



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

SENATE

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Reference: Child migration

FRIDAY, 16 MARCH 2001

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SENATE
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REFERENCES COMMITTEE
Friday, 16 March 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: Senator Crowley, Senator Gibbs, Senator Knowles, Senator Murray and Senator 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 11.05 a.m.

BEARE, Ms Cynthia, Manager, Adoption and Family Information Service, Department of Human Services

GOODCHILD, Mrs Kay Gillian, Social Worker, Adoption and Family Information Service, Department of Human Services

LUCAS, MS Jeanette Anne, Senior Social Worker, Adoption and Family Information Service, Department of Human Services

PROCTER, Mr Ian James, General Manager, Family and Youth Services, Department of Human Services

CHAIR—I would now like to declare open this public hearing of the Senate Community Affairs References Committee into child migration. This is very much a national inquiry with hearings that have already been held in Perth, Melbourne and Canberra and also to be held in Rockhampton and Sydney. 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 primarily involve evidence from a number of the people who provided submissions being invited to speak. The committee is particularly interested in hearing the views of former child migrants as to the types of assistance and services that they believe should now be provided by government and other welfare and support agencies.

Unfortunately, it will not be possible to invite all those who provided some summaries to speak with the committee; however, you may be assured that the many written submissions the committee has already received have assisted us to understand the deep personal issues involved in this inquiry. Evidence in this session is being heard in public; however, evidence may also be taken in camera if any of the witnesses coming to give evidence ask to do so. We will give consideration to that.

I welcome the officers from the South Australian Department of Human Services. The committee, as I say, prefers all evidence to be heard in public but should you wish to give your evidence, part of your evidence or answers to specific questions in camera, you may ask to do so and the committee would give consideration to your request. The committee has before it your submission No. 127. Do you wish to make any alterations to that submission?

Mr Proctor—No.

CHAIR—I remind departmental officers that you are not required to answer questions on advice you may have given in regard to the formulation of policy, nor to express a personal opinion on matters of policy. I invite you to make an opening statement and then the senators will put questions.

Mr Procter—The department welcomes the opportunity to be a part of what is a very important inquiry. As you know, our submission responds to each of the terms of reference in a very literal and direct way so we thought the most useful way to begin would be to perhaps

provide you with a little more factual information. We understand that approximately 50 girls were sent to South Australia under the British child migrant schemes, and there were a smaller number of boys. The girls were accommodated at the Goodwood orphanage in metropolitan Adelaide. The Catholic Church, through the Sisters of Mercy, ran the orphanage. Little is known about the boys.

The children were under the guardianship of the department which is now known as the Department of Human Services. There is minimal governmental documentation available in relation to these children and the schemes under which they came to this state. However, individual files exist for most of the children and the department is the government point that facilitates access to these files by individuals and their families. The department, through the Adoption and Family Information Service, has provided this access and support for those who have wished to access the files. The department has also established liaison with the Child Migrant Trust to assist in this process and, for approximately the last two years, officers of the Adoption and Family Information Service have met regularly with a group of SA former child migrants. It is through hearing their stories and through the process of assisting them that the department decided to make a submission to this inquiry.

The department's involvement has been to respond to the express needs of the former child migrants and to assist them in any way we can. The emphasis has been on this rather than on discovery of general documentation regarding the schemes or on the events of the past. Former child migrants have told us some of their stories and it was thought important to include some of these related experiences in our written submission. Most of the former child migrants have emphasised their need for assistance in accessing programs available to them, such as the British government funding to enable visits to Britain and for support in reuniting with their families in Britain, and the activities of the department have been conducted with regard to this.

There are two matters in particular we would like to draw to your attention as they have happened after we put in our submission. The Minister for Human Services recently opened a plaque for the British child migrants who came to this state down at the migration museum. Secondly, in doing so he announced a grant of \$30,000 over the next three years to the Child Migrant Trust to assist them in their work. The department is appearing today to indicate its acknowledgment of the experiences of the former child migrants and to state that we support any initiatives that will assist them.

CHAIR—I might say that having heard about the plaque I thought it would be a very good idea if this committee went down and, one, looked at it and, two, photographed it. I am not sure whether we went through the department. We went directly to the museum. If that is offending protocol, we apologise, but I had heard about it and it seemed to me it would be worthwhile, as part of our inquiry, to go and look.

Mr Procter—Chair, we do have a portfolio of photographs taken on the day that we would be happy to—

CHAIR—We wish to establish our own portfolio of photographs, thank you, Mr Procter.

Mr Procter—I was only trying to be helpful.

CHAIR—We were very grateful for your offer. If you did have any information—a portfolio of info or whatever relevant to that—we would appreciate that, particularly any information about the British migrants.

Mr Procter—We would be happy to provide it.

Senator KNOWLES—I want to come to precisely what the South Australian government has been doing. I notice what you have just said about \$30,000 over the next three years to the Child Migrant Trust. What is it envisaged that that \$10,000 a year would provide in terms of assistance?

Mr Procter—I will begin to answer, if I may, and I might ask my colleague to continue. The money is to assist the trust to extend its work in a more satisfactory way to South Australia. There has been activity in South Australia hitherto, but insufficient. The money is a response to a request from the trust. The amount we have provided is the amount they were seeking to do their work in South Australia. As to the details of its use, I will ask Ms Beare to respond.

Ms Beare—We had some discussions with some of the women who felt that accessing a service which was not based in South Australia was difficult for them and they agreed that a service which regularly visited South Australia would be more useful than an ad hoc visiting when needed service because we would be able to book ahead with the Child Migrant Trust for people to have some consultation with them if they needed assistance with searching for their families in Britain or are making plans as to how to reconnect with their families. We thought that if we worked together with the trust in establishing a regular pattern of visiting then we would be able to meet and more satisfactorily have a cooperative relationship with the trust on a face-to-face visiting and contact basis rather than conversations over the phone and letters.

Senator KNOWLES—I note in your submission that you identify that for the past approximately 50 years no specific interventions or services were made available to the British child migrant, so this is not party political or anything else. It is successive governments that seem to have just overlooked any responsibility. Do you know of any proposals that were ever put to successive governments to try to find some form of assistance for people such as the child migrants?

Mr Procter—The reference that you have drawn attention to would be I think read to be a reference to the fact that there are no explicit interventions on behalf of British child migrants. As I understand it, the British child migrants were guardians of the minister and there was no distinction made between the British child migrants and other children in the guardianship of the minister, therefore services were provided to that whole group, if you like. What we are saying is that, as opposed to now where we are talking about, for example, the \$10,000 per annum which will go directly to meet the needs of former British child migrants, there were no such interventions if you go back over time.

Senator KNOWLES—Were the child migrants made aware of the broader facilities? You might like to tell me what those broader facilities entail. Were they made aware that they could access those facilities?

Ms Beare—We responded to specific requests rather than outreaching people in the community who were former wards. It is always difficult to have that balance between respecting people's privacy and seeking them out to say, 'Did you know that you can access your information from the department and we can help?' So it is only in the general sense that the community would be able to access personal files from the department and people would know that they could come to us for that assistance. Certainly there have been people over the years who have accessed their personal information from the department.

Senator KNOWLES—There has been no specific travel assistance by the state government or counselling assistance, given the fact that the Child Migrant Trust has been out of Australia. There has been no gap filled in the process in the meantime of trying to assist these people specifically.

Mr Procter—Senator, we have got a listing here of all of the activities by the Adoption and Family Information Service in relation to former British child migrants over the last two to three years which we would be happy to supply. It will give you a complete account, if you like, of the kinds of services that have been available.

CHAIR—We really would appreciate that. Thank you, Mr Procter.

Senator KNOWLES—Thank you very much. That would be very good. One of the other things that I would like to ask you is about the procedures for former child migrants to access their remaining records. I understand you say that they are not necessarily full records and we have run into that difficulty or the child migrants have run into that difficulty all the way along the line, but do you have any specific procedures in place to assist them to find their records? If it involves freedom of information, are the fees waived? What other choices do they have?

Ms Beare—We waive the fees for people who were former wards. We believe the information we have about them is their information, and they have a right to it, and we waive the fees in relation to former migrants. If our information can help them to put their story together and find their families, then the information certainly belongs to them. We are talking about records that were many decades old, and certainly records were not kept in those days with a view to helping people to put their stories together. We are often conscious that we would like there to be more that people had written down at the time, but sometimes there are parts of the story that the children do not remember that actually do fill in some of the pieces for people.

Senator KNOWLES—Also in relation to records, I suppose, is the extent of regular visitations by the department to the institutions. It appears as though the visitations were spasmodic at best and nonexistent at worst. The reporting system seems less than satisfactory. I think it was yesterday that we were given evidence that the department expected positive reports, and so one may then draw the conclusion that the reports were actually doctored to say, 'This is a fantastic institution,' when in fact it was anything but. Do you have anything like that on record that the committee could access?

Mr Procter—I think I would be accurate in saying the records we have would show that there were what were called inspections, I believe, of the institutions. As to whether the records are accurate, we are really not in a position to say either way.

Senator KNOWLES—Of course. Would the committee be able to access any of those documents showing the reports of the inspections? We would all just have to draw our own conclusion about the accuracy, compared with the evidence.

Mr Procter—We would want to respond positively, but you would understand that that would be taking into account the privacy requirements of the various people involved. We are talking about the personal files of individual people?

Senator KNOWLES—No, I am actually talking about the institutional files regarding inspection of the institutions.

Ms Beare—No, we do not have those.

Mr Procter—That is where I think we go back to the part of the opening statement which we emphasised: the fact that we have not done a piece of research on the matter we are involved in. Our focus has been on meeting the emerging needs of British child migrants as they come forward. We would need to do a piece of work for the committee to see if we could obtain the kinds of materials that you are seeking.

CHAIR—Is that a possibility, Mr Procter?

Mr Procter—We would certainly be happy to look at it.

CHAIR—We would appreciate that.

Senator KNOWLES—I do not want to set up a system that is going to cost the government thousands and thousands of dollars in research. I would be grateful if you could come back to the committee and let us know if it is readily available, without it costing squillions.

Mr Procter—Certainly.

Senator KNOWLES—As you say, we cannot change anything that happened then, but it would just be interesting to be able to have some evidence that would demonstrate the types of inspections that were done and the types of reports that were then provided. But if it is going to cost a squillion dollars, I think it is a bit too much to ask.

Mr Procter—We will certainly do our best to find what we can for the committee.

Senator KNOWLES—Thank you.

CHAIR—There are two issues I would just like to briefly cover. One is: what can you buy for \$10,000 a year?

Ms Beare—What we have talked about with the Child Migrant Trust is three or four visits a year to South Australia. What we will do when we know that the Child Migrant Trust is coming is be a contact point to help set appointments up, arrange a room for people to meet in, arrange accommodation and that sort of thing.

CHAIR—So the money will actually go to pay the fares and the accommodation of Child Migrant Trust people from Victoria coming to Adelaide?

Ms Beare—Yes, that was the idea.

Senator KNOWLES—And the child migrants themselves?

Ms Beare—To come to the city to meet with the Child Migrant Trust?

Senator KNOWLES—Yes.

Ms Beare—If they approached us about that, we could look at it.

CHAIR—That would be useful. Some of the child migrants may live in Maree or Oodnadatta, or maybe they just live at Port Augusta, and a bit of petrol, to say nothing of bus fares or flights, might be useful. That is a very good point, Senator Knowles. So mainly it is to get the Child Migrant Trust people here.

Ms Beare—Yes.

CHAIR—And maybe provide them with a room and also to notify child migrants. Would you do any of the notifying of child migrants in South Australia that the trust will be visiting?

Ms Beare—We had not thought of that, but I think we will talk with the trust when we set up the plan of visits to look at what we do about contacting individuals or placing some public notice of their visit so that people can access them.

CHAIR—Will you leave it to the trust to make the contact?

Ms Beare—Yes. We do not know, of course, the current name and address of all of the former migrants in South Australia. Some people have not accessed our service or the trust's service, and may want to do so in the future, so some public notice might be appropriate.

CHAIR—The committee would welcome further detail on how you are planning to actually account for the \$10,000 and, in particular, whether you will be part of trying to facilitate child migrants being able to contact the trust, or whether that will just be to facilitate the trust getting here and leaving it to the migrants and the trust to keep up their contacts.

Mr Procter—The way to respond would be to say we will do whatever is required to make the business work. To go back to the point about what does \$10,000 buy, I think the way Ms Beare began to respond to that suggests that the \$10,000 will automatically be supplemented by resources from our existing budget as we support the process to make it work.

CHAIR—Support from the existing budget?

Mr Procter—Yes.

CHAIR—Some people would love those words, Mr Procter. On behalf of them, tell us more.

Mr Procter—I only mean that the staff of AFIS will devote a part of their time—and in some cases, a significant part of their time—to doing this important work.

CHAIR—So in other words, some of the admin costs will be borne by the running budget of your section? Is that what you are saying?

Mr Procter—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Ms Beare—As it already is. We already have a component of our work which is dedicated to child migrant work. Kay Goodchild is our contact person for people adopted in the United Kingdom who are now living in Australia and are seeking their families in Britain. She has established quite a bit of knowledge about how people can search for their families in Britain, and has a lot of expertise in the release of information and finding other sources of information for people when they are tracing their families. So it is an integral part of our service to numbers of people in the community who have needs which are not dissimilar from those of the former migrants in that they were separated from their families and are seeking to reconnect. Those are often not just people who were born, adopted and still live in South Australia; with the movement of people around the world we are often dealing internationally with people's families who were separated.

CHAIR—Yes. We have had witnesses tell us that they do not remember welfare inspections at the Goodwood orphanage or, if they do, they were actually asked to stand up or stand in lines outside in the quadrangle—that there were certainly not inspections inside. We have also been given evidence on the beating of children—vicious, shocking beatings when little girls were forced to lie on concrete floors and sat on by other staff while yet other staff beat them viciously. In one case, we have evidence—which we will hear on the record this afternoon—of when Archbishop Beovich came to visit. A visitor came and saw a child, and the child complained and was able to show the marks of such beatings. The particular perpetrator was subsequently removed by Archbishop Beovich. I am just interested to know whether you could provide to the committee any evidence that your welfare officers saw any evidence of how viciously the children were beaten. They were cut and bleeding. These were not even hits that might have left no bruise, or a red mark that faded; these were vicious criminal assaults.

Mr Procter—Chair, I think we have spoken of the problem of the paucity of records. That would be a constraint. But within that constraint we will endeavour to see if we can find the kind of material that you are looking for.

CHAIR—In Western Australia we have been given evidence that much of the welfare inspection role went to the bricks and mortar. We are a bit surprised that in Western Australia, when any number of witnesses told us that they did not have shoes and they did not have underpants and they did not have warm clothing, a welfare inspection could somehow tick off on the state of the quality of care for those children. What sorts of things did the welfare inspection look for? What parameters did they have? Did they ever report less than

comprehensive care of the kids? Did the welfare department ever tick-tack with the Catholic Church over this period?

Ms Beare—We have heard stories from the women as well which have moved us very deeply. The files that were held by the department had records of inspectors visiting the orphanage and inspector reports were filled out for each child. The sorts of things that were looked at were, as you described, the bricks and mortar—the practical sorts of things that were the emphasis of welfare inspections of those days. I have seen numbers of adoption and state ward files from those years, and the sorts of things that the inspectors looked for were not to do so much with the emotional wellbeing of the children, which are the sorts of things that we look for today. On the files of the former migrants there are some inspector reports. Those reports might give the committee an idea of the sorts of things that the inspectors looked at. They are on personal files, of course, so we would want to be careful about the privacy of the individuals whose files we are talking about. Perhaps we could give the committee some copies of the inspectors' reports with the identifying details removed. That might be helpful.

CHAIR—If you could provide us with any of those reports with the names removed, that would be fantastic. One of the questions I still want to pursue is relates to these children on arrival becoming wards of the state government, thus obligating a duty of care. Maybe you could tell us what was meant by 'duty of care' then. If these children were state wards, where did the state government's responsibility stop and the Catholic Church's responsibility take over?

Mr Procter—We cannot respond in any full sense on either question, given the information we have seen up to today. If we were able to find information of that kind, we would certainly make it available to the committee. It is very difficult for us to say then what being a ward of the state meant in detail. We can talk about it today, but that is 50 years or more on. As to the relationship between the state government and the Catholic Church in practice, again I cannot respond to your question, but we will provide that to you.

CHAIR—Duty of care might seem to, for instance, cover that children were adequately fed, and I would be interested in your welfare reports if it has all these individual children and reports on the bricks and mortar, but that is just because I am being a soupçon bloody-minded. Does duty of care cover the promise of a reasonable education in a state that I think introduced its first education act in about 1846, when a lot of the children in this orphanage were not provided with any education let alone something approximating an education, on the evidence we have received. I would be interested if you have any definition from that time of what a duty of care meant. I am particularly interested in, when you had these children as wards of the state, whether that wardship or guardianship role was then passed over to the Catholic Church or to the nuns, as we have been told has happened in other states. I am interested in where the chain of responsible authority lay here.

Mr Procter—I understand the question. I suppose what occurs to me is that, if we have reports which are reflective of an inspector from outside the Catholic Church going into the institution, it suggests to me that that inspector, if you like, was representing the minister of the day in terms of the duty of care. As to the quality of the duty of care, we can only judge that at the moment from the kinds of entries there are in the reports we have seen, and again we have

already made the offer to the committee to make that available, and you could exercise your judgment as well.

CHAIR—Yes. Do you think the state government would be sympathetic to making a public apology to these children, as for example the Queensland government and the Western Australian government have?

Mr Procter—That is not a question I really think I could respond to today.

CHAIR—I suppose it is an inappropriate question; I beg your pardon.

Mr Procter—I can say that the minister in launching the plaque down at the migration museum spoke, in effect, about an expression of regret about events.

CHAIR—Do you have a copy of that statement by the minister?

Mr Procter—We would not have one with us. We could look into seeing if we could get one.

CHAIR—If the minister made those comments and they are on the public record, I think that would be very useful for the committee to have a look at, particularly in the light of the Western Australian and Queensland government responses of very recent time.

Senator MURRAY—Mr Procter, just to follow up on that line of questioning from the chair, one of the things which seems apparent in this inquiry is that governments of the day and the community of the day automatically expected the religious and other institutions to do the right thing by the children and took an awful lot on trust. One of the aspects which has emerged concerns money. It would be helpful if you were able to give us any history, if you have it, of what moneys were paid to institutions by the state government to help support these children, whether there was any auditing by the state government of the way in which that money was spent and, on a different tack, whether the state government kept an eye on work that was done by these children in these institutions and whether they were paid for that work. To give you some context of this, in Western Australia there was a requirement that young people of a certain age, either in the institution or going out to farms, were paid and that that was put into a trust and they were to be paid at the age of 21. There have been countless allegations that they were not paid, so if you can flesh out that area at all from your archives it would be helpful.

Mr Procter—Senator, we will undertake to have a look at that and come back to the committee.

Senator MURRAY—Thank you. Another aspect has emerged in South Australia which I have seen no record of anywhere else, and that is as follows. Some members of the committee and I have seen forms, read the books and of course seen numerous submissions concerning the practices and the occurrences of the time. In your submission you summarise, for instance, physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and those happened all over the place. But we have been advised by a former child migrant in South Australia that she was experimented on for dentistry.

Of course there were only a few former British child migrants in South Australia, but you do also have other children who were in institutions at the time, namely Aboriginal children, those

known as the stolen generation, and of course Australian born children who were in institutions. I would appreciate it if you were able to establish whether it was the practice at the time or was ever the practice for children in institutions to be provided to dentistry schools for practice purposes, because the allegation is that this person had perfectly healthy teeth drilled out so that these dentistry students could practise on them. I must stress to you that we have not heard that allegation in any other submission to date, nor have I seen it in any of the books that I have read on the subject, but you can see what a serious allegation it is, if it were true. In my view it could only be true if there was some kind of contractual arrangement between the institutions concerned and the dentistry or medical school concerned, and I assume the state government would have had knowledge of it. If you were able to throw any light on that, that would be useful to us.

Mr Procter—It is a horrifying allegation, I agree. We have heard a range of allegations but that one has not come to us, and again we would need to look into it to see what we can find of it. I think your question really is about whether there was a practice at that time of some kind of experimenting, as you called it.

Senator MURRAY—Thank you. There is a further area I wish to touch upon. I thank both the minister and the department for starting to get involved in this area and giving some specialist attention to it, but I recognise it has not had the same focus it had in the states where there have been larger numbers of former child migrants. I would like to refer you—and I am sure the secretary will provide it for you—to the Western Australian submission from the Family and Children's Services. You may have it available. One of the key things they have done is to develop a reference index which they have coordinated through memos of agreement with the British government and with the various receiving agencies, as they are described—the former agencies for child migrants. This service and facility as described to us struck us as extremely professional and well presented, particularly as this area of access, of understanding identity and of being able to reconnect is so important to former child migrants.

Because this was a departmental initiative which was supported by the ministers of the day, and I am quite sure the new ministers will continue to support it, will the South Australian department look at that index and the way in which they have coordinated these matters? Will they have discussions with the Western Australian government department—by phone will be sufficient, I am sure? This may assist you in developing your own needs for index and access.

Mr Procter—It is a very interesting concept. We have seen the *Hansard* for the visit to Western Australia, and I think we are talking there about a national index. That seemed to be the focus of the discussion. Our understanding is that there are within South Australia now 100 former British child migrants, which means others around Australia have come to live in South Australia and, unless they make contact with us, that remains unrevealed, if you like. A national index of the kind you are describing would help in working across Australia and across state boundaries in terms of handling the issue. It is certainly something we would be interested in pursuing.

Might I say that there is an organisation called the Community Services Ministers Advisory Committee comprising the heads of various agencies that handle the community services portfolio around Australia, which does have a full agenda of cooperative pieces of work. This

item could be taken up by that group in terms of doing a piece of work across Australia, and it is certainly something we would be interested in having a look at.

Senator MURRAY—It seems to me from page 5, Mr Procter, that the fact that you have already purchased the index called PHIND indicates your sympathy for this. Rather than wait for the coordination of eight or nine governments, if you were already sympathetic you could lock onto it fairly easily, given that the number you are concerned with is low and therefore the cost of implementation I would assume would be quite low.

Ms Beare—I know in my discussions with some of the former migrants they have a quite legitimate caution about their own personal information and records being placed onto some national index, so we would need to deal with the privacy issues around people's individual information as part of participating in a national index.

Senator MURRAY—They have worked through these issues. You will not have to reinvent the wheel. Let me move on to a last area I want to consider. We have been shocked at the evidence of criminal and sexual assault of both girls and boys in institutions of all kinds across Australia. You have mentioned in the last page of your submission that child migrants have stated that they want the statute of limitations law amended to enable them to charge offenders who allegedly abused them as children. There are two areas of charging. One is as a result of criminal assault, inhumane treatment, and beatings and floggings with every sort of weapon you can conceive of. The other is of course sexual assault. On notice, could you perhaps consider advising the committee formally what limitations there are in law in this state to pursue such matters which in most cases are decades old?

Mr Procter—We are certainly happy to do that, and you would appreciate that that goes well beyond our portfolio. We would be talking to the Attorney-General's Department about that, and we would be happy to do that and come back to the committee.

Senator MURRAY—Thank you.

Senator TCHEN—Mr Procter, I think you said that out of the British child migration scheme about 50 girls and a small number of boys came to South Australia. Is that right?

Mr Procter—Yes.

Senator TCHEN—Do you know the total number? Was it 60 or 70? Roughly will do.

Ms Beare—The main groups came on two ships whose shipping lists we have. We think there were about 50—in the low fifties—that came on those two ships, but the reason we think there was a small number of boys is that there have been a couple of applications from men whose records revealed that they came under a British child migration scheme and were placed at the Magill Boys Home. Without being able to have some general documentation over the years of which children came here under certain schemes, those are the numbers that we rely upon.

CHAIR—Senator Tchen, there is an indication from the audience that the number is 62.

Ms Beare—It was 52.

CHAIR—We will have to get your name. Sybil McClaren-Carr has just indicated from the audience on behalf of a number of voices in the audience that it was 52 girls to Goodwood and 10 to 12 boys to Magill. Thank you. It is really better if we do not have contributions from the audience, but that one was very welcome. Thank you very much.

Senator TCHEN—So that is about eight per cent of the total number who came to South Australia—not a great proportion. I think you also mentioned there are about 100 living in South Australia now because they came in from other states. Is that right?

Mr Procter—That is not in any way an accurate number. It is our best guess, if you like, just from information that comes to us in the course of work.

Senator TCHEN—Of those who were brought up in South Australia, do you know how many have approached the department for assistance?

Mr Procter—The number is about 25 over the years.

Senator TCHEN—And these are the people with traumatic experiences?

Mr Procter—Yes. The submission, if you like, reflects the stories that have come from those contacts over time.

Senator TCHEN—So nearly half of the children coming to South Australia had traumatic experiences in their childhood. It is a rather poor record for the city of churches, isn't it?

Mr Procter—Well, it is a poor record, I would imagine, in any city.

Senator TCHEN—How long has the state government been aware of this problem? When was the first approach?

Ms Goodchild—From my own personal memory, we released information to former child migrants, starting about five or six years ago. That is when I first started working in the area, so I do not know of any before that.

Senator TCHEN—We heard evidence earlier that former child migrants, when they approached the welfare departments for assistance, were laughed at. That was a few years ago, not recently; certainly before your time, Mr Procter.

Senator KNOWLES—Yes, it was 20-odd years ago.

Senator TCHEN—How long have the relevant state government departments been aware of a problem like this?

Mr Procter—They have been aware for quite a period of time of the phenomenon of British child migrants, as the community has. I think we have given you the answer about the stories of the young people who came to South Australia: the last five or six years.

Ms Beare—Over the last couple of decades the interest of the community in establishing family ties and reconnecting with family history has become much more common. Certainly adoption legislation around Australia has changed to reflect that. It was only a couple of decades ago—a generation ago, if you like—that it was believed that children separated from their families would not need to reconnect with their families, that they could start a new life and forget what had gone before. We now know that children and families that are separated from each other do not forget each other and not ever try to find each other. Therefore, there have been legislative and policy changes in governments around Australia to reflect our acknowledgment that families are important to each other, whether or not they have been separated for many decades.

CHAIR—I thought Dr Bowlby was writing about that in the 1940s, was he not? It has taken departments and governments quite some time to get the message.

Ms Beare—Yes. I think Bowlby's research indicated that, if a child had a primary carer, the child would connect with that primary carer. The importance of family blood ties has, I think, been much more recent than Bowlby's work.

Senator TCHEN—You said that your department's files on individual child migrants contain only minimal information. By that do you mean the filing system contains minimal information or that information on each file is minimal? Do you still have files on every individual child?

Ms Beare—We have been able to retrieve a departmental file for all of the child migrants that have applied for their information from the department, to my knowledge. Is that your experience, too?

Ms Goodchild—I think there may have been one where there was no file found.

Ms Beare—There might have been one where there was no file. However, the files have probably between 10 and 30 pieces of paper in them. Many of those are inspector reports or notes by workers and receipts—that sort of administrative documentation—rather than the sort of documentation we keep these days, which talks about the child's story. Sometimes the administrative information can be useful to people.

CHAIR—Receipts for what, Ms Beare?

Ms Beare—Purchases that were made on behalf of a child were the sorts of things that were sometimes put onto files.

CHAIR—Not receipts for wages?

Ms Beare—I do not remember receipts for wages being on file.

Senator TCHEN—Looking at this term ‘minimal’ information, in Western Australia we encounter the practice of—after a number of years; I suppose after a safe period—departmental records being destroyed. Your indication is that in South Australia that practice is not followed?

Ms Beare—We do not seem to have found it to be a problem with the child migrant files. Certainly we are much more aware of the preservation of records now than we used to be. I know that in the past the preservation of records was not given the high priority that it is now.

Senator TCHEN—You mention several times in your report that basically you acknowledge that the children were placed in the care of the state and that the children were former SA state wards. Is that fairly obvious from the file—that there was a clear transferral of responsibility from the Commonwealth to the state, or acceptance of the responsibility by the state?

Mr Procter—Senator, there is some reference to the arrangement for the transfer of guardianship between the Commonwealth and the state on some files, but beyond that I do not think we would venture.

Senator TCHEN—But it was sufficient for the state to acknowledge that, in fact, they were state wards? There is no doubt about that?

Mr Procter—I think we would have to acknowledge that. They were in the guardianship of the South Australian government.

Senator TCHEN—Earlier Senator Knowles and also the chair asked some follow-up questions about the \$30,000 grant to the Child Migration Trust, which the minister recently announced. Is that the only grant that the South Australian government has made to assist the child migrants so far?

Mr Procter—In the form of a grant, yes. We have outlaid money for various purposes, which you would not describe as a grant. For example, there was the outlay for the purchase of the PHIND index. We have spent the money; it is not a grant.

Senator TCHEN—I notice in your submission you identified that:

A lack of access to specialist services exacerbated the problem—

that is, the problem the former child migrants faced in their childhood experience—

further adding to their despair and sense of powerlessness.

You identify it as a priority area. Is there a program being carried out by the department or the government to resolve that situation?

Ms Beare—The comment in the submission was as a result of people saying to us that they went to counselling services to receive counselling and felt that they had to tell their whole story, because every counsellor that was approached for counselling about these people’s issues had not heard the story. They had to not only tell the story but put the historical context to the counsellor. They had to educate the counsellor. That was a very difficult thing—for people to

not be understood, for their story to not be put into any context. Indeed, some of the people described going to counsellors who, having heard the story for the first time, were very shocked and personally moved, and the person going to receive the counselling felt that they did not have the opportunity to receive proper counselling because the counsellor himself or herself was dealing with his or her reaction to the story.

Senator TCHEN—I must say we have heard this comment quite a few times from other people as well. Having identified that problem, does the South Australian government have any plan to put in place a project to assist with the problem?

Ms Beare—We have done some informal liaison with some counselling services to see what they know about the child migration schemes and the issues for former migrants. There have been a couple of the services that have indicated an interest in the topic and a commitment to get information about the topic so that they can improve their services to former migrants who may need counselling. I welcome their commitment because I think it is important that, if former migrants need counselling, they have somebody who knows the historical context within which their story lies.

CHAIR—Following on from that question, which I think is a terribly important one, will the department give consideration to a day's in-service, or a half a day or something of this sort, which brings all the facts about the child migrants' story into the one package and into the one place, and give a call to counsellors to come and find that out? The committee, of course, is now deep into this, and we have learnt a fair amount. But most of us had an idea of the challenges of child migration to this country. We have seen movies, read books, or whatever. I am a bit stunned that you would be able to say that some of the counsellors in this state did not really have a context for it. It would seem to me that it would be timely now to make sure that that does not happen again—that the context ought to be perhaps an in-day service or something of that sort. What would your comment be, Mr Procter?

Mr Procter—I think that is a very interesting suggestion. Clearly there is a body of knowledge built up in the Adoption and Family Information Service that could be applied in that very useful way. It is a proposition that we would need to consider.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Senator TCHEN—In that case, can you tell me whether the department or the South Australian government have any plan or any vision for either funding or providing such a service?

Ms Beare—We have found that individuals have such diverse needs. The numbers are only small and having a generic service which is expected to meet the needs of all of them is perhaps not as important for us as ensuring that each individual referral is made to a service which is best able to meet their needs. For example, the counselling that one woman I worked with was wanting was to reconnect with her faith. She felt that as a result of being placed in religious homes she had lost her connection with her church and with her god, so the most appropriate referral for her was to somebody who would be able to help her with those particular spiritual needs. For somebody else the counselling might be of quite a different kind which is not associated with any religious content. Rather than some specific service for child migrants, it is

important that there be a small range of people who have a good, solid knowledge of the history and the context and that every single referral that we make is made on an individual and personal basis, according to the needs of the person.

Senator GIBBS—To follow-up on the counselling service, my problems would be totally different to Senator Murray's or Senator Crowley's. Counsellors are trained in that way—that they look at a person's individual needs. For the child migrants, if they wished to go, of course their needs would be different. Why would that hold you back from having a service?

Ms Beare—We could certainly look at some generic service for child migrants.

Senator GIBBS—We are talking about a trained psychologist. They train for seven years. They are not exactly dummies.

Ms Beare—I understand the social worker from the Child Migrant Trust who will now be visiting Adelaide will be a specialist person. I know they provide some counselling as part of their work.

Senator GIBBS—I do not have very much to ask because most of my colleagues have asked what I wanted to ask. We have met quite a lot of people who not only have been brutalised and thrashed by these demons that ran these institutions but a lot of whom received absolutely no education, which of course is against the law in this country. As far as I am concerned, those people should be thrown in jail and the keys thrown away, if indeed they are alive. Considering that there are so few child migrants who came to South Australia, and bearing in mind of course that the minister or the department was responsible for their care—they were wards of the state—ought the government to see their way clear to giving compensation to these people? Not huge amounts of money but compensation in the form of classes where they can actually read and write—education for these people.

Mr Procter—I think the topic takes us into the area of policy. We would be a bit reluctant to venture an opinion on behalf of the government.

Senator GIBBS—Could you put it to your minister? After all, they were wards of the state and it was the government's responsibility to check this institution and to make sure that these children were not only fed, clothed, properly looked after and not beaten to death but also educated.

Ms Beare—I would be happy to help to organise literacy classes for anybody who wanted it. Many of the former migrants I have met are very intelligent people who have a very good degree of literacy. I would not want to stereotype the group of former migrants in South Australia as being illiterate.

Senator GIBBS—I am not saying that but a lot of witnesses have said to us that they were not educated at all. They were simply used as slaves in these institutions. They had to do all of the extra work. They were told that they were stupid, that they were dummies and that they were not worth education and they received absolutely no education. Do you have a free program in South Australia that people can go to to learn to read and write?

Senator KNOWLES—Furthermore, we have also had evidence that, when people seek to go and educate themselves in the mainstream as older students, they feel even worse because they do not have the skills that others do. They get left behind again and get embarrassed. It is that group of people there. It is not necessarily, as Senator Gibbs says, all that big but there is nonetheless a group. I realise it is a policy issue and that you are probably unable to answer it, but that is the context in which it exists out there in the real world.

Mr Procter—Going back to the point already made, there is no way we would want to typify the group. As people approach the Adoption and Family Information Service and talk of their needs, clearly if the question of what we are now talking about emerges as a need on the basis of that client, that could be considered.

Senator GIBBS—I understand that but there are ways of doing it. If you had a program like that—and I know you cannot implement it but you can certainly talk to your minister and you do work for the government, so you can speak to these people. Once it is set up you can inform the Child Migrant Trust. They are the people who know so many of them and who are looking after them and can say, ‘This is available.’

Ms Beare—We could give information to the Child Migrant Trust about what literacy programs are available in South Australia for adults.

Senator GIBBS—Obviously it is not the government of today, but it was the government, and they owe these people something. This is a basic right in life that everybody should have and most of us do have.

CHAIR—Are you right?

Senator GIBBS—I am fine, apart from the statutes of limitations, but you are going to get back to us on that.

CHAIR—I notice in your submission you say under term of reference E:

Consideration should be given to the provision of reparation if it is seen that this will assist the healing process.

What do you understand by the word ‘reparation’ in that submission?

Ms Beare—An example might illustrate the point best. We have dealt with such small numbers here that we have difficulty grouping into meaningful groups. One example that I have come across is of somebody who came to the orphanage and who, while not being part of an education system and being provided with an education, was required to do housework and cleaning duties at the orphanage. This person felt, since she was not a student and was part of the housekeeping at the orphanage, that she had a right to wages for the work that she did. Indeed, it was important for her, even at this stage, that the work she did was acknowledged financially. Those are the sorts of considerations that could be given to people for whom some reparation of a symbolic nature which is important to the person could be considered.

CHAIR—In your activities statement that you provided earlier I read:

Apply for compensation. Facilitating services through Centacare to (1) enable former child migrants to receive counselling from the Mercy Sisters or through other services; (2) apply for compensation not in the legal sense, such as past wages not paid whilst at Goodwood; an apology and/or to gain information from Centacare files.

Does that mean that the government will assist people and/or pay the compensation?

Ms Beare—The assistance that was given in that case was to somebody who felt unable to approach the Catholic Church with the issues. Our encouragement to that person was to write to the Catholic Church with a request for what it was that she wanted.

CHAIR—Will the state government go into bat and take up the case for compensation for wages forgone with the Catholic Church? Will you do that on behalf of migrants?

Mr Procter—What we are describing is a process of that kind in the case of the needs of an individual person who came forward and we had tried to help.

CHAIR—This means though, as I understand it, that compensation would have to come from the Catholic Church.

Mr Procter—I guess we are in the same position we were in on a couple of other topics. We really would not purport to speak on behalf of the government, having a general approach in the area. All we have tried to illustrate is that it is a way we have tried to assist a particular person. You asked what we mean by ‘reparation’. What we mean by that term is the sum total of all of the things we have described for you so far as being the various ways we have tried to assist these people.

CHAIR—Does that include that the state government will pay compensation dollars for wages foregone, for example?

Mr Procter—I could not say that, Madam Chair.

CHAIR—Who could?

Mr Procter—The state government.

CHAIR—You have said ‘reparation’. In this submission, which has been signed off by the chief executive of the department, and I would have presumed therefore came with the imprimatur of the minister, it says:

Consideration should be given to the provision of reparations ... Some who claimed that they were forced to work for no wages have stated that they wish to be compensated for that work.

On behalf of Mrs Ordinary Citizen, I understand that to mean that the government is sympathetic to compensating people with dollars.

Mr Procter—Again I cannot speak on behalf of the government but, Chair, you could read that to mean that the system that has treated the children in this way will respond. The system that has treated the children in this way included Centacare.

CHAIR—That is a pretty good answer. It has completely distracted me from whether or not the government will pay any dollars. Keep going, Mr Procter. Is the government likely to pay?

Mr Procter—I truthfully cannot answer the question that you have asked.

CHAIR—You do accept, though, that my reading of that allows that it is open to that interpretation.

Mr Procter—Certainly I recognise that. It is the interpretation you are placing on it.

CHAIR—You also say in this additional information that you have raised concerns regarding stringent rules in former child migrants accessing services from international social services. Who did you raise those concerns with?

Ms Beare—In a discussion meeting that we had with the Child Migrant Trust we learned that some of the former migrants had trouble working out how they could access the travel fund to get back to meet with their families in Britain. To some extent the matter was resolved in that meeting because some of the former migrants did not understand that the Child Migrant Trust was able to help them with preparing their submissions to the travel fund which is administered through the international social services. I think some of the former migrants and the Child Migrant Trust have established some better connections which will assist with better access to those services in the future.

CHAIR—We have had any number of witnesses give us evidence that the rules are very stringent. First of all, you must have an appropriate relative already discovered. If you think there might be somebody there is no assistance through this to go to the UK or to try and make contact. So contact must be established, then it must be the right sort of relative. For a lot of families cousins may be the only surviving members of a family but that rules them out of eligibility. Then there is a very strict means test. Are these restricted criteria of concern to the department?

Ms Beare—Those are the concerns that we have had raised with us as well. Another example is: if the only relative that is found has passed away, then that deems the person ineligible as well, even though to visit the grave of a person is as important to somebody as meeting a close relative, if that is not going to be possible. So, yes, the stringency of the rules has been raised.

CHAIR—These are concerns that have been raised with you. Are these concerns of yours? Will you raise these concerns with the ISS on behalf of migrants from South Australia?

Ms Beare—We would be happy to coordinate the concerns that have been raised and forward them to the international social services.

CHAIR—We need clout. Will the department lend its clout to taking up the case with ISS on behalf of migrants? A lot of people will tell us, 'These are the concerns,' but who is going to help ISS to change its rules?

Mr Procter—The answer to the question is, yes, we will.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Procter. Well done. We would be very pleased to know—if you are prepared to provide it to the committee—what you might say in taking up this issue and, of course, before our committee reports, if you get any response. You understand exactly what are the concerns, and I think it is important that those concerns are raised on the run as the issues come up by such people as yourself. I am not sure of all the things you are taking away to do homework on—

Mr Procter—We have been writing furiously, Chair.

CHAIR—The *Hansard* will be provided to you, so do not fret that you have missed anything because it will all be there for you. I have to say, as we get to the end of this session, that I have dined out over many years on how forward thinking the South Australian departments are, in social policy in particular. I would hate to think there was even the faintest whiff of a chance that a South Australian department could be run over by a comparable Western Australian department in this area. You have had a look at their submission, as I understand, and you have probably read the *Hansard* of what they have actually gone ahead and set up.

Mr Procter—We have.

CHAIR—Is that something the South Australian department will take up?

Mr Procter—We will certainly look at what they are doing. We have some knowledge of what they are doing and, to the extent that it is relevant to South Australia and needed in South Australia, we would certainly look at doing some of those things. I might say, having read the *Hansard*, that I would like to take the opportunity to put on the record that I do not quite agree with the description given by my colleague from the west—Mr Fisher—about the lack of activity in the rest of Australia. Certainly they have been busy, but I hope we have succeeded in illustrating for you today that we in South Australia have been quite busy. Indeed there has been some work done between all governments from time to time.

Senator MURRAY—Mr Procter, I would like to read you something from a public submission by an organisation called Broken Rites Australia Collective Inc. The reference is submission No. 57. We also heard from them in a hearing. This is the quote:

It should be recognised that at the time child migrants were being cared for in so many institutions the sexual assault of children was not sanctioned in any educational system in Australia. Child labour was not permitted in law. Slavery had been abolished. Public beatings and floggings were no longer carried out in either the criminal justice system or in the military, and minimum standards, working conditions, hours of work, and wages had already been established for working adults.

That is another way of expressing what we all know, and that is that neither the Commonwealth government nor any state government at any time approved, permitted or otherwise agreed, in law or in any statements, to the sorts of things that happened to so many children. If there was a failure of governments, it was a failure of inspection duties and so on. The point I am making to you is that in law the government delegated the requirement for how children were to be looked after under various laws, education and other acts, to these institutions, and the fact is that these institutions breached their contract with state governments.

I put it to you like this as a question on notice: would the South Australian government consider an action—in other words, suing the institution concerned—for breaching their agreement with the government at the time? In so doing, would it undertake a representative action on behalf of those who were criminally and sexually assaulted, who were cruelly abused, who were used as slave labour, and so on? In other words, there is a case here and—as in any other contract with the government—if somebody has not fulfilled the contract you should pursue them at law. That is the question.

Mr Procter—The question is on notice.

Senator MURRAY—I would also ask you when you respond, if you are able to, to indicate if there are any other precedents to your knowledge, or in the knowledge of the Attorney-General's Department, which no doubt you will refer to, of the state government pursuing another organisation to whom it has contracted to do certain things. I think the legal relationship is the same whether you are asking someone to build a railway carriage or to look after children; they are doing a job on your behalf.

CHAIR—Can I add to that, because these are concerns that are taxing our minds. You might also ask: if that were the case, in what sense does that mean that these children are wards of the states, and that you regularly inspected and ticked off on them? Secondly, can I also add for your deliberation a very interesting quote from the Broken Rites Australian Collective Inc. from whom we heard yesterday:

The fact is, when a decision, a sentence, is imposed, the power of the state, the community, is exercised in relation to an individual ... I perceive the state as having a nondelegable responsibility for all that happens as a consequence of the exercise of that power.

That quote comes from Justice Frank Vincent of the Supreme Court of Victoria. He was not speaking in making a judgment; he was quoted in the *Age*, I believe, and it was a speech he made in the community. But I am not aware of judges too often having an opinion like that in the community that is at least not of some relevance to their opinions within the court. I think it actually cuts very closely to the question Senator Murray has raised. I think the committee would be very much assisted by what information the South Australian government and the Attorney, through yourself, could provide vis-à-vis these responsibilities—Commonwealth to state, state to institution. In this case, the children stayed wards of the state, and Justice Frank Vincent says the state has a nondelegable responsibility. We would be very much assisted by what you could provide for us as serious thinking on this question.

Mr Procter—We will provide you with what advice we can.

CHAIR—One last question: why are all these people under Adoption and Family Information Services? That is just the appropriate subsection of the department, is it?

Ms Beare—Yes. Our unit has the carriage of the research for people's files for people who want to access the departmental records about themselves, whether they were former state wards or whether they were adopted in South Australia.

CHAIR—Thank you. It is just that, as we have been following it, these children were brought as migrants, and migrants do not necessarily become a subplot of an adoption agency,

so in terms of straight definitions there is a puzzle or a confusing chain for us to follow here too. That is why I am interested that it is in the adoption department.

Ms Beare—Yes. Our unit comprises a combination of two units which previously existed. One was the adoption information area and the other was the Family Information Service, so it is now called the Adoption and Family Information Service. The word ‘adoption’ is first, but it is not primarily our work.

CHAIR—I see. I appreciate that. In conclusion, I can say the evidence we have had around the country—certainly the evidence in South Australia from submissions and witnesses—is that there is a great scar on the state. It may be a small scar in terms of numbers, but it is a great scar of damage done to people. We are assisted by your attendance here and your serious participation in the inquiry and steps we might take to further the healing process in this area. Thank you for coming. We appreciate you are taking away more work than you brought, I think, but the committee would be helped if you could provide us with some of that information.

Mr Procter—Thank you, Chair. We will be happy to assist in the ways we have said we will, and we have appreciated the opportunity to appear before the committee.

Proceedings suspended from 12.31 p.m. to 2.11 p.m.

CARLSON, Mrs Patricia Mary (Private capacity)

CARLSON, Mr Victor (Private capacity)

GOODCHILD, Mrs Kay Gillian, Social Worker, Adoption and Family Information Service

CHAIR—I welcome Mrs Patricia Carlson. The committee has before it your submission and, I believe, an extra statement. I understand that you have seen a copy of the Senate procedures for the protection of witnesses and their evidence.

Mrs Carlson—Yes, I have.

CHAIR—What would you like to tell us, Mrs Carlson?

Mrs Carlson—First of all, let me thank you, Madam Chairman, for giving me the opportunity to speak at this inquiry. I hope you will forgive me if I get a little tearful at times.

CHAIR—Mrs Carlson, you can go on now.

Mrs Carlson—On behalf of all the British child migrants I would like to thank Senator Andrew Murray for his fortitude in pressing the Australian government to conduct this inquiry. My main thrust today will be what can be done for us here in South Australia, and I hope that I do not repeat too much of what you have already heard. The plight of the British child migrants has been highlighted many times over in the last 12 years on television, newspapers, radio, over here in Australia and in Britain. Each time noises were made about how shocking and distressing the scheme was and people were appalled that such a thing happened, but no practical help came in the form of counselling.

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs have told us that this counselling has been available to us through the states, and I challenged this a couple of years ago when I got in touch with my federal member, Ms Trish Draper, in January 1999. She wrote a letter to the minister of immigration, Mr Philip Ruddock, on 12 January stating that child migrants should be entitled to ongoing and long-term counselling and therapy. In his reply Mr Ruddock noted that the Australian government had already provided \$645,000-odd to the Child Migrants Trust since 1990. This was to support its counselling service and its assistance with tracing connections in the UK.

Ms Draper rang the Child Migrants Trust in Melbourne to check how we could access these services and was told that we could travel to Melbourne or make a phone call. I am sure you will understand that this would be a very unsatisfactory way to administer ongoing and long-term counselling and therapy. Two years have gone by and we still do not have our therapy. As the Child Migrants Trust only has offices in Melbourne and in Perth, I imagine the child migrants living in Queensland and New South Wales, et cetera, would also be as troubled as we are in South Australia in not being able to access these services. You spoke of this this

morning with the human services department with respect to what was not available here in South Australia.

With this in mind I ask the committee to plead with the Australian government to make special funds available in each state for counselling and therapy for the British child migrants. I suggest that these funds should be administered by the Family and Youth Services of the human services department, at least in this state, where we have been having some help over the last couple of years. We need effective counselling from independent skilled mature people who have knowledge of the child migrant scheme and the devastating effects it has had on us all. We ask that enough funds be made available to educate sufficient counsellors in each state to cope with the special needs of the British child migrants.

With regard to the British travel fund, the time limit for this runs out next March. I would ask the committee to appeal to the British government to extend that time limit until at least 2007. This will enable the child migrants who have not found their families to date to access it. If this is not possible, perhaps you could petition the Australian government to continue with this travel fund for those child migrants, and for some of the unnecessary restrictions to be lifted, or at least reviewed, for those child migrants whose mothers and fathers have passed away. I myself late last year found my mother's grave and found it very comforting to be able to talk to her, and this is something that a lot of child migrants will not have the opportunity to do because their family has passed away.

I also ask for the Australian government to acknowledge the errors made by previous governments in approving the child migrant schemes in the first place and allowing the injustices suffered by the child migrants to happen without proper investigation. My own life and that of my family have been affected so much that I still cry uncontrollably when I recall what happened at Goodwood orphanage. I believe you have a copy of my own story,

CHAIR—We do, Mrs Carlson, thank you.

Mrs Carlson—Yes. I am sure it is not hard for you to imagine how desperate I felt, devoid of any hope and drowning in my misery. My despair was so great that I find it impossible to forget those days. I was such a confident, self-reliant and fun-loving person. I had faith in God and in people when I left England. They took all of that away from me and I have never regained the trust and assurances that the nuns in Britain had built into my character for 15 years. To think that anything like this would be perpetrated by a woman of the church on innocent people is unacceptable, even in those days. I have tried on many occasions to find my faith in God again, visiting many churches, but not the Catholics, of course, but to no avail.

You spoke of the records about the welfare visits to the orphanage this morning, and it twigged a few things with us. In my personal records I believe there is something like 30 to 40 documents. Only once of them refers to what happened at the orphanage. To give you some idea, it is typed neatly; it has lots of details and things about how happy we were and how they had interviewed me—and I don't remember ever being interviewed because I was working the whole time—and all the other documents are very scappily put together. You cannot understand the name of the person signing it, but on this one particular document it states that everything was fine at Goodwood orphanage. I don't believe that to be true that that is what happened.

We find it very hard to understand why the Australian governments and the organisations involved in our care repeatedly suggest that we should view this criminal treatment, ‘in the historical context of the time.’ This indicates to us that it was okay to unnecessarily take children from their homeland, physically, psychologically and sexually abuse them, hide all their records, tell them lies for 50 years, denying them the opportunity to see their mother before she died, and then subsequently turn the other cheek when we asked for help. I have copies of a couple of letters here that my husband wrote in 1965 asking about my parents. This just proves that they did nothing to help us, even though we asked 30-odd years ago.

CHAIR—Would we be able to have copies of those letters?

Mrs Carlson—Yes.

CHAIR—The committee would be most appreciative.

Mrs Carlson—It was copies that my husband wrote because I was too ill with a nervous breakdown. It was at the time when I was having my babies and I desperately wanted to know about my parents and he wrote to them on my behalf asking, ‘Please, can you help us?’ There is one particular phrase at the bottom from Canon Flood.

CHAIR—In fact we do have copies of these letters attached to your submission.

Mrs Carlson—Do you?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mrs Carlson—Right. ‘I think therefore that your wife can rest assured she has done all she can and she has no parents or relatives.’ I think you would know that I did find my family, my sisters. I met up with two more sisters late last year. They had the information on my birth certificate at the time when we asked these questions, and they denied ever having any information. They gave us the information that was on my birth certificate but then went on to say that I did not have any parents, so it did not sort of jell.

The phrases that these organisations have been using are really not acceptable and do nothing to help us experience emotional closure on the path to healing. References have also been made: ‘Care in the United Kingdom has proved to be a miserable experience for many and an abusive one for some.’ This was not so. I think in my story I tell you of the first 15 years of my life that was spent in a loving, caring environment in the orphanage in England, and to be ripped out, brought out here and treated the way I was at the age of just 15 years is awful.

You noted this morning that we need changes to the statutory law of limitations to enable us to pursue the issue of abuse. The perpetrators of the appalling assaults on innocent children and the organisations and religious orders that allowed it to happen should be brought to justice and made to pay for destroying our childhood, shattering our faith in God and ruining our chances of success. We believe we are entitled to compensation for the pain and suffering we have endured causing a lack of confidence and subsequently suppressing our individualities and impeding our progress. We also propose that we claim from those organisations the wages we

were denied for all the work we did after the age of 15. They kept me at the orphanage to work and never paid anything to me.

On a positive note we thank the department of human services, particularly the girls in the Family and Youth Services for their care and understanding and for helping provide the plaque at the Migration Museum. That will go a long way in helping us get through these hard times. In closing we ask that the committee heeds our plea and ensures that this inquiry comes to a fair and satisfactory conclusion for the British child migrants. Thank you very much.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mrs Carlson. We have just had the privilege of whizzing down to the museum and seeing the plaque, getting a photograph, and did we get to understand that a lot of it had to do with you?

Mrs Carlson—Yes, it did.

CHAIR—I thought that is what we understood. In fact, we were told there is a piece of paper available at the museum for people who come to write down good things or bad things. They were a bit taken aback at one time to discover a piece saying, ‘Excuse me. What about the British child migrants?’

Mrs Carlson—Yes.

CHAIR—I think that was all down to you.

Mrs Carlson—Thank you.

CHAIR—That is what we were told. That is exactly how it happened?

Mrs Carlson—Yes, that is right.

CHAIR—Well done!

Senator GIBBS—Thank you very much for coming, Mrs Carlson. You were sent out at 15 and you were placed in the Goodwood Orphanage. I do not quite understand why, at the age of 16, they sent you to an orphanage, because from previous witnesses they were virtually thrown out of these institutions when they were 14 or 15.

Mrs Carlson—Exactly.

Senator GIBBS—What was the reasoning for sending you out when you were 15, when obviously you could have furthered your education in England and stayed there, and indeed worked, because people did work at that age.

Mrs Carlson—That is right. Unfortunately, that has puzzled me all these years. Not only did I go there, but they kept me there until I was nearly 17 and made me work without wages. Then flogged me on a number of occasions for different misdemeanours. I was a very confident girl when I came out here. They beat it out of me.

Senator GIBBS—Did they ask you in England if you wanted to come? Could you have said no, or were you too young to understand?

Mrs Carlson—The details are in my story. But to cut it down to a couple of lines, they asked me originally when I was probably 12 or 13. I happened to be in bed. They said to me, ‘How would you like to go to Australia?’ I was reading a *National Geographic* magazine or something at the time and thought that Australia had been written across the back of the book. She thought I was reading about it. It was not there. The following morning they asked a number of us and they simply sowed the seed and never spoke of it much for a while after that. They let us talk about it. Of course the more game of us decided, ‘Let’s try. We can always come back,’ not realising what was really going to happen. It sort of grew from that, if you know what I mean.

Senator GIBBS—It was like an exciting adventure.

Mrs Carlson—Yes.

Senator GIBBS—Are the nuns and other people at this institution still alive today? Do you know?

Mrs Carlson—Not the one that flogged me, no. She has passed away.

Senator GIBBS—What about the others? Are they still alive?

Mrs Carlson—Sister Clare is still alive. There are probably two or three of them still alive. There were two nuns at Goodwood Orphanage who were angels but they overrode them. They could not do anything about it.

Senator MURRAY—What were their names?

Mrs Carlson—They were Mother Thomas and Sister Martha. It was Mother Michael that did all the dirty work and ordered it all to happen.

Senator GIBBS—Because you were older at the time you went there and a lot of our witnesses were younger, do you recall welfare people inspecting the place?

Mrs Carlson—No.

Senator GIBBS—Anybody in authority coming out to inspect the place?

Mrs Carlson—I do not recall them.

Senator GIBBS—Not at all?

Mrs Carlson—They stated in one of the documents in my file that they actually interviewed me and said I was happy. I do not remember ever being slightly happy.

Senator GIBBS—Of course, you were at the age where you would be able to remember that.

Mrs Carlson—I remember such a lot. I remember all of my childhood, all of it. When I came out here I tried to focus on my childhood in England to try and get through when I was out here. I now can recall heaps and heaps of stuff from my own childhood, particularly the trip out here, the treatment of the children in the orphanage, visitors. I have a very good friend who nursed Mr Fallon and it was Mr Fallon and his family that used to come up to the orphanage and see the English kids; give us lollies, although in those days we used to call them sweets. It was Mr Fallon who brought it to the notice of the archbishop—about the beating that I had had—because I showed him my back. This very good friend of mine can vouch for that because she said he spoke to her about it before he died, about what went on at Goodwood Orphanage.

Senator GIBBS—As far as the education was concerned, did the archbishop ask questions like, ‘Are these children being taught?’

Mrs Carlson—We would not know what was said amongst any of them. Mr Fallon threatened to take it to the newspapers. I know he had a meeting of the heads of the institutions at Goodwood Orphanage where he told them that the strap was never to be used again. I do not know whether that actually occurred, but I believe it did improve at Goodwood Orphanage after that, and I do remember Mother Michael being shipped back to Angas Street, with most of us cheering.

Senator GIBBS—You went out to work after?

Mrs Carlson—Yes.

Senator GIBBS—When you were what, 17?

Mrs Carlson—I was 16. I probably would have been about 16 and nine months when they sent me to Calvary Hospital.

Senator GIBBS—You were paid wages?

Mrs Carlson—Paid at Calvary, yes.

CHAIR—To do what?

Mrs Carlson—To assist in the x-ray department. I really would not want to tell you openly what actually happened on my first day. Coming from a girl’s orphanage all my life, it was quite embarrassing, quite a shock really.

Senator GIBBS—It is okay.

CHAIR—Were you in school?

Mrs Carlson—No.

CHAIR—You did not go to learn to be a hospital aide?

Mrs Carlson—No.

CHAIR—You were working as a sort of general factotum?

Mrs Carlson—Yes. I wanted to train to be a dressmaker. I finally trained when I was 56.

CHAIR—After you went to the hospital for a year or so, what happened then?

Mrs Carlson—We had to report back to Father Roberts—it was either every week or every fortnight; at least every fortnight.

CHAIR—Where was Father Roberts?

Mrs Carlson—Father Roberts was in charge of the Catholic welfare services or whatever they called it.

CHAIR—West Terrace?

Mrs Carlson—No. He was in Angas Street—no, what is the other one?

CHAIR—Wakefield Street probably.

Mrs Carlson—Wakefield Street—where Centacare is now. I had heard that people went on holidays after a year's work and I had no idea what to do so I went and asked him. He was of no help whatsoever. The girl in his office who was his secretary, who was my age at the time, called me over to her and said, 'Would you like to come to my place?' That was the best thing that could have happened to me, because I stayed with that family for three years and she was my sister. She taught me how to live in the outside world. She taught me how to behave and how to save money, just lots and lots of things, and I do not think I could ever repay her. She is still a very good friend of mine and she has done it for many people. But it really was a turning point in my life.

CHAIR—Did you get the holiday?

Mrs Carlson—I holidayed at her place and we went down the beach.

CHAIR—Well done! Then did you go to do some more work? Were you a working girl beyond that?

Mrs Carlson—Yes. When I left Calvary Hospital I started working in a chemist.

CHAIR—As a sales assistant?

Mrs Carlson—Yes—a couple of chemists actually, yes. I started to get a bit of confidence back and started on the long road.

CHAIR—I will not ask you when you met that fellow sitting to your right there. I will come to that later.

Mrs Carlson—In fact, he is the other best part of my life. Without him I could not have survived. He has been just wonderful, and unfortunately some of the girls have not been as lucky as I was.

CHAIR—I think that is also true, Mrs Carlson. We have heard the good and the bad in terms of marriage outcomes and families. It is very good to sit with one that is a very big plus. When you were in the orphanage in the UK, in Plymouth, Devon, did you know of your mother then?

Mrs Carlson—No.

CHAIR—You had no family?

Mrs Carlson—No. I did not know.

CHAIR—What age were you when you went to the orphanage?

Mrs Carlson—According to the records, two or a few weeks old.

CHAIR—Do you know why you went to the orphanage?

Mrs Carlson—Now I do, because I have met up with my family again. My mother and father had my two sisters—one was three and one was 1½—and she got pregnant with me. We have proof from my aunties and everything that she was with my father at the time when she was pregnant, because I was born about three months after she left my father. She left my father because, in my sisters' words, he was a swine and just could not cope. She left the two girls with my father, whose parents were reasonably well off in the middle of the Depression, and they had a very good education. After I was born I was put in the orphanage and left. I do remember an older person visiting me up until the time I was about three or four, but that disappeared and then nobody after that. It was quite a joke in the orphanage to say we had a mother and father. But, no, I did not know of anybody.

Senator GIBBS—Do you know who the old person was?

Mrs Carlson—I do not know.

Senator GIBBS—Would it have been a grandparent?

Mrs Carlson—It probably was. I believe it must have been my mother's mother because to me, even when I was small, she still looked small. And my grandmother was small. She had size 1 shoe or something, she was so small, and she always wore black, and that was something this lady always did.

CHAIR—Have you seen the forms that came with you when you migrated to Australia?

Mrs Carlson—Yes.

CHAIR—Did they say you had a mother and father?

Mrs Carlson—No.

CHAIR—What did they tell you?

Mrs Carlson—It says ‘unknown’.

CHAIR—Unknown.

Mrs Carlson—But alongside of that form came the birth certificate with my mother’s and father’s name on it and their address and everything. Even when we wrote back to ask, they did not do any search for years. My mother and father individually would have been claiming a pension. We wrote to all the social services and everything over there, asking if they had them on their records, but they said no. Even the day after I had already spoken to my sister I got a letter to say, ‘I’m sorry, Mrs Carlson, you have no family.’

CHAIR—From where?

Mrs Carlson—From one of the social services over there.

CHAIR—In the UK?

Mrs Carlson—In Bristol, I think, yes.

Senator GIBBS—Somebody would have had to sign for permission for you to come to Australia.

Mrs Carlson—Yes.

Senator GIBBS—Who did that?

Mrs Carlson—The mother in charge of the Nazareth House signed.

Senator GIBBS—But you had parents.

Mrs Carlson—Yes, that is right.

Senator GIBBS—So she broke the law?

Mrs Carlson—Obviously.

Senator GIBBS—She was not your guardian.

Mrs Carlson—I do not know. I do not know that she did not sign me over. I do not know that.

Senator MURRAY—Just for clarification, in the letter of 9 February 1965, the Very Reverend Canon Philip Harvey refers to:

Consent for emigration was given by her guardian, the Mother Superior at that time of Nazareth House, Stonehouse, Plymouth.

Mrs Carlson—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—So he obviously thought she was the guardian.

Senator GIBBS—Right.

CHAIR—When did you first see your birth certificate?

Mrs Carlson—Before I was married I had to get an extract from the birth certificate to prove that I was marrying him. You had to have your name. There was no information, it just said the day I was born, and the year. As far as my birth certificate was concerned, I wrote over to England and I believe it was in 1967 or 1968—my youngest daughter was four at the time—that I saw my mother's name and my father's name, and their address. That was when we started our search. We had started before that, but really this was—

CHAIR—Have you had trouble getting access to records here or there?

Mrs Carlson—You get scant stuff along the way, but always ending up with, 'I'm sorry, I can't help you any more.' When I tried for my records here back in the sixties, I went to West Terrace where the records were supposed to have been held. I knocked on the door and when the nun came to me—I had already rung and said I was coming—she said, 'Look, dear, I'm sorry, the records have been packed up. They are being moved to Angas Street.' I said, 'Okay. When can I go to Angas Street?' 'In a month's time, dear, that'll be fine.' So off I went the next month to Angas Street. 'Oh, I'm sorry, dear, but we haven't unpacked them yet. Come back in a month's time.' I came back in a month's time—'Oh, I'm sorry, dear, but the sister who's in charge is away sick today and I can't take you in there.' This went on and on and I never did go back again. I just got fobbed off and we never got anything, until the human services department applied for them.

CHAIR—Then you got records that were satisfactory, at least in amount?

Mrs Carlson—Well, yes—not satisfactory in the way that records were kept at Goodwood Orphanage. They kept absolute details of your every move after you left the orphanage, but nothing before, while you were there.

CHAIR—This is the welfare department?

Mrs Carlson—Yes. I assumed it was the Catholic welfare department that was supposed to have kept those records. I just assumed that.

CHAIR—It is an interesting question for us, and one of those things that makes it very difficult. We are in the process of discovering today that South Australia had the migrant children as wards of the state in the care of a Catholic institution which seems, as far as I can tell, to be a little different from the trail of authority in other states. It will be a question for us to look at very closely, to see if that is the case or not. Almost everybody has said to us how hard it has been to get any decent records. It is hard enough, of course, in Australia trying to get records from the UK, but the point that you raise and others have raised is that it is very hard to find details about what happened in Australia.

Mrs Carlson—Yes.

CHAIR—Again, we should take note of this and put this as a question to the Catholic authorities: what records did they keep? Are they the ones that now the department has that say, ‘Miss Pat Carlson was there from X to Y.’ They are the records you have from the orphanage.

Mrs Carlson—Yes, when I got there and when I left, and when I got baptised—not that I got baptised there, but anything to do with religion, yes, but nothing about anything else that happened, and health. We have no health records at all. We have started with a new doctor and he asked, ‘Any high blood pressure in your family?’ Incidentally, I started to get high blood pressure when I found my family. Whether it is coincidental or not is something we just do not know, but we are finding out as we find our families.

CHAIR—Ms Goodchild, has the department got all the records that were moved to Angas Street?

Mrs Goodchild—I do not know that I can personally answer that question for you because of my position in the department. From my own viewing of old files and some files of child migrants, the contents appear to be very similar to other wards of the state at that time. I have not personally seen Pat’s files from the Catholic welfare.

CHAIR—I am not interested in the contents of what is in the file. Mrs Carlson has said that she went to West Terrace, then she was sent to Angas Street, she went to Angas Street and never got files and, in the end, she could smell a brush-off from a mile off and she did not keep going. But now she has access to those records. I just want to check with you: are the records that she could now see the ones that were actually in Angas Street?

Mrs Carlson—When I applied for my records through Family and Youth Services I signed a form to say that these people could get these forms from the Catholics, so the file that I got I believe was from the Catholics.

Mrs Goodchild—Yes.

CHAIR—Right. That is very helpful. Can you tell us, either now or on notice, Ms Goodchild, did you actually get the files from Angas Street case by case, or was there a time when the department got them holus-bolus?

Mrs Goodchild—From my knowledge, I think that the Catholic welfare department had their own files and we had the government files and, yes, the files that Pat is talking about are files that were in the possession of the Catholic welfare department which we—

CHAIR—If you do not know that, I am sorry, Ms Goodchild; I just keep thinking social workers know everything.

Mrs Goodchild—Almost!

CHAIR—I am a bit puzzled here, because actually finding which rabbit hole to go down to find the answers is not as frustrating for the committee as it has been for you, Mrs Carlson, but it is sometimes pretty challenging. What I would like is for you, Ms Goodchild, to take on notice whether or not the files that were held in Angas Street on behalf of the child migrants have all been made available to the department for the maintenance of the record databank on behalf of those people.

Mrs Goodchild—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. That would be very useful. I am sorry about asking you questions that are not specific to your area.

Mrs Goodchild—That is all right.

CHAIR—Or, if there is anything else, please come up and tell us, if you would like to.

Ms Beare—The department has never received all of the files from the Catholic Church and, on a case-by-case basis we have acted more or less as a broker and requested the files from the Catholic Church, or from any other institution or hospital, on behalf of a client, with their permission.

CHAIR—Okay, so it is a case-by-case basis.

Ms Beare—Yes.

CHAIR—The department has sought files from a number of institutions, usually on a case-by-case basis, for anybody who has asked. Okay. Ms Goodchild, can you also take this question on notice: has the department ever sought on its own behalf information about the welfare of the children in those institutions without the child having asked you to pursue them? If you do not know, can I ask that that be taken on notice, too.

Mrs Goodchild—I would have to take that on notice.

CHAIR—That would help us, because this whole interesting question about whether children were wards of the state, and the state was responsible, or whether they were in the institution and the institution was responsible, is also reflected in the trail of trying to chase down the records. If the welfare department has a kind of overarching responsibility, I am just interested in whether you ever sought the records from an institution like Goodwood that are

now in Angas Street on behalf of, and now the rest, after you had had a certain number of cases. If not, you can perhaps tell us why not.

Mr Carlson—Madam Chairman, may I comment, please?

CHAIR—Please, Mr Carlson.

Mr Carlson—I cannot put my hands on it just at the moment, but somewhere in our personal files and correspondence there is something to the effect that the Archbishop, Dr Beovich, did not allow any of these girls from Goodwood Orphanage to be adopted, and he had some right to do this. I cannot remember the exact wording but it is in here somewhere. If I find it, I will get it to you.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr Carlson—It was saying that these girls were his wards and were—

Mrs Carlson—Not to be let out.

Mr Carlson—not to be adopted by people who were seeking children, because they would go out and work for these families and whatever and then the question would be raised, ‘Could we adopt them?’ or, ‘Can they come and work for us?’ and all sorts of funny things. I know it is there, and it is just a matter of finding it.

CHAIR—That would be very useful indeed. Thank you.

Mr Carlson—I cannot remember the exact wording, but I will hunt it up.

Mrs Carlson—Can I relate something about a friend of mine who took me home that day—or near enough to that day—and taught me. She worked for Father Roberts. She related to me something that happened. The phone went one day and the lady on the other end of the phone said, ‘Have you got somebody there that can come and do for me?’ and she looked it up and she said, ‘No, I’m sorry, I don’t have anybody at this stage.’ She said, ‘Well, what about those girls from England that came out to work for nothing?’ and I remember her saying, ‘If she had been across my desk I would have given her one!’ But that was the trend in those days, that we were supposed to have come over here and worked for nothing.

CHAIR—I feel a bit uneasy about this, but I do feel like I should ask you a little about your history, which you have referred to today—and I realise it is written here—on the record. You had the courage to cop that beating, and then have the evidence of that beating discovered, which then led to the archbishop having to appreciate that he could not go on ignoring—if he had ignored it—the evidence with which he was confronted. It is very important, as we have all said, for this inquiry to not gloss over. We have got to tell the stories that have come through and the story that you tell us on page 5 of your written report here is one of the very powerful pieces of evidence that this committee cannot ignore. I would like to acknowledge it so that it is not missed in our report. I realise, as it is written here, that I do not need to ask you to go through that again.

Mrs Carlson—I appreciate that very much.

Senator MURRAY—There is another useful thing you have said, and that is about children and adults like us having their faith and trust in human beings affected by what they experience or hear. You do state, right at the very beginning of your submission, that in the Plymouth, UK, Nazareth House Orphanage, Durnford Street, Stonehouse, Plymouth, Devon, that, and I quote:

The Nazareth nuns were affectionate and kind. They nurtured me from a baby and educated me well.

It is nice to know that there are some nuns who behave as they are supposed to, so I am glad to have seen that.

Mrs Carlson—They weren't Mercy nuns.

Senator MURRAY—Then we move on to the Sisters of Mercy here who somebody said to me today you could also describe as the Sisters of Satan, but you have indicated that a couple of them were kind as well.

Mrs Carlson—Yes, two of them.

Senator MURRAY—There is an issue that arises from here which we need to constantly explore. The assault you were subjected to was a criminal assault. It would, in any circumstance, warrant a gaol term, in my belief. Once you became an adult, why did you not go to the police to have this dreadful woman, Michael, charged with criminal assault and why did you not get the archbishop charged with concealing a crime and being an accomplice to concealing an assault?

Mrs Carlson—I do not know whether you can imagine what it is like to be in a country all on your own, because when we left the orphanage we were on our own. The only person who was there to help us was Father Roberts. We had no idea that that was a criminal offence. They did it to us and we were terrified. They beat us — they beat me, anyway — into submission. It was one of those things that I lost everything. I lost my confidence, I lost my ability to stand up for myself. I do not believe I knew what to do. I used to say to myself, 'One day you will rot in hell,' about her. That used to keep me going. I never, ever realised that I could have reported it as a criminal offence. I would not have known that.

Senator MURRAY—I do understand your circumstances. It is just important that we get your reasons on the record. Let us move on from there. There are still some of these people alive today. Have you and others that you are in contact with—'networking' is the phrase today—considered the possibility of going to the police and asking that assault charges be laid against those people who are still alive?

Mrs Carlson—No, I have not considered it. It is not a bad idea though. We had considered suing them at one stage. Somebody arranged for a lawyer in Melbourne to act on our behalf but the money was coming out of our pockets, and every time he made a visit to South Australia it cost us \$200 and most of us were on pensions and quite a few of them were on pharmaceuticals, if you know what I mean, from depression and things. It all costs a lot of money. Most of the girls could not afford it. I was working at the time and I put a fair bit in and a couple of other

girls did too but we just ran out, because they confronted us one day—two of the nuns and a lawyer—and there were three of us and our lawyer. In my opinion, those two nuns sat there with grins on their faces as if to say, ‘You haven’t got enough money to keep this going.’ That was the feeling I got. I nearly walked out in disgust really. We ran out of money and that was as far as we got.

Senator MURRAY—As an adult woman now you understand that that form of action you were taking was civil litigation for which you were responsible. The litigation I am referring to is criminal and is undertaken by the state. In other words, you lay a complaint and the police have to follow up. I do not know what the limitations are in this state in terms of following up issues years later. The fact is — and I don’t seek to give you advice — that this was criminal assault. The allegations have been made by numerous people right across Australia. Here we have had allegations made about Goodwood, and personally I think it is a great shame that these issues have not been considered. Let me leave that as a comment—

CHAIR—Can I interpolate there. What was the final state of the discussions with your lawyer? Do you have an opinion from the lawyer that there is a case to pursue there?

Mrs Carlson—I believe he felt there was a case.

CHAIR—Would any of that be available to the committee?

Senator MURRAY—In writing is what the senator is asking.

Mrs Carlson—I could get it.

CHAIR—Could I ask you to give consideration to that. If it were possible to provide the Senate committee with that report or opinion in writing from your solicitor, that would be very useful.

Senator MURRAY—You should indicate whether you want it to be public or confidential.

Mrs Carlson—Yes.

CHAIR—Do not worry about writing it down, because the copy of the *Hansard* will come to you and when you read it through you will have a memory jogger there. Feel free to write it down as well, if you like, but you will be getting the *Hansard*. When about were you sitting with the lawyer, talking to the nuns? In roughly what year?

Mrs Carlson—Four years ago.

Senator MURRAY—Three to four years ago or something like that?

Mrs Carlson—Yes, about four years ago.

Senator MURRAY—Has there been any compensation or recompense provided by the Mercy sisters?

Mrs Carlson—No. The two nuns that are in charge now are very sympathetic to our cause. They offered me five counselling sessions. I was not very happy about taking them but you sort of grasp at straws and hope to God that something might happen that will help. My husband said, ‘Look, give it a go.’ It didn’t work, because all the time in the back of my mind it was not—it helped, I believe, in coming to grips with my abandonment in the first place by my mother but it never touched on anything that was really troubling me. I only had to sign for five sessions so it sort of came and went and nothing—

CHAIR—I am interested to know that four or five years ago you and a solicitor and some other women, on behalf of the orphans who were sent to Goodwood, were talking with the lawyer and some of the nuns from the Mercy order. As far as you know, that has not proceeded in any direction since.

Mrs Carlson—No.

CHAIR—Thank you. Senator Murray.

Senator MURRAY—Yes. The second area which would have been worthy of a criminal charge, at least at the time and maybe still is—I will read you out a statement from your experiences and it is page 2 of those experiences:

We were lined up in the yard and the considerable amount of money given to us by the passengers and crew of the SS Ormonde was taken from us. We never saw that money again.

That is theft, is it not?

Mrs Carlson—That is correct, yes.

Senator MURRAY—I thought theft was against the law.

Mrs Carlson—There you go.

Senator MURRAY—Have you ever gone to the police to complain about that?

Mrs Carlson—No, I did not. They would have told us that, ‘We will buy you something.’ At one stage they sent me to somebody’s house. In actual fact it was Mother Michael’s cousin’s place. She had three boys aged nine, 10, 11, in that area. I had to work for her for three weeks. I went there on the pretext that I was there on a holiday but I worked and cleaned and washed and ironed and cooked and did dishes the whole time I was there. Her husband at the last minute said to me, ‘Did the woman give you some money?’ He said it in that way. I said, ‘No.’ He said, ‘Here. Here’s 10 pound but don’t tell the Reverend Mother about it.’ Of course, I got back and the first question she said, ‘Did they give you any money?’ Of course, you were too terrified of them to tell a lie for fear they would catch you out and you got another beating. So I said, ‘Yes.’ She said, ‘Give it to me and I’ll buy you a pair of pyjamas,’ which I never, ever saw.

Senator MURRAY—She stole your money again.

Mrs Carlson—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—Not only are they brutal sadistic people but they are thieves as well. Let us move on to the question of unpaid wages. You mentioned several times—this is evidence we have had in a number of places—that you worked without pay. The question is: did you know whether you were supposed to be paid? I will give you a context. In Western Australia the groups of men there in particular who were sent out to work were aware of what they were supposed to be paid and they were aware that it was supposed to be put in trust and yet they never saw the money. That is the evidence before us. Were you aware that you were supposed to be paid?

Mrs Carlson—Not at the time, no. Not until much later when I looked back on it and especially when I found out that most of the other girls were sent away from the orphanage at the age of 14. Then I started questioning, ‘Why was I kept there?’ and realised it was because they wanted me to do all the work around the place. Incidentally, there was nobody ever hired to do any work at Goodwood Orphanage. I do not remember anybody being hired to clean the place. It is fair enough to keep your clothes tidy, make your beds, things like that—

Senator MURRAY—Let me keep it in a legal framework.

Mrs Carlson—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—In Western Australia the state government agreement with the receiving agencies were that at a certain age and doing certain work, people should be paid and the amount they should be paid. What we need is evidence, either via the department or via yourselves who would know that, that there was such an agreement here because if there was an agreement between the state government of South Australia and the institutions that you were to be paid for work after a certain age or whatever it was, whatever the conditions were, and you weren’t paid then that once again is theft.

Mrs Carlson—I do know of one of the other girls who actually left the orphanage but went to another Mercy institution who states that she was supposed to have had money put into trust. It is quite possible that the same arrangement was in South Australia as in Western Australia.

Senator MURRAY—Let me make this request to you through the chair. If your network of former child migrants at Goodwood that you are in contact with are able, through you or on their own if they wish, to provide the committee with a supplementary submission indicating this issue of wages, whether they were in trust or not, whether they were supposed to be paid or not and whether they should have got them or not, that would assist us. It is an area that we wish to pay attention to. To give you a framework of the time, this committee will not report until about May or June so you have a month to assist us, if you are willing to do it.

Mrs Carlson—Yes, of course I will.

Senator TCHEN—Mrs Carlson, thank you for coming along to give us evidence today. As Senator Gibbs pointed out, you were a little bit older than most of the children who came over, so we have had the benefit of that because you had a very good memory of your experience. Sometimes I wonder if we quite often have vivid memories which tend to overshadow other memories. I wonder whether your experience with one group of sisters may have influenced

your view of the whole Catholic Church, even though you say you did have very good memories of the Sisters of Nazareth.

One of the points you make is that the Catholic Church withheld information from you which would have helped you find your parents, your mother particularly. You said it was not until about 1968 that you found out who your parents were and got their names and addresses. I notice in the letter that Canon Harvey wrote back to your husband in 1965 he said, 'I have a copy of your birth certificate.' Then he said according to your birth certificate he had your date of birth, your father's name and his occupation, his address, your mother's name, her occupation and her address. So you had that information in 1965 and that was supplied by—

Mrs Carlson—I did not actually get a birth certificate until 1967. The dates are a bit hard but it was around that time, maybe after that, that I said to Vic, 'We'll get my birth certificate,' as I never had any papers or anything and I had not been naturalised at the time.

Mr Carlson—We got married in 1958 and we had to provide certain details for registration purposes and what have you. Believe it or not, just a few months ago I looked at our original wedding certificate and we had her father's name and it was incorrect. I have since changed it with the registrar to reflect the proper situation. I cannot remember—the dates are a bit tricky.

Senator TCHEN—I just wish to clarify that, because I think, along the same line that Senator Murray said, there are certainly criminal activities against you but whether the whole organisation or institution is carrying out criminal activities against you is quite different. They are somewhat different things. In your recommendation you suggested that we need changes to the statutory law of limitations. Is that in South Australia? Why do you say that?

Mrs Carlson—I believe it is different in different states.

Senator TCHEN—Have you encountered difficulties with that particular issue of wishing to take action against people?

Mrs Carlson—Difficulties inasmuch as when we have spoken to lawyers they say, 'This is hard. The statute of limitation doesn't allow you to do that.' We have taken their word for it and walked away. That is really what it is about. In South Australia it is about six years.

CHAIR—Just about everywhere. I believe that is a question we put to Mr Procter and to the department this morning, to see if they could come back with the relevant information for people in South Australia.

Senator MURRAY—The key difference is that in some states—and it may be so in South Australia, which is why we want to hear—although the statute applies, a judge may on application ignore the statute. In other states, such as Western Australia, they may not. That is the difference.

Mrs Carlson—The problem with all of this legal stuff is none of us know anything about it. That is where we also need help, apart from our counselling and therapy and recognition. We need to be advised on anything that we may do to help us do these things.

Senator TCHEN—Did you receive that sort of advice about the statute of limitations applying? Or did your lawyer give you that sort of advice on the occasion when you were contemplating suing the Sisters of Mercy?

Mrs Carlson—I do not think so, otherwise I do not think we would have pursued it.

Senator TCHEN—Your second recommendation about the counselling is clear enough. But in the third one, where you compare your situation with the stolen generation, what catches my eye is that you said at the end of it:

It is only right that a similar amount should be allocated.

I take it you mean proportionately because the two problems are different in size.

Mrs Carlson—Yes. The point I was trying to get across was that it was the removal from our country that was at stake with this.

Senator TCHEN—Yes, I understand.

Mrs Carlson—Viv Sicaris, at the plaque ceremony, quoted Euripides, 430 BC, who said:

There is no greater sorrow on earth than the loss of one's homeland.

This so applies to us. That is part of it and perhaps the Australian government should think about that when they are—

Senator TCHEN—Mrs Carlson, we well understand your pain. I was struck by the word 'similar' so that is why I wanted to qualify that you meant 'in proportion'.

Mrs Carlson—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you, Senator Tchen. We are way behind, so we are going to have to try and move along. I have one last question for you, Mrs Carlson. Do you know of any examples of sexual assault on the girls while you were at the orphanage, or around about that time?

Mrs Carlson—I do not know of any sexual abuse within the orphanage, but I do know of at least one case that happened just after the girl left the orphanage. She went back to the orphanage for help and they told her to be a good girl and go back to the place where she had been raped. So yes, there was at least one case.

CHAIR—Nobody talked with you about the gardeners?

Mrs Carlson—Because I was one of the older girls I had a lot of dealings with the—well, not dealings with them. Old Joe I think his name was. He used to milk the cows and things. I do not know of any sexual assault but I do remember rumours in the priest's house.

CHAIR—These were things in the air about what priests had done to the girls?

Mrs Carlson—It was innuendoes that said, ‘Oh, I wouldn’t go over there if I were you. You know what that priest is like,’ and things like that. It was just that sort of thing, nothing concrete.

CHAIR—Thank you again, Mrs Carlson. Think that you have got a plaque on behalf of yourself and all those others. We hope the work we have asked you to do or to provide for the committee is not onerous. It should not be. If it gets to the point where it is all too much, just let us know.

Mrs Carlson—It will be a pleasure to work with you, thank you.

CHAIR—Our next witness wishes to be heard in camera, so can I ask all witnesses to step outside briefly, thank you.

Evidence was then taken in camera, but later resumed in public—

[3.50 p.m.]

HARMAN, Mr Peter, (Private capacity)

CHAIR—I welcome Mr Peter Harman. The committee has before it your submission. I understand you have seen a copy of the Senate procedures for the protection of witnesses and their evidence.

Mr Harman—That is right.

CHAIR—Unfortunately, Mr Harman, we are a bit log-jammed in time and I apologise for the late start but we would be very pleased if you would like to make some opening comments, and then there may be a few questions from the senators.

Mr Harman—I speak on behalf of my sister, Carol, Mrs Carol Medson, who is in the back row. I was one of 92 children sent from the National Children's Home in 1950 to various Methodist homes and Barnardos homes throughout Australia. I am quoting here from a statement made by the chairman of the National Children's Homes now, and it says:

Legally, National Children's Homes ceased to have responsibility for care and control of the child on his or her migration. This was in accordance with the Australian law and the responsibility for children was an issue that the principal of the National Children's Homes explored fully with the federal department of immigration of Australia before the child was sent to Australia.

So we were actually sent out under the guardianship of the department of immigration under the care of the minister, and custody was then granted to the state wards, the Children's Welfare Department, as it was, and then custodial care was given to the Methodist children's home at Magill. So that was the sequence.

CHAIR—What were you reading from there, Mr Harman?

Mr Harman—The committee might not be aware of it but I would suggest that the committee becomes aware of it. A tape has been made about the children who came out from the National Children's Homes and is part of a documentation with the tape that was presented to a conference of social workers in Sydney last year by Joan Carey, who actually works for the National Children's Homes in England and has been out here several years. The reason I brought it up today is that actually some of the kids' photos that came out with us are on the front of it.

CHAIR—So we could actually contact them and get a copy of that, Mr Harman?

Mr Harman—Yes, I suggest you would.

CHAIR—Thank you. I believe we have all been sent copies and they came last week. I am not aware of that but the secretary may have one. We will check. Anyhow, thanks, Mr Harman, we can follow that up if we have not all got one.

Mr Harman—Briefly, I do not have a beef with the care and welfare at the homes. It was dreadful but at the same time it was dreadful for Australian kids as well. Whatever happened to us as children in that home I think happened to both the migrant children and the Australian children. I am not certain of the extent of sexual abuse. I know it happened to me. I am not certain on physical abuse but I know it happened to me, but I would say the same thing was happening to Australian kids in those homes as well. It was something you did not talk about and you kept it as a secret. So if there was sexual abuse going on within the home no kid was going to tell you.

My biggest concern is the lack of care that came after we left the home. We were wards of the children's welfare in the state. We certainly had no follow-up or contact. I personally ran away from the home at the age of 15. I tell this story because it is so indicative of the inadequate care that was given. Six months after leaving I happened to be working on a farm and there was actually a plough in a paddock. I saw the local policeman's car pull up at the gate. I could not leave the tractor, I had to stick in the middle of the paddock and wait for him to get out. With him was this lady wearing gloves, a handbag and a hat. I was 16 at the time. She came over with the policeman whom I knew, and he said to me, 'I want you to meet so-and-so, she is a social worker with the state government.' It looked quite funny her coming across this paddock, the first contact with anybody for six months.

She turned around and said, 'How are you, Peter?' I said, 'Very well, thank you.' She said, 'I haven't got much to say to you but how is your personal hygiene?' All right? I am filthy, ploughing, dirty.' I said, 'I am not quite certain what you mean?' She said, 'Do you clean your teeth and have a shower every day?' That was the limit of the conversation as honest as I stand here. She had come up from Adelaide by train to do that. That was the last contact with anybody ever.

CHAIR—Come up from Adelaide to where?

Mr Harman—Tintinara.

CHAIR—Tintinara.

Mr Harman—On the Bluebird.

CHAIR—You had moved from Magill.

Mr Harman—Yes. I think that is significant of the care that any of us received through our teenage years. We battled by ourselves. We talk about identity but I do not think it is the question of identity, because you had no identity; you were a home kid and you hid it because you belonged to nobody. You had no family. I have a friend that I met in Tintinara, and it was only 40 years later that he ever knew that I was a home kid, and yet we have been friends for all that time, and that is how you hide it. Do you tell people you were abused? In the end you accept that, it is part of life. I am fortunate. I was a social worker with the welfare department in South Australia for nearly nine years.

CHAIR—How are your gloves and hat, Mr Harman?

Mr Harman—I am not a knowledgeable social worker, so I have seen the other side. And what was done to us you would never ever think of doing in any circumstances. That is what I cannot understand. Nobody cared. I went to England in 1970 to find my parents, or find my mother, who I had not seen since 1946. I went to National Children's Home, because they were my only contact and they were not interested, they brushed me off. Yet I had sold my house, sold everything to go over to find out who I was. My father would not even meet me, because he had sent me out here. He got rid of us, he did not want us, and the same thing happened to my sister years later when she went over there. We had nothing.

When we got to England the first time we were met with hostility because they had got rid of us and suddenly we have made people aware that we existed and suddenly consciences came out. So the first time we went over there we were met with lots of hostility, so we became very angry ourselves, because we could not understand that; these were our family and we became arrogant and the rest of it. Thankfully, my wife and I have been over seven times between the two of us and the situation has changed, and when I go there now I go home because it is my family.

I am 62 in a couple of weeks' time and I missed out on that, it is as simple as that. I missed out on anybody caring. Even the government had responsibility but they did not do it. The state had responsibility but they did not do it, and the Methodist Children's Home or the Methodist Church had responsibility and they did not do it. We came here from a home in England where we were in two groups with mixed sexes in Penarth in Wales, a small town. We were in with a sister, they called her, which was a sort of child care worker. My sister and I were together, and yet they could send us 10,000 miles away and when we needed each other they separated us: they put one in a boys' home and one in a girls' home.

They were the type of standards that were acceptable. They had a duty of care and they did not take that duty of care. So it leads to two things. I have been in Australia over 50 years and I have to get a visa to come back to Australia every time I go away. I have not got an Australian passport, I am not an Australian citizen, I have done national service. It is something that should have been given to us, we should not have to apply for it. We went through the rigours of immigration. We were brought to Australia to be Australians and yet I am still British, and again that is something which should be checked. I should not have to apply to do it.

The other thing is I have a legal challenge going on with the National Children's Home at the moment because I believe they were wrong in sending us to Australia. I do not see any sense in fighting the Australian government, I do not see any sense in fighting the Methodist Church but I believe that the National Children's Home were wrong. They did a cover-up. They did not provide adequate care for us. They shut my mother out of the question and we have documented proof that they did when she tried to trace us. That will fail on the basis that I have not got the money to keep it going, but somebody should be able to do it.

There should be a test case for everyone of us migrants, and that is one of the things that I ask the committee to look at. Someone should win a case. No-one has won a case. There were 9,000 migrants and no-one has won. We have won small battles, we have won emotional battles and mental battles but we have paid dearly for it. I was a social worker for eight years but for three years every Tuesday I went to see a psychiatrist so I could handle my job, so that I knew what I was doing, so that I knew what I was working with. I went in for the wrong reasons, I

went for a needs-meet-needs basis, to shut away my own problems, and in the end I believe I became a good social worker, but that is what we went through. So that is really what it is about.

CHAIR—Thank you, very much, Mr Harman. You mentioned documentation. Would any of your private or particular case documentation be able to be provided to the committee, copies of it?

Mr Harman—Sure.

CHAIR—Thank you for that. Particularly if it is evidence of deception against you and your sister and, indeed, it seems against your mother.

Mr Harman—Yes. Perhaps to elaborate a little bit for some understanding. When I met my mother I walked in on my mother one day, just like that, in England 20 years later. Unfortunately it is like the analogy of the adopted child, you have this fantasy of who your real parents are. Of course my mother let me down; she was not who I fantasised her to be. She was just this damn dumb blonde pommy and it did not work out the way I wanted. Unfortunately it stayed with me.

She did tell me when I was there that she tried through a solicitor to find out where we were. She found out that we left the day after we left because we had our photos in the London papers, because we were Londoners. She went to the Methodist children's home through her solicitor to find out where we had gone to so she could contact us, and they denied her the right. They wrote to say that she was a problem—and this is your natural mother—and I never believed that she did it, and that was the worst part. She died about three or four years ago, and I only found that out after. So I denied her rights that she had tried.

CHAIR—Why were you placed in the homes in the first place, Mr Harman?

Mr Harman—Because there was a war and my father was a prisoner of war, and they split after the war, so it was convenient, and we were placed. We were quite happy. I must say this: we were happy in the homes in England. At the same time I also have to be honest enough to say that I have no regrets about coming to Australia. I have regrets about the way we were treated, but I would like to be an Australian. As I said, I am not going to beg and crawl for it.

Senator MURRAY—At what age did you go to the home in the United Kingdom?

Mr Harman—I would have been five, six—going on six.

Senator MURRAY—You were born in 1939.

Mr Harman—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—So 1944-45 you went in?

Mr Harman—End of 1945, going on 1946, yes. We were evacuated during the war, so we did not know the fundamentals of home life, because we were Londoners and we were evacuated out of London all the time.

CHAIR—Without your mother?

Mr Harman—Without my mother, yes.

Senator MURRAY—Has your sister married?

Mr Harman—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—Do you or your sister have children?

Mr Harman—Yes. My sister has three children and I have five children. I have been married twice.

Senator MURRAY—Have you found this experience has affected your relationships with your children?

Mr Harman—Yes.

Senator MURRAY—In what sense?

Mr Harman—I am inclined to retreat and I am uncertain of myself. I am very dependent on my wife to bring me out of the black places, the black moods. She reads them. That is the good thing about her.

Senator MURRAY—Do your wife and your children and do your sister's husband and their children know about your past?

Mr Harman—Probably only over the last five years we have sat down and talked about it.

Senator MURRAY—This is a public submission.

Mr Harman—It is only probably over the last four or five years.

Senator MURRAY—Do you feel that, once those surrounding you know the circumstances of your background, it makes it easier to bear?

Mr Harman—For myself, yes. But then you become somebody that is different, because people know you as you are. My wife has a habit of saying, 'Oh, he's one of those migrant children, you know, that was on telly,' and suddenly you are put in a different category and everybody wants to know about you. We talked about identity and you have this identity, but the biggest thing is you do not know how to put value on yourself because you never had it. You never had a father that said you could do this or someone like that. The home did not care and no-one else cared.

Senator MURRAY—This is a question I have been asking a fair bit today but it is something I have been developing over the four days of hearings we have had, and we have had over 250 submissions. Your submission indicates that both of you were subject to physical assault, which may qualify for criminal assault in the criminal sense of the word, and one of you was subject to sexual assault. Did you never consider, once you became an adult, going to the police and laying charges?

Mr Harman—The statute of limitations had gone by the time I wanted to bring it out. I lived with it for 40 years before I said anything, so there was nothing to do. It was only when I was confident enough to do it.

Senator MURRAY—Are the persons concerned still alive?

Mr Harman—I am not certain; certainly were about four years ago.

Senator MURRAY—Have you ever confronted the Methodist Children's Home or confronted the persons concerned as an adult about it?

Mr Harman—No.

CHAIR—Mr Harman, we have been given to understand that something like 52 girls came to South Australia and were all placed in the Goodwood home, and that there might have been 10 to 12 boys who went to Magill probably. Can you tell us where your sister was placed?

Mr Harman—Seven went to the Magill Methodist Children's Home.

CHAIR—Seven girls?

Mr Harman—Yes.

CHAIR—That is very useful, thank you. We need to pursue this with the department to make sure we have a more reliable sense of how many girls and boys came here and where they were placed. There is a sense that all the girls went to Goodwood and a few blokes.

Mr Harman—No.

CHAIR—That is not accurate, is it?

Mr Harman—No, not at all.

CHAIR—No, thank you.

Mr Harman—All the ones from the National Children's Homes went to Magill Methodist.

CHAIR—That is a big help. Thank you very much. We have to finish, Mr Harman. I thank you and your sister, through you, for being prepared to share. I do not know if you have heard any of the other evidence today, but we have said a number of times that we cannot write a good

report if we do not have good evidence, hard true evidence, from the migrants themselves. We thank you very much for the evidence you have been prepared to give us in a submission and then come and speak to. Every person is telling a different story. We cannot interview them all, but every time we do we get another layer of depth to this program and to its injustice and its unfairness.

Your very important point about the Australian citizenship has been raised by others. I cannot pre-empt what we will decide, but I am sure something of that will emerge. I think we must also follow up your very powerful point about making a case for compensation. If there is anything further you can provide us on that—if it is with the solicitor, if there is an opinion, if there is anything of that sort that you feel you can provide to the committee in writing—we would appreciate that, but no duress. If you need to, you might want to say, ‘I can show you a copy of this, but it is a private document. Please don’t make it public,’ and we could accept it under any of those terms. That is a very powerful point that you raise there and it is certainly something the committee will deliberate on. Thank you very much, Mr Harman and Ms Harman.

Mr Harman—I appreciate that. Thank you.

[4.13 p.m.]

PRICE, Mr Paul Lesley (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Price, and I acknowledge that Mr Ian Thwaites from the Child Migrants Trust is accompanying you. The committee has your submission with it. I understand, Mr Price, that you have seen a copy of the Senate's procedures for the protection of witnesses and their evidence.

Mr Price—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. Would you like to make some comment or tell the committee what you would like to tell us and then we will ask a few questions.

Mr Price—For a start, I think that with the child migrants scheme, as much as the Catholic brothers were very harsh and some of the abuse that happened in the orphanages themselves, in both orphanages, I think a lot of that stuff could have been avoided if the people that were in charge of us at the time—the sending agents or whoever it was—had come and seen us. In the time that I lived in the orphanage, for 11 years, not one person—not one government person, not one agency—ever came to see me and see how I was physically. In some cases, especially at Tardun, there were times when two weeks would not have gone past where I was being absolutely belted up with a strap. Some of these straps were made that long and some of them had halfpennies sewn into them.

Senator MURRAY—Just describe the strap accurately for us, please.

Mr Price—It was two bits of leather and they were sewn around the corners, inside some of them. Some of them had halfpennies sewn in between them.

CHAIR—In between the two layers?

Mr Price—I still have a mark there from the time they hit me so hard that the penny split the seam and broke my bone.

CHAIR—For the record, this strap was about two feet long?

Mr Price—About that long, and it was a black strap.

CHAIR—And it had two layers of leather about what, two inches wide?

Mr Price—Yes. It would have been that thick and probably about that wide.

Senator MURRAY—The chair is being deliberate. Hansard will not pick up 'that thick'. Do you mean two inches?

Mr Price—That thick, I suppose.

Senator MURRAY—It is about an inch.

Mr Price—Yes, about an inch, maybe.

CHAIR—In between the layers of leather, there sometimes was sewn—

Mr Price—One particular brother had halfpennies sewn in between them.

Senator MURRAY—Which brother?

Mr Price—Brother Thomas.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Price.

Mr Price—In cases like Brother Thomas—and there was another brother; I believe he is still alive, the one that sexually assaulted me, Brother McLachlan, at Tardun—that person is still alive and he should be brought to justice, as far as I am concerned. At Castledare there was a person by the name of Leo. In the 11 years I spent there, I never once celebrated my birthday, did not know what date my birthday was. All I knew was that I was a year older. When I left the orphanage, when I specifically asked them about my family, whether I had a family or not, the answer was, ‘You haven’t got a family. That’s why you’re here. You’re an orphan. You do not have a family.’ I have documents here. This is about the only document I have from the Catholic Church or any government bodies. This is from the Child Migrant Trust. They are the only people who have done anything for me. That is the only document I have. All they were worried about was whether I had been baptised when I made my first holy communion.

Senator MURRAY—For the *Hansard* record, the witness showed one piece of paper for the government and three files from the Child Migrants Trust.

Mr Price—I did not even get a birth certificate. If it was not for the Child Migrants Trust, I doubt very much if I would even know who my family were. In fact, as far as I knew, I did not have a family; no brothers or sisters. When I left the orphanage there was a stigma. You were called a bastard if you did not have a family. When you went out with girls and stuff like that—I had a relationship with a girl and I told her I had a family. I could not produce a family and ended up having to leave her because I made up lies about a family I did not have.

Senator TCHEN—Mr Price, what year did you come out?

Mr Price—1953.

CHAIR—Aged how old?

Mr Price—I am also planning to go back to England for good. I would have gone back three years ago, or two years ago, but I could not get the money out of my superannuation because the laws would not allow me to get it out. I had money of my own, but I still needed that money to set myself up in England. I should not have to do that. I did not bring myself out here. I have paid over \$3,000 to return to England out of my pocket, not out of the government’s pocket. It

seems to be an ongoing thing, expenditure all the time. We always seem to be spending money to do something for the sins that the government committed.

Senator MURRAY—You realise, Mr Price, this is not the government here; this is the Senate.

Mr Price—All right, it is the Senate, but you are part of the government Senate, aren't you?

Senator MURRAY—It is different. It is part of the parliament.

CHAIR—What we will be doing, Mr Price, is writing a report that will be tabled in the parliament and then the government will respond to that report. Stories like you are telling us add considerable weight to our report. We very much appreciate you coming and telling us. But we are not the people who could then immediately solve the problem. We hear what you say and we can make recommendations about that.

Mr Price—Something needs to be done, because they are getting to the stage now where we are all in our fifties and sixties, and I still should imagine that a lot of the children who came out in my time probably still have not found their parents, you know, and I bet there has been no report on the two children that actually died at the Tardun orphanage. I bet their parents don't know they are dead. There is nothing. Nobody kept any records of the children.

Senator MURRAY—Mr Price, can you tell me about those two children. Were those two children—

Mr Price—One got run over by a tractor or trailer. The other one, they reckon he was walking in his sleep but it would be pretty hard to walk in your sleep at midday, especially where the Christian Brothers were sleeping.

Senator MURRAY—Is it possible he was murdered?

Mr Price—Well, it is possible, it is possible. I don't really know—

CHAIR—How did he die, Mr Price?

Mr Price—It just seemed it was a strange time of the day for someone to be sleepwalking around where the Christian Brothers sleep.

CHAIR—How did he die?

Mr Price—He fell—well, as far as we know, he jumped over the edge.

CHAIR—Of?

Mr Price—Of the building. The Tardun farm school is about four, three storeys high.

CHAIR—And he jumped over which floor do you think—first or second or—

Mr Price—It would have to be the second floor. The first floor is only a few feet.

Senator MURRAY—Did he fall outside or inside the building.

Mr Price—He fell outside.

Senator TCHEN—Can you tell us about what year that was.

Mr Price—Well, I went to Tardun when I around about 11½, going on 12, and it was probably about the second year I was there, it was.

Senator TCHEN—1955?

CHAIR—When did you go to Tardun? Was that after—

Mr Price—I was at Castledare from 1953 till I was—well, I think I was 7½ when I actually come out from England on the boat.

CHAIR—You were at Castledare—

Mr Price—Castledare boys home.

CHAIR—For how many years?

Mr Price—Well, from 7½ till I was nearly 12, I think.

CHAIR—Five years, okay, and then it was a little while after you arrived at Tardun that this death happened?

Mr Price—Looking at about a year. It is still a bit vague in some cases, as far as the dates.

CHAIR—Late fifties, it sounds.

Mr Price—Yes, it would have been late fifties. I think overall there was about three boys that actually died in that, but one had died long before I got there, as far as I know. See, if the government or the people who sent us had done something about it, I don't think a lot of this stuff would have happened, because it probably would have come out much earlier if they had spoken to any of the children at the orphanage itself at various intervals, maybe every six months or every 12 months, but it never happened. Eleven years I was there: not one person ever came to see how I was. I could have been dead and nobody even know. I used to get to the stage where I used to make myself so sick so I didn't have to go to school and things like that. I just hated the place. It was so—

CHAIR—How did you make yourself sick, Mr Price?

Mr Price—Just used to go down to the shed and eat wheat with rat poison or some sort of a poison on there, like I don't know what they put on there, but some pink stuff they used to put on the wheat to stop the weevils from getting in.

CHAIR—And it made you sick?

Mr Price—Yes, it made me sick all right.

CHAIR—What sort of sick—vomiting?

Mr Price—Just vomiting, yes.

CHAIR—Anything else?

Mr Price—Used to go to the toilet quite a bit, too.

CHAIR—So diarrhoea?

Mr Price—Diarrhoea, yes.

CHAIR—Did you get headaches?

Mr Price—I don't remember getting headaches, no. I probably did but I can't remember offhand.

CHAIR—And that meant that you did not have to go to—

Mr Price—I did not have to go to church all the time. I think my schooling—it got to the stage where I stayed in fifth grade for five years because one brother decided that I was not actually good enough, I was not worth the effort to actually pull me aside and teach me. That was reflected also probably going out later on in life, because I could not get the jobs I really would have probably liked to, as far as getting up—I suppose even today now—with the company I am working for now, which I have been working for for 14 years. They have said to me, 'We'd promote you but you can't read and write.' It's as simple as that. I have been on the basic wage just about all my life because of the simple reason I cannot go any further, but I am brilliant with my hands, when it comes to making things, but I just cannot read and write things. If they asked me to do something and gave me something to read to make something, I could not do it, but if they said, 'Go and build this,' I could do it.

Senator TCHEN—I hesitate to interrupt, Mr Price, because the last thing you said actually went to the crux of the matter, of the whole issue. I wish you would just continue. But, Mr Price, can I ask you, very simply: what do you think we should be reporting to the parliament about? What do you think we should be telling the government to do?

Mr Price—Well, it needs to do something about—I am going back to England. It is going to cost me probably in the vicinity of quite a large amount of money to move back, to ship things over there and start a new life. I have no-one out here. I have friends but I have no real family

out here. All my life I have been wandering around Australia because I have no-one. I could not fall back on anybody. If something went wrong—you know, even in my teens, I had no-one to fall back on.

Senator TCHEN—You have family in England?

Mr Price—Yes.

Senator TCHEN—You have found them?

Mr Price—I have got a family in England. That is why I am going. They want me to come back. I have got two nieces that I adore, and then their children. These are things I have missed out on all my life. I have a mother that is still alive, and I found out my father died 12 years ago which, if I had got the right information at the time when I left the orphanage—when I asked them, and they at least gave me the choice to have made up my mind, but I wanted to go back to England at that stage and be reunited with my family, but I never got that choice.

Senator TCHEN—We have heard a lot of witnesses ask us to recommend that there should be funding to help people to go back and visit their family, but you are slightly different. What you are asking is that the government of Australia help you to resettle back in England.

Mr Price—Well, it needs to supply funds for the Child Migrants Trust—and they seem to have done the bulk of the work with the child migrants over the last eight years, as far as I know, and they are the only ones that have made any effort to find the families, the siblings and family of all the child migrants. So they certainly need money to do it. They cannot just pick it off a tree.

Senator MURRAY—Mr Price, both in your verbal evidence and in your written evidence you have discussed the matter of sexual abuse. I want to read 10 names to you which include people who have been named in books and other places as guilty or accused of sexual abuse or have been publicly named by victims in this committee's hearing, and I want you to tell me if there are any other names that you know of. These are the names, and they are all brothers: Brothers Murphy—

Mr Price—Murphy, yes.

Senator MURRAY—Hansen?

Mr Price—No.

Senator MURRAY—Fricker?

Mr Price—No.

Senator MURRAY—Kerwick?

Mr Price—No.

Senator MURRAY—Doyle?

Mr Price—Brother Doyle.

Senator MURRAY—That is a yes for Hansard. Angus?

Mr Price—No, Angus I don't—

Senator MURRAY—Beeden, Cusack?

Mr Price—No.

Senator MURRAY—Howe?

Mr Price—No.

Senator MURRAY—Keaney?

Mr Price—No. The only three that I remember were the ones at Castledare, which was a Morgan, whatever his name is, McLoughlin who was at Tardun, and a Leo that was at Castledare.

Senator MURRAY—Just go through that slowly. Moore first?

Mr Price—That first one you read out.

CHAIR—Murphy.

Mr Price—Murphy.

Senator MURRAY—Murphy.

CHAIR—And then?

Mr Price—McLachlan, Brother McLachlan, I think. I believe his name is Peter McLachlan, and I have only just found out that he is still alive and he lives in the north-west of Western Australia. I found out about six months ago.

CHAIR—And the last name?

Mr Price—McLachlan it is. We used to call him Brother McLachlan.

CHAIR—I thought you said one after that.

Senator TCHEN—Leo or something.

Mr Price—There was a Leo, but Leo wasn't a brother. At the orphanages it was one of those things that everybody knew who the brothers were, in a sense, but it was like everybody knew which brothers to keep away from or where to keep away from, what toilets and that sort of stuff to keep away from.

Senator MURRAY—One other name. Yes or no on this question. Brother Bolter.

Mr Price—Well, I don't know what orphanage he was in. I don't even remember him being in any orphanage I was in at the time. He may have been. But not always the brothers looked after the boys in the sense where they were there every day. Some of them may have been doing other jobs, like at Tardun a lot of them were doing either the farm work, like Brother Simon, various brothers like that, Brother Moore, but there were brothers at the orphanage that were very good. Brother Moore was a brilliant brother, and as far as I remember, he actually left because of the things that were going at the orphanage.

Brother McLachlan—I remember something like about five or six or seven of us actually approached Brother Hewitt, I think his name was, who was in charge of Tardun at the time I left. He was confronted about this fellow for two years, and they kept him there. Eventually they sent him away, and I believe he just went to another orphanage. It just seemed so ridiculous.

Senator MURRAY—Now if I can move on to criminal assault, beatings and floggings, and I am not talking about punishment. You have given us the name of a brother already. There were other names. Do you have any other names of—

Mr Price—Brother Doyle was a very hard man. Brother Doyle and Brother Thomas were brothers at—

Senator MURRAY—Brother O'Sullivan? Do you know the name?

Mr Price—Brother O'Sullivan, yes. Brother O'Sullivan used to be actually at Tardun, but we never had any problems with Brother O'Sullivan, nor did I have any problems with Brother Moore. There was probably a couple of brothers. Brother Quirk, who was in charge when I first went to Tardun, was quite a good brother. He ended up dying of cancer or something, but it was after he left I think sort of got a little worse, probably.

Senator TCHEN—Were you ever at Bindoon?

Mr Price—Well, I was, actually, but I was there for the last probably two months of staying with the Christian Brothers because they sent me down there to prepare me to go out to work. Also I actually stayed at a place called Moore River. They had a retreat down there, and I had just come out of hospital from an injury I had from when I was in Tardun due to working in the woolshed, and I had to lift up this big wool bale thing. It was an old wooden thing, and it came down and cut my ear off, or partly cut my ear off. I was only 13. I was driving a tractor at 13, out driving International tractors, because they did not want to teach me in school.

Senator MURRAY—Mr Price, just to fill out your picture, you came out from England at the age of seven. When were you put into a home in England?

Mr Price—As far as I know, I was about two years old.

Senator MURRAY—Two years old?

Senator MURRAY—What part of England and what home?

Mr Price—The first orphanage I was in, from documents I have from the Child Migrants Trust, was at a place called Carlisle.

Senator MURRAY—In the north of England?

Mr Price—Yes, and then from there, as far as I know, from what my mother has told me, she put me in there for a period of—she was finding it difficult. My dad had left her, they had split or divorced—no, they did not actually divorce, they split, from what I can gather, and then she put me in a home because things were quite—they did not have unmarried mothers' pensions and stuff like that in those days, and in those days I think the English government put you in a home to look after you, until such time as she got back on her feet. Well, she wrote several letters, and I have actually written to some departments asking for the letters, but they said most of those files would have gone and disappeared and they do not keep a record of them any more, and she said that she would be coming back to pick me up at some stage or other within the next couple of months, and then apparently when she went to get me I had gone. Apparently she was told that I had died, or something. That is what she told me.

Senator MURRAY—So she did not consent to you being sent to Australia?

Mr Price—No.

Senator MURRAY—Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Mr Price—I had a brother and a half-brother. I actually had two half-brothers.

Senator MURRAY—Older or younger?

Mr Price—One brother is older and my half-brothers are—

Senator MURRAY—Was your older brother also sent away?

Mr Price—No.

Senator MURRAY—You were the only one in the family?

Mr Price—I was the only one in the family at the time, yes, at that stage, and that was after the war. It was not as if there was a problem with the war. It was nearly 10 years after the war when I was born—two years after the war, but nearly 10 years after the war that I actually came out to Australia.

Senator MURRAY—There but for the grace of God go I.

Mr Price—And I have actually got a document here that was in response to—

CHAIR—Can you tell us about these documents, Mr Price.

Mr Price—One particular document in there was in relation to me asking them about my family, and looks like two departments have corresponded with each other, and that is what has come out of it.

CHAIR—What lawyers in the United States of America was this forwarded to? Or, are lawyers actually acting for you at the moment?

Mr Price—I assume so, because I think there is an association called the International Association of Former Child Migrants and their Families, and they are doing, as far as I know, a class action against the British government. That is as far as I know. I just sent that over, the photostat copy to send over to them. Was that the bit about where they actually gave no information about the family?

CHAIR—Mr Price, would you mind if Mr Thwaites helped me get an answer on this one. I seem to be losing the thread here. I am sorry, it is my fault.

Mr Price—Yes, I am probably getting muddled up, too.

CHAIR—No, it is not you, Mr Price, it is me.

Mr Price—It has been frustrating.

CHAIR—Please, Mr Thwaites.

Mr Thwaites—Senator Crowley, the document that Mr Price was, I think, wanting you to look at was the letter from the Social Welfare Department of Western Australia. It is the first document. It appears to be a response to an inquiry that he has made as a young person in relation to family background information. The point is the department's response, where the advice is that it probably would not be in his best interests to be pursuing family.

CHAIR—Can you help me further with the information about lawyers in the USA?

Mr Thwaites—I believe that would be a matter the International Association of Former Child Migrants and their Families would be able to expand upon.

CHAIR—Thank you. Are these documents for us to look at and then pass back to Mr Price?

Mr Price—Unless you need them or unless you want any of the documents.

CHAIR—I think they would be extremely useful, Mr Price, but we would like a copy of them so we do not have your documents.

Mr Price—Yes.

CHAIR—If we could get a copy, Mr Price, that would be fantastic. We have come to the end of our day. I thank you very much. I said to others—and you may have heard but I am happy to say it to you, too—that our report will be as good as the evidence provided to us. We cannot get good evidence if people like you do not come forward either to write a submission, but in this case as well to come and speak to us. We thank you very much indeed. I hope we can pick up some of the points that you have raised.

Mr Price—There are lots more things I could say, but you just could not say them all because if you went into detail it would probably be a book that thick with all the things that happened over the years. There were cases like when I think we had to go to church and I missed church and went down to the paddock and hid down in the paddock from going to church, ‘because we were going to church so many times I seemed to be brainwashed by religion. The next day I got a belting for it and then I was not allowed to watch the pictures for nearly six or seven months. I had to sit behind the back of where the photos are there and I had my back behind the film and I was not allowed to watch it for six months, any of the films that were put on every Friday night, just because I got sick of it. It seemed to me at that stage that I just was not learning anything. My schooling was nonexistent. I seemed to know all about the Protestants and the pagans and that but I did not know anything else in life.

CHAIR—Mr Price, one of the other things that is so important, even from that last contribution of yours, is that if one person tells us something we do not expect that those people are telling lies and I cannot imagine anybody would have written these stories just making them up, but it is particularly powerful when you say something that exactly reinforces what somebody else has said in another state on another day—and you just have—and that is about the punishments of being beaten and then denied being able to see the movies.

Mr Price—Sometimes we used to get around in shorts, little shorts and one brother used to pull your pants up so far that he would actually be crushing your private bits and he would be whacking you on the bum and half your bum would be bare, you know, in front of a class and that sort of stuff.

Another time—this is the last one—I used to be able to write left-handed. I was a natural left-hander and, mainly when I got to Tardun for some reason, every time I wrote left-handed it was just natural to me. I tried to write with the right and I couldn’t; it was just scribble. Then I used to write left-handed and every time I did it the brother would come up behind me and—whack, behind the ear—just because I was writing left-handed. It was just a natural thing to me, but he would just whack you.

CHAIR—Again, Mr Price, I thank you very much for the effort you have made to come and talk to us. I thank everybody else who has been here today. This committee stands adjourned until our next hearing in Rockhampton. Thank you very much.

Committee adjourned at 4.41 p.m.