

unloved and stigmatised, of educational and other opportunities denied, of behavioural and other mental health problems, and of adult lives blighted by poor personal relationships, broken marriages, suicide attempts, and insecurity (p. x1-xii).

5.11.7 The report was aware that over time social attitudes change, but concluded that the abuses disclosed went far beyond what might have been regarded, even in the past, as acceptable limits.

5.11.8 The Ross Committee had noted that three institutions in Queensland had been approved by the UK Government to receive British children. However, none had been sent to one of them, and only one was by the time of their visit in residence at a second, the Salvation Army Riverview Training Farm at Ipswich, though a total of 56 others had been there over previous years. The third was St Joseph's Orphanage at Neerkol near Rockhampton, which as noted earlier [5.10 above], had already been reviewed critically by the Children's Commission of Queensland the previous year. The Ross Committee had found 32 British child migrants in residence. The Forde inquiry confirmed the Ross report that 48 had been sent there in total, the first group of 22 arriving in February 1951, followed by another 14 in July. A few arrived thereafter, the last six in February 1955. The age of these children on arrival ranged from 5 to 14 years. Most were girls. By 1966-67 all had been discharged from State care. They had been 'recruited' in a group nomination scheme by the Catholic Migration Organisation (this title may be a mistake: we have not seen other references to an organisation with this name). The children were mainly drawn from Father Hudson's Homes around the UK, together with a few from St Anthony's Home in Bedford (p.32).<sup>103</sup>

5.11.9 The Forde report recognised that responsibility for the well-being of British child migrants to Queensland lay with the Commonwealth Minister for Immigration who was their legal guardian, though this responsibility had been delegated to the Director of the Queensland State Children Department. Custodianship had been awarded to the Bishop of the Diocese of Rockhampton. The Rockhampton Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy were responsible for the children's care. This follows more general patterns of guardianship and custodianship discussed below (see 6.5).

5.11.10 The Commission described Neerkol as a substantial institution, not of 'cottage homes' design. During the 1950s, when British child migrants were in residence, between 10 and 15 nuns cared for between 300 and 400 children. One nun was responsible for 45 children in the dormitory for older boys, while another nun with a single assistant had charge of 94 girls, big and little. It was therefore overcrowded and understaffed, and of this the Children Department were aware, but had taken no action. Witnesses to the inquiry could not recall being spoken to by an inspector from the department. What many did recall was the abuse they suffered at Neerkol.

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<sup>103</sup> We assume that the report actually means St Anthony's Home, near Feltham. For an account of the departure of children from this home to Neerkol, see <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/features/british-orphans-it-broke-our-hearts-to-see-them-go-away-1914210.html>