

Inquiry Into Child Migration, Parliament of Australia

2000 – 2001

URL:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/1999-02/child_migrat/index

Details

On 20 June 2000, on the motion of Senator Andrew Murray, the Senate referred the issue of child migration to the Community Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report. An estimated five to ten thousand child migrants from both Britain and Malta came to Australia between 1922 and 1967, most of whom were sent to charitable and religious institutions. Many child migrants later claimed that they were ill-treated in the institutions to which they were sent. The resulting report 'Lost innocents: righting the record – inquiry into child migration' was tabled on 30 August 2001.

During the 1980s and 1990s, details of the history of a unique group of children who had been in care in Australia were gradually coming to light. That group was child migrants from both Britain and Malta.

Between 1922 and 1967 about 150 000 children with an average age of eight years and nine months were shipped from Great Britain to help populate the British Dominions of Canada, Rhodesia, New Zealand and Australia with 'good white stock'. Estimates of the number of children sent to Australia vary from 5 000 to 10 000, most of whom were sent to charitable and religious institutions. The Australian Government welcomed the scheme and encouraged non-government organisations such as Barnardo's and Fairbridge to continue settling child migrants who were regarded as adaptable with long working lives. However many child migrants later claimed that they were ill-treated in the institutions to which they were sent.

In the 1980s and 1990s, a number of books were published on child migration, its history, the impact on the lives of former child migrants and the stories of individuals who were migrated to Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Child migration was also the topic of the television documentary *Lost Children of the Empire*, broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) in 1989 and the mini-series *The Leaving of Liverpool*, broadcast by the ABC in 1994. These publications led to a growing awareness and understanding of the history and issues surrounding child migration.

The terms of reference for the inquiry into child migration were as follows:

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:

1. in relation to government and non-government institutions responsible for the care of child migrants;
2. whether any unsafe, improper, or unlawful care or treatment of children occurred in such institutions, and
 - (a) 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.

The report 'Lost innocents: righting the record – inquiry into child migration' was tabled on 30 August 2001.

Gallery



Australia apology over abuse in state shelters - 16 Nov 09

Description: Al Jazeera's Michelle Stone reports on the apology to 'forgotten Australians' and former child migrants.



Stewart Lee on SS Strathnaver, 1955

Description: This is a copy of an image that was part of the exhibition: 'On their own: Britain's child migrants'. Stewart Lee was sent to Australia by the Fairbridge Society in 1955, aged 4, and went to Molong Farm School in New South Wales. This webpage is no longer in operation. This version was taken from the Wayback Machine and is dated 19 November 2016.



Prime Minister says sorry

Description: The Parliament of Australia issued a national apology to the Forgotten Australians on 16 November 2009. 'Prime Minister says sorry' is a video of then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivering that apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants in the Great Hall of Parliament House in Canberra.

More info

Related Entries

Related Events

- [Inquiry into the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Reports, Parliament of Australia \(2008 - 2009\)](#)
- [Redress WA, State of Western Australia \(2008 - 2011\)](#)
- [Select Committee into Child Migration, Legislative Assembly, Parliament of Western Australia \(June 1996 - November 1996\)](#)
- [Inquiry into the Welfare of Former British Child Migrants, House of Commons Health Committee, Parliament of the United Kingdom \(July 1997 - 23 July 1998\)](#)
- [Apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants, Parliament of Australia \(16 November 2009\)](#)
The Lost Innocents report recommended that the government issue a formal statement of acknowledgement, sorrow and regret.

Related Glossary Terms

- [Child Labour](#)

Related Organisations

- [Dhurringile Rural Training Farm \(1951 - 1964\)](#)
- [Child Migrants Trust \(1987 - current\)](#)
- [Child Welfare Department, State of Western Australia \(22 December 1927 - 15 June 1972\)](#)
- [CBERSS: Christian Brothers Ex Residents and Students Services \(1995 - December 2005\)](#)
- [The International Association of Former Child Migrants and Their Families \(1994 - current\)](#)
- [Catholic Child Welfare Council, United Kingdom \(1929 - 2003\)](#)
- [Father Hudson's Society, United Kingdom \(1902 - current\)](#)
- [Advisory Council of Empire Settlement, United Kingdom \(1925 - 1981\)](#)
- [Catholic Episcopal Migration and Welfare Association \(1947? - 1970\)](#)

Related Archival Collections

- [Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project \[sound recording\], National Library of Australia \(2009 - 2012\)](#)

Resources

- Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat, Parliament of Australia, [Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Revisited: Report on the progress with the implementation of the recommendations of the Lost Innocents and Forgotten Australians Reports](#), 2009
- Hill, David, *The Forgotten Children: Fairbridge Farm School and its betrayal of Australia's child migrants*, 2007
- Humphreys, Margaret, *Empty Cradles*, 1994
- Dow, Dr Coral & Phillips, Janet, *Background note - 'Forgotten Australians' and 'Lost Innocents': child migrants and children in institutional care in Australi*, 11 November 2009
- Coldrey, Barry, [Good British stock: child and youth migration to Australia](#), 1999
- Rudd, Kevin, [Address at the apology to the Forgotten Australians and former child migrants Great Hall, Parliament House](#), 16 November 2009
- [On their own: Britain's child migrants](#), Australian National Maritime Museum website, 2010
- Turnbull, Malcolm, *Malcolm Turnbull apology to Forgotten Australians*, The Australian, 16 November 2009
- *Transcript of the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP apology to Forgotten Australians, Great Hall, Parliament House*, The Australian, 16 November 2009
- [Welcome Walls](#), Western Australian Museum, 2011
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- Plowman, David, *Enduring Struggle*, 2003
- Gill, Alan, *Orphans of the empire: the shocking story of child migration to Australia*, 1997
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- House of Commons Health Committee, [Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Health Committee on 11 June 1998 \(Health - Third Report\)](#), 11 June 1998
- Bean, Philip and Melville, Joy, *Lost Children of the Empire*, 1989
- Health Committee, House of Commons, [First Special Report: Welfare of Former British Child Migrants](#), 13 March 2001

- The International Association of Former Child Migrants and Their Families, [Submission No 129 to the Senate Inquiry into Child Migration](#), 2001
 - NCH (National Children's Homes) (UK), [Submission No 98 to the Senate Inquiry into Child Migration](#), 2001
 - Senator Andrew Murray, [Senator Andrew Murray speaks at the 1st International Congress on Child Migration - Child Migration Schemes to Australia: a dark and hidden chapter of Australia's history revealed](#), 28 October 2002
 - Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, [Submission No. 42 to the Senate Inquiry into Child Migration](#), 2001
 - Coldrey, Barry, [Submission No 15 to the Senate Inquiry into Child Migration](#), 2001
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