

the Ross committee dismissed the notion that children 'already rejected and insecure' would benefit from 'a fresh start' (para 19). They insisted that children 'deprived of a normal home life' should be brought up in circumstances 'approaching as nearly as possible those of a child living in his own home' (para 14). Hence they should be boarded out with foster parents or accommodated in small children's homes (para 40). Moreover, they acknowledged that there was a body of opinion in Australia which already subscribed to similar principles with respect to Australian children (paras 8, 9, 14).

5.6.3 Having visited 26 (out of 39) establishments in Australia to which British children had been sent, the reports were largely critical of 'their institutional character' (paras 12, 27), their lack of a 'homely atmosphere' (para 27), the failure even in cottage estates to reproduce anything like a normal family home (para 28), and the isolation of several places which separated children from the wider community (para 32-35, 38). Regrettably siblings were sometimes separated (para 20). Education and employment opportunities available to some children were also criticised (para 30, 31). Moreover, not all staff had 'sufficient knowledge of child care methods' (para 26); no specialised scheme of training in childcare work was available in Australia (para 26); and little progress with fostering was possible until Australia produced enough suitably qualified childcare workers (para 40). In addition the committee was concerned that insufficient information about children was being sent from the UK to receiving homes (para 18), and there were legitimate complaints about the selection of some children for migration (para 17). The committee also recommended strongly that the consent of the Home Secretary should be required before children could be sent overseas by voluntary societies, just as was required for those in local authority care (paras 22, 36). The Doyle Report, it will be recalled, had argued for a similar equivalence of approval back in 1875. All this was in the report published as a government White Paper in August 1956, and therefore available to interested parties in the UK and Australia.

5.6.4 The committee's un-paginated confidential reports on each of the twenty-two institutions inspected were not published, but seen by officials and ministers in the Home Office, in the Commonwealth Relations Office and in Australia. Some comments are complimentary, but most are critical, for example:

- (i) St Joseph's Orphanage, Sydney: 'deficient in comfort and amenities, in which the girls lead a restricted life'.
- (ii) Durringhile Rural Training Farm, Tatura, Victoria: 'isolated...bare and comfortless'.
- (iii) Nazareth House, Melbourne: 'anything approaching a home atmosphere impossible'.
- (iv) St Joseph's, Neerkol: 'institutional upbringing in isolation from the outside world'.
- (v) Methodist Home, Perth: 'an unnecessarily restricted life'.
- (vi) Methodist Home, Macgill: 'old and dilapidated'.

5.6.5 Particularly pertinent to IICSA are comments explicitly as well as implicitly critical of staff at particular establishments: