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SENATE

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Reference: Child migration

THURSDAY, 15 FEBRUARY 2001

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**SENATE
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REFERENCES COMMITTEE**

Thursday, 15 February 2001

Members: Senator Crowley (*Chair*), Senator Knowles (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Bartlett, Evans, Gibbs and Tchen

Substitute members: Senator Murray for Senator Bartlett

Participating members: Senators Abetz, Brown, Calvert, Chapman, Coonan, Crane, Denman, Eggleston, Faulkner, Ferguson, Ferris, Forshaw, Gibson, Harradine, Harris, Lightfoot, Mackay, Mason, McGauran, O'Brien, Payne, Tierney, Watson and West

Senators in attendance: Senators Crowley, Gibbs, Knowles, Murray and Tchen

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

For inquiry into and report on:

Child migration to Australia under approved schemes during the twentieth century, with particular reference to the role and responsibilities of Australian governments and to the issues listed in the following paragraphs:

- (a) in relation to government and non-government institutions responsible for the care of child migrants:
 - (i) whether any unsafe, improper, or unlawful care or treatment of children occurred in such institutions, and
 - (ii) whether any serious breach of any relevant statutory obligation occurred during the course of the care of former child migrants;
- (b) the extent and operation of measures undertaken or required to assist former child migrants to reunite with their families and obtain independent advice and counselling services;
- (c) the effectiveness of efforts made during the operation of the child migration schemes or since by Australian governments and any other non-government bodies which were then responsible for child migration to:
 - (i) inform the children of the existence and whereabouts of their parents and/or siblings,
 - (ii) reunite or assist in the reunification of the child migrants with any of their relatives, and
 - (iii) provide counselling or any other services that were designed to reduce or limit trauma caused by the removal of these children from their country of birth and deportation to Australia;
- (d) the need for a formal acknowledgment and apology by Australian governments for the human suffering arising from the child migration schemes;
- (e) measures of reparation including, but not limited to, compensation and rehabilitation by the perpetrators; and
- (f) whether statutory or administrative limitations or barriers adversely affect those former child migrants who wish to pursue claims against individual perpetrators of abuse previously involved in their care.

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Committee met at 2.55 p.m.

CHAIR—Good afternoon. I now officially declare open this public hearing of the Community Affairs References Committee inquiry into child migration and I welcome you all here this afternoon. This is very much a national inquiry, with the Perth hearing being the first of a number of hearings to be held in all states. We had a hearing with the federal department of immigration in Canberra a week or so ago but this is the first public hearing out on the road.

The committee has received over 200 submissions nationwide from individual former child migrants who, through their life stories, have raised a whole range of issues for the committee to consider. Today's hearing will commence with a number of people who provided submissions being invited to speak. The committee would like to make it clear that we welcome and thank very much all of those of you who have put in submissions, those of you who have accepted to be witnesses, and those who have given information in camera at an earlier time.

I note for the record that we have with us Channel 9 and we have a journalist, Mr Rosengren, from the *Catholic Record*. Is there any objection to the media being present and recording? If there are no objections, it is so ordered. Does the committee authorise Channel 7 also to be able to record if and when they come through the door? It is so ordered too. Thank you, *Hansard*.

BENT, Mr Peter (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Bent. I note for the record that you are accompanied by Mr Derek Rushbrook. I understand, Mr Bent, that you have seen a copy of the Senate procedures for the protection of witnesses and your evidence.

Mr Bent—Yes, I have.

CHAIR—I have to say that, as you appreciate, we are way behind time and so I would like to ask you now to speak to your submission and make the points that you really want the committee to go away with from what you have written to us. Thank you, Mr Bent.

Mr Bent—I do this under duress, but I feel it is a responsibility, not so much for me but for the other poor lads that I saw being horribly treated, especially in the classrooms, for no other reason than they were a bit slow to come up with the answers for arithmetic and spelling. The teaching methods were absolutely shocking, very crude and brutal -

CHAIR—Just for the record, Mr Bent, where are we talking about?

Mr Bent—I am talking Castledare and here in Clontarf, sorry.

CHAIR—Thank you. Can you tell us at what age you came there?

Mr Bent—I was a child migrant and I was shipped out to Australia in 1947 when I was six years old.

CHAIR—Thanks, Mr Bent.

Mr Bent—I was sent to Castledare boys home and that is where it all started. As I said, I got through reasonably well. I have a few psychological problems, unfortunately, but what I witnessed was a horrible thing. In the classroom, to see an adult come down a row of desks and belt every poor kid just because they did not know the answer to a question. The brutality was just a daily diet, and these were supposed to be Christian people. If they were government employees one would understand it, one would say, ‘They’ve gone off the rails,’ but Christian people: it was unacceptable.

I had a dog which died about two months ago and I thought, ‘I couldn’t have put my dog in their care,’ because in all the 12 years I had my dog I would have given him a smack about four times, for chasing cats, but for 12 years I never went out there and kicked him or belted him because he dug a hole. I would fill the hole in all the time and say, ‘I’ll end up burying you there,’ but I did not belt him. We were little kids brought from another country. I am glad I am in Australia now, despite what happened in those places, and I will always call Australia home, but it was so unnecessary and it was senseless. The sexual abuse was very prevalent and we were introduced to that, as a class, in grade 3 by a tall brother—I do not know if I am allowed to say names here. It was in public, in front of the whole class.

CHAIR—That is your decision, Mr Bent, but if you wish to name the brother the committee will take that on the record.

Mr Bent—He is dead now. It was a Brother Murphy, six foot tall and if you pampered to him, curried favour with him for sexual reasons, he left you alone, but the rest of us, we were just belted around. This is the environment that we were brought out to. Then we went from Castledare, which was a junior orphanage, to an orphanage down the road which was called Clontarf Boys Town. Everything was bigger but the brutality was the same there, so it was no boys town, and Father Flanagan—they were just cruel people and they should not have been in charge of children. They brought a lot of shame on their religion—the Christian Brothers I refer to—and they brought a lot of shame on Australia too, because the authorities just did not come in and say, ‘How are you going, lads?’ I recall voicing my complaints to a guidance officer and nothing was done about it.

CHAIR—When was that, Mr Bent?

Mr Bent—In about 1956, I think. I may have sent you a copy of the memo.

CHAIR—Just tell us a bit more about that, Mr Bent.

Mr Bent—It is a memo that was left in my file and it refers to half a dozen lads who had been taken for hospital treatment—I had a lot of ear trouble, discharge from my ear. We used to tell the guidance officer that we were being knocked around and, as you can see from the memo, it was just dismissed. State welfare, our guardian, just dismissed it; it never came out.

CHAIR—The memo reads, in part:

Brother Doyle also pointed out that the children are not reliable in what they say to Guidance Officers, in fact, they seem to make up between themselves various yarns that they will tell the Officer during the course of the interview.

Mr Bent—That is what I am referring to. We never had a hope.

CHAIR—Did you ever get any response from guidance officers who sounded sympathetic?

Mr Bent—No, I found Welfare in general to be quite indifferent. We were taken into the hospital and you had to walk back to the Welfare headquarters. They were quite indifferent, running around having cups of tea. We stayed there for two hours sometimes and then they drove us back to the orphanage.

CHAIR—How old were you then, Mr Bent?

Mr Bent—I would have been about 12.

CHAIR—Twelve, thank you.

Mr Bent—My final statement is that it was unnecessary, completely unnecessary, to create these conditions where hundreds of children were put into one place, and then to justify the existence of these huge institutions by taking children from another country and saying, ‘Oh, yes, but we’ll give them a good life.’ They did not give us a good life. We are lucky that Australia is such a great country, that we have had a good life within ourselves; we have got on, but they had no intention of giving us a good life. We were to justify their existence and many of the lads they preyed on for sex. Then when we were teenagers the master plan was, ‘Put them on farms, get rid of them.’ We just were not wanted. You could not go back; there was no after-care, you were on your own, and some of the lads ended up on the streets very early. That is about it.

CHAIR—Mr Bent, what would you want to say to the committee as the most important thing that we should recommend? What are your suggestions for where we go from here?

Mr Bent—I hope the committee brings down strong findings that these things did happen. There is no justification—varicose veins or heart attacks—no justification, and the committee should ask of the government to set up a fund where money could be put into a trust and anyone who needs help—financially, counselling or reunions—should have access to that trust. But the Australian government, I am sorry to say, is woeful; it is absolutely being very woeful on this issue. I may have mentioned in my submission that it has shown the same disregard for the child migrants as they have shown for their prisoners of war and as the Japanese have shown to the allied prisoners of war and the comfort women of the Second World War. The Australian government has been shocking. Australians have a lot to be proud of, but they have some things to be very, very ashamed of. I would like that to be my final say.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Bent.

Senator MURRAY—Mr Bent, in your submission you said:

In 1987 I was informed by the Perth Catholic Migrants Centre that I had a mother.

You talk about two women from the centre who I presume gave you that information. You then said:

They refused to give me the name and address of my mother.

What sort of person can tell you that you have a mother and refuse to give you the name and address, just 14 years ago?

Mr Bent—With due respect, I think that was an agreement that was reached, or those were the criteria and the practice of these agencies of the day—that is, the mother said that she did not want to have any contact and they would withhold the name and address.

Senator MURRAY—So you do not blame the women concerned?

Mr Bent—No, not really.

Senator MURRAY—Was it true that your mother did not want to know who you were?

Mr Bent—Unfortunately, yes, because when I did visit her several years later she still had a letter I had written that had been passed on to her through the agency, to be quite honest.

Senator MURRAY—So there were mothers who did not want their children?

Mr Bent—It is a terrible fact of life, but in hindsight and understanding the situation, the times of the day, unfortunately it was the case, yes.

Senator MURRAY—You found your sister and her twin brother, Jonathon; how did that go?

Mr Bent—Very well, they welcomed me with open arms, and my mother in the end too. But my sister and brother, they were the catalysts, yes.

Senator MURRAY—So in the end your mother was reconciled with you?

Mr Bent—Yes, absolutely, which turned out for the better.

Senator MURRAY—At whose initiative?

Mr Bent—I would say that the Child Migrants Trust played a very important part in the reconciliation.

Senator MURRAY—So it was a mutual thing between you and your mum and your brother and sister?

Mr Bent—That is right, yes.

Senator MURRAY—You mentioned that there were good times. Four nuns came from New Zealand, who you described as the ‘Sisters of Compassion’. You mentioned Brothers O’Shea and Doyle who were sadistic brutes, and I might say that that is well documented elsewhere—but you seemed to indicate that not all brothers were evil. My notes here have that Castledare

brothers McDonald and Kissane were kind; Moore, Murphy and McGee, who have also been mentioned elsewhere in this sense, were cruel and abusive men.

Mr Bent—Yes, but I would like to clarify that statement. There were a very few decent brothers but they had no effect on the overall situation. It is akin to saying there were a few very good and respected officers in the SS. The end result is the SS just murdered and tortured people, so the organisation at heart is corrupt. So I can say a few, but two apples in a barrel and the rest of the barrel was rotten.

Senator MURRAY—Was the problem one of leadership? Who was the brother in charge at your time in Castledare and then Clontarf?

Mr Bent—For a while, Brother McDonald, who at the time was having bouts of sickness. He lost superiority of Castledare and came back, but, unfortunately, he was always quite ill.

Senator MURRAY—They had no control over this abusive behaviour?

Mr Bent—No, because my memory is Brother Murphy seemed to be running the orphanage in a de facto manner—although he was not a superior, he was the one who was running the orphanage.

Senator MURRAY—And he was the chief sexual abuser as well?

Mr Bent—Absolutely, yes.

Senator MURRAY—Did all brothers know what was going on?

Mr Bent—I believe so, yes.

Senator MURRAY—And therefore the good and kind brothers concealed what was going on?

Mr Bent—Absolutely.

Senator MURRAY—That is your opinion?

Mr Bent—That is my opinion, because a brother could be smashing you up against a wall, which they sometimes did, that back wall, and another brother would walk past. That other brother would not intercede and say, ‘Hey, brother, you’re doing something pretty heavy there.’ It seemed to be an unbroken rule that they would not interfere with the punishment of another child. A child could be assaulted down from the wall to the ground and another brother would not intercede, never.

CHAIR—Mr Bent, I just noticed on the last page of your submission you say:

The present British government has at least accepted some moral responsibility for the past damaging of its predecessors.

You also point out that it has contributed some moneys towards the reunion of child migrants, airfares and so on. You also say:

The Christian Brothers a big beneficiary of child migration, it must be said have matched the British Government offer of finance for family reunions.

Have you had any of that money?

Mr Bent—Yes, I went back for a reunion because of a grant via the Christian Brothers, yes.

CHAIR—How did you make access to that? Did you contact the Christian Brothers or did you hear about this money through some other source?

Mr Bent—It was advertised quite widely in newspapers.

CHAIR—And you answered the advert?

Mr Bent—They set up an independent panel and it was advertised that this independent panel would do the paperwork and, although it was funded by the Christian Brothers, would give airfares and expenses for a reunion back in the country of origin.

CHAIR—Did you find any difficulty between getting assistance from the Christian Brothers and getting assistance from the Child Migrants Trust?

Mr Bent—No.

CHAIR—They seemed to work together, or was it separate—two different things?

Mr Bent—Could you repeat the question?

CHAIR—I am sorry, I am jumping, Mr Bent. Did you find any difficulty in getting assistance from the Christian Brothers and from the Child Migrants Trust?

Mr Bent—No, I did not see any conflict there, because the Christian Brothers were providing the finance; the Child Migrant Trust was providing the counselling. I did not see any conflict because I felt this was the responsibility of the Christian Brothers because we were brought out by them.

Senator KNOWLES—So you found C-BERSS was actually quite useful?

Mr Bent—To be quite honest, yes.

CHAIR—Are there any further questions, colleagues? Mr Bent, this committee is not going to be successful if people like you do not give us your written submission and come before us to talk to us, and we want to thank you extremely. As I say, we cannot get anywhere without the detailed stories from you. I would like to thank you very much indeed for appearing before the committee today.

Mr Bent—If I could just take you up on that point, the reason a lot of the adults now cannot come forward is they were not educated. They feel uneducated, they cannot express themselves, and this is a direct result of the teaching methods in these institutions. They were very crude, and it is just disgusting, and to see kids running around at six years old, knowing that they were so mistreated. Those poor buggers, they have no-one to talk to them and this is why I have made it my responsibility to try and say something.

CHAIR—That is even better, Mr Bent, because you said at the beginning that you really did not want to be here but you felt as though these words had to be put on the public record. In concluding, can I just say that one of the things we have to look at—and I think Senator Murray has referred to this—is how appropriately governments behaved. Certainly, we understand that the children were brought with the expectation that they would get an adequate education, and you are able to tell us, as other witnesses have, that the education was very, very insufficient.

Mr Bent—Absolutely. The classrooms at these institutions—Clontarf and Castledare, because I was there—were just bashing fields for the poor kids that could not do their arithmetic. Every day the whole class would be crying because they were belted with an assault weapon, a strap—someone got \$2 million for being assaulted just the other day but we were assaulted every day. I was not any good at education; I was backward.

CHAIR—What was that strap like?

Mr Bent—It was 15 to 18 inches long. I would say it was about half an inch thick, not just a little old belt; it was layered to a thickness of half an inch.

CHAIR—So it was like four or five belts stuck together, effectively?

Mr Bent—It was very pliable, but at the same time firm. When they hit you on the hands your hand swelled up all the time, and in the cold weather it was torture. Some of the brothers used to boast, ‘Oh, it’s a very cold, frosty morning today, I’ll have to aim for the tips of your fingers,’ and sure enough, if they got you on the fingers you could not do anything for half an hour; your hand just swelled up.

CHAIR—Mr Bent, after you left the institutions did you do some further education and study for yourself?

Mr Bent—No. I did try to go to technical school but I was unsuccessful. I spent most of my time on farms.

CHAIR—Mr Bent, I think those people who are not able to come before the committee would join me in thanking you for making the effort. Thank you very much.

Mr Bent—Thank you.

[3.19 p.m.]

O'DONOGHUE, Mr Michael (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr O'Donoghue. I note that Mr Rushbrook is staying on with you. I understand you have seen a copy of the Senate procedures for the protection of witnesses and their evidence.

Mr O'Donoghue—Yes. I also would like to give the committee further evidence and documentation showing facts, my own research of looking for my family over the years. It is not all here because I have sent some earlier material up to other organisations, including people who do searches. I also have written submissions in here, one made by a certain Christian Brother today who is claiming abuse. I also have a written submission here from a Mrs Lally, who had not seen me for over 40-something years, which will sustain the lies that were given to her in that period, in the year of 1953, Christmas 1953, the fact that they claimed that my name was given to me, that I was found on the streets of London, which was in fact a lie. This lady contacted an organisation, VOICES, and when I asked her could she send this written submission to VOICES, not to me, she agreed and it is in here. Could I give this to somebody, please?

CHAIR—To the secretary. Thank you very much, Mr O'Donoghue.

Mr O'Donoghue—There is also another written submission from 10 years ago on me and the abuses on me in Clontarf.

CHAIR—Mr O'Donoghue, I will invite you now to make some comments for the committee, whatever you would particularly like to highlight, and also any recommendations you think the Senate should know about.

Mr O'Donoghue—I would like to reiterate what Peter has said about Murphy; his comments go along the same line as mine: sexual abuse of children in front of the school, three at the time, one grooming the hair, one sitting on its knee while he masturbated them, and another also under his arms, which he took particular delight in in front of the whole class—there was no escaping that. I would like to also emphasise that Murphy also took children into his room during the evening and also took children out of the dormitory which I was in, and I can also emphasise some of the children and know some of the children that were taken into his room, and the ones that were considered as his favourites, or one particular lad who has yet to surface, to make a complaint, and does not want to surface because he just wants to forget it. I will say today that this lad would be by far, in the period between 1955 when Murphy came to Clontarf and when he left in disgrace in about 1957, probably his most abused child.

Since I have seen submissions come in from other children, over the *60 Minutes* program, claiming rape by this man, just one man, not counting all the others including Angus, Doyle, lay teacher Jackson—I was one of his victims—I have been surprised by the claims of these people. I did not know them, but yet I knew all these other victims. None have yet come forward. It shows you just how suppressed these children really have become. Lay teacher Jackson sexually abused me, Angus sexually abused me, Doyle has battered me senselessly, Cahill, within the

few weeks of the time in Clontarf, got to the point of bashing me into the ground, and kept bashing me while I was on the ground, because I wet my bed. Doyle, which I am not even going to use the 'Brother Doyle' because it is too sanitised for the man, is a man who says that children make up whatever they do.

Through the press Doyle has been asked questions, particularly about things like the wet bed machines, the electric shock machines, which were so called treatment for wet bed children. He first said that he did not know about the machines, he denied there were any, and when he was pressured and the build-up of evidence came forward he then said, 'Yes, there were, but the attachment was attached to the sheets.' This is a man who says not to trust the credibility of the victims or the children, this is the man who had attachments placed on your penis and when you wet into that machine while you were sleeping you had to get up fast, and there was no way in the world you were going to take that machine off; you have to first try to get that plaster off, or get somebody in there to do it, because the thing was still giving you a shock right from your body up. This is the barbarity of Clontarf.

But further than that, Doyle was randomly calling children into the privacy of his office. He was the most fearful man in Clontarf—even amongst some of the despots like Murphy and Angus and Miller and Higgins and Cahill, he was by far the most fearful. But what was he doing to these children when he got them in his office? He had this thing about getting children in and forcing them, with a fair amount of bashing, to say that they were doing sexual things with one another. What sort of a person was that? It did not matter whether the children were doing it or not, he was forcing them, and there was no way in the world you were going to get outside that office until you named kids. Have you heard of McCarthyism, guilty by association? It was not even safe to have a friend. This was Doyle, the man who said, 'Don't trust those children.'

But further than that, the only welfare officers that came into Clontarf at the time, which was probably about 1957, was when all the children were paraded up into the dining area, and the time the tables were full of this beautiful food, tablecloths. Doyle came through the door and said, 'We have a welfare officer and he wants to talk to you. When he comes in here you are to tell him you are all right and you are quite happy.' Two minutes later that welfare officer came through that dining room door and repeated the same questions for the answers we were told to give. That tells me, ladies and gentlemen, collaboration. So, where in the hell were the welfare officers? Where were they?

I have documentation in there and it shows 'Michael O'Donoghue enters Clontarf on 9 August 1953'. The next piece of documentation says that Michael O'Donoghue leaves and starts on one of these Catholic farms which Peter was talking about only recently. There is nothing in between, no personal thought between welfare officers, nothing whatsoever. I now have a fair idea why that officer came: because the stink was starting to leak out, the stink. Not only that, we come to a man we called Miller, who didn't teach in Clontarf but taught out, who used to shoot horses, the children's pets, down in the pig sty. At one stage he even shot one horse there in front of a group of kids and did not even shoot it properly and allowed the pigs into that yard to rip the thing to pieces while it was still alive, with an older boy trying to grab the rifle to put the horse out of its misery. What sort of a human being was that? What sort of a human being carried a stockwhip around on their shoulders and who would keep kids working and then give them an occasional licking with it for a little bit of fun?

Then we get to the other side of it, the brothers' boys, the ones who have come in and run all these work gangs. They had full authority from the Christian Brothers. In fact, O'Shea, who was in Clontarf at the time—another abusing person who had a wonderful habit of cracking kids across the scalp, or chastising children, putting signs around their neck saying, 'I'm a thief' or 'I'm a fish'; in other words, you wet your bed—said to us when we first got into Clontarf that no child was allowed to make a complaint of any other boy or any other person that was put in charge, other than the fact that he will be flogged. So where was the point where any child could come forward and complain?

Let's go back to Doyle, this one who seems to think that children are making up stories. He couldn't get across the quadrangle without battering into children; he could not get across the quadrangle without hitting some child. Not only that, he even stalked kids so that he could listen to their conversation. We were thinking, 'Where in the hell did he come from? How in the hell could a big 15-stone man sneak up on you?', but he could. So there was no way that you could even have a private conversation. Also, there was the reading of mail that came in. If you read that documentation, there is a lady in there that was trying to get me out of that institution and their continuous lies. She has told me about mail that should have been sent to me, none of it that I received. Let me tell you something more twisted about this man. He had something going about Protestants: 'Don't trust Protestants. You're not allowed to go out with Protestants,' and when some Protestant family wanted to get me out he denied my right to go out. He said, 'Are they Catholics?', and I said, 'No.' That gives you a fair idea of what sort of mentality he was.

I would suggest to you that Brother Doyle knew about the abuses in Clontarf. I would face him and tell him here today. On *60 Minutes* I outed him, deliberately named him—I did not say, 'Perceived', I said, 'Yes, he did it,'—for one reason: because we could not get him out of the woodwork. I wanted him to come back out and have a go at me legally so that I could bring him out. He did not even have the guts to do that, but he had all the guts in the world to beat the hell out of children—up on the stage every morning, up to a dozen children, flog the guts out. I have seen him flog into half a school one day in the assembly area. The boy who wrote an article that said that he never saw a child beaten or hurt or hit in Clontarf was the one who called the names of the children out, one after the other. He was there, a bloke by the name of Morris Whitfield.

Michael Dark goes on to call him, 'a gentle person.' It must have been that there were two Doyles. Maybe there is schizophrenia, I do not know, but we in Clontarf were totally fearful of this man. The special punishment days where he could walk up and down the hall and pull kids out, one after the other, beat them in front of the whole assembly. He injured children. He had children working under the spotlight late at night, coming in and out of the dark at night, whacking into them to work harder. In fact, one time when I raised my hand to run the blows off he even kicked me in the chest, lifted me up off the ground, which today I still suffer pain from. I have sustained head injuries from bashings in those institutions. You know, this would be all right, but what was my lot in England; what am I complaining about? My lot in England was just as bad, if not bloody worse.

CHAIR—Where was that, Mr O'Donoghue?

Mr O'Donoghue—Nazareth House, Sheffield Inn and Romsey Hampshire. It was worse and I actually ran away from that institution to get away from the abuse and to get away from the

bashings, the continuous bashing for wetting the bed. It never stopped. Today I am flabbergasted why somebody would not understand that if you are bashing a child continuously for wetting the bed and he will not stop then there must be something wrong, that obviously it is not working. It just never seemed to enter their head. 'These children are lazy,' said the welfare reports. All those welfare reports have no input by children, all by adults. As Peter has said about the farms they sent us out to, I had a friend up at Manjimup, dead before he was 21 years of age, found in the gutter, a bloke by the name of Graham Davidson. We worked on a farm at Mandurah, 18 hours a day, seven days a week, very little money, or no money at all, very little food.

This was the third job. The first job they put me in I wet the bed. Well, the bloke is running around chasing after his kids with a piece of wood, a nice Catholic home, and bashing into his wife. She took off and he said, 'She'll be back.' Nice homes. This is the placement, no money. I will let you have your say; you ask me some questions.

CHAIR—I do not want to stop you, Mr O'Donoghue, but I wanted to ask what you think are the best recommendations that this committee might make? In the light of the evidence that you and others are giving us, what are your strongest recommendations for how to proceed from here?

Mr O'Donoghue—Firstly, I would like to see the Child Migrants Trust obtain parity funding to the Aboriginal people, because we are looking at stolen children. I would like to see it in greater numbers because I think we have bigger problems of getting children because there is greater cost getting back. People like me are now touching 60. I do remember my mother, and I have been introduced to a sister who I spent about that much time with. I still remember the separation in that institution where they took all the girls away, did not matter the fact that they were sisters—one morning took them all away and said they were going off to Swansea. Who knows where they are today? I have been introduced to an aunt. I remember being with a family. I have 20 years of records and I have sent records down of earlier searches that go back into the seventies, and before I got married I was doing searches into the 1960s.

CHAIR—Have you had trouble getting any of the relevant documentation?

Mr O'Donoghue—It took me some time.

CHAIR—Did you do it by yourself or were you assisted by the trust?

Mr O'Donoghue—After about 20-something years it got too much for me and I put the trust onto it. The trust has had it for about 10 years and I have perfect confidence in these people who are doing it. They are up to the 1980s; I have sent the earlier ones to the solicitors.

Senator KNOWLES—Mr O'Donoghue, have you had much to do with C-BERSS?

Mr O'Donoghue—Yes, I have.

Senator KNOWLES—How have you found the service that they have offered?

Mr O'Donoghue—I found the service all right, but it took me a while to get to trust. I am dealing with an organisation that I had to know was impartial. I could never directly get involved with the Christian Brothers. In talking to some of the counsellors I am convinced that they are impartial. I have found the service reasonable but nowhere near as good for family searches as the Child Migrants Trust.

Senator KNOWLES—Is there a cross-communication of information between the Child Migrants Trust, C-BERSS and other organisations trying to do the tracing?

Mr O'Donoghue—C-BERSS are a nice organisation for handing out money, but they are totally impractical when it comes to helping children to find their family. I had an incident where they just gave me a list of names and said, 'Here you are; check these ones out.' What am I supposed to do, ring up people and say, 'Are you my mother?' Can you imagine the shock? Whereas the Child Migrants Trust do the searches and then go carefully as she goes without upsetting the would-be mothers, and they are skilled to do it. I would say at the present moment that I would put all my confidence into the Child Migrants Trust. C-BERSS can hand out all the money they like as far as travelling costs go but I do not have any confidence in them for doing research work or getting people back with their families. They are too clumsy.

Senator KNOWLES—Thank you.

Senator GIBBS—Mr O'Donoghue, you talk about these electric shock machines.

Mr O'Donoghue—That is right, yes.

Senator GIBBS—How long were they left on for?

Mr O'Donoghue—All night if necessary.

Senator GIBBS—All night, attached to your penis?

Mr O'Donoghue—All night, and I must add also that he used to get the kids up at night and if he found wet beds he would flog them also. So that was another one of Doyle's habits.

Senator GIBBS—So they were machines where an electric current was constantly going into your body?

Mr O'Donoghue—It would go when you ejected wee into it.

Senator GIBBS—Oh, I see. So if you wet the bed it would shock you?

Mr O'Donoghue—And keep shocking you until you got that damn thing off. Before you go, there is one very important thing I want you to look into. There are two reports that have been put out, and we are talking about credibility: us or them. There are two reports that were put out by a historian brother, Barry Coldrey. One was called, *The scheme of things*, in which he attempted to gloss over the abuse and trivialise it. He then also wrote a private report which was called *Reaping the whirlwind*, which was for the Christian Brothers' executive alone to be seen

and which talks of child sex rings in the vicinity of these institutions. He was talking basically about Bindoon, but the same Christian Brothers served in all those institutions, they wandered them around like that. They literally have shot themselves in the foot. You do not have to look any more, they have admitted it through those what's-a-names. Then, of course, when those reports came out, and the one that fell off the truck—and most parliamentarians would know about those—he said they then tried to discredit him, like they have done with the child migrants.

Let us go a little bit further. When these scandals did break out, from people like Gordon Grant, Geordie, and Bruce Blyth, they first denied that also. Then, when the evidence started building up, they started saying, 'Oh, well, it was perceived that English children were immoral, not like decent Australian children,' so then they tried to trivialise it. Doesn't that sound familiar to people: a typical abuser trying to dirty up the victim? Doesn't that sound similar? Eventually they were forced, on public TV, when we found that there were 28 paedophiles within those institutions, to apologise. But what did they do after? They put up all these huge legal barriers, employed the most expensive legal minds, they used all the statutory laws to block us. We could not even get through the door. It was like David and Goliath.

Senator MURRAY—Let me ask you a question about assault. You were—there is no other word for it—criminally assaulted. Those bashings do not constitute punishment; they constitute assault. Criminal assault is a crime. Did you at any time after you left the institutions think of going to the police and laying a charge or a complaint, now that you were an adult and could?

Mr O'Donoghue—I never ever knew how to complain. I sit here today and I find that amazing, but then I am reminded about a situation in the United States where there was a teacher who abused four generations of children in this primary school, an open school. Family after family kept sending their children, until into the third generation some kid screams out 'Foul'. What kept them quiet? What keeps people quiet?

Senator MURRAY—I presume you and the other kids met up after leaving the institutions. Did you ever discuss that and think you should have pursued it?

Mr O'Donoghue—I have been isolated from most of the children, up until the scandal broke in about 1988. Some of these boys I had not seen for 40 years plus.

Senator MURRAY—Was that by choice or by circumstance?

Mr O'Donoghue—Once it got going I wanted to be right into this; I wanted to be down here with my mates giving them a hand. I am not going to have anybody tell me that I am this and that and that I am immoral child; I will get into combat with them anytime.

Senator MURRAY—Let me ask you the question about criminal assault. If there were no limitations on you pursuing that at law, and if those who assaulted you were still alive, would you consider at this stage laying charges against them for those bashings and beatings?

Mr O'Donoghue—I have attempted to lay assault charges, and not just assault but sexual abuse charges, on one Killer Doyle. After the failure of trying to get Murphy into court, because they claimed dementia, the DPP said the same thing was going to happen in the case of Doyle,

so he said they were going to drop it. I pushed and pushed and pushed, because I was in Murphy's class, I was in his dormitory for a while before they put me onto the wet bed thing, and I saw what he was doing. But I was being continuously frustrated because I knew this man never sexually abused me. I could have easily said he did—I mean, there was enough stuff on the man as there was—but I did not. I only want the persons who damaged me. I was particularly annoyed because I could think of people like Doyle, and Angus is dead, and I could not do a thing about it. 'One at a time,' the person said to me. 'First Murphy and then Doyle,' and when the thing about Murphy failed, due to dementia or whatever they had claimed, they said they were no longer going to proceed with Doyle.

Senator MURRAY—You see, Mr O'Donoghue, just leaving the sexual side of it alone for a moment and dealing with criminal assault, every book I have read, most submissions I have read, all television documentaries et cetera, all indicate that that was regular systematic assault.

Mr O'Donoghue—It was.

Senator MURRAY—Now, in assault cases you struggle if it is one person's word against another, but what if you have a hundred now adults laying charges. What I find difficult to understand and what I am searching for is whether there was any sympathy or interest or response from the police whatsoever or whether no real attempt was made by the kids, once they were adults, to pursue these matters?

Mr O'Donoghue—Up until about 1988 there was no attempt by anybody to claim assault charges against the Christian Brothers. That is pretty well what you are asking. I might add that if you talk about being assaulted, I have been assaulted by Doyle and Foley where I was held down over a desk for over an hour and beaten and beaten and beaten. It only stopped when some of the kids came down and threw stones through the door to try and stop it.

CHAIR—Mr O'Donoghue, I am terribly sorry, I am going to have this shocking job all afternoon of saying to people that there is much more we could get if we had the time but we are terribly pressed for time. First of all I want to say, like I have said to others, that it is so important for this committee to actually have submissions and then for you to come and give evidence, so we thank you very much for that and also for the extra material you have provided to the committee.

Mr O'Donoghue—I particularly want to keep some because I was a bit worried particularly about sending that letter from somebody which is in trust. After use, I would like, if possible, to keep it private. The lady sent it with her own trust and I want it to be kept private and for you to return it when you are finished using it, if possible.

CHAIR—Can I be clear here, Mr O'Donoghue: do you want the whole folder back or just particularly the letter?

Mr O'Donoghue—After you are finished with it, send it back.

CHAIR—That is no trouble at all.

Senator MURRAY—Do you want the whole file to be in confidence?

Mr O'Donoghue—No, just that letter because it is a private letter. It is only just to corroborate the lies that are being told. Can I just emphasise that we do need funds to get the searches going, and we need a lot, and time is running out.

CHAIR—Indeed.

Mr O'Donoghue—It is very frustrating because we really need it, if not tomorrow or the next day then at least as soon as possible.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr O'Donoghue.

[3.48 p.m.]

TENNANT, Mr Brian (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Tennant. I understand that you have seen a copy of the Senate procedures and how it protects witnesses and their evidence.

Mr Tennant—I have, yes and, equally important, I have seen the terms of reference.

CHAIR—I understand you have not made a written submission but you wanted to take the opportunity to speak to the committee today.

Mr Tennant—Within my 10 minutes, yes.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Tennant, you are on.

Mr Tennant—The important part of what I have to say is in a file which you will all be getting, bar one—I will leave this for the one who does not have one, so you do not have to worry about it. A letter of mine was read in the Senate on 29 August 1989 by Senator Panizza, and I will read that letter only; I will not go through all the others. The most important part is that the letter is headed ‘Allegations of mistreatment and or child abuse must be put in perspective’. The letter in part reads:

My objective is not to discredit any of your correspondents—

And certainly not to discredit anyone who has spoken or is going to speak—

allegations of child abuse in many of the orphanages but to suggest some of the alleged abuses are open to interpretation, such as slave labour and child abuse, and to give a balanced view.

Just for the record, child migrants after the war came out in 1947, so I will try and just cover from 1947 to 1951 in Clontarf where the child migrants were because the other might not be relevant to the terms of reference, even though you might think so. So I will try and confine it to the terms of reference, because we are looking at the child migrants and that sort of thing. The letter continued:

At the age of one, I was declared a State ward and spent the next 15 years in three orphanages: St Joseph’s Orphanage, Castledare Boy’s Home and Clontarf Boys Town.

During my experiences at Clontarf Boy’s Town I was required to work Saturdays, after school and during the holidays, either in the stock yard or in the kitchen. It was hard work. Looking back my interpretation of such work was simply a contribution to ones up-keep. I was also given the strap (referred to as ‘corporal punishment’) mainly in school for not doing my homework and for obtaining low marks. I don’t believe this helped me in any way—

in fact, it was a bloody nuisance—

but in those days corporal punishment was the norm in orphanages, colleges and public schools.

In September 1988, over 250 former child migrants and their families from the Christian Brothers Agricultural School Tardun, gathered in Geraldton to celebrate fifty years that have apparently brought more migrant joy than misery.

At Castledare in February 1989, several hundred ex-pupils from Clontarf, Castledare, Bindoon and Tardun, gathered with their families to pay tribute to two former teachers in recognition of 50 years of 'unpaid service' in the Order of the Christian Brothers for the underprivileged children—

of course, it is now over 60 years—

I feel indebted—

and this is me; it is no reflection against anyone else—

to both the good sisters—

and I mean the good sisters, not the bad ones—

and the brothers—

not the bad ones—

for doing the best they could with such limited resources.

I notice that in the file you have—and I will only mention the file—happy memories outweigh the bad; that is, the *West Australian*, Saturday, 13 November 1983, and I will not read those. There is also the *West Australian*, Saturday, 18 June 1994, 'Happy memories of life with Brothers' by a Gabriel Morrow. What I am saying there is that, reading that, my experiences equate with his. But also, more importantly, I note what Julian Grill said in a two-page letter and note the last paragraph of page one where it says:

I must say that I am also suspicious that a lot of the recent activity has been motivated mainly by a perceived opportunity for monetary enrichment. I had one aggrieved party who was a former student at the Christian Brothers institution who came into my office a couple of weeks ago.

This letter, by the way, is dated 10 September 1998. It continues:

He was prepared to forego his right to a million dollars compensation as long as I was able to obtain a new car for him. He blamed his two broken marriages and the alienation of his children on his period in the institution but takes no responsibility for his current plight himself. He doesn't allege any particular ill-treatment beyond the normal corporal punishment that was handed out in such schools. On the other hand I had a friend in Esperance who went through the process, accepted responsibility for his own life and has made a very good fist of it.

That is no attack on people speaking about what they saw or what they experienced. I am not having a go at anyone at all; I am not saying these things did not happen. In this document you will see, on paper No. 6, letters explaining the reasons why the DPP did not proceed, and my letter underneath. But, more importantly, with respect to our justice system in Australia, on page 7 it says, 'Judge slates police as cleric cleared.' That was in a Northern Territory Supreme Court, and it gives you an idea of the standard of policing and criminal investigation, which is nil, and the administration of criminal law, which allows people to be brought up before the courts with no corroborating evidence whatsoever against the brother—in fact, he still is.. It reads, 'Judge slates police as cleric cleared,' and it is from the *Weekend Australian* of 14 and 15 October 1995, page 5.

As one speaker—I think it may have been the last one—said, so be careful about the evidence you hear. I was at Castledare and one of the brothers had me up at his desk often because I was

very slow at school. He would put his arms around me, whether it be simple arithmetic where I was getting a sum wrong, or spelling wrong or whatever, and he would put me right. Someone in the classroom could very well have mistaken that as putting his hands down his pants, or whatever. If someone says to you, 'Brian Tennant was abused by Brother Smith putting his hands down and feeling his whatever,' by all means take note of what they say but, more importantly, it is best to put more weight behind the horse's mouth when it speaks. That is what the last speaker said. He said, 'It's a pity that there aren't enough people who were really sexually or physically abused coming before the committee,' and he is right.

I agree with him that a lot of people simply cannot write. I was one of those who when I left Clontarf had great difficulty in writing. I did not do any good at school: I never passed a class. I even tried to join the Army three times to get back into the institutional life but I failed the aptitude test. My social law reform work really started around the mid-fifties when I got permission from the colonel in charge of recruiting to have a third go at trying to join the Army so that I could chase that institutional life. Of course, I failed, but what I did say to the colonel was, 'Could you put the aptitude test first, before the medical test, and in that way you'll save stress and save hundreds of thousands of dollars.' He did that, and there was a little report in the paper where the procedure was changed because seven out of 10 were failing their aptitude test whereas only one out of 10 would fail their medical. That was my first social reform, and I was quite pleased about it.

So I was trying to chase my past. I was 15 years and four months in those places and I enjoyed myself—I liked the good brothers; I liked the good sisters. What I would like to say to you, senators, is that I regard the brothers and sisters as my foster parents—particularly the good ones, by the way—but when you attack, rightfully or wrongfully, one of those brothers or sisters for their bastardisation, or alleged bastardisation, it hurts me. It is just like your own family: if one of your family is justifiably or unjustifiably charged and plastered in the newspapers it hurts you equally. I am the same and so every time I read about a Christian Brother being charged or a priest being charged it hurts Brian Tennant, because I regard them as my foster parents and I love them very much. On the other hand, I also loved my schoolmates and that sort of thing.

To me, you will read the good times and there were more good times than bad times. My mother took me home for one Christmas Day and I said, 'Mum, I really appreciate you bringing me home, but you've given me a water pistol and a double bed to play on. I want to be with my mates for future Christmases.' I am speaking for Brian Tennant now; I am not speaking for the others. They are entitled to say what they experienced, but -

CHAIR—Mr Tennant, where was your mother? Is she in Western Australia?

Mr Tennant—Yes, I am an Australian; I was born in King Edward Memorial Hospital. My mother was in and out of Heathcote and so she was unable to look after me, even if she had child support. She had a very hard childhood, harder than we could imagine. She did come to see me regularly, so regularly that I was a bit selfish. We lived in togs, with the river there and that sort of thing. Of course, when you had parents visiting it went over the mike and you had to have a shower, get your clothes on and sit on a hard stool and wait until five o'clock, until the bus came and took them back. I asked my mum to come less frequent. In hindsight, I did the wrong thing, because now I realise I was all she had, if you know what I mean.

But my point is I can see one of the brothers named for brutality, and the last speaker was good; he confessed and said, 'I could have said he was guilty of child sex abuse to me but he didn't,'—and I do confirm that that particular brother, and I won't mention names, he was fearsome. But in regard to child sexual abuse, in my 15 years and four months I did not see anything. But the chief paedophile who was named who died last year—obviously I wasn't a good-looking one so I wasn't entertained in any way—but I did see one brother who has been named have kids in his room. You can only draw inferences from that so I will not entertain that. Nothing may have happened, I do not know. All Brian Tennant is saying is that in my 15 years and four months, a lot of my Australian mates from Clontarf, Castledare and the Family Home and I did not see any sexual abuse, even though when we had the reunions I was saying to people, black and white, 'Nothing like that happened,' but when I went to the reunions things happened, not so much the staff but boys' boys, like big boys, would bully little boys and there was that sort of, if you can call it, rape, but I never believed it happened but, you know, that sort of thing.

CHAIR—Mr Tennant, I think we are indebted to you, because it is important that we do get a balance and a different story from different people. We are hard-pressed for time this afternoon, and I hate having to keep reminding you of that again and again. I think the point that you make, that your story would be this and you wanted the opportunity to say it, does not in any way discredit the stories of anybody else.

Mr Tennant—It does not discredit or say the others are liars or anything. I do concede that there was a strap-happy one, and he has been named, and I am satisfied about the one who passed away. But, as I say, to me and my Australian friends there were pluses and minuses. By the way, if you ran away you were brought up before the assembly after the evening meal and you got six on the hindquarters. That was the punishment for absconders. At one stage they had their hair cut with a brush, but then child welfare stepped in and said, 'Cut that part out.' So child welfare were quite aware of what was happening and they -

CHAIR—When did child welfare come that you knew of, Mr Tennant?

Mr Tennant—In my experience, unlike the last speaker, welfare did come periodically. They came into the classrooms and we all stood up and said, 'Good morning, sir,' and that sort of thing, and they did ask us how we were.

CHAIR—What can you tell us to help us understand what you mean when you said that welfare stopped them cutting the hair like that?

Mr Tennant—I am giving you a copy of *The Scheme*. *The Scheme* is a documentary document that has official archives correspondence between the state government child welfare department and the Christian Brothers. In there you will see correspondence which verifies what I have said. It is a historic document and there is a bit of balance of some guys saying how good it was and others saying how bad it was, that sort of thing. I do not condemn any one of the former speakers or those who may go along the same line. I encourage them to do so: if they were abused, they are entitled to be heard.

CHAIR—Thank you very much indeed, Mr Tennant.

[4.02 p.m.]

BLYTH, Mr Bruce Amos (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Blyth. I understand that you have seen a copy of the Senate procedures for the protection of witnesses and their evidence.

Mr Blyth—Yes, I have.

CHAIR—Would you now care to speak to your submission and then we will take it from there.

Mr Blyth—I did not really mean to talk to the submission which I have already submitted.

CHAIR—Then you tell us what you would like to.

Mr Blyth—There are two other issues which I would like to bring up which I think are important, and they are a little bit different to the evidence that you have heard before. I must say at this point that I am not a child migrant and I have had no personal experience of what happened, but for 10 years I was director of VOICES. There were 300 survivors of the Christian Brothers orphanages involved in that organisation and I was the director of that organisation so I have been heavily involved in this for 10 years and I have known most of the people involved.

The first issue that I would like to raise, and that I would like the committee, if possible, to take some action on, is to do something about the statute of limitations as it applies in Western Australia. Two hundred men belonging to VOICES took their case to the Supreme Court in New South Wales in 1994, and they took it to New South Wales because they knew that under the Western Australia statute their case could never ever be heard in Western Australia.

CHAIR—What is the statute time in WA, Mr Blyth?

Mr Blyth—The statute time is the same as everywhere else, six years, but in every other state—and in most other places around the world actually—that statute can be set aside if, in the opinion of the court or the judge, by not setting it aside justice will not be served. We took the case to the Supreme Court in New South Wales, and the Christian Brothers fought—and they had about two QCs and a terrific lot of money behind them—to get the case sent back to Western Australia, knowing very well that if it was sent back to Western Australia it would never be heard. The judge, Mr Justice Levine, ruled against the Christian Brothers. His words were that if the case was sent back our case would be, and I quote, ‘dead in the water’ and that the complainants ‘forever could well be deprived even of the chance to seek a remedy. They could well be shut out.’ We thought that we had won a great victory, that the case would be heard in New South Wales.

Incidentally, the reason for it being held in New South Wales was that the headquarters of the Christian Brothers at the time the offences were committed was in New South Wales, and the orphanages in Western Australia were ruled from the brothers’ headquarters in the eastern states. So there was a valid reason to go to New South Wales to get justice. He ruled that it should be heard in New South Wales, but the Christian Brothers appealed. The appeal was

upheld by the appeals court. The case was sent back to Western Australia and, of course, that was it. It never even got off the ground because of the inflexible statute in Western Australia which meant that it could not be heard. It meant that those men were pressured to accept a settlement with the Christian Brothers, and many of those 200 got \$4,000 for years of the sort of treatments that you have heard about, the sexual abuse and all the other abuse they suffered. The most any of them got was \$25,000—I think there were about 30 who got \$25,000, and they were the ones who were considered to have been raped and brutally assaulted, the worst cases.

I believe that this statute needs to be changed in Western Australia so that it is flexible. In 1977, the WA Law Reform Commission said in its report:

Thus while the limitation legislation of Western Australia remains rooted in the 19th Century, over the last 50 years most other common law jurisdictions have adopted modern reforms and compared with these jurisdictions Western Australia is not one step but two steps behind.

In 1982, they said:

The limitation period for all personal injury be six years—

That is what they recommended—

...but that this period not apply where the court determines that it is just that it not apply.

In 1995, the European Commission of Human Rights ruled that time limits barring victims of sexual abuse violated human rights, and the Supreme Court of Canada had already ruled that there were no limitations in cases of sexual abuse. In 1995, a Victorian judge ruled in favour of a 35-year-old man who claimed he had been sexually assaulted by his school principal between 1969 and 1971. So Western Australia is on its own in having this inflexible statute, and it is a bar to getting justice, not just for the people who we are involved with but for lots and lots of people. The spectacular case revealed yesterday in New South Wales could not have happened in Western Australia because that was 15 years old. So I urge the committee to have a look at the statute of limitations in Western Australia.

I suppose it is only the Western Australian government that can change it, but I am sure the committee, especially perhaps with the change of government, would be able to put some—I do not know if ‘pressure’ is the right word—but give them some advice or something in that regard. I do believe that that is very, very important. These men we represented have been denied justice. They were forced to accept a very, very paltry figure—a man gets \$2.5 million for an injury to his hand; some of these men had 10 years of the most vile, violent abuse inflicted on them and they walk out with \$4,000—and that is because of this statute of limitations.

The other matter I would like to raise with the committee—and I believe this is important, although it may not appear to be at first—is how many child migrant orphans were actually involved.

CHAIR—Involved in what, Mr Blyth?

Mr Blyth—I am sorry?

CHAIR—You asked, ‘How many child migrant orphans were actually involved.’ I am asking whether you mean how many migrants altogether or—

Mr Blyth—No, child migrants from England.

CHAIR—How many came from England.

Mr Blyth—Yes, came from England. The generally accepted number that is touted around the place is 10,000—it just runs off the tongue nicely, 10,000. The House of Commons Health Committee said in its report:

The exact number of child migrants to Australia and New Zealand is not known, but it is thought that during the final period in which the migration policy operated, from 1947 to 1967, between 7,000 and 10,000 children were sent to Australia.

The Forde inquiry in Queensland said the same thing: that ‘between 1947 to 1967 between 7,000 and 10,000 orphaned children were sent from the United Kingdom to Australia’. But that figure is so much higher than the actual fact that it puts off governments or anybody else—10,000 is a huge number and if you are going to help 10,000 people that involves a lot of money, a lot of resources, and so on.

In actual fact, the number of child migrants who came to Western Australia from 1947 until 1955, and this is on the record, was 2,324. By 1955 the numbers had dried up, and there were very few migrants coming after that. So it is quite impossible for there another 7,000 migrants to have come between 1955 and 1967 when it ended. Those figures come—and they are quite specific—from the Ross report, a British government report, a fact finding mission of 1956. Ross was sent out to Australia from Britain to investigate the child migrants, how they were going. I can hand these figures to the committee if that is more convenient but, to give you an idea, they were placed in 38 institutions, small numbers in each institution. For example, there were 46 children placed in Neerkol and 48 in Goodwood; 450 of these boys were placed in the brothers’ orphanages in Western Australia.

I only raise this matter because I think it is very important that the truth is established. I think it may not be important compared with the abuse that went on and that side of it, but I think if we are going to have an inquiry it is very, very important that the facts that are available are correct. When you say 10,000, that is a huge number and people are claiming funds to help 10,000 when actually there were only 3,000—funds have been distributed for helping 10,000 when there were in fact only 3,000. Now, those figures are available; they are there, and they can be seen. I do not know if this matter has ever been raised in front of a committee before but I do believe that it is important.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Blyth. Indeed, I think that is very important, but my understanding is that there has been some difficulty in getting an agreement of what exactly the figures were. Some people put the 10,000 figure to cover migration over a longer period, a more comprehensive figure of perhaps the 20th century migration—again, that is a qualification I have put on that too—and some other people give us figures on Western Australia as apart from all of Australia. But you raise a very important point and certainly the committee is appreciative of your efforts to try and make us focus on a more accurate number of cases that came here. Are there any questions, colleagues?

Senator MURRAY—Mr Blyth, I have read your book, *In the Shadow of the Cross*, and therefore I know about your organisation, VOICES. If I may say so, this is a well researched submission and it is of particular interest in view of the first hearing we had in Canberra where the Commonwealth department essentially denied or seemed not to know how much they did know at that time. I thank you for the research you have provided, which will help us question them more closely.

We are short of time and your submission stands on its own so I do not need to go a great deal into that, but there is one somewhat sensational aspect which I want to briefly explore. In the confidential hearing this morning and part of this afternoon one of the witnesses did say that they were the victim of an attempted murder situation by a brother. In your 'Deaths of Migrant Children' section, pages 20 and 21, you indicate that there were five deaths of children in your records, and I will read them briefly: the first was 1943, fractured skull; Tardun; the second, 1949, fractured skull, Tardun; the third, 1956, peritonitis and intra-abdominal abscess, Tardun; the fourth, 1957, Bindoon, fractured skull; and the fifth, 1958, Bindoon, fractured skull.

You heard me earlier questioning about criminal assault. My knowledge of the consequence of being bashed against walls with your head, or bashed against the floor with your head, or being thrown off a balcony and landing on your head, or any of the other allegations that have been before us, is that those could in the end result in a fractured skull. Now, murder is an intentional act; manslaughter is not, so we might be talking about manslaughter here. I understand from your submission that none of those deaths were subject to coronial inquiry and therefore the details of all those deaths came from the brothers themselves, or perhaps from the police as well: a motor truck at the school—who knows; fell from a balcony; a spring cart got out of control. I mean, you can draw conclusions. What I am asking you is: in view of the fact that your organisation interviewed substantial numbers of migrants at length about their experiences, has anyone ever made the allegation that these deaths were a consequence of the way in which they were dealt with in the institutions concerned? Were they a consequence of assault?

Mr Blyth—Yes, I am quite sure they were. It was a topic that was discussed very, very often over the eight or 10 year period that we were working. We wrote several articles on it in our newsletter—we published a newsletter every quarter. It was a topic that came up quite frequently. We wrote to one of the Western Australian government ministers—I forget which one now but I think it was Mrs Edwardes when she was Attorney-General—specifically asking if there had been inquests into these deaths. We were told, no, there had not been. You have caught me on the hop a bit, I am afraid, but I think there might have been one inquest. The rest were just accepted as accidents, were written up as accidents, and that was it.

CHAIR—I beg your pardon, Senator Murray, but I just wanted to respond to this by saying that I thought a death by accident was a cause for a coronial inquiry?

Mr Blyth—Yes.

CHAIR—So you are saying these were called accidents but no coronial inquiry followed?

Mr Blyth—Yes, I think so. Anyway, certainly no inquests were held.

CHAIR—I am sorry, I should not have intruded.

Mr Blyth—You have caught me on the hop on this particular one and I could not actually say if they were all termed as accidents but I am sure some of them were. There was certainly no inquest into them anyway. We did raise the matter with the government and they told us that no inquest had been held.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Blyth.

Senator MURRAY—The point I am leading to, Mr Blyth, is that the statute of limitations has been regarded as a barrier or an impediment to the proper pursuit of sexual abuse instances, and perhaps criminal assault instances. As far as I am aware, Western Australian law does not have a statute of limitation on manslaughter or murder and the options here would seem to me to be either for police to open these cases again, if there was sufficient evidence—and I am not saying there is because I just do not know—or to ask for a coronial inquest, even though it is at this stage. Would there be any merit or purpose of reason for the committee to look further into that aspect?

Mr Blyth—Yes, I would like to see the committee do that. The point is that we were more concerned with what was happening at the moment and we tried and we tried and we tried to get the police and the Director of Public Prosecutions to prosecute people, the Murphys and the Doyles and all the people that you have been hearing about. We tried and tried to get them to prosecute and they just point-blank refused. They were prosecuting people who were not Christian Brothers—there was a case at the time that we were trying to get Murphy prosecuted of an 87-year-old man who had abused his daughters. We knew his daughters; they were then in their forties or fifties and they came to us and told us about it. The DPP prosecuted that man at 87 years old. He was sent to jail for the rest of his life—I think it was 10 years or something; I forget now the exact figure. He was sent to jail, but when it came to Murphy, he was too old, and this was almost in the same month.

The man in charge of the child abuse unit at the time was a Sergeant Paul Fough and he was a wonderful man. We were getting evidence against Murphy and I took 16 men to the child abuse unit in Newcastle Street. I took them one at a time over a period of a couple of months. I would discuss the matter with Sergeant Fough over the phone, we would make the appointments. Now, for some of these men to enter a police station, as you will understand, was a very difficult situation, but then to ask them to sit down and to make sometimes a two-hour statement about the dreadful things that had happened to them, how they were sexually abused in the most vile manner: that needed tremendous courage.

I took some of these men up there; we would go into the station. Sergeant Fough would ask us both into his office, he would sit us down, give us a cup of tea and a biscuit. He would have a chat about the weather and the football and he would put this man at ease and then he would bring in the officer who was to take the man's statement and then we would sit down and talk for another five minutes. I would then go off back to my office in Perth, and two hours, three hours later, without exception, the man involved on that day would come straight back into my office in Perth and they would be over the moon about what a wonderful reception they had had, how wonderful Sergeant Fough had been and how well they had done—

CHAIR—Mr Blyth, I am so sorry, we are absolutely running out of time. Can I ask you to conclude this point.

Mr Blyth—Yes. What I am really trying to say is that I am not blaming individuals in the police force, because Sergeant Fough really tried. The point of this story is that Sergeant Fough was transferred out of the child abuse unit, never to be heard of again. We were told, in a letter from the Minister for Police, and also from the DPP in another letter, that Mr Murphy would not be brought over from South Australia to be charged.

CHAIR—Do you have copies of those letters?

Mr Blyth—Yes. I could not find them by tomorrow but—

CHAIR—If you were able to find those letters, or anything further in terms of the statements that were made to Mr Fough or your notes about a consequence of those hearings, that would be very useful for the committee to have. I hate having to wind this up, Mr Blyth, but we have a deadline to be out of this room, so, with the greatest regret, I do have to cut across what you are saying. I would like to say that this is an extremely useful submission. It has, I think, material that the committee needs to consider and it may even be that we want to get back to you for further questions. If you have copies of those letters or, as I say, any notes that might assist the committee with the very powerful point you are making, we would very much appreciate it. You do not have to get it for us tomorrow, Mr Blyth. If you cannot find it, of course we understand, but if you could that would be very useful indeed. I thank you very much for your time.

Senator TCHEN—Can I ask Mr Blyth a quick question? Did children in those institutions who were Australian born report the same sort of treatments?

Mr Blyth—Yes. We are out of time, but this is another sore point: the Australians feel left out by this committee. In the four institutions we were involved in, 4,000 boys went through those institutions between 1901 and 1967. Of those 4,000, only 850 of them were migrants, and 250 of those were Maltese migrants—and that is another group which is being ignored and left out of all of this. So a lot of the Australians feel very aggrieved that they are not included, but I am sure you have heard that.

CHAIR—We have had submissions on that point, Mr Blyth, and it is a very powerful point. I think it has already been emerging as an important point for our committee. I am very sorry for my colleagues, we have many questions we would like to put to you, and also to you who have done so much work, but we have to be brief in our time today. Thank you very much indeed. I would like to suggest, too, that the department of immigration might like to read this very closely because in answer to questions not too long ago they were not able to assist us with the information that your submission has. It might help the department in looking for further information. Thank you, Mr Blyth.

[4.31 p.m.]

McCLOAT, Mr Brendan (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr McCloat. I understand that you have seen a copy of the Senate procedures for the protection of witnesses and their evidence?

Mr McCloat—I have, yes.

CHAIR—Would you like to make your comments for the committee, and, again, I do apologise because of our time constraints.

Mr McCloat—Thank you, Senator. I do intend being brief. You have read my story so there is no need for me to repeat the abuse that I suffered. I was fortunate enough not to be scarred by it, because I was also abused after I left Clontarf on a couple of occasions whilst at work and by another person. But this is, I think, not part of my story. I feel that addressing the recommendations is where I want to aim at.

No amount of justice given can compensate for the suffering that many of these people suffered. My first point is that I did recommend in my recommendations a financial compensation for the migrants who were abused and, indeed, for that matter, for the Australians in these institutions who were abused also, not forgetting them—and for that matter the ladies, the girls who were brought over too, because there is a whole ambit of people involved. I have paid to the taxation department over the past 21 years over \$91,000 of hard earned money as part of my wages. What I am saying here is that over my 36-odd years of employment I have paid more than \$200,000 so, if you might pardon my saying so, in my era Robert Gordon Menzies made a good investment in sending us to Australia. He only spent a few quid sending us out but he got a lot of money back for it. I think a refund there would be handy.

CHAIR—A very well made point.

Mr McCloat—I do feel that people suffered. Like I said, I was abused once. I was lucky, I walked away from it. The effect was not severe because he just touched my genitals and I just shoved him away. A lot of people were not abused; a lot of kids went through the school in the normal way. The education I received I considered to be reasonable. I would have liked to have gone further—I did later on my own behalf by attending night school and did eventually achieve my leaving certificate.

I got off the point, which was about the financial side. I do feel that a monetary compensation should be paid, and I would consider it should be substantial. Far be it from me to put a figure on it, but I would be very disappointed if it was anything under \$40,000. The problem is, of course, 1,000 migrants at \$40,000 each is a lot of money. Then again, a lot of them are dead so there will be a bit of saving there.

The second point is that I remember a few years ago the state government held an inquiry into child migration. What happened, I think, was an election occurred and as a result this inquiry—I hope people can bear me out; I do not know if I am speaking right here—died in the water, as it

were. Because of the state election new members were brought in and that particular inquiry died. I do not know about government procedures but will this happen with this inquiry if Mr Howard calls an election some time in the next year and this committee does not complete its task? Will this committee lapse?

CHAIR—No, this is a standing committee of the federal parliament; it is a standing committee of the Senate. The Senate will continue, unless there is a double dissolution, until 13 June 2002 and this report will be completed by May this year, or very close to that. The other thing to assure you is that, even if there is an election, this is a term of reference before a standing committee and when a new government is in place and a new committee established the inquiry would continue if it had not been completed.

Mr McCloat—Thank you for that, because I was frightened that the same thing might happen as happened with the Western Australian inquiry. Other than that, I have no more really to say, except that I do believe the point that I wanted to raise was that there should be a financial reimbursement for all the taxes that the young lads have paid and the various governments, whatever type, invested in these child migrants. Thank you.

CHAIR—Mr McCloat, brevity is the soul of wit: that was a very witty contribution. We will leave it there, mainly because of the pressure of time. I thank you very much. We have read your submission, and you have made the points in the recommendation with considerable punch, and I like that point about the investment, that the government has got far more back than it put out to get you here—as you say, putting a wall around the pain and suffering loss et cetera. Thank you very much, indeed, Mr McCloat.

[4.38 p.m.]

MONAGHAN, Mr Patrick (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Monaghan. You have seen the advice on the protection of witnesses and their contributions?

Mr Monaghan—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Monaghan. I note for the record that Mr Rushbrook from the Child Migrants Trust is accompanying you. You are also aware of our time constraints so I would ask you to go directly to making some comments for us.

Mr Monaghan—I spent 16½ years in an orphanage, 10 years in Ireland and 6½ years in Australia. I was at Tardun and Clontarf. In Clontarf in 1949 the brothers were very cruel to the boys. One instance was that the Pommie kids, as we used to call them, painted some tyres and the brothers saw the tyres painted and ran amok. They waited until all the kids got under the shower, about 12 kids under the shower at a time, and these two big brothers just grabbed them by the arms and pulled them out and belted them, every part of their body, with their straps. The kids were screaming and yelling, and then they finished up having their showers. The brothers who did that were Doyle and O'Doherty. I am a bit nervous. I was also in trouble. Another time, Brother Doyle caught me after dinner—

CHAIR—Just take your time; we are happy to wait while you draw breath.

Mr Monaghan—Another time, Brother Doyle caught me. My friends had some bantams, two of my friends, and I did not have a share in the bantams. After lunch one day I was in the bantam cage and Brother Doyle came along and caught me in there. He gave me a kick up the backside and said, 'On Saturday, you will bring that bantam down and chop its head off in front of the clock tower.' When I told my friends they were not too happy—it was their bantam. On Saturday, after lunch, in front of the clock tower, in front of all the boys, they had their chopping block, the axe; the bantam was brought forward. I broke down and cried and they let the bantam go.

Another time, I had some spots on my jumper in Brother Doyle's classroom and Brother Doyle beat me across the head about 12 times with the strap and then told me to go out and clean myself up. As I was walking out I muttered under my breath, 'You fucking bastard,' and one of the other brothers either read my lips or heard me. He took me back into the classroom by the ear and told Brother Doyle what I had said. He did not use the strap; he used his fists and his boots. He picked me up and threw me from desk to desk. 'Insulting my parents, insulting my parents.' I just said, 'I've never met your parents. I don't know who they are. I never insulted them. How could I insult somebody I never met?' But I got two black eyes, was belted and bruised. He told me to go and clean myself. The next time I walked straight to the gates, heading to Royal Perth Hospital; I did not know where I was. I asked some old fellow on a pushbike, 'Where's Royal Perth Hospital?' and he took me home and put me to bed and gave me a feed and rang up the priests and they came and got me and took me back to Clontarf.

Another brother in Castledare whacked me over the head with a broom. He said, 'Go to work.' I said, 'I haven't had any breakfast.' He said, 'You're not having any breakfast.' He chased me across the paddock near Castledare with a piece of three by two. He caught me as I got through the fence and broke the piece of three by two on me. There were people building houses across the road who saw this. They rang up the child welfare department. The child welfare department came and got me the next day, and I have a document that says that I came in with an inch and a half split on my scalp. They asked me if this happened all the time. I said, 'It happens all the time,' and they just said they could not prosecute the brothers. They said, 'We couldn't take the brothers to court.' They knew that the children were getting beaten but were not prepared to do anything about it.

CHAIR—Can you tell the committee about when that was or whether there is a record of that?

Mr Monaghan—I have a thing on my child welfare report that I got a few years ago, and it says I came in with an inch and a half laceration on my scalp, in 1953 when I was 16.

CHAIR—But it does not say, 'We are unable to prosecute the Christian Brothers'?

Mr Monaghan—I do not know. No, he said it verbally.

CHAIR—Yes, but it is not written down?

Mr Monaghan—No, he did not write it down—they wouldn't be that silly, would they?

CHAIR—We live in hope.

Mr Monaghan—Even when I had to come before this committee to give evidence, every now and again they chase me around the bedroom in my dreams. I get belted all the time and I wake up and I think, 'Oh my god, I'm still here.' So when I get under pressure it comes back to me quite a bit.

CHAIR—I sincerely hope when you leave you will not find we have been a cause for further nightmares.

Mr Monaghan—No. In my submission I said that I was at Tardun for the last 2½ years working on the farm. They had 63,000 acres, 10,000 sheep, and the kids used to have to put the crop in and take it out. One time we went about 20 mile and we ran into the bush to chase the emus out of the crop. When I came out, the truck was gone with all the other working boys on it—the brother that drove the truck, he did not like me one bit. Anyhow, I got to a farm and I got a lift back to Tardun. I went to the pictures and the next morning down in the tractor shed this brother said, 'Did you go to the pictures last night?' I said, 'Yes.' So he got the big belt and belted the living daylight out of me. I said, 'You didn't tell me not to go to the pictures.' He said, 'You miss every picture show from now on.' So the last 18 months I never went to one picture show; I went to bed, every time there was a picture show on. That is the way it was: punish me for something I did not even do.

CHAIR—Have you subsequently made contact with your family?

Mr Monaghan—I have not found my family. I first tried in 1965 and the Child Migrants Trust have been trying for the last 11 years. I have been to Ireland twice. I went last year to Ireland and I went to the hospital I was born in and I said to the man at the hospital, ‘I want to see the original records.’ He said, ‘I’m not going to show you anything.’ I had some documents that I got from people here and I went to the car and I got them and I took them in. He read the documents and he wanted to photostat them. I said, ‘Go to buggery’. He told me I had double standards. I said, ‘Excuse me, sir; you’ve got stuff you’ve had on me for 62 years and you want to photostat other people’s stuff without their permission, and I’m the one with the double standards.’ How can you win? You have no hope; you cannot win.

CHAIR—Have you since been assisted by the hospital?

Mr Monaghan—No.

CHAIR—Would you like to be?

Mr Monaghan—I am going back in May this year to have another crack at them.

CHAIR—A number of witnesses have said the same: that they would like to get access to their records, wherever those records are, and that it is always very hard.

Mr Monaghan—In 1997, the hospital gave us a photostat. First of all, for years they had no records, so we went to Ireland. We went there, and in the afternoon they said they had sent a photostated record—they changed my mother’s name from Bridget to Maggie, alias Bridget. I put a big thing in the paper when I was there and people were ringing up. Some lady said to me, ‘If you go to Joyce House in Dublin’—so I went from Armagh to Dublin—‘they’ll have all the records’. So I went in there and the man said, ‘Oh, Mr Monaghan.’ I said, ‘Do you know me?’ He said, ‘I saw your photo in the paper. What can I do for you?’ ‘I want to look for my mother’s birth certificate.’ ‘What’s her name?’ I said, ‘I don’t know. I don’t know if it’s Maggie, I don’t know if it’s Bridget,’ because they put ‘Maggie, alias Bridget.’

CHAIR—Did you succeed?

Mr Monaghan—No. The Child Migrants Trust are still looking. I went to Derry. I come from the south of Ireland. They had done my paperwork in Scotland and shipped me to Derry for two weeks and then brought me to Australia. It is illegal what they did. I went back to Derry. The nun said, ‘You couldn’t have been here because your name’s not in the book.’ You know, I am a nobody. I got something from Sligo. They wrote in 1995, ‘Patrick Joseph came to Sligo in 1939’—before I was two—‘left for Australia in 1947. Mother still alive,’ and I got that in 1945. When was my mother still alive: 1947 or 1937? Well, she was alive in 1937 because that is when she had me, didn’t she. That is the problem you have. You get no help at all. They just seem to close the door when you get there, because they are frightened. This man in the hospital was telling me about all the girls who were adopted from the hospital. I said, ‘I’m not interested. I wasn’t adopted; I was put in an orphanage. I’m not interested in the girls who are suing you because you adopted them out,’ and this is where they just will not tell you anything. It is impossible.

CHAIR—Mr Monaghan, we are constrained by time and we are, yet again, assisted by what people like you are saying. Thank you very much, both for your written submission and for your words today. Over and over and over again people have been saying to us, ‘We need access to records and we don’t like to be treated like a piece of nothing when we go asking for them.’ You have made that message very powerfully.

Mr Monaghan—The problem is that if you do not find anybody they will not send you back. The people who do not find any family—and this is my third time this May—and cannot afford to go back, they should let them go back to the country in which they were born, where they were born; they should be allowed to go back and see their own country. I am a naturalised Australian but I will die an Irishman.

CHAIR—Mr Monaghan, that is a pretty powerful line to finish on. Thank you. Mr Monaghan. Senator Murray just wants to ask one quick question.

Senator MURRAY—Mr Monaghan, your ‘naturalised citizen’ remark at the end confused me. We have had a lot of evidence from people that they are not automatically Australian citizens; they had to apply for and pay for citizenship.

Mr Monaghan—I applied and got it but I had to prove that I was here for two years.

Senator MURRAY—So you applied for it and you paid for it?

Mr Monaghan—Yes, but I was here about 30-odd years and I had to prove I was here two years.

Senator MURRAY—Thank you; that is what I wanted to know.

CHAIR—I am sorry, Mr Monaghan, but that is good for the record.

[4.51 p.m.]

COSTA, Mr Anthony Vincent (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Costa.

Mr Costa—With me are the Child Migrant Trust representatives who are part of the final glory of this story I am about to tell you: Mr Ian Thwaites and Ms Margaret Humphreys.

CHAIR—Firstly, Mr Costa, I have two questions for you. The first is: you have seen a copy of the Senate procedures about the protection of witnesses and their evidence?

Mr Costa—I have, indeed. I have it with me here.

CHAIR—We have a submission from you which we have received as confidential. Do you wish it to remain confidential?

Mr Costa—The document I have here: I am willing and desirous of giving verbal evidence to the Senate committee, which is the tail end of the statement. Please note: I do not give permission for my submission to be made a public document. Now that we are here, I am more than happy to go along with the public aspect of it.

CHAIR—That is to say the whole submission can now be made public?

Mr Costa—It can.

CHAIR—It does not need to be, Mr Costa; it can stay exactly as you say.

Mr Costa—It does not have to be but I just wanted to make the point that the verbal evidence to the Senate committee is what I am doing.

CHAIR—So, as I understand it, at this stage we keep the submission confidential but your comments today are on the public record?

Mr Costa—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you. Mr Costa, fire away.

Mr Costa—This tragic story, like so many others you have probably heard today and probably will tomorrow, there is a rainbow at the end of this. I am going to start from the latter part of my story, the reunion of my family who I finally met up with in the last two years, through the absolutely amazing work of the Child Migrants Trust. I owe a great deal of debt to them for how they have gone about researching my background. Because you have the documents in your presence I do not think I need to go through all the points in it, but just basically to sum up the recommendations—which is what I think you are really all about today, the recommendations.

On page 4 of the documentation you will see where there are three recommendations that I have made, and I believe if they are taken seriously the credibility of this Senate committee will no doubt stand in good stead. I say that based on my experiences, both through my own family reunion that has taken basically the best part of 60 years of my life—this year it will be 60 years—but also for inspiration for those people who have yet to be reunited with their families in their latter years and their families' latter years. I see the great urgency.

In the recommendations 1, 2 and 3, I do say that the Child Migrants Trust, in this case, definitely needs recognition and funding to continue the vital humanitarian work for at least 10 more years, based on the age factor, which would go back to the history of this era, this appalling era, of child migration. In saying that, they need offices in every state, enough workers to do the job, and I say the exploitation of the trust must cease forthwith—I think there has been a degree of that on the shoestring budget they have had, given the enormity and the urgency of this assistance. Currently their staff work around the clock because the Australian government has held them to ransom with inadequate resources, and I make no apologies for making that statement; I think the figures speak for themselves. Those of us who are the victims, and remain the victims, and those victims who have yet to be reconciled with their families are also in my thinking.

Recommendation 2 is a compensation package of services and financial assistance to former child migrants for the failure of both government and church organisations. It is no good attacking one party and not the other. There are a whole lot of parties in this—respective governments and, equally, respective church organisations—and they need to provide safety and protection. We continue to live with the scars of the Australian government's child-care policies. Compensation remains long overdue, based on the bastardisation and the incarceration of some of these kids who I now resemble in my 59th year.

Recommendation 3 is a travel fund to assist former child migrants return to the United Kingdom, or wherever in the world their families live—and I am being so bold as to suggest there is another nationality involved in this package, and I refer to the boys who came from Malta. There is a great reference to them and I think that they have been underplayed in some of these issues by, again, the governments respectively and perhaps the churches. It is a fact that we are not here on our own accord; we are not migrants in the sense of voluntary, informed decision making. We are here as the result of Australian government policy of the day, and this continues to be a duty of care issue.

Based on that summary, I do believe that the recommendations should be taken earnestly and seriously. I do believe that it is a long challenge, but the next 10 years are vital for those people who have yet to be reunified with their families. In my own case, I cannot speak any louder or sing the praises more of the role of the Child Migrants Trust, as opposed to the former governments and the relevant churches who supposedly took care of our destiny in this. I am pleased to say that in my own role as a public figure—an elected mayor in a city of this city—I come across this urgency more than ever in the whole sphere of the way I work and walk with people in the community who are victims of an appalling error, an error that has to be addressed.

Let me say to you, Senator Crowley, and to some of your members—I think the only other person I know personally is Senator Murray—without appearing to be patronising, the last word

that is in my vocabulary, that I am very pleased that this Senate committee has found the courage collectively to sit here and to listen to these tragic, realistic, urgent, compassionate stories that need to be addressed. I will do anything I can to help the Senate inquiry to reach those goals on the grounds of compassion, on the grounds of family reunions.

Last but not least, and through you, Senator Crowley, I have brought with me some documentation. It is nothing to do with the actual inquiry but it gives you a bit of an idea about my own background and gives evidence to my own role in this cultural thing. You must appreciate from the statement that I had, and still have, an ethnic name. I was brought up in an English-educated system, if you want to call it that, under the Christian Brothers and, as I was saying, it was very common for children to be treated shamefully in English-speaking cultures if they had ethnic names or ethnic accents. I experienced that and I also feel so strongly about the Maltese boys' culture who came to these institutions and were treated equally shamefully where in some cases those kids were denied to speak in their own native tongue; yet their own brothers and sisters were involved in this.

So there are a whole lot of things from which I have the scars. I am proud to say that I am a survivor, but by the living God, justice must be done. To do that we look to the Senate, because you are a democratic process through the parliamentary system. So those are my three recommendations. There is enough material here and I am happy to give it to you. It may help you to understand, rather than me going on and on.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Costa.

Senator TCHEN—I was just wondering, Mayor Costa, why you need two support people? I think you are eloquent enough.

Mr Costa—I want your Senate inquiry to appreciate the enormous humanitarian—

Senator TCHEN—I understand that, Mr Costa.

Mr Costa—I brought them up here to let you see them. In answer to your question, the reunion with my father's sister in Belfast, while it was devastatingly beautiful, it may not have happened, and the urgency is that because it happened to me I want these other boys and girls—now men and women—to enjoy that reunion that I experienced, which was something I thought impossible in my 59th year. That is the reason why they are here, at my insistence.

Senator MURRAY—What you have said, Mayor, stands for itself, so I am not going to explore that, but I am interested in your remarks about the ethnic issue. Much of what we have heard from British migrants has indicated that there was racism against them. But these were Irish brothers in an Australian setting calling them 'Pommie bastards'—but, of course, with a special emphasis on 'bastards'—but that is a racist sort of approach. In your case, you were of Irish origin, weren't you?

Mr Costa—Yes, unbeknown to me until I got my birth certificate at the age of 21 from the child welfare, as it was known in those days.

Senator MURRAY—The evidence we have had, though, is that, generally speaking, the brothers were aware of where the kids came from—although the kids weren't aware of where they came from—because they had the records. So it is possible that the Irish brothers knew that you were Irish.

Mr Costa—I do not know if they did or they did not. I do not know what records they ever had, because nothing was ever given from them to me, the brothers that is.

Senator MURRAY—It seems, too, that the way in which Maltese children were treated was also racist, one race with a nasty view of another race. Did the children very much feel that?

Mr Costa—Yes, I do remember the kids being put down for their respective nationalities. To quote you, the 'Pommie' inference was used quite often from time to time, but other nationalities, whether they be Scottish or Maltese, were also subjected to certain treatments. Yes, there is no doubt about the ridicule in my statement. You will recall the last paragraph on page 1 of the submission:

In the six years I was there, I am haunted to this day by their horrific forms of cruelty, ridicule and torment. They set us on to fight each other as an entertaining pastime. The mental trauma—

which is what I refer to here—

whereby they taunted us, to be told by Keaney, shouting out at us that we were good for nothing, that our mums and dads disowned us, that we were sons of whores.

That sort of language was thrown to us in forms of ridicule, be we English, be we Irish, be we Maltese.

Senator MURRAY—One of the other things that has come through, which I had not thought enough about before I read these submissions, was a great sense of loss of country, not just of identity or connection but of loss of country, which is interesting. Was that a very strong theme in the children at the time?

Mr Costa—I think a lot of us do remember some of the songs, perhaps the music, that we were taught in the earlier days by, in my own case, the Irish Sisters of Charity, the ones with the big cornets—which you might recall if you know anything about Catholicism. The Sisters of Charity were founded by Catherine Laboure, but they were the ones with the great big cornets. But, yes, a lot of us as infant kids do remember melodies and songs in culture that was brought to us in those early years and, yes, we did feel we missed some of that culture. In answer to your question, whenever I hear the great Robeson sing certain English songs I am haunted by first hearing them as a child.

CHAIR—One of the things you said, Mr Costa, was a reference to children from Malta. We have had very little evidence about those children. Is there anything further you could provide to the committee, either now or at a later time, or could you point us to where we might want to go to look further?

Mr Costa—I can only say that the Maltese culture is relevant to child migration and that they have a story to tell, when they choose to tell it, of course—I have to respect their rights—built

on confidence, built on encouragement, built on a whole lot of things. But I would be totally remiss not to make reference that those were some of the traumas. I come back to how in my own case it is not an English Irish Celtic name, is it, my original family name. That is the point I am making: that it was bad enough being orphaned children in these institutions, but equally was the other bastardry based on people with ethnic names, non-English speaking names. There was a price to pay for that in the form of the mental trauma. Kids were set upon kids and it was light entertainment for some of the Christian Brothers that kids fought each other in a most cruel and barbaric way, soiled on to do the most horrific things at such an age group. I am haunted by that to this day, be they of any nationality.

CHAIR—We are nearly out of time. Again, I want to thank you so much, both for your confidential submission and now for coming to speak on the public record. Clearly, you would know from the agreement publicly voiced during your comments how many people feel as though your story is their story too, in part or in many of the points you made. I want to thank you very much for that, Mr Costa.

We have had a request from one person in the audience who would like just five minutes—and it is unfortunate but it will have to be just five minutes—to come up and make a few comments. Thank you very much, Mr Costa.

[5.07 p.m.]

GOULDING, Mrs Hazel (Private capacity)

Mrs Goulding—My name is Hazel Goulding, formerly Payne, and I came over in 1947 at the age of seven. But before you hear any of that I would, please, like to ask one big favour, and I would like this to be put to the board. If it could be possible, there are so many of us out there and what we have a problem with, and I am experiencing it greatly at the moment: I have a son in England who is going to get married. I cannot find accommodation, not that would be over the roof, and especially in London. Most of us migrants need somewhere to go, basically even if it is not for our family but somewhere we can look up our records, somewhere we can go for a week or a fortnight where there is a motel-style or some accommodation that most of these migrants can go to, because they really need somewhere—if they have the money to at least pay for the fare, to help with their accommodation. I am sure this is not too much to ask for. When I went over, I went over not so long ago with a sentimental journey, and yes, we had accommodation. I come from a large family—I had five sisters and two brothers when I went back. One of them has died since then and I wanted to stay longer and I could not.

But I really do feel the plight of accommodation for people like me who would like to go over, stay that bit longer time with their family, not necessarily have elaborate settings or anything—even if it is just accommodation, not even the food, if there were tea-making facilities or something like that. Most of us who want to go could go but you cannot meet the accommodation side of it. That is just one thing I would like to ask, and I would like it to be considered.

CHAIR—It will be, and thank you for that, indeed. It is a very important point. It is one thing if you have friends who can give you a bit of floor space or assist you, because accommodation costs become very expensive, but if you have not found the family yet there is no-one to assist you.

Mrs Goulding—My son is getting married on 7 July and I cannot get accommodation. I do have family over there but they are all in one bedrooms, and it has been very hard. We have phoned everywhere—we must have spent a fortune on phone calls. We were told that we would be able to get accommodation through the Nazareth House, but they cannot accommodate me either. I am quite upset about this because of it being so close.

CHAIR—I do not want to confuse you. The committee welcomes that comment, because it is one very important area that not too many people have raised as a point for our consideration in recommendations, but I would like to make it clear that it is not within our capacity to assist you with accommodation immediately. But in terms of a recommendation, I think it is a very useful point you make.

Mrs Goulding—Can I just tell you a bit about my background?

CHAIR—Yes, but you are now down to 2½ minutes.

Mrs Goulding—I was seven when I came to England and my house was blown up in front of me. The army came out of the barracks; I was in Pimlico—if you know anything about Pimlico, it was flattened. We were all sent on a bus by the army down to Birmingham and from there they gave us castor oil and God knows what, which put me in hospital, because I have a lot of problems with medicines. I was out of hospital only a week when I was sent on the boat to Australia with my sister. They kept us apart the whole time we were in the orphanage. Now, tell me that was humanity. It wasn't.

In seven and a half years I was there, I had one year's schooling in the total of that seven years. I was chopping wood and, believe me, I used to chop the wood and as I chopped each piece of food, at nine years of age, it was a nun that I killed. That is how bad I felt.

CHAIR—Which institution were you in?

Mrs Goulding—St Joseph's Orphanage in Subiaco. Now, I could not get that out of my system, and it is very hard for me to talk about it. I have tried to write a book for 40 years, and my husband knows it has been very hard. I write a page and in the drawer it goes, I might write 10 lines and in the drawer it goes, because I cannot take the feeling and emotion that comes into me. I do have witnesses that I used to carry all that wood that I cut to the boiler room in the 40 degrees. We used to be made to read books standing up in 44 degrees. My friends next door to me used to faint, and if you had lost your line you would be penalised and smacked—or not smacked, but you would be sent outside reverend mother's office.

I would be outside reverend mother's office at least once to twice a week for the cane, and not only did I get six hits with the cane, I would get it on the knuckles as well as the top. That is one thing that I could never forget. At the age of 13 I could not take any more and I stood up for myself—for the first time I realised I was grown up; I was old enough to take care of myself. I smashed that cane out of her hands, across my knee, and walked out of that office. They never caned me again, but they put me on night duty, at 13.

For meals I was outside. I was one of the problem children that stood up for myself—I was one of the biggest children for my age there at that time and I would be lucky to have one meal in three days because of it. There were other things, like there used to be a budgie outside the dining room. I took comfort out of feeding the budgie a little bit of orange that he had in the bottom of the tray, because I did not want him to waste it. I cannot remember ever having a glass of milk, and when I ate my porridge I used to pray to God, 'Please let me be good for Sunday,' because we used to get a boiled egg, and I knew I could eat that. But we used to get porridge with maggots in, and don't tell me we didn't because I did. Because I used to go, 'Oh, I'm not eating that,' the sister in the dining room used to come at the back of me with a strap on the back of my neck and put me outside the dining room. Consequently, I did not eat for two and three days. That just did not happen once; I would say I would be outside the dining room once a week regularly without any meals.

There was more, lots more: night duty, trying to put a napkin on babies—there were about 30 babies in the night. I would be on from 6.30 at night until 7.30 in the morning with an hour's sleep at midnight.

CHAIR—Was this at the same place?

Mrs Goulding—In the same place.

CHAIR—So this was like a hospital as well, was it?

Mrs Goulding—Yes, it was.

CHAIR—With new babies?

Mrs Goulding—With new babies, and I had to put a napkin on the baby that was dirty. I could not get to sleep and I got up and I changed the baby again, and I was made to put that dirty napkin on the baby and I wouldn't. She got me by the hair and swung me around, with my hair coming out in pieces, with straps and welts all over my chest and body. I ran away and I went to the Salvation Army for comfort. They were the only ones who I thought they would never find me there, because being Catholic at that time I thought they would never look in the Salvation Army. But, unfortunately, the police came. I showed them the welt. I said to them, 'This'll show you.' I am a bit high-spirited in that way because I thought the police would not come and get me, they would not dare, I would strip and they could not touch me, that is the way I thought, because I thought showing my body would be the last thing they would come near me. But it did not make any difference. When I was in the car I did show them that and after that I never saw any of the children again; I was kept separately for nearly a year.

My sister, who was nearly 15, was sent on a farm where the husband and wife had three sons, and I will not go into that because you do not need any imagination. I saw my sister once in that four years. They knew my mother was alive for three years and did not tell me, and that is what hurt me. When I met her off the boat I had never been given instructions that people get older—I was not quite 15 but I never thought people got older; I always thought they stayed the same age. When I held the photograph—that was probably six inches in those days, down to about an inch by now—I could not speak to her, because I thought my older sister was my mother because she was like the photograph. She said to me, 'Has the cat got your tongue?' and all I could do was show her that photograph that was in my hand and I could not speak to her.

We never got on because it was—I don't know; I knew her for probably a year but I could not live with her. I had become too independent, I had become too hurt, too angry with her, and I feel that we could have put a few things together to realise that she had got older and I had not realised it. She was not as tall as I had thought: I thought she would be about five foot six; instead she was five foot nothing. I was five foot four. So, leaving her as a baby, coming back taller than her, it was nothing like what I had imagined in the photograph.

CHAIR—Mrs Goulding, I am so sorry but we have to finish. I want to say thank you for coming forward. You actually capture, in a sense, what the day has been like, and that is it has been a public story of pain. It has been optimism and it has been courage and it has been people who have survived and it has been pain and pain and pain. But I do believe it is very important now, as this day's hearing finishes, that we all—and you have all done it many times—take a deep breath and do, in a sense, a de-roling. We need to turn off the pain that we have heard today. We will not forget it but we need to go from this hearing, after a minute's reflection, so we can make the break between what has been the substance of the day's hearings and what happens when we leave this place.

I want to thank you all very much. I think you have been putting the pain to one side for many, many years. The committee thanks you all for sharing it with us. I think it has been a day that is an enormous help and focus for the committee in its inquiry. I thank Hansard who have listened very patiently, and to all of you who have participated, either by being here or by giving us evidence. This committee stands adjourned until tomorrow.

Committee adjourned at 5.20 p.m.