

# Child Migration Programmes Investigation, UK Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

2017 – 2018

**URL:** <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications/investigation/child-migration/part-c-detailed-examination-institutional-responses/what-did-hmg-know-about-sexual-abuse-child-migrants-and-what-did-it-do-about-it.html>

## Details

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As part of the UK Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, which ran from 2015-2022, the Inquiry investigated child migration programs to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Zimbabwe. Research and hearings took place in 2017, and the Investigation Report was published in March 2018.

The Inquiry asked a series of questions about child migration schemes, focussing on how much the sending agencies and government in the UK knew about conditions and abuse in Australia, and whether they responded appropriately at the time. It heard evidence from former child migrants, the sending agencies, and the UK government who oversaw the child migration schemes. While conditions for child migrants in all countries were investigated, the number of child migrants sent to Australia especially post-WWII meant there was a focus on child migrants' experiences in Australia.

The Inquiry concluded that most organisations knew something of the conditions in Australia, and noted that some organisations deliberately did not investigate further. In other cases, the Inquiry concluded that sending organisations and the UK government were aware of sexual abuse of child migrants in Australian institutions, and they had failed in not responding in any way, and had therefore exposed other children to the abuse.

The Inquiry also noted ways that children were unable to report abuse at the time, including how communications between child migrants and their families were tightly controlled "and that letters were censored" (*Child Migration Programmes: Investigation Report*, p.14). It also noted that both parents and children were lied to, with parents being told their children could return to the UK whenever they wished, and children being told their parents died in the War (*Child Migration Programmes: Investigation Report*, p.15).

Some witnesses noted they had been abused in institutions in the UK before being sent to Australia, and discussed that they "believed they may have been sent to Australia because they had reported their sexual abuse in [the UK]" (*Child Migration Programmes: Investigation Report*, p.12).

The Inquiry concluded that while the child migration scheme had been conducted badly by the sending agencies and other organisations that were part of the scheme, it was "successive British governments" that enabled the scheme to continue for so long, despite evidence about conditions for child migrants in Australia, risk of abuse and the increasing rejection of the scheme by childcare professionals "on ethical and moral grounds" (*Child Migration Programmes: Investigation Report*, p.ix). It noted that:

*post-War child migration was a fundamentally flawed policy, and that [the British government] failed to ensure that there were in place sufficient measures to protect children from sexual abuse (as well as other forms of abuse and neglect). Child Migration Programmes: Investigation Report, p.150.*

The Inquiry recommended that a redress scheme for child migrants be established, and the Payment Scheme for former British Child Migrants opened in 2019. The Inquiry also recommended further institutional apologies occur, and that any organisations involved in child migration actively work to preserve and make available all records they hold about child migration.

## More info

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### Related Entries

#### Related Events

- [Payment scheme for former British Child Migrants, UK government \(2019 - current\)](#)
- [Inquiry into the Welfare of Former British Child Migrants, House of Commons Health Committee, Parliament of the United Kingdom \(July 1997 - 23 July 1998\)](#)

#### Related Organisations

- [Fairbridge Farm School, Molong \(1938 - 1973\)](#)
- [Fairbridge Farm School, Pinjarra \(1913 - 1981\)](#)
- [Northcote Farm School \(1937 - 1979\)](#)
- [Mowbray Park \(1929 - 1959\)](#)
- [Green Wood \(1951 - 1966\)](#)
- [Drapers' Hall \(1962 - 1981\)](#)
- [Methodist Children's Homes \(1924 - 1960\)](#)
- [Dalmar \(1900 - current\)](#)
- [Methodist Children's Home \(1922 - 1959\)](#)
- [Nazareth House, Geraldton \(1941 - 1979?\)](#)
- [Nazareth House, Camberwell \(1929 - 1975\)](#)
- [St Joseph's Home, Neerkol \(1885 - 1978\)](#)
- [Castledare \(1934 - 1983\)](#)
- [Tardun Farm School \(1928 - 2008\)](#)
- [Clontarf \(8 September 1901 - 1983\)](#)
- [Bindoon \(1936 - 1966\)](#)
- [St Vincent de Paul Orphanage \(1866 - 1975\)](#)
- [Dhurringile Rural Training Farm \(1951 - 1964\)](#)

#### Related Concepts

- [Child Migration \(1800s - 1970s\)](#)

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