

## Chapter Thirteen

### Australian Child Migration- Positives, Concerns and Failings

Between 1939 and 1963 Catholic agencies and religious orders in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland sent 1149 children to Australia. The vast majority of children sent to Australia were sent to Catholic institutions managed by religious orders. Of these the main recipients, (52.2%), were the Christian Brothers, who owned several residential schools in Western Australia.



The other prime providers of residential care in Australia were the Sisters of Mercy (19.8%) and the Sisters of Nazareth, (12.9 %). 795, (69%), of children sent were boys, and 354, (31%), were girls. The majority of children going, via the Catholic agencies, to Australia were aged between 8 and 12 years old.

Evidence for consent by birth parent(s) was found in only 229 instances (20%) but it is unknown in 920 cases whether

or not parental consent was obtained, though later accounts suggest that in some cases it was not.

Children were placed in a variety of residential establishments throughout Western Australia - Castledare in south-east Perth, Clontarf on the River Canning estuary, Tardun – 450km north of Perth, Bindoon – 150km north of Perth, Nazareth House – Geraldton and St Joseph's – Sisters of Mercy – Perth.

#### The Moss & Ross Reports

An insight into how the provision for migrant children was operating in the early 1950's is given in a report, "Child Migration to Australia", compiled in 1953 by John Moss, (who had been a member of the Curtis Report Committee in 1945). John Moss was a senior Home Office official who had been asked by his Department to use his visit to Australia as an opportunity to look into child migration.

Moss concludes his report with 34 recommendations, concerned mostly with improving the life opportunities of the children involved. He observed that "the larger type of institution is generally provided under Roman Catholic auspices". His comments on these institutions range from highly critical to praiseworthy, but he does make it clear that he believes that "the Cottage system is clearly the best," as opposed to the barrack block type of institution provided by many Catholic agencies.