But maybe one day
There will be a clear window pane.

REUNIONS

MacKillop Family Services in Melbourne (03 9300-1011) have sent us a schedule of their reunions for 2001. Here they are:

Saturday 14 July: St Anthony's Kew & St Joseph's, Surrey Hills, to be held at St Joseph's (now called Youth with a Mission)
Sunday 26 August: St Augustine's Geelong, at the Christian College, Highton
Saturday 6 October: St Vincent de Paul's Girls' Orphanage, South Melbourne, & St Vincent de Paul's Children's Home, Black Rock
Saturday 27 October: St Catherine's Geelong at McKillop Family Services, North Geelong
Sunday 4 November: St Vincent's Boys' Home, South Melbourne.
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

A member, REDACTED, has written to us about Eden Park Boys' Home at Mt. Barker in South Australia, which was run by the Salvation Army. REDACTED was there from 1959 to 1967; his number in the Home was 44. He can be contacted on tel./fax: REDACTED, or write to:

REDACTED, NSW 2250, or email: REDACTED or REDACTED.

REDACTED would like to hear from anyone who was in this Home, and he would especially like to contact his best mate, REDACTED. REDACTED wrote to CLAN about returning to Eden Park Boys' Home in early 2000, some 34 years after leaving the place. It is now privately owned and REDACTED said that "The present owners made me welcome and were interested in the history of the place, which helped ease an otherwise traumatic re-visiting of memories. No records appear to be available from Eden Park Boys' Home.....If anyone knows of any available records for South Australian children's homes or a place where I might start to look for these records, I would be grateful."

After the visit, REDACTED wrote a poem, which has been made into a plaque and in the present Eden Park. Here is his poem:

TO THE BOYS OF EDEN PARK

What words could I write to do these boys the justice and respect they finally deserve?
I could tell of their pain and constant fear of what would come next.
I could tell of the lack of dignity or the slow eroding of self-esteem.
I could tell you that they never had a chance to just be a child
Or to feel arms that just wanted to hug you.
I could tell you more but there is no need for more pain.
What these boys now deserve is for it never to happen again.
so when you read this, don't feel pity, sorrow or pain.
Go away from here determined that this won't ever happen again.
So boys when you read these words, feel proud as I do because you had the strength to return.

REDACTED

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would like to locate anybody who was in Royalston, Werrington Park, Kincumber, Yasmar, Mittagong or Mt Penang. Please contact

My sister and I were in St Joseph's Home Kenmore NSW from 1958 - 1962 and we would be very interested in learning from other girls who were at Kenmore, especially Leonie Peacock. Contact via CLAN's address or email.

THANKS
Thanks to for sending us newspaper clippings from the Melbourne papers to keep us up to date on Victorian news.

INFORMATION FOR CARE LEAVERS

Victoria: VANISH

VANISH is a self help organisation for people who have a state ward or adoption experience. They are located in Melbourne and most of their staff have had a personal experience of search and reunion. VANISH can help former state wards to:
- Access information
- Search for family members
- Find support both in a practical and emotional way

VANISH hold a support group for former state wards on the third Wednesday of the month from 1:30pm to 3:30pm at 199 Cardigan Street Carlton. At the support group you will meet other people who share your experience. If you would like to find out more, please contact VANISH on 03 9348 2111 or 1800 334 043.

NSW: ARC - Aftercare Resource Centre

In our last newsletter we talked about the Aftercare Resource Centre in Parramatta, run by Relationships Australia and funded by DOCS. Although the service is mainly to provide help and support to state wards up to 25 years old, it also runs a telephone Helpline which is available to people of all ages who have been abused "while they were a child in the care of a welfare group or other organisation" in the state of NSW (these are the words on their flyer).

We set up a meeting with some of the ARC staff on Saturday 7 April at the Exodus Foundation in Ashfield. Quite a few CLAN members came along to meet with Vanessa and Jenny, two of the young women who run the service. Our feeling from the meeting was that this is a very under-resourced service, and that the Helpline for older care leavers does not begin to address the needs of this group of people. We are currently attempting to set up a meeting with the head of ARC to outline the necessity for much more extensive support services. We have also written to Dr Judy Cashmore, chair of the Leaving Care After Care Forum which DOCS has set up and which is currently inquiring into these services. We'll keep members posted on any developments.

If you do want to contact the ARC Helpline, their number is freecall 1800 656 884 Monday to Friday 9 to 5.
GRIEF SUPPORT INC.

In our last newsletter we mentioned a Grief Support Service in Sydney. This used to be called Griefline. One of our members, Karin, wrote to flat this is a 24 hour volunteer telephone counselling service that helps people to talk about grief and loss issues that they are experiencing.

"All the counselors are trained and compassionate people, who have had personal experiences of grief as well as training in counseling skills. They work a roster system from their own homes, so that there is always somebody 'on duty'. Grief can cover a wide spectrum of issues from losses due to death, illness, relationship loss, friendship, etc. and could include issues to do with loss of childhood and loss of identity, that ex-state wards [and anybody else who grew up away from their family] may be dealing with.

In my darkest hour of despair, in the early hours of the morning when I have been absolutely desolate and alone, it has been a great comfort to me to be able to speak with a caring, compassionate person and to feel and know that there is some one out there for me. These people have restored my belief in humanity, and I am very appreciative of their service. They give of themselves and are not paid for this service. I recommend that for anyone reading this who is having similar difficulties, to keep this number, as Grief Support counsellors are always available, and often sharing and unburdening a problem or worry can reduce anxiety, stress and suffering.

Thank you Grief Support for being there."

You can contact Grief Support on 02 94896644. or write to P.O. Box 423, Wahroonga. 2076.

LIBRARY
Don't forget our library and the reference books we can consult to help you find your records. If you would like to borrow a book contact Dorothy on 02 9920 5296.

CONTACT LIST

We have people who have been in care who are willing to be telephone contacts, someone for you to share your thoughts and feelings with. Please remember they are volunteers, who are not trained counsellors.

Joy  03 6363 1423 * Caroline  03 9899 0417 * John  02 9558 5227
Win  02 9529 7149 * Leonie  02 9724 1826 * Terri  03 94595842
Lisa  02 9540 9095 * Terry  08 8379 9302 * David  02 9920 5296
Ray  02 6254 2706 (AH only)
Mother's Day.

Last Sunday, on Mother's Day I sat in my lounge room wondering about how CLAN members deal with this day, the one day on the calendar which celebrates Mother's.....

But what about people who are Motherless?

I would really like to hear from our members what they think of this day, How does it make them feel? Do they celebrate it with their children?

Please feel free to send me your comments, thoughts, feelings on this subject. I look forward to receiving them.

Leonie Sheedy.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Yes! I would like to renew my membership of CLAN from 1/7/2001 to 30/6/2002.

NAME: ...........................................................................................................

ADDRESS: .....................................................................................................

TEL/EMAIL: ..................................................................................................

I enclose cheque/money order/cash for: ..................................................

Care Leavers: $5  Professionals: $20  Govt.Depts./Past Providers: $50

Donations are most welcome

Please return this form to CLAN, PO Box 164 Georges Hall NSW 2198.