

SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

**LOST INNOCENTS:
Righting the Record**

REPORT ON CHILD MIGRATION

August 2001

RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 1

Recommendation 1: That the Commonwealth Government urge the State and Territory Governments to undertake inquiries similar to the Queensland Forde inquiry into the treatment of all children in institutional care in their respective States and Territories; and that the Senate Social Welfare Committee's 1985 inquiry be revisited so that a national perspective may be given to the issue of children in institutional care.

Chapter 2

Recommendation 2: That British and Maltese former child migrants be treated equally in accessing any of the services currently provided or as recommended in this report, including access to travel funding.

Chapter 3

Recommendation 3: That the Commonwealth Government establish the means to accurately determine the numbers of child migrants sent to Australia during the 20th century to assist in determining the level of support services and other assistance needed for former child migrants.

Chapter 5

Recommendation 4: That in accordance with the *Statutes of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire*, the Commonwealth Government initiate the process for Francis Paul Keaney's membership of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire to be cancelled and annulled.

Recommendation 5: That the Commonwealth Government continue to provide funding for at least three years directly to the Child Migrants Trust to ensure that the specialised services of tracing and counselling are provided or accessible to former child migrants living throughout Australia.

Chapter 6

Recommendation 6: That the Commonwealth Government urge the British Government to continue financial resources for the National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations (NCVCCO) for the retention and expansion of the Child Migrant Central Information Index.

Recommendation 7: That the Commonwealth Government urge all State Governments to establish a comprehensive signposting index similar to that established by the Western Australian Government.

Recommendation 8: That the Commonwealth Government urge all State Governments to co-operate to establish a national index of child migrants.

Recommendation 9: That the Commonwealth Government urge State and Territory Governments to publish directories of information to assist all former residents of children's institutions to access records similar to the directories published by the New South Wales and Queensland Governments.

Recommendation 10: The Committee recommends that a national group of all receiving agencies, other relevant bodies and Commonwealth and State Governments be established to develop uniform protocols for accessing records and sharing information relevant to former child migrants, their families and descendants and to coordinate services for former child migrants.

Recommendation 11: That the National Archives of Australia be provided with sufficient funding to ensure continuation of the program of digitising its records relating to child migration.

Recommendation 12: That the National Archives of Australia liaise with the Genealogy and Personnel Records Section of the National Archives of Canada in relation to the technology, protocols, processes and procedures the Canadians have implemented to facilitate access to their records for former child migrants and their descendants.

Recommendation 13: That the Commonwealth Government provide at least three year funding to those agencies engaged in dedicated tracing in the United Kingdom to assist former child migrants to locate their families, based on applications by agencies undertaking that work.

Recommendation 14: That all organisations holding records pertaining to former child migrants make these records available to former child migrants or their authorised representative immediately and unconditionally.

Recommendation 15: That where any organisation holds primary documents, including birth certificates, relating to any living former child migrant without their express permission, former child migrants be entitled to recover that document from the holding organisation.

Recommendation 16: That all sending and receiving agencies be required to extend access to their records to descendants of former child migrants.

Recommendation 17: The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government:

- confer automatic citizenship on all former child migrants, with provision for those who do not wish to become Australian citizens to decline automatic citizenship; and
- that a special ceremony conferring citizenship be conducted for former child migrants.

Chapter 7

Recommendation 18: That the Commonwealth Government urge the United Kingdom Government to extend its contribution to the Child Migrant Support Fund for at least a further three years beyond its anticipated end in 2002.

Recommendation 19: That the Child Migrant Support Fund be supplemented by funding from the Australian Government, State Governments and receiving agencies; and that this funding comprise:

- (a) a Commonwealth Government contribution of \$1 million per year for three years initially;
- (b) a combined contribution from State Governments of \$1 million per year for three years initially; and
- (c) a contribution from receiving agencies, and that this be funded by a levy or other means on receiving agencies not currently providing travel assistance, in proportion to the number of children placed under their care as a result of the child migration schemes during the 20th century.

Recommendation 20: That the eligibility criteria for access to the Child Migrant Support Fund be broadened to:

- (a) permit visits to family members and other relatives, including aunts and uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces; and for other related purposes, such as visits to family graves;
- (b) be available for all former child migrants, including the Maltese and those who may have undertaken previous visits at their own expense;
- (c) provide for two further visits but with a reduced level of assistance, limited to the payment of airfares and associated travel expenses;
- (d) provide, in exceptional circumstances, travel funding for a spouse, child or other person as an accompanying carer; and
- (e) be subject to no means-testing requirements.

Recommendation 21: That the Commonwealth Government, together with other stakeholders, undertake a review of its participation in the Child Migrant Support Fund after three years to determine the adequacy of funding from Australian sources for the fund and the extent of continuing demand for travel from former child migrants.

Recommendation 22: That, should the Child Migrant Support Fund not be extended by the United Kingdom Government, the Commonwealth Government establish a separate Australian travel scheme to assist former child migrants to visit their country of origin, and that this scheme be funded by contributions from the Commonwealth, State Governments and receiving agencies as detailed in Recommendation 19; and that the scheme have a broad set of eligibility criteria as detailed in Recommendation 20.

Chapter 8

Recommendation 23: That, to ensure that choice in counselling services remains available to former child migrants, the Commonwealth Government urge agencies and other State Welfare Departments providing counselling services to maintain those services and expand them where necessary.

Recommendation 24: That the Commonwealth and State Governments in providing funding for boarding house and supported accommodation programs recognise the housing needs and requirements of former child migrants.

Recommendation 25: That the Department of Health and Aged Care commission a study into the aged care needs of former child migrants; and that Commonwealth funding be directed into areas of need identified in that study.

Recommendation 26: That the Commonwealth Government urge the British Government to ensure that former child migrants living permanently in the United Kingdom are not disadvantaged in gaining access to income support payments following termination of the Social Security Agreement with the United Kingdom.

Recommendation 27: That the Commonwealth Government provide a prospective one-off grant of \$10,000 to former child migrants wishing to return permanently to the United Kingdom or Malta who can prove that they will permanently relocate in those countries.

Recommendation 28: That the Commonwealth and State Governments widely publicise the availability of remedial education services and associated adult education courses to child migrants and child migrant organisations.

Chapter 9

Recommendation 29: That the Commonwealth Government urge the Attorney-General of Western Australia to urgently review the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia Report on Limitation and Notice of Actions with a view to bringing the Western Australian law into line with other Australian jurisdictions.

Chapter 10

Recommendation 30: That the Commonwealth Government issue a formal statement acknowledging that its predecessors' promotion of the Child Migration schemes, that resulted in the removal of so many British and Maltese children to Australia, was wrong; and that the statement express deep sorrow and regret for the psychological, social and economic harm caused to the children, and the hurt and distress suffered by the children, at the hands of those who were in charge of them, particularly the children who were victims of abuse and assault.

Recommendation 31: That all State Governments and receiving agencies, that have not already done so, issue formal statements similar to those issued by the Western Australian and Queensland Governments and the Catholic Church and associated

religious orders to former child migrants and their families for their respective roles in the child migration schemes.

Recommendation 32: That the Commonwealth and State Governments, in conjunction with the receiving agencies, provide funding for the erection of a suitable memorial or memorials commemorating former child migrants, and that the appropriate form and location(s) of such a memorial or memorials be determined by consulting widely with former child migrants and their representative organisations.

Recommendation 33: That the Commonwealth Government support and promote international initiatives that facilitate the sharing of professional best practice, and that ensure uniformity of protocols relating to work with former child migrants and their families.