

**SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REFERENCES COMMITTEE  
INQUIRY INTO CHILD MIGRATION:**

**SUBMISSION BY SWANLEIGH - DECEMBER 11, 2000**

Swanleigh is an Anglican, co-educational, residential college, caring for three hundred students who come from country areas and overseas to live at Swanleigh while completing their secondary education in the metropolitan area.

**1. Background Information on Child Migration 1947-1960:**

In the year 1947, Swan Homes (as Swanleigh was known then) was approached by the Australian Government who had decided to start the Child Migration Scheme to bring to Australia from the United Kingdom children who had been orphaned, and those from the depressed areas in England. Swanleigh was asked to co-operate with the aim for the children to be maintained and cared for at Swan Homes with the British and Commonwealth Government paying for their maintenance. Swanleigh agreed to this arrangement as the Commonwealth Government committed to the provision of capital to erect the necessary buildings to house the children as Swan Homes did not have sufficient accommodation. (Reference: *"The Noisy Mansions"* by A. Roy Peterkin (Manager - Swan Homes) Page 23-24).

A conference was held on July 22, 1947, to discuss the policy to operate between the Department of Immigration and Swan Homes concerning the provision of accommodation for migrant children. This conference was attended by Mr. E.R. Denny (Immigration Department), Mr. R. Pegrum (Anglican Church Office), Mr. A.A. Robertson (Anglican Church's Immigration Officer from 1927 to 1965 - (Reference: *"A History of the Swan Homes"* - A personal reminiscence by A.A. Robertson - page 56 & arrangement between the Orphanage Board and the Church of England Council for Commonwealth and Empire Settlement in London (see Page 107)) and Mr. A.R. Peterkin (Manager - Swan Homes).

Mr Roy Peterkin later wrote in his book: "Child Migrants were always accompanied by adults on their travelling from the United Kingdom to Australia. In 1952, Mr. Peterkin was commissioned by the Orphanage Board to visit England to investigate and put the scheme in order and to recruit more migrant children for the Swan. Mr. Peterkin attended conferences with the London County Council, The Church of England Children's Society, Dr. Barnado's Homes, Chichester Children's Homes and other Institutions in the United Kingdom. He also had an audience with the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace. At this time Mr. & Mrs. Peterkin accompanied 23 children to return by ship in their care, and arranged for other children to be cared for in the future.

In the year 1953, the homes were catering for 211 children, 142 boys and 69 girls. These children came to Swan Homes from the children's court and destitute and neglected migrants from England and those periodically placed at Swan Homes by relatives who paid maintenance fees. The importance was that no difference whatsoever was made between the care and opportunities of any of those groups. To the staff they were deprived children, and the aim was to make a child's life as happy and homely as possible; that this should be the rightful heritage of every boy and girl born into this world." (Reference - Page 28 - *"The Noisy Mansions"* by Mr. A. Roy Peterkin.)

In 1958, Mr. & Mrs. Peterkin accompanied 18 children from the United Kingdom (lamenting the fact that there were no personal records accompanying these children). The last group of 12 children arrived in 1960. A total of 350 children were accompanied to Australia from the United Kingdom and accommodated at Swan Homes between 1947 and 1960.

The first buildings to house these children were Hudleston House, Freeman House and, in 1949, Lee Steere House.

Diaries and Registers were kept and liaison occurred between Family & Children's Services and the Child Migrant Trust.

Dr Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, paid the Swan Homes a visit during this time. Politicians, both State and Commonwealth, also paid visits to Swan Homes, among them the Hon. Arthur Caldwell, Minister of Immigration and Mr. Eddy Ward.

## **2. Situation at the present time:**

A Steering Committee was formed by the Western Australian Government. Swanleigh has been proactive by sending a representative of staff to attend each meeting of the Steering Committee into Child Migration since the inception of the Committee.

Swanleigh has assisted the Steering Committee by supplying a data base listing of Swan Homes Migrants' Names for the Referral Index of Child Migrants.

Approximately 20 people have applied for Grants from the British Government towards travel and accommodation costs from Australia to England. Only 5 people have been accepted for these Grants.

At Swanleigh's cost an Archivist was employed and has interviewed these 20 applicants who have applied for the Grants. Swanleigh has supplied all the data regarding arrival, name, date of birth and place of origin. We have also referred these applicants to the Family & Children's Services, the Child Migrant Trust, etc. and followed up any queries for assistance from these applicants. Through Mr. Peterkin's diaries, Swanleigh has been able to give their date of discharge from Swan Homes and, in most cases, where they were transferred. Swanleigh has provided as much information as possible for these applications for a Grant from the British Government.

## **3. Aboriginal Mission accommodating Aboriginal children:**

Cornwell House (built in 1868) on the Swan Homes Campus operated as an Aboriginal Mission for children needing care from 1888. Visits to the Mission House by Department of Public Health occurred in 1920 and Cornwell House was subsequently closed for repairs. The people of the Swan region were very supportive and offered to employ children from the mission when they were old enough. Records were kept regarding the progress of children after they left Swan Homes care. Many of the children remained with employers for long periods and lasting friendships were formed.

During 1950, at Mr. Peterkin's invitation, Mr. Hicks from the N.S.W. Child Welfare visited Swan Homes and reported Swan Homes as "outstanding" in his Report to Parliament on his return to N.S.W. (*Reference: Mr. Peterkin's book - "The Noisy Mansions" - pages 4, 32-34, 127, 183 and 233*).

Mr. Peterkin was offered the position of Director of Child Welfare by Mr. Hawke after his visit to Western Australia (but declined the offer).

## **4. Summary:**

The Swanleigh Council, Management and Staff have assisted, and will continue to assist as far as is possible, the Select Committee into Child Migration and the children for whom we have cared.

Swanleigh, under the auspices of the Anglican Church of Australia, has cared for children from 1868 until 2000 and continues to care for children into the new millennium.

Sue van Leeuwen - Director of Swanleigh