

June 2002

NEWSLETTER

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS EX-RESIDENTS AND STUDENTS SERVICES

STORIES take PRIDE of PLACE

The personal stories of ten Maltese former child migrants will be stored for posterity at the Batty Library in Perth. A ceremony to mark the hand-over of the recorded oral histories, and to honour the men who took part in the Maltese Oral History Project, was held at the Alexander Library in April.

The hand-over ceremony was attended by nearly 100 people, including the High Commissioner of Malta in Australia, His Excellency Mr Ives De Barro the Premier, the Hon Dr Geoff Gallop pictured below right with Maltese former child migrant Mr Alf Naudi. (see page 2 for more information on this historic event).



Oral History Participants (pictured left): Vince Lambertini, Reno Camilleri, Charlie Grima, Tony Pavia, Bill Bartell, Alf Pisani, John Pace, Henry Wettinger and Joseph MacKay (plus Alf Naudi featured at right above)

Commonwealth Response to Senate Inquiry

Good News for Former Child Migrants

The Commonwealth Government has responded positively to the 33 recommendations of the report of the Community Affairs References Committee on Child Migration with an emphasis on "practical support and assistance" for those who need it.

Welcoming the Reference Committee's report as a "sensitive, comprehensive and insightful appraisal of child migration schemes and child migrants' experiences in Australia", the Commonwealth Government response acknowledges the value of former child migrants having had an opportunity to "tell their story" in the "hope that this will contribute to the healing process for those who have conflicting or painful memories of the schemes".

While noting that some recommendations are directed at State Governments or sending and receiving agencies, the Commonwealth response identifies a range of key initiatives over which it has jurisdiction, and is able to take action.

As well as acknowledging its past role in child migration schemes, the Government will encourage other jurisdictions and agencies to support the Committee's recommendations.

Key Initiatives

Key Commonwealth Government initiatives include

- ◆ Establishing a **new Australian travel fund** to enable former child migrants to return to their country of origin, re-establish connections and reunite with family members (contributing \$1million a year for three years to the fund and encouraging State Governments to also make a contribution)
- ◆ Continued **funding for the Child Migrants Trust** to support family tracing and counselling services (contributing \$125,000 over the next three years)
- ◆ Supporting the establishment of **Child Migrant Memorials** initiated by State Governments (with a contribution of \$100,000 towards costs in 2002-03).



**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
(Monday, Tuesday)

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

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Former child migrant and member of the Senate Inquiry into Child

RIGHTING the WRONGS A Senate Inquiry Trilogy

Migration, WA Senator Andrew Murray told a meeting of ex-residents of Christian Brothers and Sisters of Mercy child care institutions how two recent Senate Inquiries had effectively helped to right the past wrongs systematically committed against disadvantaged children in Australia.

Speaking at a meeting of ex-residents and their partners organised by the C-BERS Management Committee in May, Senator Murray said the first of,

what he envisioned was a required “trilogy of Senate Inquiries”, investigated the impact of the removal of indigenous children from their families “*The Stolen Generation*” and resulted in grants of \$69 million to correct the effects of what is now seen as a flawed policy.

The second inquiry “*Lost Innocents: Righting the Record*” reported on the impact of child migration schemes involving children from England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Malta which, with the unanimous

support of all political parties, has resulted in funding of \$2.7million already

having been allocated in response to the Inquiry’s recommendations.

Senator Murray said a third inquiry was currently being considered by the Senate inquiring into “*Children in Care in Australia*”.

Senator Murray said he was very keen to progress this inquiry, not only to complete the “righting of the historical record” but also to continue to right the historical wrongs that had been committed against Australia’s children.

MALTESE HISTORY... in the MAKING

MALTESE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Professional interviewer John Bannister took on the job of conducting structured personal interviews with the ten Maltese former child migrants who had volunteered to participate in the Oral History Project. With each interview lasting between two and three hours, the edited result was 20 hours of taped histories which were then transcribed for formal hand-over to the State Library and Information Service of Western Australia. (Each story self contained in its own separate package—one for the library and one for each of the participants).

C-BERS Counsellor Michael Anderson (a history buff by heart) helped to instigate and organise the project.

The formal hand-over at the Alexander Library Theatre on 19 April 2002 emphasised the contribution of former child migrants to the Aus-

lian way of life far more than the hardships they may have endured along the way.

Professor David Plowman, himself a former child migrant, commented on the contribution made by the men who had told their stories to their own country, to themselves and to Australia.



C-BERS Counsellor, Michael Anderson was a principal player in bringing the Maltese Oral History Project to fruition

Premier Geoff Gallop and Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs said the oral histories represented an important historical experience so that those living today and in future generations could learn from the lessons of the past. For those who had contributed their stories, the Premier said, “Your children, grandchildren and great grandchildren will know more about you than most other members of the community know about their own forbears”.

Goodbye and Goodluck

The Management, staff and clients of C-BERS Services bid a fond farewell to **Sue Lodge Calvert** who has served as our Clinical Supervisor for the past two years. Those who have come to know Sue during this time will miss her humour and wisdom. We all wish her the very best as she embarks on a course of full time study.

All at C-BERS extend our deepest sympathy to our friend and editor of C-BERS Ex-press, Deirdre Croft on the recent death of her mother.

Some of you may remember Mrs Tessie Croft who was a psychologist at the then Child Welfare Department in the 1960s and 70s in which professional capacity she regularly visited and worked to support children at Clontarf and Castledare.

After many years of fruitless search, I eventually discovered the whereabouts of my mother. She lived in the village of Selsey near Chichester in the south of England. I felt it prudent to write to the Catholic priest in Selsey, with a copy of my birth certificate to ask for his assistance.

In time a reply came back from a Father Price who explained that my mother indeed lived in the village, that she was a well known business woman and a devout Catholic who attended mass every day. He also explained that she was a personal friend of his and that he would find it rather difficult to break the news to her, but he would do his best.

A couple of months later Fr Price wrote to say that he had passed the information on to my mother and that she would be writing to me soon. Eventually she did write explaining in a one page note that she was happily married and that she had no real desire to meet me, as it could bring turmoil

A Surprise HOMECOMING

Tardun Old Boy John Hawkins writes of the surprise ending to his visit to the English village in which his mother lived after she had initially rejected his request to meet her

to her family. She did express some sympathy and said that she'd given me up for adoption and had no idea that I had gone to Australia, aged seven, to face a childhood growing up in institutions. Naturally I was very disappointed with the response – rejection wasn't something I had considered.

Without alerting Fr Price, I surprised him one day when I arrived to meet with him in the village of Selsey. I insisted that I had no intention to barge in on my mother's life. I showed him a copy of my mother's letter and suggested that "I would be happy just to see her in the flesh".

He advised me to come to mass in the morning as she would almost certainly be there. With the photo that I had acquired from Fr Price, I sat quietly at the back of the church, observing the three women who knelt near the front. Just before the end of the service my mother left her seat and began walking toward me. She paused – I thought for me – but it was to light some candles

before she left the church. I decided to attend the mass the following morning for just one last look before going to Wales to stay with some friends.

After the second service, Fr Price inquired where I was staying in the village and what my plans were. I said that I was satisfied now that I had seen my mother and that I would be leaving for Wales in the morning.

With a keen interest in English history and a strong sense of belonging, I spent the rest of the day acquainting and absorbing myself in the history of Selsey and Chichester.

Around 9.30 that night, someone began knocking on my hotel room door. I opened the door to be confronted by a rather attractive young woman who momentarily looked at me before bursting into tears. She said her name was Susan, that she was my sister, and that I was coming home.

CHILD MIGRANTS of MALTA

For the first time since the arrival of the original group of Maltese child migrants in Australia 52 years ago, the Maltese former child migrants now have their own support group.

Formed as an initiative of the Maltese Professional and Business Association of Western Australia, the **Child Migrants of Malta (C-MOM)** aims to act as a vehicle to persuade the Maltese Government and Church to erect a monument in honour of the former child migrants in Valletta and to take measures to ensure that information and materials of the child migration period are preserved.

Professor David Plowman was chosen to chair C-MOM and recently retired Executive Director of Public Health, *Dr Paul Psaila-Savona* was chosen as his deputy. Representatives from the Maltese Professional and Business Association, C-BERS Services and the Maltese former child migrants make up the rest of the ten-member committee.

C-BERS (Christian Brothers Ex-Resident and Student Services) provided valuable support for the formation of C-MOM. It facilitated a meeting for the Maltese former child migrants and representatives of Western Australia's two Maltese Associations which resulted in formation of the current committee.

C-MOM held its inaugural meeting on Monday, 15 April.

Their main initial task is to reach as many Maltese former child migrants as possible. Of particular concern are the Maltese female former child migrants who are currently unrepresented in the new organisation. They urge readers who know Maltese former child migrants to make them aware of C-MOMs formation.

By Paul Calleja

Commonwealth Response to Senate Inquiry (cont from page 1)

Other key initiatives include

- ◆ Making existing and new services **equally accessible** to former Child Migrants from Britain and from Malta including waiving fees for Australian Citizenship for Maltese Former Child Migrants
- ◆ Arranging **special citizenship ceremonies** for former Child Migrants "as appropriate"

While acknowledging the many valuable initiatives proposed by the Commonwealth Government, C-BERS Chairperson Maria Harries has expressed disappointment that the Commonwealth's response has failed to recognise the "current inadequacy of government funding to support family tracing" as one of "the most vital of services". The Commonwealth says that this service is already provided for through its existing funding to the Child Migrants Trust.

To Contact C-MOM: 12 Alvan Street Subiaco, Western Australia. 6008
David Plowman Tel. (08) 9380 3984 (W) Fax (08) 9380 1072
 Email dplowman@ecel.uwa.edu.au
 or *Paul Psaila-Savona* Tel (08) 9345 2809
 Email paul.psaila.savona@health.wa.gov.au



REUNIONS

Tardun Old Boys Association
27-28 July 2002
 Tuppin House, Guilderton, Moore River
 A Weekend Reunion for Old Boys and their families—For further details contact Judith Marshall on (08) 9457 7936.

Child Migrant Friendship Society
GRAND REUNION LUNCH
Sunday 22 September 2002
 11.30 am Beau Rivage Room, Gloucester Park
 This day marks the 55th Anniversary of the arrival of the *Asturias* in Fremantle in 1947. All Child Migrants and partners are welcome to what promises to be a great day – (Including a sing-along!)
 For bookings phone Maureen Colgan on 08-9317 2753 or fax 08-9317 2091.

Tasmanian 50th Anniversary
Saturday 12 Oct 2002
 John Merrigan (formerly of Boys Town, Tasmania and Tardun, WA) is helping to organise the **Tasmanian 50th Anniversary Reunion of Child Migrants.**
 John wishes to hear from Child Migrants who came to Australia in 1952 and were placed at Boys Town in Glenorchy (Hobart). Please phone C-BERS for John's contact details.

WANTING CONTACT

Daniel Gallagher (Bindoon 1947) Joan Kerry of CCWC in the UK wishes to get in touch with Daniel Gallagher. If anyone knows where Daniel can be contacted, please phone C-BERS or Joan in the UK on : 0011-44-1675 434002.

Guy New (Australian, ex Bindoon) would like to contact Tom Cox whom he remembers from Tardun around 1942. Guy's telephone number can be obtained from C-BERS.

C-BERS would like to contact Child Migrants Paddy Maguire and Paddy McGowan who sailed for Australia on the Strathnavar in December 1956. If you can help us please phone 08-9381 5422.

Ted Haenow wishes to contact Glen Attenborough Phone C-BERS for Ted's telephone number if you know how Glen can be reached.

COUNSELLING

C-BERS Counselling extended to women previously in the care of the **SISTERS OF NAZARETH**

The Sisters of Nazareth have contracted C-BERS to provide confidential counselling free of charge to former child migrants who were previously in their care who may require professional help to resolve issues associated with their past.

The confidential nature of the counselling means that no identifying information will be revealed to anyone outside C-BERS Services (including the Sisters of Nazareth). Women seeking counselling may therefore be assured that their identity and any information about them will remain strictly private and confidential.

Please spread the word of this good news so that women who wish to avail themselves of this service can do so.

The RUAH CENTRE
 33 Shenton Street, Northbridge
 (Opposite Russell Square)

operates a drop in centre
 weekdays 9 am to 1 pm

provides lunch for \$2.50-\$3.00
 weekdays 12 noon to 1 pm

offers counselling and group work
 weekdays 2 pm to 4 pm

For further information
 Phone: 9227 7894.

C-BERS Services has been providing services for former child migrants who resided at Christian Brothers child care institutions since 1995 and to Christian Brothers ex-students since 1998.

And.... Over the past seven years, we have

- ◆ Provided support and assistance to more than 450 former child migrants and ex-residents
- ◆ Assisted 226 former child migrants to make reunification trips (55 to Malta)
- ◆ Provided no-interest loans to 45 clients
- ◆ Assisted 20 clients to access adult education courses

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