

September 2001

NEWSLETTER

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS EX-RESIDENTS AND STUDENTS SERVICES

On 30 August, the Senate Community Affairs References Committee released the report of its nearly year long Inquiry into Child Migration. The report describes as a "very sorry chapter in Australia's history" the policies and practices which, over a 30 year period, led to thousands of young children being uprooted from their country of origin to be sent to a country in which their needs, safety and wellbeing were too often "completely disregarded". The report's 33 recommendations are broad-ranging in their scope, seeking, not only to right the record of Australia's role in child migration schemes in the past, but also to redress the personal consequences which for many former child migrants live on to this day.



LOST INNOCENTS:

The Senate Inquiry into Child Migration validates the harsh reality of the experiences of many former child migrants at the hands of those who were charged with their care. It also vindicates their long battle to have their story heard and acted upon.

The report of the Senate Inquiry makes 33 recommendations in all. (A full copy of the recommendations is included as an insert with this newsletter). Many of the recommendations are leveled at the Commonwealth Government identifying its responsibility to correct the consequences of the wrongs perpetrated by its predecessors. Most relate to the need to support former child migrants in tracing their family histories and to reunite with family members in their countries of origin. Others recognize the ongoing need for counseling and for practical support with education, housing and re-building relationship programs.

Recommendation 30 (summarized) calls on the Commonwealth Government to issue a formal statement acknowledging that previous child migration schemes were wrong and expressing deep sorrow and regret for the harm and suffering that resulted from them.

RIGHTING the RECORD

"The British and Australian Governments entered into agreements for the migration of children to Australia. The Australian Government was the legislated guardian of the children but then transferred responsibility for their care to State Governments. In turn the State Governments transferred responsibility to receiving agencies.

The responsibility was transferred but in many cases the duty of care and protection was not... State Governments were unable or unwilling to ensure the protection of the children".

Prologue Senate Inquiry into Child Migration

In its EDITORIAL on 5 September, the WEST AUSTRALIAN NEWSPAPER has described the tabling of the Senate report on Child Migration as offering "a closure of sorts to a dark time in our country's social history". The editorial goes on to comment that the report provides "a bleak register of the pain and misery endured by children sent to start a new life in post-World War II Australia".

"For many, though not all, their arrival was the start of years of physical, emotional and sexual abuse... Some children were told their parents had died, and parents were told that their children had died. Letters were not passed on and records were falsified, complicating and sometimes destroying any subsequent chance of families being reunited...

"The former migrants have had to fight hard to make the world listen. The sheer horror of their experiences make dismissing them, or passing the blame to someone else, an easier option".

Affirming that one of the most important results of the report has been to demonstrate that the stories of former child migrants have now been heard and believed, the editorial calls on the Federal Government to accept the Inquiry's main recommendations ensuring that damaged victims are helped to find their families where this is still possible, and that they be offered specialist counseling to deal with their continuing distress... "It's not a lot to ask".



**WE'RE OPEN
FOR BUSINESS**

**between 8.30 a.m.
and 4.30 p.m.
Monday to Friday**

ON STAFF

Administration

Manager— Mary Kearns
(Monday to Thursday)

Clinical Psychologist

Patrick Howard
(Tuesday, Wednesday)

Counsellors

Michael Anderson
(Tuesday, Wednesday,
Friday)

Sjoukje Tarbox

(Monday, half day
Wednesday, half day
Thursday)

Administration

Lorraine Hipkins

(Monday, Tuesday)

Sue Fullerton

(Wednesday, Thursday,
Friday)

**MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE**

Maria Harries

(Chairperson)

Dr Debra Rosser

George Horton

CONTACT

12 Alvan St,
Subiaco WA 6008
PO Box 1172
Subiaco WA 6904
Ph: (08) 9381 5422
Fax (08) 9382 4114
Freecall 1800 621 805
E-Mail:
welcome@cberss.org
Web-site:
www.cberss.org

Celebrating CHRISTMAS in JULY

Once again, the Child Migrant Friendship Society has staged a highly successful get-together of former child migrants who have joined together in a spirit of friendship and fellowship to celebrate the bond they share. More than 100 guests attended this year's Christmas in July function at the WACA. Child Migrant Friendship Society President Maureen Colgan reports on the highlights of this year's event.



The day began with a traditional one minute's silence for all former Child Migrants who had passed away. This was followed by Grace said by Tony Mapson. The ladies were given a corsage and one lucky wearer, Margaret Gibson (formerly of Nazareth House) was the winner of beauty products.

A delicious meal of traditional Christmas fare followed. Coles even shipped in a supply of Christmas crackers (all the way from Tom Price) for the occasion.

Santa paid a special visit from the North Pole receiving lots of hugs. Each guest received a gift "scratchie" (there were some winners!) and chocolate. The usual sing-a-long concluded with a resounding rendition of "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer". All in all, much fun and good cheer

Malta Migrants MATTER!

At St Catherine's College in Nedlands on 3 August, former child migrants from Malta and their partners attended a meeting organized by C-BERS to discuss issues of particular concern to them. The meeting was a "chatty, informative and engaging affair" with topics discussed including

- ◆ The launch of the Maltese Oral History Project
- ◆ The Senate Inquiry into Child Migration
- ◆ The Child Migrant Fund and its conditions of travel funding.

The Senate Inquiry into Child Migration has acknowledged the right of former child migrants from Malta to equal status in their access to support services (including access to travel funding) as child migrants from other destinations. (*Recommendation 2*). C-BERS supports this recommendation and has sought through a number of its services and initiatives to respond to the special needs and issues that face the more than 300 child migrants who, from 1950 to 1965, were sent to Western Australia from Malta.



Searching....

Since 1958

I started looking for my family back in 1958.

I had left Clontarf in 1958, starting work on a farm for six months. This family helped me to get me a job on another farm 22 miles east of Mukinbudin. This is where I met the Morrison family. They have been the most wonderful people in my life, they are the family I never had to this day. Old Mrs Morrison wrote to Somerset house on my behalf in 1958 trying to trace my family. As my surname was spelled incorrectly my family could not be traced at that time. I left it at that for many years.

Trying Again

In 1995 I met a friend from Clontarf who put me on to Sr. Tania from the Catholic Migrant Centre and C-BERS where I received counselling.

With the help of Sr Tania and Michael Lyons from the UK my mother was found.

Unfortunately a Social Worker knocked at my mother's door unannounced with the news that her son (myself) lived in Australia and wanted to make contact with her. She was shocked, her reaction was that she did not want to know about me and refused any further contact.

My mother had married soon after I was placed into an orphanage. She and my stepfather tried twice to get me back. Her husband had agreed to bring me back into the family. They were told both times that I had been adopted. That was the last she heard of me.

A Family Connection

I was aware though that I did have half brothers and sisters.

Three years ago my Adult Education Tutor Valerie searched the Internet and found half a dozen people with the name of Devaney. By making a phone call that night Valerie hit the jackpot! She spoke with Pat, my half brother Stephen's wife. They did not know that I existed.

They were excited to discover that they did have me as their brother in Australia. Stephen wrote to me soon

The story of Tom Connolly's long search to find his family as told to C-BERS Counselor Sjouke Tarbox and published with Tom's permission

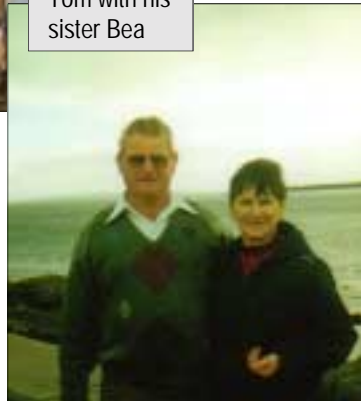


Right:

Tom meets up with his mother and his Auntie May.

Below:

Tom with his sister Bea



after telling me about my other sisters, Bea and Pat and my brother Shaun and their families, whom he had contacted with the news.

Mum Comes Round

Steve together with Michael Lyons tried to work out which would be the best way to approach Mum to try and change her mind about meeting with me, seeing that now the rest of the family knew about me. She had never told anyone about me. It was Pat, Steve's wife who is very close to Mum who was able, together with Steve, to soften Mum's resolve in the end.

One of my workmates who is a bit psychic told me one day out of the blue that Mum would agree to see me but that the meeting could be hostile. Another person I knew who reads tea leaves asked me into her kitchen one day. I asked her "will I ever meet my mother?" She said "I see someone pushing down your shoulders". She hesitated for a while, then said she couldn't do anymore and suggested I see a Clairvoyant who told me the same, yes, I would see my mother but she also said that the meeting could be hostile.

Meeting Family

In the meantime Steve decided to come to Australia to meet me. Unbeknown to me I also discovered that I had a sister living in Victoria who had been looking for me for many years! It was with the help of the Child Migrant Trust that she located me, so all at once

I had a sister and brother to come and visit me!

Success At Last

Twelve months ago, with the help of C-BERS I decided to travel to the UK to meet with my Mother who now had agreed to see me and to reunite with my long lost family.

My meeting with mum was not hostile, it was tense of course at first, but as time went by we got closer and now we have regular contact by phone, cards and letters.

Over the years Christmas and birthdays have always been very lonely. Now I know I have a family: my life has more meaning I am not alone anymore. I am more content knowing that there is someone out there for me.

AN IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR BRITISH CHILD MIGRANTS

DEADLINE FOR FORMER BRITISH CHILD MIGRANTS WISHING TO AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THE CHILD MIGRANT FUND.

We are advised by ISS that all travel to the UK MUST BE completed by 31 March 2002.

If you are planning to apply to visit primary relatives whom you have not yet met, please contact C-BERS or ISS to make the necessary arrangements as soon as possible.



C-BERS GET TOGETHER

**For ALL EX-RESIDENTS
and their PARTNERS**

**On: Friday 19 October 2001, 3.30pm
At: St Catherine's College, Nedlands**

The C-BERS Management Committee invites all ex-residents and their partners to this get-together to update you on recent events and activities. For catering purposes please let Lorraine or Sue know by Friday 12 October (ph: 08 9381 5422) if you plan to be there.

WANTING CONTACT

David Crisp (Clontarf 1950s) would like to contact his former best friend **Michael Robbins** and would appreciate information from anyone who knows him or his whereabouts.

Joe Murrins (Castledare 1952—58) (Bindoon 1958-63) now living in Townsville (QLD) would like any of the old boys from his time at Castledare or Bindoon to contact him. Joe would also like to acknowledge C-BERS for the care and commitment shown to him and wishes the "old boys" all the best for the future.

David Gallagher (Bindoon from 1947) Sr Tania of the Catholic Migrant Centre wishes to contact David. Please contact Sr Tania on 9221 1727 or C-BERS if you have any news of David.

Contact details available through C-BERS

REUNIONS

BINDOON OLD BOYS: a note from Laurie Humphreys

It started with "I'll have lunch with my brother Terry once a month in his favourite tavern—Hickey's". He lives in Perth. I live in Coolbellup and to you north of the river people, that's 15 minutes from Perth and 8 minutes from Fremantle. Before it got off the ground it became "why not ring some of our mates from Bindoon to join us".

We don't talk a lot about the old days but we learn a lot from listening to who's been where and who has, or has not, found a relative here, there and everywhere.

Whether it's a soft drink or a beer, or, in my case, a steak sandwich as well, the time spent together is good. Our stories are different and so will yours be. So if you want to join us, to talk or just to listen in, you are welcome. We can also share our wisdom of what we think our future will be or who can help us get a better one.

If I'm not home when you ring on 9337 4850 leave a message but make sure you leave your call back number—Regards Laurie

TARDUN OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION

We regret that the reunion organized for July 2001 at Moore River had to be cancelled due to the refurbishment of Tuppin House. We are planning the next reunion in February/March 2002

Farewell

RECENT OBITUARIES

We note with sadness, the passing of the following ex-residents and former Child Migrants. We extend our deepest sympathy to their families and friends on the loss of these valuable men.

Charles Debono



Died on Friday 20 April 2001 aged 65. Born in Malta, Charles arrived in WA in 1950 on the Ocean Triumph and was placed in Bindoon. Charles and his wife Irela

were able to visit Malta in September last year. Although Charles was already ill during this time they were able to visit Charles's family and take part in the pilgrimage organized by their Church. Charles is survived by his wife Irela, their seven children and 14 grandchildren of whom he was very proud. He always thanked God for coming to Australia. He was very proud to be an Australian citizen.

Thomas Joseph Allen

After a long illness, Tom passed away on 5 June 2001 in NSW aged 64. Tom arrived in Australia from the UK on the Asturias in 1947 and was placed in Bindoon. After he left Bindoon, he worked on farms all over WA then moved to NSW. Tom had hoped to visit his family in the UK but was unable to do so due to his ill health. Tom is sadly missed by his three daughters and son Brad.

Joseph Austin Bowey



Born in Carshalton UK on 11 August 1930, Joe died in Geraldton on 1 December 2000. Over 400 mourners attended Joe's funeral on 6 December and the City Band played

at both St Francis Xavier's Cathedral and the Crematorium. Joe arrived in WA in 1939 on the Strathnavar and was placed in Clontarf and Tardun where he farmed for some 30 years. Sadly Joe failed to find his family of origin despite many journeys back to the UK. Joe, who had a great love of music is much missed by his loving wife Bernadette (herself a former Child Migrant) and sons Christopher and John and grandchildren Marika and Brandon, and Brandon and Caleb.