

# FINAL REPORT

Historical residential institutions



**Royal Commission**  
into Institutional Responses  
to Child Sexual Abuse

VOLUME 11

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# FINAL REPORT

Volume 11

Historical residential institutions

## Content warning

This volume contains information about child sexual abuse that may be distressing. We also wish to advise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers that information in this volume may have been provided by or refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have died.

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# Preface

## The Royal Commission

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The Letters Patent provided to the Royal Commission required that it ‘inquire into institutional responses to allegations and incidents of child sexual abuse and related matters’. In carrying out this task, the Royal Commission was directed to focus on systemic issues, be informed by an understanding of individual cases, and make findings and recommendations to better protect children against sexual abuse and alleviate the impact of abuse on children when it occurs. The Royal Commission did this by conducting public hearings, private sessions and a policy and research program.

## Public hearings

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A Royal Commission commonly does its work through public hearings. We were aware that sexual abuse of children has occurred in many institutions, all of which could be investigated in a public hearing. However, if the Royal Commission was to attempt that task, a great many resources would need to be applied over an indeterminate, but lengthy, period of time. For this reason the Commissioners accepted criteria by which Senior Counsel Assisting would identify appropriate matters for a public hearing and bring them forward as individual ‘case studies’.

The decision to conduct a case study was informed by whether or not the hearing would advance an understanding of systemic issues and provide an opportunity to learn from previous mistakes so that any findings and recommendations for future change the Royal Commission made would have a secure foundation. In some cases the relevance of the lessons to be learned will be confined to the institution the subject of the hearing. In other cases they will have relevance to many similar institutions in different parts of Australia.

Public hearings were also held to assist in understanding the extent of abuse that may have occurred in particular institutions or types of institutions. This enabled the Royal Commission to understand the ways in which various institutions were managed and how they responded to allegations of child sexual abuse. Where our investigations identified a significant concentration of abuse in one institution, the matter could be brought forward to a public hearing.

Public hearings were also held to tell the stories of some individuals, which assisted in a public understanding of the nature of sexual abuse, the circumstances in which it may occur and, most importantly, the devastating impact that it can have on people’s lives. Public hearings were open to the media and the public, and were live streamed on the Royal Commission’s website.

The Commissioners' findings from each hearing were generally set out in a case study report. Each report was submitted to the Governor-General and the governors and administrators of each state and territory and, where appropriate, tabled in the Australian Parliament and made publicly available. The Commissioners recommended some case study reports not be tabled at the time because of current or prospective criminal proceedings.

We also conducted some private hearings, which aided the Royal Commission's investigative processes.

## Private sessions

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When the Royal Commission was appointed, it was apparent to the Australian Government that many people (possibly thousands) would wish to tell us about their personal history of sexual abuse as a child in an institutional setting. As a result, the Australian Parliament amended the *Royal Commissions Act 1902* (Cth) to create a process called a 'private session'.

Each private session was conducted by one or two Commissioners and was an opportunity for a person to tell their story of abuse in a protected and supportive environment. Many accounts from these sessions are told in a de-identified form in this Final Report.

Written accounts allowed individuals who did not attend private sessions to share their experiences with Commissioners. The experiences of survivors described to us in written accounts have informed this Final Report in the same manner as those shared with us in private sessions.

We also decided to publish, with their consent, as many individual survivors' experiences as possible, as de-identified narratives drawn from private sessions and written accounts. These narratives are presented as accounts of events as told by survivors of child sexual abuse in institutions. We hope that by sharing them with the public they will contribute to a better understanding of the profound impact of child sexual abuse and may help to make our institutions as safe as possible for children in the future. The narratives are available as an online appendix to Volume 5, *Private sessions*.

We recognise that the information gathered in private sessions and from written accounts captures the accounts of survivors of child sexual abuse who were able to share their experiences in these ways. We do not know how well the experiences of these survivors reflect those of other victims and survivors of child sexual abuse who could not or did not attend a private session or provide a written account.



## Policy and research

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The Royal Commission had an extensive policy and research program that drew upon the findings made in public hearings and upon survivors' private sessions and written accounts, as well as generating new research evidence.

The Royal Commission used issues papers, roundtables and consultation papers to consult with government and non-government representatives, survivors, institutions, regulators, policy and other experts, academics, and survivor advocacy and support groups. The broader community had an opportunity to contribute to our consideration of systemic issues and our responses through our public consultation processes.

## Community engagement

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The community engagement component of the Royal Commission's inquiry ensured that people in all parts of Australia were offered the opportunity to articulate their experiences and views. It raised awareness of our work and allowed a broad range of people to engage with us.

We involved the general community in our work in several ways. We held public forums and private meetings with survivor groups, institutions, community organisations and service providers. We met with children and young people, people with disability and their advocates, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. We also engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in many parts of Australia, and with regional and remote communities.

## Diversity and vulnerability

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We heard from a wide range of people throughout the inquiry. The victims and survivors who came forward were from diverse backgrounds and had many different experiences. Factors such as gender, age, education, culture, sexuality or disability had affected their vulnerability and the institutional responses to the abuse. Certain types of institutional cultures and settings created heightened risks, and some children's lives brought them into contact with these institutions more than others.

While not inevitably more vulnerable to child sexual abuse, we heard that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were more likely to encounter circumstances that increased their risk of abuse in institutions, reduced their ability to disclose or report abuse and, if they did disclose or report, reduced their chances of receiving an adequate response.

We examined key concerns related to disability, cultural diversity and the unique context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience, as part of our broader effort to understand what informs best practice institutional responses. We included discussion about these and other issues of heightened vulnerability in every volume. Volume 5, *Private sessions* outlines what we heard in private sessions from these specific populations.

## Our interim and other reports

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On 30 June 2014, in line with our Terms of Reference, we submitted a two-volume interim report of the results of the inquiry. Volume 1 described the work we had done, the issues we were examining and the work we still needed to do. Volume 2 contained a representative sample of 150 de-identified personal stories from people who had shared their experiences at a private session.

Early in the inquiry it became apparent that some issues should be reported on before the inquiry was complete to give survivors and institutions more certainty on these issues and enable governments and institutions to implement our recommendations as soon as possible. Consequently, we submitted the following reports:

- *Working With Children Checks* (August 2015)
- *Redress and civil litigation* (September 2015)
- *Criminal justice* (August 2017)

## Definition of terms

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The inappropriate use of words to describe child sexual abuse and the people who experience the abuse can have silencing, stigmatising and other harmful effects. Conversely, the appropriate use of words can empower and educate.

For these reasons, we have taken care with the words used in this report. Some key terms used in this volume are set out in Chapter 1, 'Introduction' and in the Final Report Glossary, in Volume 1, *Our inquiry*.

## Naming conventions

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To protect the identity of victims and survivors and their supporters who participated in private sessions, pseudonyms are used. These pseudonyms are indicated by the use of single inverted commas, for example, ‘Roy’.

As in our case study reports, the identities of some witnesses before public hearings and other persons referred to in the proceedings are protected through the use of assigned initials, for example, BZW.

## Structure of the Final Report

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The Final Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse consists of 17 volumes and an executive summary. To meet the needs of readers with specific interests, each volume can be read in isolation. The volumes contain cross references to enable readers to understand individual volumes in the context of the whole report.

In the Final Report:

The **Executive Summary** summarises the entire report and provides a full list of recommendations.

**Volume 1, *Our inquiry*** introduces the Final Report, describing the establishment, scope and operations of the Royal Commission.

**Volume 2, *Nature and cause*** details the nature and cause of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. It also describes what is known about the extent of child sexual abuse and the limitations of existing studies. The volume discusses factors that affect the risk of child sexual abuse in institutions and the legal and political changes that have influenced how children have interacted with institutions over time.

**Volume 3, *Impacts*** details the impacts of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. The volume discusses how impacts can extend beyond survivors, to family members, friends, and whole communities. The volume also outlines the impacts of institutional responses to child sexual abuse.

**Volume 4, *Identifying and disclosing child sexual abuse*** describes what we have learned about survivors’ experiences of disclosing child sexual abuse and about the factors that affect a victim’s decision whether to disclose, when to disclose and who to tell.

**Volume 5, *Private sessions*** provides an analysis of survivors' experiences of child sexual abuse as told to Commissioners during private sessions, structured around four key themes: experiences of abuse; circumstances at the time of the abuse; experiences of disclosure; and impact on wellbeing. It also describes the private sessions model, including how we adapted it to meet the needs of diverse and vulnerable groups.

**Volume 6, *Making institutions child safe*** looks at the role community prevention could play in making communities and institutions child safe, the child safe standards that will make institutions safer for children, and how regulatory oversight and practice could be improved to facilitate the implementation of these standards in institutions. It also examines how to prevent and respond to online sexual abuse in institutions in order to create child safe online environments.

**Volume 7, *Improving institutional responding and reporting*** examines the reporting of child sexual abuse to external government authorities by institutions and their staff and volunteers, and how institutions have responded to complaints of child sexual abuse. It outlines guidance for how institutions should handle complaints, and the need for independent oversight of complaint handling by institutions.

**Volume 8, *Recordkeeping and information sharing*** examines records and recordkeeping by institutions that care for or provide services to children; and information sharing between institutions with responsibilities for children's safety and wellbeing and between those institutions and relevant professionals. It makes recommendations to improve records and recordkeeping practices within institutions and information sharing between key agencies and institutions.

**Volume 9, *Advocacy, support and therapeutic treatment services*** examines what we learned about the advocacy and support and therapeutic treatment service needs of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts, and outlines recommendations for improving service systems to better respond to those needs and assist survivors towards recovery.

**Volume 10, *Children with harmful sexual behaviours*** examines what we learned about institutional responses to children with harmful sexual behaviours. It discusses the nature and extent of these behaviours and the factors that may contribute to children sexually abusing other children. The volume then outlines how governments and institutions should improve their responses and makes recommendations about improving prevention and increasing the range of interventions available for children with harmful sexual behaviours.

**Volume 11, *Historical residential institutions*** examines what we learned about survivors' experiences of, and institutional responses to, child sexual abuse in residential institutions such as children's homes, missions, reformatories and hospitals during the period spanning post-World War II to 1990.

**Volume 12, *Contemporary out-of-home care*** examines what we learned about institutional responses to child sexual abuse in contemporary out-of-home care. The volume examines the nature and adequacy of institutional responses and draws out common failings. It makes recommendations to prevent child sexual abuse from occurring in out-of-home care and, where it does occur, to help ensure effective responses.

**Volume 13, *Schools*** examines what we learned about institutional responses to child sexual abuse in schools. The volume examines the nature and adequacy of institutional responses and draws out the contributing factors to child sexual abuse in schools. It makes recommendations to prevent child sexual abuse from occurring in schools and, where it does occur, to help ensure effective responses to that abuse.

**Volume 14, *Sport, recreation, arts, culture, community and hobby groups*** examines what we learned about institutional responses to child sexual abuse in sport and recreation contexts. The volume examines the nature and adequacy of institutional responses and draws out common failings. It makes recommendations to prevent child sexual abuse from occurring in sport and recreation and, where it does occur, to help ensure effective responses.

**Volume 15, *Contemporary detention environments*** examines what we learned about institutional responses to child sexual abuse in contemporary detention environments, focusing on youth detention and immigration detention. It recognises that children are generally safer in community settings than in closed detention. It also makes recommendations to prevent child sexual abuse from occurring in detention environments and, where it does occur, to help ensure effective responses.

**Volume 16, *Religious institutions*** examines what we learned about institutional responses to child sexual abuse in religious institutions. The volume discusses the nature and extent of child sexual abuse in religious institutions, the impacts of this abuse, and survivors' experiences of disclosing it. The volume examines the nature and adequacy of institutional responses to child sexual abuse in religious institutions, and draws out common factors contributing to the abuse and common failings in institutional responses. It makes recommendations to prevent child sexual abuse from occurring in religious institutions and, where it does occur, to help ensure effective responses.

**Volume 17, *Beyond the Royal Commission*** describes the impacts and legacy of the Royal Commission and discusses monitoring and reporting on the implementation of our recommendations.

Unless otherwise indicated, this Final Report is based on laws, policies and information current as at 30 June 2017. Private sessions quantitative information is current as at 31 May 2017.



# Summary

We were sad lonely kids torn away from our family and did no one any harm. We should have been cared for and shown compassion for whatever reason we were unable to stay safe with our family. We had no safety net and would have been terrified to tell anyone.<sup>1</sup>

Every person, from family, from relatives, to professionals that I went and asked for help not only didn't give me the help, they put me in a worse situation ... How can a child be protected if the adults and the professionals choose to ignore the abuse?<sup>2</sup>

Volume 11 presents an overview of survivors' experiences of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions. In this volume, we use the term 'historical' to describe residential institutions in which children were placed from post-World War II to 1990. By 1990 many residential institutions had closed, although some groups of children continued to be placed in large residential settings after this time.

This volume brings together survivors' accounts from private sessions, written accounts, findings from public hearings and research to document survivors' experiences of sexual abuse in historical residential institutions. Although many of these institutions have closed, we acknowledge that for many survivors of child sexual abuse in these institutions, the impacts remain current.

## Historical context

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Understanding the history of children's residential institutions, where governments, institutions and individuals failed in their duty of care to protect children has driven some of the reforms of Australia's out-of-home care system.

The latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw significant changes to the systems and models of residential care in Australia. Until the 1960s, Australia often relied on large residential institutions to accommodate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children forcibly removed from their families, child migrants, wards of the state, orphans and other children.<sup>3</sup>

Multiple previous inquiries – including those focusing on the experiences of the Stolen Generations, Former Child Migrants and Forgotten Australians – have outlined the harsh conditions for children and the abuse of power by authorities in many historical residential institutions.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have been forcibly separated from their families since the first days of European colonisation of Australia.<sup>4</sup> Governments in most Australian states and territories assumed legal guardianship over Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, with control over where a child lived, education, training and work placements. States had their own legislation but the effects were broadly similar in terms of the tragic intergenerational consequences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The exact number of children removed is unknown.

Commissioned research traces the complexity of historical policies and social attitudes and draws implications for contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The research concludes that while all children in institutions are vulnerable to child sexual abuse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experience increased vulnerability.

## Child migrants

While the precise number of child migrants sent to Australia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century is unknown, approximately 3,000 to 3,500 children were sent under approved schemes during the post-war period and a similar number before the war.<sup>5</sup>

In 2001 the *Lost Innocents: Righting the record – Report on child migration (Lost Innocents)* detailed the widespread abuse of child migrants in Australia and noted the ‘complete disregard for the needs, the safety and wellbeing of many child migrants’.<sup>6</sup>

## Forgotten Australians

It is estimated that over half a million children experienced institutional and other out-of-home ‘care’ in Australia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 2004 *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional and out-of-home care as children* outlined what the Senate Community Affairs References Committee had heard through hundreds of submissions from people who spent time in such institutional care. ‘Their stories outlined a litany of emotional, physical and sexual abuse, and often criminal physical and sexual assault. Their stories also told of neglect, humiliation and deprivation of food, education and healthcare.’<sup>7</sup>

## Children with disability

Many children with disability were placed in disability-specific institutions as part of a parallel system of care. They were often housed with adults with intellectual disability and mental illness in the same large hospital-style institutions.



A series of government reports starting in the late 1970s found that disability programs were lacking and there were negative effects from separating people with disability from the wider community. Commissioned research noted that these reports frequently recommended that institutions for the psychiatrically ill and developmentally disabled be progressively closed and be replaced with integrated community services. The transition away from residential care occurred much later for children with disability than for other children, and many children with disability continued to be housed in large-scale residential institutions well into the 1980s and early 1990s.

## Types of historical residential institutions

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Historical residential institutions fulfilled different and sometimes conflicting functions in the care of children, which often varied across jurisdictions. The main institution types covered in this volume include missions, orphanages, children's homes, youth detention and mental hospitals, psychiatric facilities and disability institutions.

In practice, children with disability, children with mental health and behavioural concerns, and children convicted of criminal offences were often housed alongside children who had been removed from their parents for other reasons, some of whom were at risk within their family of origin.

## Child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions

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Between May 2013 and May 2017, 6,875 people came forward and told their stories of sexual abuse to one or more Commissioners during a private session. Over one-third (35.9 per cent) of these survivors described abuse in an historical residential institution.

Survivors in private sessions who described abuse in an historical residential institution were most often male (61.8 per cent), and over one in five (22.2 per cent) identified as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivor. Most survivors (57.8 per cent) were aged between 40 and 60 years of age when they attended their private session, and almost half (45.1 per cent) said they were first abused between 1950 and 1969.

Most survivors who told us they were sexually abused in an historical residential institution said their childhoods were marked by trauma, brutality and violence. Many survivors described being physically and emotionally abused, and as a result carried lifelong physical and mental scars. They said that as children in youth detention, mental health institutions and reception centres they were often subjected to strip searches, which many found humiliating and intimidating. Many survivors said they were frightened by seeing other children beaten or suddenly go missing.

Some survivors described experiences of sexual abuse carried out under the guise of medical practices, commonly conducted without consent. Other survivors described the misuse of medication and medical procedures in historical residential institutions.

Many survivors said they had to work at the institutions, including farm work and caring for other children. We heard that many children in historical residential institutions did not have any real education and instead were put to physical labour. Some survivors said they were abused when they were sent out to work on farms or as domestic workers.

## Characteristics of residential institutions that increased children's vulnerability to abuse

Aspects of historical residential institutions' culture, day-to-day operations and environmental features all contributed to children's vulnerability to sexual abuse by adults and other children. In particular, many historical residential institutions operated as 'total institutions'. Total institutions are those that:

- are made up of staff and 'inmates', where inmates are the children living in the institution
- exert nearly complete control over all aspects of the inmates' (that is, children's) lives
- amplify staff members' control over inmates by imposing rigid rules and procedures
- have, as a principal objective, the transformation of human beings (for example, transforming convicted youth into model prisoners and ultimately into model citizens).

Aspects of institutional culture may also have directly or indirectly enabled child sexual abuse by endorsing abusive behaviours or preventing children from disclosing abuse. These include cultures:

- of secrecy and isolation from the outside world, where systems and processes are hidden from external view
- that do not listen to or value children, such as those that endorse the belief that 'children should be seen and not heard', that support high power differentials between staff and children, and that believe physical discipline and corporal punishment have a moral and educative role in children's lives
- where physical and emotional abuse and neglect towards children is normalised
- that treat children as inferior to staff, such as by referring to children by number rather than name, calling children offensive names, not allowing children to talk with one another and isolating children from others.

Operational aspects of historical residential institutions may also have increased opportunities for child sexual abuse. Adults in positions of authority and trust, and especially those responsible for maintaining discipline and control, may have responded in abusive ways to the power and control offered to them as part of their role. Many historical residential institutions controlled children's access to people outside the institution, and some children, including Former Child Migrants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, were prevented from accessing potentially protective adults. Many survivors told us that their sense of isolation, loss and trauma was compounded by being prohibited from contact with siblings, even where they were housed in the same institution.

We heard that in some institutions interactions between adults and children, as well as between children, were inadequately supervised, allowing abuse to occur unseen. In other cases, authorities with oversight of institutions did not supervise institutions effectively or ignored evidence of abuse and neglect.

Environmental and situational aspects of institutions may also have increased children's vulnerability to abuse. Children were sometimes placed in institutions based on the availability of places, with little consideration for the suitability and safety of the institution for the individual child. In these contexts, children were sometimes abused by other children with harmful sexual behaviours.

## Institutional responses to child sexual abuse

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### At the time of the abuse

Many survivors abused in historical residential institutions said they tried to disclose the abuse at the time. They were often accused of telling lies or punished, and the abuse continued. Some said they were made to feel as if they were the instigator of the sexual abuse rather than the victim. Others said they were labelled as bad or morally deficient.

We often heard that staff in historical residential institutions overlooked signs of child sexual abuse, including injury and pregnancy. Many survivors said they felt they could not trust the police to respond appropriately to their childhood disclosures.

Survivors often told us that along with disclosures of sexual abuse being disbelieved or ignored, some alleged perpetrators were allowed continued access to children. We regularly heard that staff in historical residential institutions were not trained in child protection, and that many institutions lacked basic processes and checks to ensure people wanting to work at the organisation were suitable for child-related work.

We heard that reporting of allegations of sexual abuse to police by authorities in historical residential institutions was generally inconsistent and ad hoc. Institutions often lacked policies and procedures for reporting allegations to police when the allegations related to staff. External authorities often did not act on reports of child sexual abuse at historical residential institutions, despite receiving official confirmation of abuse.

## After the abuse

Many survivors of abuse in historical residential institutions said they waited until adulthood to tell others of the abuse. Many survivors who disclosed as adults to the police found the process difficult and retraumatising. Some survivors would not report the abuse to police because their interactions with police as children had been negative. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors' relationships with police have been affected by past racist policies. Other survivors said they were frustrated by the high threshold of evidence needed to pursue prosecution. Some survivors said they felt their allegations were taken seriously by police, but that the process of making a report and the subsequent court processes and outcome affected their wellbeing.

Few survivors told us they had found the process of government or religious institution based redress schemes satisfying, respectful or supportive. Many found the process of applying to redress schemes difficult and lacking in transparency. Financial compensation through redress schemes received a mixed response by survivors. Some appreciated the money they received but many felt it could never compensate for the suffering they had endured.

Some survivors had taken part in legal action against the institution. Most said the process had been difficult, and some said the action had not brought the resolution they had hoped for.

## Lessons for the future

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This volume presents an overview of survivors' experiences. Survivors' suggestions for the future are echoed in recommendations in other volumes of the Final Report including, Volume 8, *Record keeping and information sharing*, Volume 9, *Advocacy, support and therapeutic treatment services*, Volume 12, *Contemporary out-of-home care*, Volume 15, *Contemporary detention environments* and the *Redress and civil litigation* and *Criminal justice* reports. Responses to our issues papers from advocacy and support groups including the Alliance for Forgotten Australians, Care Leavers Australasia Network and Child Migrants Trust further support survivors' suggestions noted in this volume.

Many survivors of abuse in historical residential institutions had views of how children should be cared for and how they could be protected from abuse. They repeatedly said that children needed someone to act in their best interests and advocate on their behalf, and that this was especially important for children and young people who were away from their families. Survivors said children needed more support as they transitioned from out-of-home care into living in the community, and that children and the wider community needed a better understanding of behaviours that constituted child sexual abuse. Many survivors said that institutions needed to focus more on employing appropriate people to work with children in care. Some called for better monitoring, screening, training and ongoing supervision of adults looking after children in care.

Survivors of abuse in historical residential institutions also told us about the support they need now and in the future. Many survivors called for better access to medical and dental care, mental health services and housing. Many survivors said they needed support to access their records and information, including information about their birth families. Some said they struggled with parenting and relationships and needed extra support, and that the legacy of intergenerational trauma affected their relationships with others and their ability to parent. Survivors often said their life outcomes had been affected by the poor quality of education they received while in institutions and that they needed support to gain skills, including literacy, and access to employment.

Many survivors discussed the need for appropriate redress for what had happened to them. Survivors said redress schemes needed to acknowledge the trauma of children who had been sexually abused in institutions, and noted the importance of recognising and remembering what had happened in a way that would help child sexual abuse survivors in the future. They wanted redress schemes to be straightforward, and for institutions and those responsible for the abuse to bear the cost. They wanted the process for determining the amount of compensation to be transparent and fair. Other survivors suggested memorials and official days to remember survivors and victims of child sexual abuse.

Many survivors said they feared the possibility of re-entering institutional care as an older person. They were concerned the abuse would be repeated in institutional aged care. Survivors wanted the aged care system to be sensitive to their childhood experiences and some felt that survivors should be better supported to live in the community as they aged.

Survivors of abuse in historical residential institutions often told us about their hopes for the future. They told us they wanted children now to be protected from sexual abuse. They said they wanted their stories of childhood to be believed and respected, and to be treated with dignity as they aged. Survivors often talked about the things that brought them peace, joy and happiness, such as work and spending time with children and grandchildren.

# Endnotes

- 1 Name changed, private session, 'Lela'.
- 2 Name changed, private session, 'Lisa Michelle'.
- 3 The Forgotten Australians report states: 'Upwards of, and possibly more than 500 000 Australians experienced care in an orphanage, Home or other form of out-of-home care during the last century. As many of these people have had a family it is highly likely that every Australian either was, is related to, works with or knows someone who experienced childhood in an institution or out of home care environment'. Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional out-of-home care as children*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT, 2004, p xv.
- 4 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing them home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, Commonwealth of Australia, Sydney, 1997, p 27.
- 5 Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, *Lost Innocents: Righting the record - report on child migration*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2001, pp 69–70.
- 6 Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, *Lost Innocents: Righting the record - report on child migration*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2001, Prologue, p 13.
- 7 Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT, 2004, p xv.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

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Between the 1800s and 1990, hundreds of thousands of children across Australia were placed in residential institutions such as orphanages, children's homes, reception centres, hostels, hospitals, and missions, reserves and related institutions.<sup>1</sup> Many hundreds of residential institutions operated in Australia from post–World War II until the 1990s; however, the exact number has been difficult to determine.<sup>2</sup> Find & Connect, the Australian Government web resource of historical resources relating to residential institutions in Australia, lists at least 600 institutions in the 1950s and over 700 during the 1970s.<sup>3</sup>

This volume defines 'historical residential institutions' as residential institutions for children in the years following World War II up to 1990. We use the term 'historical' to describe these residential institutions because, in the main, they were closed by the 1970s and 1980s and replaced with more 'contemporary' models of home-based and family-oriented care. By 1990 many residential institutions had closed, though some groups of children continued to be placed in large residential settings after this date. In this volume we include institutions that accommodated children for short or long periods and exclude boarding schools, foster care and kinship care. Key terms definitions are listed in Section 1.5. The definition and types of institutions we discuss in this volume are listed in Section 2.2, Table 11.1. Although many of these institutions have closed, we acknowledge that for survivors of child sexual abuse, the impacts remain current.

This volume draws on Royal Commission public hearings, private sessions, written accounts and research.

Case study reports from our public hearings provided evidence about the management and operations of a number of historical residential institutions.<sup>4</sup> Nine public hearings examined historical residential institutions in detail, and several others made relevant findings and recommendations. Evidence from the public hearings and case studies outlines the circumstances at the time of the abuse and how institutions have responded to the disclosure of child sexual abuse. The case studies referred to in this volume are listed in Appendix A.

Over the course of the Royal Commission, we heard about 598 different historical residential institutions in private sessions.<sup>5</sup> Of all the survivors who attended private sessions, 2,470 survivors (35.9 per cent) said they were sexually abused in an historical residential institution. We also received numerous written accounts from survivors of sexual abuse, including many who were abused as children in historical residential institutions.

Survivors came from different backgrounds, and had diverse experiences and needs, which changed over their lifetimes. Factors such as age, geographical location, gender, faith, culture, disability and sexuality all influenced the way survivors understood and managed the impacts of child sexual abuse. These factors also affected how institutions, families and communities responded. While there were common threads throughout victims' stories, each person's story was unique. The same institutional conditions, including institutional responses to sexual abuse, affected individuals differently. Survivors' accounts highlight the need for institutions and service systems to anticipate and take account of this diversity and the dynamic shifts in survivors' needs over time.

Within this diversity of experience, some people faced particular issues that increased their vulnerability. We heard that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds commonly faced additional challenges. These children were not inevitably more vulnerable to sexual abuse but they often encountered circumstances that put them at greater risk. This made it harder for them to disclose abuse and more likely to receive an inadequate response if they did. While all children are vulnerable to child sexual abuse in institutional contexts, there were and continue to be specific extra dimensions of risk and vulnerability for these populations.

Commissioned research used in this volume provides further detail regarding historical residential institutions and legislation regarding child protection. Relevant to this volume are the following commissioned research reports:

- *History of institutions providing out-of-home residential care for children*<sup>6</sup>
- *History of child protection legislation*<sup>7</sup>
- *Disability and child sexual abuse in institutional contexts*<sup>8</sup>
- *Framework for historical influences on institutional child sexual abuse: 1950–2014*<sup>9</sup>
- *Risk profiles for institutional child sexual abuse: A literature review*<sup>10</sup>
- *The role of organisational culture in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts*, which examines the contexts for child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions.<sup>11</sup>
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and child sexual abuse in institutional contexts*, which outlines the particular experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.<sup>12</sup>

Previous inquiries and reports have documented the failings of historical residential institutions to properly care for Australia's vulnerable children. Over the past two decades, three state and four national inquiries have been conducted into the treatment of children in residential institutions.<sup>13</sup> The commissioned research *History of Australian inquiries reviewing institutions providing care for children*, documents inquiries held into institutions providing out-of-home care for children in Australia from 1852 to 2013.<sup>14</sup> Noted in that research are 52 inquiries



conducted between 1852 and 1950 and 31 inquiries held between 1950 and 2013 (see Appendix B).<sup>15</sup> The research also outlines the changes in attitude towards listening to and acknowledging survivors' experiences.<sup>16</sup>

Along with public hearings and their case studies, private sessions and commissioned research, this volume also draws on three previous inquiries and their respective reports. *Bringing them home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (Bringing them home)* was published in 1997. The report details past laws, practices and policies that resulted in the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. These children were forcibly removed from their families and are referred to as the Stolen Generations.<sup>17</sup> In 2001, the *Lost Innocents* report inquired into the experiences of children who had come to Australia under approved child migration schemes during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>18</sup> In 2004, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children (Forgotten Australians)* detailed the plight of the many hundreds of thousands of mainly non-Aboriginal, Australian-born children who suffered under institutional care.<sup>19</sup> The three reports outline the harsh conditions for children and the abuse of power by authorities in historical residential institutions. Other state-based inquiries are also referred to in this volume.

## 1.2 Terms of Reference

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The Letters Patent establishing the Royal Commission required that it 'inquire into institutional responses to allegations and incidents of child sexual abuse and related matters' and set out the Terms of Reference of the inquiry.

This volume particularly addresses paragraph (e) of the Terms of Reference, which required us to have regard to the experience of people directly or indirectly affected by child sexual abuse and related matters in institutional contexts, and the provision of opportunities for them to share their experiences in appropriate ways while recognising that many of them will be severely traumatised or will have special support needs.

We were committed to sharing these experiences with the broader Australian community. We were in a privileged position and able to validate the experiences of those who told us their stories, in contrast to the dismissal, denial and lack of recognition many survivors told us they experienced during previous attempts at disclosure. While the experiences of survivors have much in common, each survivor had their own story to tell about their experience of child sexual abuse, the circumstances surrounding the abuse, their experience of disclosure and their experience of wellbeing in the immediate aftermath, as well as in the years and decades following the abuse.

## 1.3 Links with other volumes

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This volume provides an overview of the factors that influenced historical residential institutions and describes the different types of residential institutions in which children were placed in the years following World War II to 1990. This volume links with others in the report:

- Volume 2, *Nature and cause* provides background to the historical factors that influenced the development of Australia's current system of child protection and child welfare and the legislation that underpins it
- Volume 3, *Impacts* outlines what we heard about the impacts of child sexual abuse
- Volume 4, *Identifying and disclosing child sexual abuse* details barriers and facilitators to the disclosure of child sexual abuse in institutions and survivors' experiences
- Volume 5, *Private sessions* provides a qualitative and quantitative overview of survivors' experiences of child sexual abuse that were told to us in private sessions
- Volume 8, *Recordkeeping and information sharing* discusses institutional recordkeeping
- Volume 9, *Advocacy, support and therapeutic treatment services* outlines the need for advocacy, support and therapeutic treatment for survivors of child sexual abuse
- Volume 12, *Contemporary out-of-home care* outlines Australia's contemporary out-of-home care system (post-1990)
- Volume 15, *Contemporary detention environments* examines contemporary detention environments (post-1990), focusing on youth detention and immigration detention
- Volume 16, *Religious institutions* focuses on institutions managed by religious organisations, including historical residential institutions.

Survivors' hopes for the future and suggestions for change, including our recommendations for contemporary child protection, link with:

- Volume 6, *Making institutions child safe*
- Volume 7, *Improving institutional responding and reporting*
- Volume 12, *Contemporary out-of-home care*.

## 1.4 Limitations of our work

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The themes described in this volume are drawn from survivors' accounts of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions. The volume is confined to:

- evidence heard in the public hearings and presented in case studies
- accounts by people who participated in private sessions and written accounts
- available research.

Case studies from the public hearings were used to further understand systemic issues and provide an opportunity to learn from previous mistakes. Case studies outline any findings and recommendations for future change. In some cases, the relevance of the lessons to be learned will be confined to the institution which was the subject of the hearing. In other cases, the findings and recommendations will have relevance to many similar institutions in different parts of Australia. Of the 57 public hearings, nine were specifically focused on child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions.

In private sessions Commissioners encouraged survivors to talk about their experiences in their own way. Some survivors discussed their experience of child sexual abuse and its impacts on their lives in detail and others with little detail. Attending a private session was a personal and challenging experience for many survivors and all attendees have made a valuable contribution to our work by telling their story. We do not know how well the themes from survivors' accounts from historical residential institutions reflect those of people who did not attend a private session.

Discussion in this volume is also based on the available research about historical residential institutions. We have referred to research commissioned by us, wider research and previous government inquiries.

## 1.5 Key terms

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The inappropriate use of words to describe child sexual abuse and the people who experience the abuse can have silencing, stigmatising and other harmful effects. Conversely, the appropriate use of words can empower and educate.

For these reasons, we have taken care with the words used in this report. Some key terms used in this volume are set out below. A complete glossary is contained in Volume 1, *Our inquiry*.

## Child migrant

‘Child migrant’ is used to refer to Former Child Migrants. ‘Child migrants’ were unaccompanied children generally under the age of 16 years who were brought to Australia from the United Kingdom or Malta under government-approved schemes during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This cohort was described in the 2001 Australian Parliament committee report *Lost Innocents: Righting the record – Report on child migration (Lost Innocents)*.

## Child sexual abuse

‘Child sexual abuse’ is understood as any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child’s inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.

## Forgotten Australians

‘Forgotten Australians’ is the term used to describe the estimated 500,000 mainly non-Indigenous Australian-born children who spent all or part of their childhood in the care of a government or non-government institution, including children’s homes, orphanages, industrial or training schools or out-of-home care in Australia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On a wide scale, many of these children experienced neglect and mistreatment while in the care of these institutions, with negative long-term social and economic consequences for them, their families and Australian society as a whole. This cohort was described in the 2004 Australian Parliament committee report *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*.

## Historical residential institutions

‘Historical residential institutions’ in this volume describes institutions that provided accommodation for children and operated before 1990, and excludes boarding schools, foster and kinship care. In the main, these institutions were closed by the 1970s and 1980s and replaced with more ‘contemporary’ models of home-based and family-oriented care. Some groups of children continued to be placed in large residential settings after this date. The definition of historical residential institution in this volume is broader than the one used in Volume 16, *Religious institutions*.

## Mission, reserves and related institutions

‘Mission, reserves and related institutions’ are church or government run institutions which accommodated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people broadly and were identified from information in private sessions and from noting relevant legislation, publicly available governance information and institutional records. Survivors often did not distinguish between church or government operation and oversight of reserves, missions and related institutions. In private sessions and consultations they often referred to all of these settings as ‘missions’.

## Stolen Generations

‘Stolen Generations’ refers to ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who, when they were children, were taken away from their families and communities as the result of past government policies. Children were removed by governments, churches and welfare bodies to be brought up in institutions. The forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children took place from the early days of British colonisation [and continued until the early 1970s in some jurisdictions]. It broke important cultural, spiritual and family ties and has left a lasting and intergenerational impact on the lives and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’.<sup>20</sup>

## Victim and survivor

We use the terms ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ to refer to someone who has been sexually abused as a child in an institutional context. We use the term ‘victim’ when referring to a person who has experienced child sexual abuse at the time the abuse occurred. We use the term ‘survivor’ when referring to a person who has experienced child sexual abuse after the abuse occurred, such as when they are sharing their story or accessing support. Where the context is unclear, we have used the term ‘victim’.

We recognise that some people prefer ‘survivor’ because of the resilience and empowerment associated with the term.

We recognise that some people who have experienced abuse do not feel that they ‘survived’ the abuse, and that victim is more appropriate. We also recognise that some people may have taken their lives as a consequence of the abuse they experienced. We acknowledge that ‘victim’ is more appropriate in these circumstances. We also recognise that some people do not identify with either of these terms.

When asked if she considers herself a ‘survivor’, one private session attendee, ‘Jody’, said she did not like the term.<sup>21</sup> Some of her siblings, who, like her, grew up in a mission, have since died and she rejects the suggestion that they were not ‘strong enough to survive’. She added, ‘I don’t know if I survived’.<sup>22</sup>

When we discuss quantitative information from private sessions in this volume, we use the term ‘survivor’ to refer both to survivors and victims who attended a private session and those (including deceased victims) whose experiences were described to us by family, friends, whistleblowers and others. This quantitative information is drawn from the experiences of 6,875 victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in institutions, as told to us in private sessions to 31 May 2017.

## 1.6 Structure of this volume

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**Chapter 2** outlines the social and historical context of children in historical residential institutions. It describes the context of children who were particularly disadvantaged during the period 1950–90, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, child migrants and children with disability. Drawing on research commissioned by us, this chapter also outlines the types, function and nature of historical residential institutions. These descriptions note that the distinction between types of institutions is not clear as many institutions served multiple purposes and these varied across jurisdictions.

**Chapter 3** draws on evidence presented in public hearings to outline the nature and experience of abuse in historical residential institutions. It uses quantitative analysis of institutions, perpetrators, abuse and disclosure to give a profile of those survivors who came to private sessions and told us they were sexually abused in historical residential institutions. The chapter also outlines the experience and nature of the abuse in historical residential institutions as told to us by survivors in private sessions and written accounts. Case studies and commissioned research are used to discuss the institutional culture, operational and environmental characteristics that increased children’s vulnerability to child sexual abuse.

**Chapter 4** analyses institutional responses to child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions. We describe what survivors have told us about the experiences of disclosure at the time of the abuse and what they saw were the barriers to disclosure. This chapter also includes institutional responses to disclosure by adults after the abuse.

**Chapter 5** presents an overview of what we heard from survivors’ accounts of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions. Based on their childhood experiences, many survivors had suggestions for change. This chapter concludes with a discussion of what survivors told us they wanted in the future for:

- children in contemporary residential institutions, and
- survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions.

# Endnotes

- 1 The Forgotten Australians report states: 'Upwards of, and possibly more than 500 000 Australians experienced care in an orphanage, Home or other form of out-of-home care during the last century. As many of these people have had a family it is highly likely that every Australian either was, is related to, works with or knows someone who experienced childhood in an institution or out of home care environment'. Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT, 2004, p xv.
- 2 Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT, 2004, pp 394, 399–407; Swain notes the Find & Connect resource lists 1,127 residential institutions since 1819. The limitation of this number is the lack of information and reference to Missions, reserves and related institutions. S Swain, *History of institutions providing out-of-home residential care for children*, report prepared for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, 2014, pp 27, 29–50; Approximately 150 orphanages and detention centres from the 1900s until the 1990s in Queensland in L Forde, *Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions*, Queensland Government, Brisbane, 1999, p 1; See also J Penglase, *Orphans of the living: Growing up in 'care' in twentieth-century Australia*, Curtin University Books, North Fremantle, 2005, pp 156–8, 174–8.
- 3 Find & Connect lists over 600 institutions for children in operation in the 1950s and over 700 in the 1960s. All such figures are likely to underestimate the number of historical residential institutions as they may not have included juvenile detention centres, institutions for both adults and children, psychiatric or disability institutions, and all missions. Commonwealth of Australia, *Find & Connect Web Resource Project*, 2011, [www.findandconnect.gov.au](http://www.findandconnect.gov.au) (viewed 7 June 2017).
- 4 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 3: Anglican Diocese of Grafton's response to child sexual abuse at the North Coast Children's Home*, Sydney, 2014; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay*, Sydney, 2014; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 17: The response of the Australian Indigenous Ministries, the Australian and Northern Territory governments and the Northern Territory police force and prosecuting authorities to allegations of child sexual abuse which occurred at the Retta Dixon Home*, Sydney, 2015; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 19: The response of the State of New South Wales to child sexual abuse at Bethcar Children's Home in Brewarrina, New South Wales*, Sydney, 2015; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 26: The response of the Sisters of Mercy, the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton and the Queensland Government to allegations of child sexual abuse at St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol*, Sydney, 2016; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 30: The response of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, and the Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria to allegations of child sexual abuse*, Sydney, 2016; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 33: The response of The Salvation Army (Southern Territory) to allegations of child sexual abuse at children's homes that it operated*, Sydney, 2016.
- 5 Number includes private sessions until May 2017. Each institution is counted once only. There were 3,295 allegations of child sexual abuse across these 598 historical residential institutions.
- 6 S Swain, *History of institutions providing out-of-home residential care for children*, report prepared for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, 2014.
- 7 S Swain, *History of child protection legislation*, report prepared for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, 2014.
- 8 G Llewellyn, S Wayland, & G Hindmarsh, *Disability and child sexual abuse in institutional contexts*, report prepared for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, 2016.
- 9 A Quadara, *Framework for historical influences on institutional child sexual abuse: 1950–2014*, report prepared for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, 2017.
- 10 K Kaufman, M Erooga, K Stewart, J Zarkin, E McConnell, H Tews & D Higgins, *Risk profiles for institutional child sexual abuse: A literature review*, report prepared for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, 2016.
- 11 D Palmer, *The role of organisational culture in child sexual abuse in institutional contexts*, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, 2016.

- 12 P Anderson, M Bamblett, D Bessarab, L Bromfield, S Chan, G Maddock, K Menzies, M O'Connell, G Pearson, R Walker & M Wright, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and child sexual abuse in institutional contexts*, report for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, 2017.
- 13 *Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions* (Forde, 1999), *Listen to the Children* (Tasmanian Ombudsman, 2004), *Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry* (Mullighan, 2008), *Bringing them home* (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997), *Lost Innocents* (Senate Community Affairs References Committee, 2001), *Forgotten Australians* (Senate Community Affairs References Committee, 2004), and *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* (Senate Community Affairs References Committee, 2012) are noted in P Anderson, M Bamblett, D Bessarab, L Bromfield, S Chan, G Maddock, K Menzies, M O'Connell, G Pearson, R Walker & M Wright, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and child sexual abuse in institutional contexts*, report for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, 2017, p 5.
- 14 S Swain, *History of Australian inquiries reviewing institutions providing care for children*, report prepared for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, 2014, p 3.
- 15 S Swain, *History of Australian inquiries reviewing institutions providing care for children*, report prepared for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, 2014, pp 12–45.
- 16 S Swain, *History of Australian inquiries reviewing institutions providing care for children*, report prepared for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, 2014, p 9.
- 17 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing them home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, Commonwealth of Australia, Sydney, 1997.
- 18 Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, *Lost Innocents: Righting the record - report on child migration*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2001.
- 19 Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT, 2004.
- 20 Commonwealth of Australia, *Find & Connect web resource project*, 2011, [www.findandconnect.gov.au](http://www.findandconnect.gov.au) (viewed 7 June 2017).
- 21 Name changed, private session, 'Jody'.
- 22 Name changed, private session, 'Jody'.



## 2 Children in residential institutions: Social and historical change

Understanding the history of children's residential institutions, where governments, institutions and individuals failed in their duty of care to protect children has driven some of the reforms of Australia's out-of-home care system. In the wake of many inquiries, governments have taken steps to reform the welfare sector with the aim of better protecting children now and in the future.

As we observed in our *Redress and civil litigation* report, the history of social attitudes towards children, combined with an unquestioning respect for the authority of institutions, created a high-risk environment in which thousands of children were sexually abused.<sup>1</sup> The Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions (the Forde Inquiry) found that:

Many children historically have been the victims of the systems designed to provide care and protection for them. The Inquiry has found a range of ways that children have been harmed while within the system. Some of the harm has been caused by ignorance on the part of providers of the needs of children, some by failures in the system to monitor and track the needs of individual children, some by a lack of commitment by government to provide adequate resources to care for the children's wellbeing, and some by a perception that children deserved no better.<sup>2</sup>

Commissioned research notes that legislation governing child welfare in Australia was almost entirely the responsibility of the state or territory and not the federal government, and might be best described as 'a patchwork [rather] than a coordinated model'.<sup>3</sup> Despite changes in legislation during the 1950s and 1960s regarding the care of children, designed to prioritise the 'best interests' of the child rather than the economy of the state, residential institutions continued to accommodate many children.<sup>4</sup> The 1970s saw considerable change in providing for children in the care of the state, and by 1990 many residential institutions such as orphanages and hostels had closed.<sup>5</sup>

The latter half of the 20th century saw significant changes to the systems and models of residential care in Australia. Between the late 1960s and early 1990s, other key developments facilitated the closure of large residential institutions and the adoption of more home-based, family-oriented models of care. Activists, advocates and families helped bring about changes to social attitudes and government policies, including:

- the repeal of formal assimilation policies following decades of work by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activists to draw public attention to the oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and to grow the confidence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to demand self-determination<sup>6</sup>
- the introduction of the Supporting Mother's Benefit in 1973, which meant single mothers who were struggling financially no longer needed to rely on institutional care for their children<sup>7</sup>

- the introduction of the Handicapped Child's Allowance in 1974, to help parents of children with disability to care for their children at home, rather than placing them in institutions<sup>8</sup>
- the professionalisation of the child protection and welfare workforces, including through increased registration and training requirements for carers.<sup>9</sup>

Commissioned research suggests that changes to government policies and residential institutions were not always implemented for all children.<sup>10</sup> For many, the shift away from accommodation in large residential institutions came much later. New knowledge and practices of childcare – along with the move away from institutionalisation – were not applied to the treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, who continued to be forcibly separated from their families and to remain in residential institutions.<sup>11</sup> In theory, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were treated the same as non-Indigenous children. In practice, negative attitudes were common, and 'the child welfare approach was, in effect, overt denial but covert recognition and denigration of Aboriginality'.<sup>12</sup>

Change for children with disability was also slow. Despite a number of scandals and inquiries exposing dire conditions in disability institutions across Australia, the momentum needed for a systemic shift for children with disability only began to gather pace in the late 1970s.<sup>13</sup> Commissioned research found that large-scale, institutional accommodation of children with disability continued well into the 1980s and early 1990s, lagging behind the phasing out of orphanages and children's homes in most jurisdictions.<sup>14</sup>

A further important development that resulted in changes in child protection after 1990 was the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Australia ratified the convention in 1990. Under the convention, state parties agreed to protect and promote the rights of children, and specifically to 'protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse'.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.1 Social contexts

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### 2.1.1 Forgotten Australians

It is estimated that over half a million children experienced institutional and other out-of-home 'care' in Australia during the 20th century. In 2004 *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional and out-of-home care as children* outlined what the Senate Community Affairs References Committee had heard through hundreds of submissions from people who spent time in such institutions. Perceptions and treatment of children living in historical residential institutions showed little regard for the effects of institutional life on their emotional and physical wellbeing, or consideration of how harsh treatment could affect them later in life. In their submissions to this inquiry, people told 'stories [which] outlined a litany of emotional, physical and sexual abuse, and often criminal physical and sexual assault. Their stories also told of neglect, humiliation and deprivation of food, education and healthcare'.<sup>16</sup>

More than one-third (35.9 per cent) of survivors who told us about their experience of child sexual abuse in private sessions were sexually abused in an historical residential institution before 1990. Many (45.1 per cent) of these survivors were first sexually abused between 1950 and 1969. Of these survivors, 87.4 per cent were sexually abused in an historical residential institution such as an orphanage, children's home, reformatory, industrial school and/or training farm.

Until the 1960s, Australia's large residential institutions had accommodated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children forcibly removed from their families, unaccompanied child migrants, Forgotten Australians, children who were wards of the state, orphans and others.<sup>17</sup> Some children were voluntarily placed in residential institutions by their parents for 'safe-keeping'.<sup>18</sup> The numbers of children accommodated in residential institutions varied across jurisdictions. Some states and territories relied more on foster care and others on residential institutional care. Social and political views influenced the management and operations of these institutions and the 'care' of children changed.

In our case studies, we heard that children were often mistreated in historical residential institutions. Survivors told us they were subjected to military-style discipline and control, rigid rules, harsh punishments and cultural abuse.<sup>19</sup> Many institutions have acknowledged that treatment of children in these institutions was harsh. In the public hearing for *Case Study 3: Anglican Diocese of Grafton's response to child sexual abuse at the North Coast Children's Home (North Coast Children's Home)*, evidence was presented of the diocese's public apology made on 5 September 2013:

The Anglican Diocese of Grafton apologises unreservedly to children who, in the past, suffered from sexual abuse, harsh punishment or a lack of appropriate and nurturing care while resident at the North Coast Children's Home, Lismore.<sup>20</sup>

Many survivors in private sessions gave accounts of their childhoods in historical residential institutions similar to those we heard about in our case studies. Survivors commonly told us about experiencing isolation, vulnerability, neglect and a lack of love. 'Cameron John' told us in a private session that 'at Christian Brothers institution in Western Australia, life truly was unbearable ... It was void of all love. There wasn't a skerrick of tenderness or compassion'.<sup>21</sup> Some survivors told us they were forbidden to speak their first language and punished for breaking this rule.<sup>22</sup> For some, their experiences in these residential institutions undermined their faith in authority, society or religion.<sup>23</sup>

Social stigma attached to single-parent families and unmarried mothers remained. Commissioned research suggests that during this time, social norms and attitudes represented the nuclear family as ideal.<sup>24</sup> Gender roles were strict: men were breadwinners and women were homemakers.<sup>25</sup> Women whose circumstances differed from the conventional family unit, such as those who had children outside wedlock, were stigmatised and often experienced financial hardship.<sup>26</sup> The Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices Inquiry conducted by the Senate Community Affairs References Committee 'heard

accounts from women who gave consent without being advised of their options, who gave consent under duress, who revoked consent and were not given their baby, and in some cases, who reported not giving consent at all'.<sup>27</sup> The inquiry identified the common views held in the 1950s and 1960s that adoption would benefit the child born to single and poor mothers, and 'the psychological and financial qualifications of a married couple were superior to those of single mothers and impoverished families'.<sup>28</sup>

Amid growing concerns about the cost of institutional care, as well as the influence of emerging child development theories in the 1950s and early 1960s, governments started to rethink their approaches to child welfare.<sup>29</sup> Attitudes to child development changed, with a growing recognition of the importance of stable child–parent relationships in ensuring the psychological wellbeing of children and the potential adverse consequences of breaking families apart.<sup>30</sup> During the 1960s and with some variation across the states and territories, Australian governments started closing large orphanages and children's homes and placing greater emphasis on supports to keep children in their own families or, where an out-of-home care placement was considered necessary, placing them in home-based settings, preferably with relatives.<sup>31</sup> These changes were not applied to all children and often excluded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

### 2.1.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have been forcibly separated from their families since the first days of European colonisation of Australia.<sup>32</sup> A system of government control over Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's lives and, in particular, the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children has been underpinned by various Aborigines Protection Acts or equivalents in each state.<sup>33</sup> In most states, 'Chief Protectors' assumed legal guardianship over Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, exerting 'near-total control' over their lives and regulating relationships, movement and employment.<sup>34</sup> Tasmania was the exception and did not have a Chief Protector. In the Northern Territory, the South Australian Chief Protector was legally responsible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In the Australian Capital Territory, the New South Wales Chief Protector was responsible for the 'few Aboriginal children who lived in the ACT' after the population had been compelled to move to a mission in Yass in 1911.<sup>35</sup> States had their own legislation but the effects were broadly similar in terms of the tragic intergenerational consequences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Official policies were 'aimed at the "eradication" of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and the "disappearance of the black race"'.<sup>36</sup>

The *Bringing them home* report states:

The Australian practice of Indigenous child removal involved both systematic racial discrimination and genocide as defined by international law. Yet it continued to be practised as official policy long after being clearly prohibited by treaties to which Australia had voluntarily subscribed.<sup>37</sup>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities continue to experience the intergenerational and cumulative trauma of forced child removal.<sup>38</sup> Commissioned research has found that community resources are compromised by the impacts of generations of child removal.<sup>39</sup> The exact number of children forcibly removed is unknown, and the application of policies varied in intensity over time in each state. Documentation was insufficient, lost or never existed.<sup>40</sup> The *Bringing them home* report concluded that no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family in Australia had escaped the effects of forcible removal. The report found that ‘most families have been affected, in one or more generations, by the forcible removal of one or more children’.<sup>41</sup> In some communities, all the children were taken away in one sudden mass traumatic event.<sup>42</sup> The report concluded:

The loss of so *many* of their children has affected the efficacy and morale of many Indigenous communities. Evidence to the Inquiry referred particularly to the way in which the child-rearing function of whole communities was undermined and denied, particularly where all children were required to live in mission dormitories.<sup>43</sup>

Commissioned research outlines how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children came to be in institutions and therefore vulnerable to child sexual abuse.<sup>44</sup> The research, in the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and child sexual abuse in institutional contexts* report, traces the complexity of historical policies and social attitudes and draws implications for contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.<sup>45</sup> The research concludes that while all children in institutions are vulnerable to child sexual abuse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are likely to experience increased vulnerability.<sup>46</sup>

The *Bringing them home* report charted the history of colonisation, segregation, ‘protectionism’ (1883–1937) and assimilation (1937–69).<sup>47</sup> Research commissioned by us suggests the term ‘protectionism’ fails to adequately capture the intent of government policies of the day:

Despite the use of the term ‘protectionism’, the primary purpose of forced removals was assimilation and cultural genocide rather than protection and this is why these children, removed over multiple generations, are referred to as the Stolen Generations.<sup>48</sup>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors frequently described what happened when they were forcibly removed from family and community. In his written account, ‘Craig Philip’ explained how he and his sister were separated from each other, taken from their family and sent to a mission when they were on their way home from school.<sup>49</sup>

When I was about 12 years old – I was 12 years old at the time, and my two brothers, one was younger, six years younger, and one was a couple of years older than me, we were taken – and my sister, she was taken, but she went to [non-denominational mission]. We were taken by a policeman, and we were actually really stolen. We were sent to school. The old man lived 20-mile out. He lived and worked on a farm 20 miles out of [town 1].

And we were sent to school in the morning, and in the evening when the bus came we were walking from the school back to the bus to get in the bus and the copper was waiting halfway in between, and he grabbed us and took us down to the lock-up and locked us up in the police station there at [town 1]. The next day we got a car and he took us across to [town 2] and he put us in gaol again there overnight and sent us out to [Protestant mission] the next day. I think they come and picked us up in a truck, from memory. Anyway, that's how it all began.<sup>50</sup>

'Ward Anthony' described to us his experience of being taken from his parents.<sup>51</sup> He said he was also at school when welfare officers:

brought my sister to the front gate, and they bought her a packet of lollies. Back in them days, lollies was a luxury. If you had a packet of lollies you was everybody's friend, all the kids wanted to know you ... I saw lollies, I didn't think about anything else. And as I went to say to her, 'Hey sis give me a lolly', a man and a woman grabbed me both sides.<sup>52</sup>

'Ward Anthony' said he asked the man and woman who they were 'And they said, we're the Welfare. And I said, "oh, no". My heart sunk'. They drove straight past the turn to the reserve, where his grandparents lived and to the Catholic-run mission. 'Ward Anthony' told us:

I realised what was going on, and I started kicking the back seat and screaming and shouting ... My sister was crying. She was only three years old. So I was kicking the back seat and when I didn't stop, the lady in the front she leant over back and slapped me across the face. But that didn't deter me, because I wanted to go home.<sup>53</sup>

In the 1950s and 1960s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's resistance to assimilation grew stronger and Australia faced international pressure over its racially discriminatory practices.<sup>54</sup> These movements saw a change in formal government policy in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from assimilation towards self-determination.<sup>55</sup> The 1967 referendum granted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people legal status and citizenship and enabled the Australian Government to legislate in regards to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. By 1969, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activists and community organisations fighting for rights and self-determination had successfully influenced government policy and all states had repealed 'protectionist' legislation (for example, various state Aborigines Protection Acts). However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remained in institutions even after legislation was repealed.

In 2008 the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for forced child removals and past racist government laws, policies and practices.<sup>56</sup>

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

Before the 1950s and in line with the ‘protectionist’ policies of the time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were removed from their families were frequently sent to large residential institutions, and, from these, large numbers of children were sent to private homes as domestic servants or farm workers under protectionist legislation and assimilationist policies.<sup>57</sup> During the 1950s, fostering and the forced adoption of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children became more common, as ‘excessive overcrowding’ and prohibitive costs led to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being placed with non-Aboriginal foster families.<sup>58</sup>

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle was adopted in the 1980s in response to the grassroots activism of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities opposed to the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and culture.<sup>59</sup> The principle emphasises that each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child has the right to be brought up in their own family and community. It states that the removal of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child from their family must be a last resort and be conducted in genuine partnership with the family and a relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child care agency.<sup>60</sup>

Further explanation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle can be found in Volume 12, *Contemporary out-of-home care*.

### 2.1.3 Child Migrants

Thousands of child migrants from Britain and Malta were sent to live in historical residential institutions in Australia. The experiences of child migrants in institutional care has been well documented in previous inquiries, in particular, the *Lost Innocents* report.<sup>61</sup> We heard from 95 Former Child Migrants in private sessions, and received many written accounts.

The *Lost Innocents* report used the term ‘child migrant’ to refer to ‘unaccompanied children generally under the age of 16 years who were brought to Australia from the United Kingdom or Malta under government approved schemes during the 20th century’.<sup>62</sup> This definition excluded children who migrated to Australia with their parents, and children and young people 16 years and over who migrated as part of youth migration schemes, such as the Big Brother Movement.<sup>63</sup> The definition also excluded children who migrated to Australia as part of various child migration programs in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *Lost Innocents* report estimates that the number of child migrants in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was 6,000 to 7,500 children.<sup>64</sup>



Child migration programs after World War II were bolstered by concerns about national security and under-population.<sup>65</sup> The *Lost Innocents* report noted that another motivation was the importation of ‘good white stock’, which was seen as a desirable policy objective in the developing British colonies.<sup>66</sup> The Australian Government approved in principle a plan to bring 50,000 orphans from Britain and other countries to Australia in the first three years after the war, though the target was not reached.<sup>67</sup> Instead, an estimated 3,000 to 3,500 children were brought to Australia in the postwar period. The precise number of child migrants sent to Australia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century is unknown due to ‘appalling inaccuracies and discrepancies in the data’ on the number of child migrants and the institutions where children were placed.<sup>68</sup>

Child migration and the duty of care for child migrants was overseen in consultation between the federal and state governments. The federal government largely relied on ‘private organisations such as Barnardos, Fairbridge and the religious organisations’ to promote child migration and receive children once they arrived in Australia.<sup>69</sup> While the federal Minister for Immigration was the legal guardian of all child migrants, the Minister delegated his powers as guardian to state welfare authorities.<sup>70</sup> In Western Australia, for example, the role of guardian for child migrants rested with the state, while the care and welfare rested with the custodians, receiving agencies and voluntary organisations.<sup>71</sup>

Concerns about Australia’s child migration schemes after World War II were exposed by two major reports prepared by British government officials in the 1950s. Standards for the care of children in Britain had emphasised the importance of replicating the ‘“conventional natural family” as far as possible’ and paying attention to the child’s psychological needs and ‘not just physical needs’.<sup>72</sup> Reports of two investigations by the British government into child migrants were published: *Child migration to Australia* (the Moss report) in 1953 and *Child migration to Australia: Report of a fact-finding mission* (the Ross report) in 1956.<sup>73</sup> The Moss report supported ‘child migration as a suitable welfare strategy’; however, it was critical of the accommodation, facilities and isolation of some residential institutions.<sup>74</sup> The report raised concerns about single-sex institutions and a lack of trained staff, and called for barrack-like institutions to be abandoned in favour of smaller cottage homes, boarding out (foster care) and adoption.<sup>75</sup> The report also recommended that child migrants be better integrated with the wider community.<sup>76</sup>

The Ross report was critical of child migration and the way child migrants were cared for in Australia. Key criticisms included: <sup>77</sup>

- the institutional nature of many of the establishments
- inadequate knowledge of child care methods
- limited privacy, especially in larger institutions
- the failure to create a family-like home environment and provide family-focused care
- the lack of educational and employment opportunities for the children
- limited opportunities for the children to assimilate into Australian society.



The Ross report was also critical of child migrant schemes more broadly, noting that many of the children entering the schemes ‘might often be ill-equipped to cope with the added strain of migration’.<sup>78</sup> The report highlighted the appalling conditions of the institutions, and that some children were being exploited as cheap labour.<sup>79</sup> The report noted several institutions for special condemnation, including Bindoon Farm School and Riverview Boys’ Home, (Endeavour Training Farm), examined in the *Christian Brothers* and *The Salvation Army boys’ homes, Australia Eastern Territory* case studies respectively.<sup>80</sup>

The Australian government of the day rejected the findings of the Ross report and conducted its own inquiry, which suggested only minor improvements to two of the institutions. In response to this inquiry, the Commonwealth Relations Office in the United Kingdom recorded that ‘as we feared, the Australian authorities focus only on material things like bathrooms and carpets, and ignore what has been said about atmosphere and management’.<sup>81</sup>

The *Lost Innocents* report echoed concerns raised in the earlier reports and detailed the widespread abuse of child migrants in Australia. The report noted:<sup>82</sup>

While some child migrants have made positive comments about their time in institutional care, many others can only recall childhoods of loneliness, great hardship and privations. While under the custodianship of receiving agencies, there was a complete disregard for the needs, the safety and wellbeing of many child migrants [emphasis in original].

State Governments were unable or unwilling to ensure the protection of the children and the Committee received evidence of shocking physical and sexual abuse and assault perpetrated by those charged with their day-to-day care.

Australian authorities ignored changes in childcare arrangements developing in the United Kingdom and many child migrants were placed in barrack-style institutions, isolated from the general community. Connection with family was severed or actively discouraged by carers. Without those connections, children lost their personal identity, culture and country.

The report also noted that many parents of child migrants had not provided consent for their child’s migration, and in some cases consent was provided by the institution rather than by a living parent.<sup>83</sup> The report said children and families were pressured into giving consent or deceived with the promise of a ‘better life’ for their child.<sup>84</sup> Some parents tried to stop the child from being sent away.<sup>85</sup>

In 2009, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on behalf of the Australian Government delivered a National Apology to the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants at a special remembrance event.<sup>86</sup>

### 2.1.4 Children with disability

Research commissioned by us states that before 1950, parents of ‘children with disability (except for children with polio and tuberculosis, and children who were deaf or blind)’ could decide to care for their child at home or alternatively ‘commit them to a state mental hospital’.<sup>87</sup> The research noted that into the 1970s there was a lack of community awareness about children with disability who had been ‘put away’ in mental institutions, where they received limited care, schooling or activities.<sup>88</sup> The abuse and neglect of people with disability in residential institutions was framed as ‘acceptable’ in disability-specific settings, where children with disability could be thought of as the ‘other’.<sup>89</sup> Children were often housed with adults with intellectual disability and mental illness in the same large hospital-style institution.<sup>90</sup> Commissioned research notes that children with disability in institutions were frequently ‘uncontrollable’ teenagers with intellectual disability.<sup>91</sup> Many children with disability were placed in historical residential institutions with some educational facilities.<sup>92</sup> Volume 5, *Private sessions* discusses survivors’ experiences of the poor quality and limited education in these institutions and how this has impacted on their lives.

Commissioned research details a series of government reports starting in the late 1970s which found there were ‘significant shortcomings in disability programs’ and ‘profound and detrimental effects in segregating people with disability from the wider community’.<sup>93</sup> Hospitals and homes for children with disability were regularly named in these inquiries.<sup>94</sup> In New South Wales, the *Richmond Report*, published in 1983, recommended institutions for the psychiatrically ill and developmentally disabled be closed and be replaced with integrated community services.<sup>95</sup>

Commissioned research also explains that changes for children with disability took place slowly: many continued to be housed in large-scale residential institutions well into the 1980s and early 1990s, and many people who had entered the institution as children remained there as adults.<sup>96</sup>

Changes in attitudes towards people with disability were partly driven by the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 and a national survey that, for the first time, identified the number of people with disability, the nature of their disability, the services they needed and the extent to which those needs were being met.<sup>97</sup> The *Handicapped Persons Australia 1981* survey outlined that most people with disability were being cared for at home.<sup>98</sup> This was despite decades of parents being advised by professionals that ‘institutional care was the best option for the child and for other family members and allows parents to “forget” the unfortunate incident and get on with the rest of their lives’.<sup>99</sup> Commissioned research notes that for children who remained in institutional care ‘the situation was dire’.<sup>100</sup>

## 2.2 Types of historical residential institutions

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Care of children in historical residential institutions fulfilled different and sometimes conflicting functions, which varied across state and territory jurisdictions.<sup>101</sup> Historical changes to how institutions operated means that some institutions cannot be clearly defined as one type or another. Not all states used all types of institutions and the function of institutions merged and changed over time. Orphanages, children's homes, family group homes and training facilities accommodated children with complex and diverse needs. Children with disability and children with mental health and behavioural concerns were placed in child welfare, criminal justice or mental health institutions, often alongside children who were in the care of the state.<sup>102</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were taken forcibly from their families and placed into missions, reserves and related institutions.<sup>103</sup>

Due to the way information was collected in private sessions and in written accounts, we do not know the nature of all the institutions, the precise number of children they accommodated or the identities of those children.

Research commissioned by us outlines the different types of institutions and includes some detail about specialist institutions, which are not all mentioned in this volume. Institutions discussed here are presented, as far as possible, in chronological order. There are no clear timelines for changes in policy and deinstitutionalisation, which means some institutions changed name and function. Some fulfilled multiple functions and there was a blurring of lines between institutions accommodating children for welfare and youth detention.

Table 11.1 draws on commissioned research to provide a brief overview of the key institutions discussed by survivors.<sup>104</sup> Chapter 3 describes the operations and culture of these institutions as told to us in private sessions and public hearings.

Volume 15, *Contemporary detention environments* looks in detail at children in youth detention facilities.

**Table 11.1 - Types of historical residential institutions**

Type of residential institution	Description
Missions, reserves and related residential institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A mission or reserve was a controlled, residential settlement established under 'protectionist' legislation to place, and restrict the movement of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.<sup>105</sup> They included church-run missions, government reserves, agricultural stations and settlements.<sup>106</sup></li> <li>Schools and dormitories within, or adjacent to, the reserves and missions were operated by the relevant church or government service.</li> </ul>
Orphanages and babies' homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From the early 19<sup>th</sup> to mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, orphanages, orphan schools and orphan asylums housed mainly school-aged children who could not live with, or had been separated from, their family.</li> <li>Babies' homes, infant asylums and foundling hospitals cared for young children and babies (not discussed in this volume).</li> </ul>
Industrial schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industrial schools accommodated and trained destitute children not able to be placed in overcrowded orphan schools. They expanded rapidly from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.</li> </ul>
Training homes and farm training schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training homes typically offered children training in line with the specific labour requirements of its sponsors.</li> <li>Farm training schools trained children to work in the rural sector.</li> <li>These institutions usually incorporated commercial enterprises into their 'training' activities to offset their costs.</li> </ul>
Reformatories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reformatories (training schools/institutions) were for child offenders, but were also used to house other children deemed 'uncontrollable'.</li> <li>Institutions for child offenders later became known as youth training centres, 'juvenile detention centres or juvenile justice centres'.<sup>107</sup></li> </ul>
Reception centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accommodated children before a long-term welfare placement, and children while on remand for criminal offences.</li> <li>Children with chronic illness and disability often spent long periods at such centres.</li> <li>Children who were deemed 'uncontrollable' or wards of the state were often placed in youth training and reception centres.</li> </ul>

Children's homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's homes (girls' and boys' homes) were an alternative to large orphanages from the 1920s.</li> <li>• Some were cottage-style facilities, with managers as 'parents'. Others housed children in dormitories.</li> </ul>
Family group homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, group homes accommodated children in buildings about the size and form of a family home.</li> </ul>
Hostels and emergency accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hostels were single-sex accommodation for young people working or studying in cities.</li> <li>• Emergency accommodation provided temporary housing in units with rostered staff.</li> </ul>
Mental hospitals, psychiatric facilities and disability institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used to confine and treat children with challenging behaviours or mental health concerns.</li> <li>• Residential care for children with intellectual or severe, multiple disabilities was often provided in adult mental health facilities.<sup>108</sup></li> <li>• Residential schools for children with hearing or visual impairments were established from the 1860s.<sup>109</sup></li> <li>• Other institutions included those from the 20<sup>th</sup> century for children with long-term health conditions, such as polio or tuberculosis.<sup>110</sup></li> </ul>

### 2.2.1 Missions, reserves and related institutions

The Royal Commission adopted a broad approach to defining missions, reserves and other institutions where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were placed after being removed from their families. We heard in private sessions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors who said they were abused in one or more of 87 missions, reserves and related institutions. We identified these missions, reserves and related institutions from information in private sessions and from noting relevant legislation, publicly available governance information and institutional records.<sup>111</sup> Survivors often did not distinguish between church or government operation and oversight of missions, reserves and related institutions. In private sessions and consultations all these settings were referred to as 'missions'.

The establishment and operation of religious-run missions and government-run reserves is a significant chapter in the history of colonisation, and plays a part in the destruction of culture and the removal, institutionalisation and abuse of generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.<sup>112</sup> Missions and reserves operated from the 1800s in various forms across the pre-Federation colonies and continued to operate under government authority until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including until 1969 in New South Wales. The establishment of missions and reserves occurred against the backdrop of frontier wars, massacres and widespread exploitation.<sup>113</sup> Research commissioned by us notes that the reasons for establishing different missions and reserves were varied, and included providing refuge and support to communities in danger.<sup>114</sup> However, all were underpinned by ideas about the inferiority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

Whether the rationale was to ‘smooth the dying pillow’, Christianise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or weaken resistance to colonisation, the missions and related institutions were based on ideologies that saw white men as superior and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as less than human.<sup>115</sup>

Many missions effectively functioned as ‘total’ institutions (see Summary and Section 3.3 for a definition of ‘total’ institutions). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were required to have permits to enter or leave the mission, and decisions about family contact, work and marriage were solely within the power of the superintendent in charge.<sup>116</sup> The 1991 report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody describes the establishment and operation of missions and reserves in this way:

Having reduced the original inhabitants to a condition, in many places, of abject dependency, the colonial governments decided upon a policy of protection which had two main thrusts: Aboriginal people were swept up into reserves and missions where they were supervised as to every detail of their lives and there was a deliberate policy of undermining and destroying their spiritual and cultural beliefs. The other aspect of that policy as it developed was that Aboriginal children of mixed race descent – usually an Aboriginal mother and a non-Aboriginal father – were removed from their family and the land, placed in institutions and trained to grow up as good European labourers or domestics.<sup>117</sup>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were also moved to and from other residential institutions under the ‘protectionist’ legislation and assimilation policies and practices. These institutions were sometimes but not always segregated institutions, and included dormitories, reformatories, orphanages, children’s homes, hostels, schools, training centres, reception centres, and work placements in private homes and on pastoral stations, as well as foster care.

For most of the missions, reserves and related institutions that survivors identified during private sessions, state and territory governments retained management oversight but delegated the responsibility for day-to-day operations to religious institutions. In 1967, following a constitutional referendum, the federal government gained powers to legislate Aboriginal affairs, which aided the dismantling of state-based systems of ‘protection’ and control.<sup>118</sup> A shift in government policy towards ‘self-determination’ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples meant that from the 1970s, governance of missions and reserves was gradually transferred to community councils. Nonetheless, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remained in the institutions.

In the public hearing for *Case Study 17: The response of the Australian Indigenous Ministries, the Australian and Northern Territory governments and the Northern Territory police force and prosecuting authorities to allegations of child sexual abuse which occurred at the Retta Dixon Home*, we heard about the experiences of men and women who were sexually abused as children at the Retta Dixon Home between 1946 and 1980. Witnesses told us they had limited or no contact with their families and were prevented from maintaining Aboriginal culture. A fence separated the home from the rest of the reserve, and we heard from survivors that they were not allowed to speak with ‘full-blood’ Aboriginal children who lived on the reserve.<sup>119</sup> Witness AJA told us that, beyond the many other impacts of the abuse she experienced as a child, she ‘had lost her Aboriginal identity and heritage’ at the Retta Dixon Home.<sup>120</sup>

### 2.2.2 Orphanages

Orphanages housed mostly school-aged children, with babies and younger children placed in babies’ homes or mothers and babies’ homes.<sup>121</sup> Children were usually accommodated in dormitories along age and gender lines and supervised by a male superintendent or a female matron.<sup>122</sup> Younger children and girls were looked after by female staff and older girls, while boys over the age of 10 were usually supervised by male staff.<sup>123</sup>

Research commissioned by us suggests that orphanages in Australia were based on the British model.<sup>124</sup> This model emphasised the provision of care for children of the ‘deserving’ poor, with the aim of preventing these children from living in workhouses. Orphanages were government-run or run by charities and managed by committees, with some government funding.<sup>125</sup> Many of these institutions were large, outwardly impressive buildings, an ‘important assertion of civic pride, a sign that a community honoured its obligations to children in need’.<sup>126</sup>

Commissioned research states that in practice, few children were ‘genuine orphans’ – children whose parents had both died – and the institutions were often selective in the children they took in.<sup>127</sup> ‘Single orphans’, children without a mother or a father, were accepted into these institutions, with preference for children without mothers.<sup>128</sup> Orphanages requested some financial contribution from guardians or relatives towards the costs of a child’s care and this ‘entitled [them] to see the children on visiting days’.<sup>129</sup> Commissioned research is consistent with the Forde Inquiry, which stated:

We believe that it is important to place on the public record that few of the children historically placed in orphanages were, in fact, orphans. Most were either removed from their families by the State, or placed in orphanages by their parents, who for various reasons (such as the death or illness of one parent) were unable to look after them. In the case of indigenous children, this occurred simply because of the colour of their skin. Very few of the British child migrants (erroneously referred to at the time as ‘war orphans’) were orphans.<sup>130</sup>

Orphanages were organised as self-contained institutions. Children attended school within the orphanage and were required to work to sustain it.<sup>131</sup> Work at the orphanage was divided along gender lines, with girls doing domestic chores and boys working on farms and in gardens.<sup>132</sup> When they reached school leaving age (14 in most states), children were sent to some form of employment – boys as farm labourers and girls as domestic servants.<sup>133</sup> A proportion of the child’s wages was paid to the orphanage and on reaching adulthood they could claim back this money. Commissioned research notes that the child’s standing with the orphanage often affected their ability to reclaim these savings.<sup>134</sup> The *Bringing them home*, *Lost Innocents* and *Forgotten Australians* reports document historical examples of ‘lost’ wages for children sent to work from residential institutions.<sup>135</sup>

In *Case Study 26: The response of the Sisters of Mercy, the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton and the Queensland Government to allegations of child sexual abuse at St Joseph’s Orphanage, Neerkol*, we heard that most children who were residents at this institution were ‘state wards’, that is, children for whom the government had taken or assumed parental responsibility, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.<sup>136</sup> Children were admitted to the orphanage under Queensland Government authority by either care and protection orders or care and control orders.<sup>137</sup> The orphanage also received private admissions and acted as a quasi-boarding school for children who were not in state care, as well as accepting a small number of British child migrants.<sup>138</sup> The age of children at the orphanage ranged from newborn babies to 18 years.<sup>139</sup> The number of children who lived at the orphanage at any one time varied from 180 to 500.<sup>140</sup>



### 2.2.3 Industrial schools

Industrial schools were established to provide training for ‘neglected’ children who were viewed as posing some form of risk to society.<sup>141</sup> Commissioned research notes that the primary purpose of industrial schools was to transform children who were assumed to be at risk of moral degradation or criminality into industrious citizens – ‘teaching them the value of work and preparing them to support themselves in the future’.<sup>142</sup> The government took parental responsibility for these children, who became known as ‘wards of the state’.<sup>143</sup> Industrial schools were generally single sex and children were segregated by age.<sup>144</sup> The children slept in large dormitories and were supervised by staff of the same gender.<sup>145</sup> Children in industrial schools tended to receive a poorer education than children in other institutions.<sup>146</sup>

Children in industrial schools were likely to have little contact with their parents, who were still expected to provide some financial contribution to the school.<sup>147</sup> Education was basic and training was focused on labour and domestic skills for future employment. As in other historical residential institutions that prepared children for work, boys were most likely to be sent to farm labour and girls to domestic service, with wages paid to the institution.<sup>148</sup>

### 2.2.4 Training homes and farm training schools

Training homes and farm training schools had a similar purpose to industrial schools, but provided more specific training in domestic labour for girls and farm training for boys. They took in older children, including many child migrants.<sup>149</sup>

Training homes were established predominantly by governments in New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania, and by religious organisations in Victoria and Queensland.<sup>150</sup> Most of the girls in government training homes came from foster care, while those in training homes established by religious organisations tended to come from orphanages and children’s homes controlled by the same denomination or organisation.<sup>151</sup> Few children stayed for short periods of time. On their discharge from training homes, girls were often placed in private homes as domestic servants.

Farm training schools trained boys in the skills required for rural employment, reflecting the popular belief in the rehabilitative effects of rural labour.<sup>152</sup> Many boys were transferred from orphanages or children’s homes to farm training schools at the age of nine or 10, where they stayed until they reached the school leaving age of 14. In institutions with schools, farm work was prioritised over school work. While most farm schools were for boys, some girls were sent to Fairbridge Farm Schools.<sup>153</sup> In her private session, ‘Sarah Elizabeth’ told us she was 10 years old when she was put on a ship in England and sent to Western Australia, where she was placed in a farm school.<sup>154</sup>

Concerns about conditions at farm schools date back to at least the 1930s and continued into the 1980s. In the public hearing for *Case Study 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School (Christian Brothers)*, we heard that in 1947, a Child Welfare Department inspector submitted a report finding that:

The conditions at Bindoon are not good. As a matter of fact, the educational facilities provided for the boys are most inadequate and I fail to see how they can receive proper schooling. Furthermore, the conditions generally do not conform to those at other Institutions, or for that matter the provisions of the Child Welfare Act.<sup>155</sup>

Another visitation report from the same month noted that:

The classrooms are dull, dingy and dirty, and appear to lack facilities for teaching. One room is fitted with standard type desks, but no other facilities exist; it is even lacking a blackboard.

Bindoon was never fitted out as a school and was never intended to take boys who should be really under a woman's care.<sup>156</sup>

In the *Christian Brothers* public hearing we heard that conditions for children living at farm schools were basic.<sup>157</sup> At Bindoon Farm School, about 30 boys slept in three small dormitories and other boys slept on exposed verandahs.<sup>158</sup> Witness VV recalled that when he arrived at Bindoon, boys slept on old army mattresses that were stuffed with horse hair or coconut fibres and they did not have sheets.<sup>159</sup> We heard that boys were sexually abused 'in the boys' dormitories or the Brothers' rooms; it also happened in other parts of the institution'.<sup>160</sup> VV said that Brother Angus anally assaulted him at the farm hayshed at Bindoon.<sup>161</sup> At that time VV had only been at Bindoon for about two weeks. When he told Father William about the incident, he said that Father William applied cream to the scratches on his legs and then began to fondle his bottom and genitals.<sup>162</sup> VV fled from Father William and remained in his bed for four or five days. VV recalled that Father William later attempted to grope him again when he was an altar boy.<sup>163</sup>

## 2.2.5 Reformatories

Reformatories were established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and were an early form of youth detention centre.<sup>164</sup> Importantly, not all children sent to reformatories were there due to committing an offence. Some children ended up in reformatories due to overcrowding in other institutions. Reformatories were strictly gendered and the reasons for detention varied for males and

females. Boys were mostly admitted because they were perceived to be 'in danger of embarking on a criminal life'. Girls were mostly admitted for 'moral offences'.<sup>165</sup> Many moral offences were, in fact, welfare related. In most jurisdictions, welfare concerns and criminal offences were not disentangled until the 1980s. The interpretation of a 'moral offence' or being in 'moral danger' relied on the interpretation of the authority, and might include associating with a criminal or being perceived as sexually active.<sup>166</sup>

Some survivors talked about being charged with 'moral offences' in their private sessions. 'Sally' said she was locked up after being wrongly accused of 'playing around' with boys.<sup>167</sup> In her account 'Linda Justine' told us, 'According to the Police I was "uncontrollable" because I used to shoplift, drive without a license and disturb the peace by kicking over trash bins'.<sup>168</sup>

The routines in many reformatories were similar to that of prisons.<sup>169</sup> Most children had been sentenced by the courts, but children living in institutions who were judged to be 'out of control' could also be admitted.<sup>170</sup> These types of transfers were especially straightforward when applied to children living in residential homes run by the Catholic Church and The Salvation Army, who managed most of the long-running reformatories.<sup>171</sup> Commissioned research states that many reformatories form the basis of youth detention today, which still operates on a prison model.<sup>172</sup> However, contemporary institutions accommodate children in custody for criminal allegations or convictions and not for care and protection concerns.

In the public hearing for *Case Study 30: The response of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, and the Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria to allegations of child sexual abuse (Youth detention centres, Victoria)*, we heard about the Turana Youth Training Centre, Winlaton Youth Training Centre and the Baltara Reception Centre. We heard that these institutions served multiple and divergent purposes.<sup>173</sup> The Turana Training Centre was used as an assessment and classification centre for convicted juvenile offenders, a reception centre for children in need of care and protection going into the care of the department, a remand centre for boys aged from 10 to 16 years who were awaiting sentencing or the outcome of a protection order, a residential facility for boys who could not be accommodated elsewhere, and a youth training centre for sentenced boys aged between 15 and 21 years.<sup>174</sup>

The range of children housed in reformatories and reception centres was discussed in the *Youth detention centres, Victoria* public hearing, where we heard evidence that Baltara Reception Centre was divided into five sections. The centre accommodated 'older, tougher' boys, including boys convicted of sexual offences, habitual absconders, boys with physical disabilities or mental disabilities and a mixed group of boys.<sup>175</sup> Winlaton Youth Training Centre was the only statutory institution in Victoria for young women aged between 14 and 21 years.<sup>176</sup> Some girls younger than 14 were admitted to Winlaton, generally because they were deemed to present a severe management problem or because they persistently ran away from non-secure facilities.<sup>177</sup>

## 2.2.6 Reception centres

Reception centres housed children before a long-term placement, while on remand for criminal offences, and before they went to court or into a more permanent form of care.<sup>178</sup> Although these institutions were for short-stay accommodation, delays in the system could lead to overcrowding.<sup>179</sup> Newly arrived children mixed with those returned from failed placements and the semi-permanent population of 'hard to place' children. Commissioned research states that children with chronic illness and disability often spent long periods at such centres.<sup>180</sup> Many children who were long-term residents took a leading role in the cleaning and outdoor maintenance of these institutions. In some cases, children spent their whole childhood at the centre, going on to become part of the staff upon reaching adulthood.<sup>181</sup>

Reception centres later came to be known as assessment centres, reflecting the increased engagement with psychology in the child welfare sector.<sup>182</sup> Most were government operated, though some non-government organisations used a similar style of assessment before placing children in other types of care.<sup>183</sup> In Victoria, reception centres were established in the 1960s, before which industrial schools were used as housing for children going into care.<sup>184</sup>

In private sessions, many survivors described the mix of children accommodated in reception centres. 'Irwin' told us that both his parents were put into mental health institutions.<sup>185</sup> 'Irwin' said that after this occurred the family doctor had taken him to court to make him a ward of the state and then to the centre:

I walked in the door and a man at the reception, first thing he said to me was 'What are you in for?' 'What am I in for? Nothing'. And then he responded to me, I can't forget the words, he said to me, 'You're conning me'. I said, 'No I'm not. I haven't done anything'. 'Cause they're just used to getting these criminals from out the back of police wagons. But I was delivered, special delivery. 'Irwin' got specially delivered into what proved to be a living hell that I never recovered from ...<sup>186</sup>

'Irwin' said:

At 14 I got a shock and a half. And the warders didn't blink an eye ...

The boys in the place went on a rampage. I got raped. All the boys were running around all the rooms naked, stark naked, and I had a youth on top of me ripping my pyjamas off, demanding anal sex ... I was just, at 14, I couldn't take it ...<sup>187</sup>

Some survivors told Commissioners they were sexually abused as soon as they arrived at a reception centre. 'Sam' explained in his private session that he and his sister were taken from their family as a result of his father's psychological instability after the war.<sup>188</sup> 'Sam' said he was sexually abused and threatened by a junior staff member:

We had two in a room and he'd come in when there was only one in the room and he'd fondle you and everything and he'd say, 'You say anything, you'll never ever see your parents'.<sup>189</sup>

'Sam' said he and his friend reported the abuse to a senior officer. 'And he laughed at us and said, "You haven't seen the worst of it yet, so bloody well get used to it"'.<sup>190</sup>

The *Youth detention centres, Victoria* case study examined youth training centres and reception centres. These centres were state-run and although legislation distinguished between 'children in need of care and protection' and 'juvenile offenders', between 1954 and the early 1970s there was not always a clear separation in practice. We heard evidence from former residents and former staff members that both groups of children were often placed in the same institution and sometimes in the same section. Younger children were sometimes placed with older children.<sup>191</sup> Former resident BDB gave evidence that no efforts were made to separate children in need of care and protection from sentenced juveniles. She said that Turana was 'like a training ground for institutionalisation and gaol'.<sup>192</sup> Katherine X told us she was placed in Winlaton Youth Training Centre, which operated as a youth training centre, a classification and assessment facility, a remand centre and a reception centre, when she was 14 years old.<sup>193</sup> Katherine X gave evidence in the *Youth detention centres, Victoria* case study that she was taken to Winlaton for protection after she disclosed to social workers that she was being repeatedly raped by her father.<sup>194</sup>

## 2.2.7 Children's homes

Children's homes were similar to orphanages and industrial schools and accommodated orphans and other children deemed by authorities to be in need of care. The philosophy of the children's home drew on the idea of the 'rehabilitative power of the family'.<sup>195</sup> These institutions were run by various organisations – churches, governments, charities and even private individuals. Children's homes were a popular form of care for children during the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and were established by different religious denominations to protect their own 'flock'.<sup>196</sup> In some cases, children's homes were run by 'individuals who believed that they had a calling to care for children'.<sup>197</sup>

Some children's homes were organised to mimic family life, with cottage-style accommodation and adult staff standing in as parents. While children's homes were usually smaller than orphanages or industrial schools, dormitory accommodation nonetheless remained a common feature, with children being divided by gender. More boys than girls experienced this type of institutional care, and more children's homes catered exclusively to boys than to girls.<sup>198</sup> Some children's homes were established specifically to accommodate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children or children with disability.

Children who may have previously been taken into orphanages were taken into children's homes, although it appears arrangements were loose and many were not accountable to any governing body.<sup>199</sup> Commissioned research notes that the supervision of children and of the adults caring for them in children's homes was often inadequate, leaving children vulnerable to abuse.<sup>200</sup>

In the public hearing for *Case Study 33: The response of The Salvation Army (Southern Territory) to allegations of child sexual abuse at children's homes that it operated (The Salvation Army children's homes, Australia Southern Territory)*, we heard evidence relating to four children's homes in Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria. We heard that a residential care facility operated in Nedlands in Western Australia between 1918 and 1992. Evidence at the public hearing explained that in about 1965 The Salvation Army adopted the cottage model for this institution. Children lived in separated cottage homes with a family designated as 'house parents'. Often, the children of house parents also resided in the cottage. 'Campus cottage care' arrangements such as that at the Hollywood Children's Village in Nedlands were regarded as providing a 'stable family-like' environment for children.<sup>201</sup>

The Bethcar Children's Home profiled in *Case Study 19: The response of the State of New South Wales to child sexual abuse at Bethcar Children's Home in Brewarrina, New South Wales* was a children's home set up by Burt and Edith Gordon, a married couple, in 1969.<sup>202</sup> We heard in the public hearing for this case study that the Gordons took children into their care in 1969 at their residence at the Old Mission in Brewarrina. Initially, the arrangements were informal. By 1974, they also received children who had appeared before the local magistrate.<sup>203</sup> In that year, the Gordons received a \$90,000 grant from the Australian Government to construct a new home at the Old Mission site.<sup>204</sup> Two years later, in 1976, they were granted a permit to operate the children's home.<sup>205</sup> Until its closure in 1989, Bethcar received state funding for dozens of children. This included funding for '24 disadvantaged aboriginal children'.<sup>206</sup> In the public hearing into *Bethcar Children's Home*, six former residents gave evidence about their childhood experiences, including allegations of sexual abuse by Mr Gordon and his son-in-law, Colin Gibson, and physical abuse by Mrs Gordon.<sup>207</sup>

Some survivors who attended private sessions described invasions of privacy and child sexual abuse by cottage parents and other people associated with these homes. They described a culture of control, physical and emotional abuse along with sexual abuse. 'Gayle' told us in the cottage accommodation, where she lived with at least 10 other children, the older son would 'patrol' the house.<sup>208</sup> She said the son sexually abused her and she witnessed the abuse of others. 'Gayle' said, when this was discovered the children were moved on and he stayed in the home. 'Deon' told us he had frontal lobe damage after an accident, which affected his learning and cognitive abilities.<sup>209</sup> When he was 12 years old, he was sent to a boys' home where the boys lived in separate cottages. 'Deon' said that in one cottage the cottage mother 'would shower us sometimes and dry us', despite the boys all being teenagers.<sup>210</sup>

### 2.2.8 Family group homes

Family group homes accommodated the same groups of children as those accommodated in children's homes but offered an alternative to an institutionalised environment.<sup>211</sup> The family group home model, based on the ideal of the family, became the preferred option for children from the 1960s, as the provision of out-of-home care shifted away from large institutions.<sup>212</sup> This led towards a preference for foster care and cottage care, although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were still more likely to be placed in larger institutions. The model was particularly suited to sparsely populated areas where small units could be established in many centres rather than concentrating children in large institutions in capital cities and regional centres.<sup>213</sup>

Group homes consisted of suburban homes staffed by married couples, many of whom had their own children in the house. Siblings could stay together and attend local schools and churches.<sup>214</sup> While family group homes were envisioned to replicate an ideal of family life, in practice the families were often much larger than those in the surrounding community, and high staff and child turnover made the 'family' façade hard to maintain.<sup>215</sup> Commissioned research concludes that effective family group homes were similar to domestic family homes, but that the worst group homes reproduced the risks of a 'family gone wrong', and children were left isolated and vulnerable to abuse.<sup>216</sup>

### 2.2.9 Hostels

Hostels provided single-sex accommodation for young people working or studying in cities.<sup>217</sup> Most were not designed for children in care, and were relatively small-scale operations with low staffing levels.<sup>218</sup> With the spread of secondary education after World War II, hostels became increasingly popular.<sup>219</sup> Many students were from regional or remote areas, and some hostels catered exclusively for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.<sup>220</sup> Working children contributed to their own board in hostels.<sup>221</sup>

By the 1970s, the demand for hostels within the general population had dropped.<sup>222</sup> Hostels that had been attached to children's homes were also closed, often because older children who were admitted to them required more intervention than the hostels could provide.<sup>223</sup>

In Volume 13, *Schools* we discuss the contemporary use of hostels including those to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from remote communities to attend school.

### 2.2.10 Emergency accommodation

From the late 1960s, state child welfare departments and more progressive non-government providers acted in response to community expectations that children should not automatically be placed in long-term care when families were struggling.<sup>224</sup> Aided by the availability of social security payments (particularly the supporting parent benefit), these factors brought about a shift towards a new policy of providing temporary accommodation for children while the family re-grouped.<sup>225</sup> Under this system, children were often housed in small units supported by rostered staff, although some states used short-term foster care to meet this need.<sup>226</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were often excluded from this new policy and were still removed from their families.<sup>227</sup>

### 2.2.11 Mental hospitals and psychiatric institutions

Residential 'mental hospitals' and psychiatric institutions for adults with mental illness also commonly admitted children with disability.<sup>228</sup> Government health departments operated combined psychiatric and disability institutions. Children and adults with intellectual disability and adults with mental illness were often placed in different wards on the same grounds.<sup>229</sup> Children could be placed in these institutions from birth, though placement was possible at later ages if families were no longer able to provide care. Peak times for placement were when the child reached puberty or when younger siblings were born.<sup>230</sup>

Some children were placed in adult psychiatric institutions because they experienced mental illness or intellectual disability, and others were placed there under care and protection orders, including orders related to 'uncontrollable' behaviour and juvenile justice orders. Girls were often admitted because they were deemed to be 'exposed to moral danger' rather than because they had committed criminal offences.<sup>231</sup>

Experiences of child sexual abuse in mental hospitals and psychiatric institutions were told to us in many private sessions. Some survivors explained they had been placed in adult psychiatric institutions when they were children. 'Ida' told us she was prescribed antipsychotic drugs and tranquillisers.<sup>232</sup> She said she was the youngest in a large ward of men and women and was very vulnerable. 'Ida' said the medication made her situation worse:

It takes away your will. It takes away your will to defend yourself. It takes away your strength to fight to survive. It is just really bad. I had no power, no control, and no voice. I was invisible.<sup>233</sup>



‘Toni’ recalled in her private session that at the age of 12 she was made a state ward and sent to a ‘youth hospital’.<sup>234</sup> This institution used a medical model to treat children who had mental health needs, or had been in trouble with the law, as well as those who were homeless. ‘Toni’ described how she was forced to undergo gynaecological examinations, which she referred to as ‘rape by medical instruments’, during which she was held down by male officers. She told us she was made to shower in front of male and female staff. She said sometimes she was stripped naked and drugged, then locked inside the ‘tantrum room’ at night.

Some mental hospital and psychiatric institutions also fulfilled multiple purposes. The Wilson Youth Hospital in Queensland was established in 1961 as a remand, assessment and treatment centre for boys, with a unit for girls added in 1971.<sup>235</sup> It was investigated as part of the Forde Inquiry in Queensland, which noted allegations of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and the use of practices such as corporal punishment and solitary confinement.<sup>236</sup> The institution was described as ‘a unique institution doubling as a corrective institution and mental health facility run jointly by the Children’s Services and Health Departments’ from the 1960s to the early 1980s.<sup>237</sup> The Forde Inquiry noted that the boys’ section was managed more in line with a training school, while the girls’ unit was based on a medical model. The report of the Forde Inquiry noted the use of sedation to subdue girls for minor behavioural matters.<sup>238</sup> The *Forgotten Australians* report noted that the Wilson Youth Hospital became ‘notorious’ for the way it used medication on children.<sup>239</sup> One witness to the Forde Inquiry said that ‘It was called a hospital, but I don’t know why; maybe you needed the hospital when they were finished’.<sup>240</sup>

# Endnotes

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## 3 Child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions

In this chapter we discuss survivors' experiences of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions. We consider evidence from the case studies, accounts written by survivors and given in private sessions, and commissioned and other research. Listening to the experiences of people who attended private sessions enabled Commissioners to understand survivors' perspectives of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions. Private sessions were conducted across Australia and included people who were sexually abused in residential institutions as children, and their families, carers and supporters.

The information presented in this chapter draws from experiences of 2,470 victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions who talked to us in private sessions. It includes:

- the characteristics of survivors who attended private sessions
- experiences of sexual and other types of abuse and neglect in historical residential institutions
- the institutions where the abuse occurred
- what we were told about adult perpetrators and children with harmful sexual behaviours.

The chapter also describes the common features of historical residential institutions which may have increased children's vulnerability to sexual and other forms of abuse.

Information from private sessions illustrates survivors' experiences of child sexual abuse but may not represent the experiences of survivors in the broader Australian community who did not attend a private session. Survivors attended private sessions voluntarily, and chose what they shared about their experiences with Commissioners.

We supplement the information from private sessions with material from written accounts, case studies, and also draw on commissioned and other research to better understand the characteristics of residential institutions that may have increased children's vulnerability to sexual abuse.

### 3.1 Profile of survivors in private sessions

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Of the 6,875 survivors who attended private sessions and shared their experiences of child sexual abuse in Australian institutions, more than one-third (35.9 per cent) told Commissioners that they were the victims of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions. We use the expression 'survivor' to describe those people who spoke in private sessions, including family members and friends of survivors of child sexual abuse.

Most (61.8 per cent) survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions who attended private sessions were male. Almost one-quarter (22.2 per cent) of survivors identified as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person, and a small proportion (4.5 per cent) said they had a disability at the time of the sexual abuse.

The majority (57.8 per cent) were aged between 40 and 60 years when they attended their private session. Two in five (39.1 per cent) were over 60 years old, and a small proportion (2.0 per cent) were aged under 40 years.

Almost half (45.1 per cent) said they were first sexually abused between 1950 and 1969, which was consistent with the age demographic of survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions attending private sessions. One-third (34.1 per cent) said they were first abused between 1970 and 1989. A small proportion (5.1 per cent) said they were abused before 1950, and the remainder (15.7 per cent) did not tell us when they were first abused.

## 3.2 Experiences of abuse

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During private sessions and public hearings, survivors told us about their experiences of child sexual abuse. Some survivors wrote to the Royal Commission to provide an account of the abuse. They told Commissioners what happened to them, the institutions in which it happened and who had sexually abused them. Talking about sex and sexual abuse is taboo in many cultures, and some survivors chose to give very little detail. The quantitative information in this section is drawn from private sessions, and takes into account that not all survivors provided information about the different types of abuse they told us they experienced.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.2.1 Nature of the abuse

Of the survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions who talked to Commissioners in private sessions, most (86.0 per cent) mentioned their age at the time of the first abuse. Of these, more than two in five (41.0 per cent) said they were aged under 10 when they were first abused. Just under half (48.7 per cent) said they were first sexually abused between the ages of 10 and 14 years and one in 10 (10.3 per cent) said they were aged between 15 and 17 years.

Most (92.2 per cent) survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions who attended private sessions mentioned the frequency of the abuse. Of these, most (86.1 per cent) said they experienced multiple incidents of child sexual abuse. Among survivors who discussed the duration of the abuse (71.8 per cent), over half (54.2 per cent) said they were sexually abused as a child for one year or less, two in five (40.6 per cent) told us they were sexually abused for two to five years, more than one in 10 (12.7 per cent) said they were sexually abused for six to 10 years, and a small proportion (1.6 per cent) said they were sexually abused for 10 or more years.

Of the survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions who talked to Commissioners in private sessions, most (86.3 per cent) talked about the types of sexual abuse they experienced. Of this group (noting that many experienced multiple episodes and different types of sexual abuse):

- almost two-thirds (65.7 per cent) described experiences of child sexual abuse involving non-penetrative contact abuse, such as an adult touching a child's body or a child being forced to touch an adult's body
- a similar proportion (64.7 per cent) described experiences of child sexual abuse involving penetration (for example, penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth with a penis, another body part or an object)
- more than one-quarter (28.1 per cent) described experiences where their privacy was violated, such as being forced to undress or being watched while showering
- more than one in 10 (11.7 per cent) described experiences consistent with being groomed for sexual contact. Grooming is defined here as tactics and strategies used by an adult perpetrator or a child exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours with the intent of facilitating or concealing the sexual abuse of a child. It can be directed towards the child or other people associated with them, such as their parents
- nearly one in 10 (9.4 per cent) described experiences consistent with exposure to sexual acts and material, such as being shown pornographic material or being forced to watch other people perform sexual acts
- a small proportion (2.4 per cent) described experiences consistent with being exploited, such as adults coercing or manipulating them to engage in sexual acts in exchange for an incentive, or the promise of an incentive, such as food, drugs, alcohol or cigarettes.

In private sessions, almost three-quarters (72.9 per cent) of survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions discussed experiencing other forms of abuse before, during and after being sexually abused. Of these, more than three-quarters (79.4 per cent) indicated that they experienced emotional abuse, such as fear, intimidation, bullying and humiliation. One-quarter (26.1 per cent) said they were neglected when they were living in a residential institution and one-fifth (21.0 per cent) said they were forced into child labour. Almost one-quarter (23.8 per cent) said they had witnessed the abuse of others.



Of the survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions who provided information to Commissioners in private sessions, most (79.6 per cent) said they had also experienced physical abuse, frequently in the context of severe corporal punishment. Although these assaults were sometimes conducted under the guise of punishment, they often went far beyond what was considered acceptable for disciplinary purposes at the time.<sup>2</sup> Many survivors told Commissioners they were beaten, flogged, caned, belted, punched, hit, kicked, thrown about and knocked unconscious by adults in historical residential institutions.<sup>3</sup> Survivors also said that other children in the institution committed acts of physical abuse, often in the context of a violent institutional culture and with the knowledge of adults in authority.

## Experiences of childhood in historical residential institutions

Most survivors who told us they were sexually abused in an historical residential institution said their childhoods were marked by trauma, brutality and violence. Many survivors described being physically punished for unknown or small misdemeanours, and as a result carried lifelong physical and mental scars. We heard from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors that they were punished for speaking their languages and practising their culture.<sup>4</sup> Child migrants from Malta were also forbidden from speaking their first language. Regimes of fear operated over many residential institutions and survivors recalled many examples of excessive force and harsh treatment. Many survivors in private sessions told us that during their childhood in historical residential institutions they were fearful of sexual and physical violence, and felt isolated from family, culture and community.

We heard from witnesses that the physical conditions of many historical residential institutions were harsh. Children were often hungry and inadequately clothed.<sup>5</sup> Many survivors recalled not having enough blankets at night.<sup>6</sup> In the public hearing for *Case Study 3: Anglican Diocese of Grafton's response to child sexual abuse at the North Coast Children's home*, former residents of the home told us it was poorly funded in the 1950s and 1960s, food and clothing were limited, and the physical conditions were unsanitary.<sup>7</sup> Witness CN, a resident from 1959 to 1969, described arriving at the North Coast Children's Home for the first time: 'It smelt terrible, like faeces, and there was vomit on the ground. I could see about 20-odd children, all dirty. It was horrific'.<sup>8</sup>

Similar evidence was presented by survivors in the public hearing for *Case Study 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys' homes in New South Wales and Queensland (The Salvation Army boys' homes, Australia Eastern Territory)*.<sup>9</sup> Mr Mark Stiles gave evidence that he was placed in the Gill Memorial Home at the age of 12 in 1971. His mother could not look after him and he stayed there for about a year. Mr Stiles said the boys at the home were constantly hungry, and the home, being in the south of NSW, was very cold in winter. Mr Stiles said that despite the cold Salvation Army officers turned off the hot water heaters because they were apparently too expensive to run.<sup>10</sup>

The remote location and isolation of many historical residential institutions enabled maltreatment and physical neglect of children to flourish. Many survivors told Commissioners they did not receive an education and instead worked on farm schools and did chores without adequate clothing or food. In the public hearing for *Case Study 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School (Christian Brothers)* we were told that food was scarce at Castledare. Witness VI recalled that the food was of an atrocious quality, but if the boys did not eat it the Brothers would beat them.<sup>11</sup> We found in *Case Study 26: The response of the Sisters of Mercy, the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton and the Queensland Government to allegations of child sexual abuse at St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol (St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol)*, and consistent with the findings of the Forde Inquiry, that there was insufficient food at the orphanage.<sup>12</sup>

Forgotten Australians, child migrants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and others taken abruptly from their homes were often already traumatised when they arrived at the institution.<sup>13</sup> The *Lost Innocents* report states that 'child migrants sent to Australia from the United Kingdom, especially in the immediate post-war period, were often the most deprived children in UK institutions'.<sup>14</sup>

In private sessions, survivors explained that once inside a residential institution life was determined by the authority of the institution. Written accounts also described how survivors felt they were treated in historical residential institutions. 'Neil Jeffrey' wrote:

I clearly recall the horror of [the institution] and how the knot in my stomach started and never left from the moment I set foot in that shithole. What a hard, cold, terrifyingly brutal place it was. Underfed, scrawny children swarming everywhere. Severe Brothers stalking the place in their black robes, children dodging them whenever they could. Bullying everywhere from the bigger boys and especially from the Brothers. What really gets me is how respected the staff at [the institution] were in the community and how they used us for fund raising and to promote themselves as doing good works, when all the time we were treated as slaves, beaten and abused, used for their perverted desires. These were terrible years. No love or kindness, no safety or warmth. Always hungry and always frightened.<sup>15</sup>

Some survivors told Commissioners they changed institutions frequently and had no stability of care. Others said they remained in the same institution, being abused for several years. 'Fred Michael' went to an orphanage at four years of age, when his mother died.<sup>16</sup> He told us the nuns were physically and emotionally abusive.

They'd just hit you for anything ... Say something out of turn, step out of line ... Everything was regimented ... You weren't allowed to talk. If you talked – well, that was it, you got whacked with a piece of cane, or a piece of wood.<sup>17</sup>



'Fred Michael' explained that he was moved to a Marist Brothers orphanage when he was 10. He recalled:

It was just terrible, man. I mean, these guys were even worse than the nuns. They actually, some of them used fists on you ... not just the cane, which was their favourite ... or a barber strap, which was another favourite.<sup>18</sup>

I've even got marks on my face where I was actually hit by this one Marist Brother ... he was a fruitcake ... We had young Aboriginal boys living there and ... he took particular liking to laying into those blokes ... and then, if I stood up for 'em, I'd cop it too.<sup>19</sup>

Many survivors in private sessions gave accounts of poor nutrition and medical neglect. For some, seeking help for medical ailments placed them at risk of sexual and physical abuse. 'Cameron John' was a child migrant at the age of five.<sup>20</sup> He said that when he was 11, he was living in a residential institution run by the Christian Brothers. One day, while suffering from a toothache, he went to see a Brother he thought of as a 'father' figure. 'Cameron John' said the Brother put Bex (a common analgesic) on the tooth, told him to lie down and then raped him. Another survivor, 'Seymour', also told us about seeking help for a toothache and the lifelong impact of his mistreatment:

I remember this time I had a very bad toothache and [the nurse] pulled it out by pliers. I said, 'You took the wrong one out'. She belted me and slapped me ... She ended up taking two or three of them out ... I never really recovered, but I've got top and bottom false plate.<sup>21</sup>

Survivors who attended private sessions told Commissioners they were unable to find any adults to support or look after them in these residential institutions. Survivors' written accounts, private sessions and evidence in public hearings describe institutional cultures that reinforced the trauma of child sexual abuse. 'Elwyn' told us in a private session that he was aged one when he was taken from his mother, and almost eight when he was sent to Australia as a child migrant.<sup>22</sup> 'Elwyn' said he was sexually abused almost as soon as he arrived:

It happened several times a week for eight long and desperately sad years, even after I reported it to the principal. They ignored it. This is the whole point of it all, they ignored everything that was told to them. They would not believe a word of it.<sup>23</sup>

'Elwyn' said, 'I know they knew what was going on, and the pain of the caning is still raw to me, but the pain of them ignoring what was happening to me and then punishing me for it is indescribable'.<sup>24</sup>

Commissioners were also told in private sessions that children were sexually abused when they were away from the residential institution, at work or in short-term foster care, for weekends or school holidays. 'Alfred' told us in his private session that he had been repeatedly sexually and physically abused in the residential institution he lived in.<sup>25</sup> He said the perpetrators were priests and visiting ministry. Later, when he was in his early teens in the mid-1960s, 'Alfred' went to work in a hotel owned by a prominent local Catholic. He said he slept in a toolshed and was raped repeatedly while he was there by the local priest acting in cohort with the hotel owner and another relative. He told us:

One would hold you down and the other one tie your legs and then they'd go for it. That lasted nearly nine months and it was the whole three of them, they'd just take turns. You had nowhere to go.<sup>26</sup>

## Punishment

We heard in private sessions and public hearings that punishments in historical residential institutions were cruel and unpredictable. Survivors gave accounts of repeated punishments for small transgressions and told us they were sometimes punished for no apparent reason. We were also told by survivors that staff said that their parents did not love them or want them. In the public hearing for the *St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol* case study, we heard extensive evidence about the infliction of corporal punishment by the religious sisters and other employees at the orphanage in contravention of relevant laws and regulations.<sup>27</sup>

Survivors who were brought to Australia as child migrants told similar stories of physical violence and indiscriminate punishments.<sup>28</sup> Some also said they were punished for not speaking English. In the public hearing for the *Christian Brothers* case study, we heard evidence from Mr Raphael Ellul, who recalled being told as a child in Malta that he was going to Australia to get a better education and a better life.<sup>29</sup> Mr Ellul said that instead he lived in fear of the straps and fists that were used to inflict 'extreme, arbitrary and severe physical punishment'.<sup>30</sup> After Mr Ellul was sexually abused by one of the Brothers, he tried to escape from Tardun Farm School. He tried to report the abuse, but the police did not believe him.<sup>31</sup> He was returned to Tardun, where one of the Brothers belted him as punishment.<sup>32</sup>

We heard that government legislation of the day in some circumstances permitted institutional staff to physically punish children. Witnesses in public hearings told us that physical punishment inflicted by institutional staff often went well beyond what the legislation or regulations at the time permitted. In *Case Study 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay* we learned that Part 11 of the *Child Welfare Act 1939* (NSW) allowed institutional staff to punish children in detention in particular situations, including if they disobeyed the rules, were idle or negligent in their work, or behaved in a way that 'prejudiced good order and discipline'.<sup>33</sup> Corporal punishment and isolated detention were permitted with restrictions.<sup>34</sup> From evidence given at the public hearing, we accepted that girls

at the institution faced severe punishments for disobedience in that institution, including being deprived of food or told to scrub floors.<sup>35</sup> We heard that the worst punishment at Parramatta Girls was being sent to an isolation cell.<sup>36</sup> Several witnesses told us they were often placed in an isolation cell, the 'dungeon', for days or weeks at a time, which contravened the maximum period under Part 11 of the Child Welfare Act of one or two days detention.<sup>37</sup>

We heard similar accounts about punishment in the public hearing into *The Salvation Army boys' homes, Australia Eastern Territory*. In all four Salvation Army boys' homes examined in this case study, regular, public and excessive physical punishment occurred, beyond approved methods under state laws of the time. We heard there were 'punishment parades' at Indooroopilly Boys' Home and Riverview Boys' Home where boys were hit with a cane or strap in front of other boys.<sup>38</sup> At Riverview, one boy was dangled head first into a well. Another was tied to a tree with a chain attached to a metal collar. Others were put into a 'cage'.<sup>39</sup> One was forced to crawl around an oval naked holding a chicken in the air while others stood by laughing.<sup>40</sup> We heard harsh physical punishment often went hand in hand with psychological abuse.<sup>41</sup> This included having to sweep the playground with a toothbrush, and, in one case, a boy was forced to eat his own vomit.<sup>42</sup> Boys who wet the bed were humiliated in public.<sup>43</sup> At times, boys were punished without a clear reason.<sup>44</sup> Evidence at the public hearing led to a finding in the case study that in each of the four homes there was physical abuse of boys by officers of The Salvation Army that was on occasion brutal, and that The Salvation Army did not protect the boys from this abuse.<sup>45</sup>

In private sessions, survivors told Commissioners that children were beaten, made to stand for hours at a time, denied food and locked in isolation. They said they were cruelly treated for wetting the bed, and punishments included being dunked in cold water and humiliated in front of the other children.<sup>46</sup> 'Kenrick' told us he was sexually abused and punished in several homes and youth detention centres before he turned 10.<sup>47</sup> He said he was tied to a tree all night for wetting the bed and forced to scrub concrete with a toothbrush. 'Kaye' recalled in her private session that in the girls' dormitory on the mission she kept quiet, but would be punished 'for anything or nothing' regardless.<sup>48</sup> She said there had been times when she was locked in a dark storeroom all night, and consequently has slept with the light on ever since. 'Kaye' said that 60 years later, scars from the beatings and floggings she received are still visible.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors often told us in private sessions that they were punished for speaking their language or practising their culture. 'Carl' told us he had felt 'very, very rich ... and very healthy' living in the bush with his mum and dad and community.<sup>49</sup> As a nine-year-old, he was already familiar with his cultural traditions and had practised them for a long time. That changed, he said, when he was removed from his parents and sent to a mission. '[At the mission,] each time you spoke your language you were flogged. Any time you did something cultural, meaningful for yourself – you were flogged.'<sup>50</sup>

We were told by survivors in private sessions that children were often punished and humiliated in historical residential institutions. 'Elmer' was born with intellectual disability and was placed in a special home for children at a very young age in the mid-1950s.<sup>51</sup> He said he was punished in front of other children, often without reason. He recalled having his pants pulled down in the dining room and being struck on his backside with a razor strap – an experience he described as 'humiliating'.

## Strip searches

Survivors told us that strip searches were often conducted in historical residential institutions, particularly in youth detention, reformatories, mental health institutions and reception centres. Survivors frequently mentioned being strip searched and watched by workers. They described the humiliation and fear associated with being searched on arrival in the institution, following visits to and from people outside the institution, and sometimes for no apparent reason. Some survivors described strip-search experiences in orphanages and children's homes. 'Merve Rose' told us in her private session that she was living in a girls' home when she was sexually and physically abused by the superintendent.<sup>52</sup> She said that at the home she was watched by male staff members as she showered, and that she was regularly strip searched by male and female staff members.

In the public hearing for *Case Study 30: The response of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, and the Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria to allegations of child sexual abuse (Youth detention centres, Victoria)*, survivors from Winlaton Youth Training Centre gave evidence that they were subjected to strip searches, which we accepted were degrading, humiliating and invasive experiences.<sup>53</sup> One survivor, Ms Gabrielle Short, said on one occasion a female officer placed her fingers inside Ms Short's vagina to check for hidden items. She said that she objected but was told that the male night watchmen would be called to do the search if she did not cooperate.<sup>54</sup> Ms Marilyn Minister, Deputy Superintendent at Winlaton, acknowledged that strip searches were conducted and said that although the searches could be humiliating, degrading, intrusive and uncomfortable, they were a necessity. She gave evidence that she never attended a strip search or asked residents about their experiences of them. Ms Minister accepted that, in the absence of spot checks or an audit process, individual youth officers could conduct checks in any manner they wanted.<sup>55</sup>

In the public hearing for *The Salvation Army boys' homes, Australia Eastern Territory* case study we heard that Salvation Army officer Lieutenant Lawrence Wilson ordered boys to strip for 'medical inspections'.<sup>56</sup> Witness ET said Wilson forced him to strip off his clothes and then touched his genitals.<sup>57</sup>

In private sessions, many survivors told Commissioners they believed workers used searches as an opportunity to sexually abuse children. 'Toby James' told us he was picked up by the police for getting into trouble when he was in his early teens, and when he was 15 was taken to a state-run remand home for a short time.<sup>58</sup> 'Toby James' told us:

When you first come in you have to strip off to get into the khaki clothes, and they'd have you standing there for about an hour, naked, and it was a sexual thing as far as the screw was concerned. 'Cause he was making us stand there naked for his own gratification, not for punishment.<sup>59</sup>

Other survivors said they believed that strip searches were used to intimidate and punish children. Escaping from a dysfunctional family in the 1970s, 'Paul Andrew' said he was picked up by authorities and taken into a government-run receiving centre.<sup>60</sup> He said he ran away after being abused by one of the night-shift workers. 'Paul Andrew' talked about his experience of being searched after running away and being returned to institutional care:

One particular time when I come back, 'Mr Jonas', the housekeeper, decided to strip me naked and put me in the corner. And everyone was laughing at me. It was a very horrible moment, actually.<sup>61</sup>

## Medical examination of girls

Female survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions described being subjected to sexual abuse under the guise of medical procedures and internal examinations. Many said they found these experiences frightening. In her private session, 'Sally' said she left home because she felt overwhelmed by domestic chores and the responsibility of caring for her siblings.<sup>62</sup> Her mother signed papers to say she was 'uncontrollable' and 'Sally' was taken to a remand centre. She told us her belongings were taken and she was punished and subjected to two internal examinations. 'Sally' said the first time a nurse held her down and a doctor 'shoved this steel thing' up inside her and told her, 'You were a virgin. You ain't now'. She said that afterwards the nurse just left her on the table and walked away.

When I came out, I was bleeding, I was upset, I was cranky ... You were made [to] sit in the waiting room and you were made [to] shut up ... From that day on, every time something was done, you put up with what happened because you knew if you didn't shut up, you were going to cop more and more and more and more.<sup>63</sup>

In her private session, 'Lisa Michelle' said she was put in the care of the state after being abused at home. When she was 12 she was placed into a psychiatric home where her mother was staying.<sup>64</sup> She recalled being sexually abused by the institution's doctor under the pretence of a medical examination when she entered the institution.

Nobody did anything else. It wasn't like they took your blood pressure or they looked at your eyes or they asked you to open your mouth to look at your tonsils. There was none of that. It was 'Get up in the chair, bring your knees up and open your legs'.<sup>65</sup>

In her private session, 'Ruby' told us that a staff doctor in another institution was referred to as 'Mr Fingers' and he had examined all the 250 to 300 girls at the home.<sup>66</sup> She said he regularly examined their vaginas and she is positive that this was sexual abuse and not medically required.<sup>67</sup>

In the *Youth detention centres, Victoria* case study public hearing, we accepted that between the 1960s and early 1970s, some residents of Winlaton Youth Training Centre were subjected to internal medical examinations by doctors who attended Winlaton and by doctors at a venereal disease clinic in Fitzroy, Victoria.<sup>68</sup> We were satisfied that residents were not told why the examinations were being conducted and that on some occasions the examinations occurred in a questionable manner and without the residents' consent.<sup>69</sup> We accepted that the residents experienced these internal examinations as sexually abusive, and consider that there are doubts that many of these examinations were necessary.<sup>70</sup>

The *Forgotten Australians* report states that 'it appeared thousands of girls were given vaginal examinations on the pretext of testing for "promiscuity"'.<sup>71</sup> Historian Dr Joanna Penglase referred to this institutional practice as 'state-sanctioned rape' in her account of growing up in 'care' in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>72</sup> For girls, one part of the many medical assessments at the Wilson Youth Hospital was the 'enforced gynaecological examination, including an internal involving a speculum'.<sup>73</sup>

## Medical procedures and child sexual abuse

In public hearings and private sessions we heard about the use of medication and medical procedures on children in historical residential institutions. Witnesses told us that some authority figures, doctors, nurses and other staff used these procedures to sexually abuse children in their care. We heard in the *Parramatta Training School for Girls* public hearing that some girls at the Parramatta Training School were forcibly sedated with antipsychotic medication. Survivor Ms Mary Farrell Hooker gave evidence that pots of tea were spiked with medication to curb sexual drive and calm the girls down. She said that this allowed the officers to 'do what they wanted with them'.<sup>74</sup> Psychiatrists or the superintendent assessed difficult and rebellious girls before they were transferred to the maximum-security Institution for Girls in Hay. One survivor said that girls were given large doses of medication, put on a train and handcuffed.<sup>75</sup>

In her private session, 'Minnie' told us she was sent to a psychiatric treatment centre outside Brisbane when she was 13.<sup>76</sup> She said, 'It was terrible. It was horrible. There was things that I saw that I shouldn't have seen and many people seen it too – nurses, doctors'. She was given electric shock treatment, and lithium and other drugs. 'Minnie' explained how medical intervention was used to sexually abuse her:

The worst part was when they sedated us, we'd wake up on the floor naked and the door shut ... I woke up naked on the floor and I didn't know where in the hell I was and I didn't understand why I had no clothes on.<sup>77</sup>

Other survivors told similar accounts of abuse in these institutions. 'Walter Louis' said that on his admission to an adult psychiatric hospital:

I was absolutely shocked. I didn't want to be in a mental home ... I walked in and there's all these people just walking around drugged out and sitting in chairs and rocking and I couldn't believe I was going in there.<sup>78</sup>

'Walter Louis' said he tried to refuse his medication.<sup>79</sup> He suspected he was sexually abused after being forcibly injected with medications:

blokes in white overalls and black boots would come at me and would like really brutally ... I was held down, get injections, get knocked out ... I'd feel something going in me backside and it'd get worse and worse and I'd just fade out ... I'd have a really, really sore backside and there was blood on my underpants, and I complained ... and they would just always say 'Oh, you just had a suppository', but I'd had a suppository before and it was no suppository. They just didn't take any notice.<sup>80</sup>

## Fear of 'disappearing'

Survivors talked about the fear of 'disappearing' they had felt as children living in isolated regional and remote residential institutions.<sup>81</sup> They described incidents of other residents disappearing, and how knowledge of these incidents increased their fear of perpetrators and authorities in the institution. Some said they had witnessed or suspected a child had died or been sent away never to return. Others said pregnant girls were taken away in the middle of the night and returned much later without their babies. 'Joy' said in her private session that the priest at the nearby church was allowed free access to the girls in the orphanage.<sup>82</sup> 'Joy' explained that she became pregnant as a result of the sexual abuse and she told one of the nuns it was because of the priest. 'Joy' said the nun did not believe her and took her to the priest and made her apologise. 'Joy' told the Commissioner that once she was left alone with the priest he beat her and told her it was 'commonplace for girls to just disappear from the home'.<sup>83</sup>

Many survivors said they were frightened by seeing other children get beaten or suddenly go missing. 'Sam' said the physical abuse was so bad that several kids were beaten to death, and their bodies hidden.<sup>84</sup> 'Sam' had spent his childhood in different children's homes managed by the government, the Catholic Church and The Salvation Army. 'Sam' said in his private session:

You know, they actually – they even say – I've got a book at home, and you would never see some kids after a – they'd just go missing, especially half-castes, because a lot of the half-castes weren't registered at birth. They'd have no family. They'd just go missing.<sup>85</sup>

'Trent Patrick' sent a handwritten account to the Royal Commission. He described his experience in an isolated residential institution, where the boys would try to run away.<sup>86</sup> 'Trent Patrick' wrote:

There were a few times I ran away with some other boys only to find out we could not run anywhere but into the bush it was so thick and we would stay there about two days and come back to the school and get a hiding from the Christian Brothers. A lot of boys ran away but they always came back and got the same treatment the time I was there I think four boys were killed and was through slave labour and there was nothing said about that that I don't think anybody outside the farm knew.<sup>87</sup>

## Child labour and exploitation

Farm schools, training schools, industrial schools, missions, reserves and other historical residential institutions were often supported by the labour of child residents during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Child labour in these institutions included cleaning, cooking and maintenance, labour as punishment, building work for the institution, farm work and commercial work.<sup>88</sup> Many accounts in private sessions from survivors reflect the history of exploitation of child labour that has been outlined in other inquiries for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, child migrants and other children in residential institutions.<sup>89</sup>

In the public hearing for the *Christian Brothers* case study, VG, a child migrant from Malta, recalled another boy telling him that they did not go to school; that they were working boys.<sup>90</sup> The boys had to do most of the work to maintain the farm, which included moving heavy superphosphate and wheat bags, clearing land, cutting down trees, burning off, constructing fencing, milking cows, shearing sheep and baling wool.<sup>91</sup> They also had to help other farmers around the Tardun area.<sup>92</sup> Another survivor, VV, recalled that his education virtually ceased on arrival at Bindoon Farm School.<sup>93</sup> From the age of 11 he received no formal education.<sup>94</sup> He recalled being removed frequently from class in his first year to collect rocks to build the main building on the farm.<sup>95</sup> We found in the *Christian Brothers* case study that in taking children into care, the Christian Brothers were obligated to provide for them and educate them, but this was not done properly in all cases. Many of the children did not have any real education and instead were put to physical labour.<sup>96</sup>



Survivors in private sessions described completing chores for the upkeep of the institution before going to school and regularly doing harsh and physically demanding work. In his written account, 'Michael Barry' highlighted the work of boys to maintain and develop the Catholic-run boys' home in which he lived.<sup>97</sup> He wrote:

We were worked like slaves. We had to dig out the swimming pool by hand, little boys shovelling dirt onto old wheat bags and carrying them a long way to dump the dirt, no wheelbarrows. It was back breaking work and worse because the Brothers stood over us and belted us if we worked too slowly. We had to pull down the enormous pine trees, dig out the roots and haul on a long chain tied to the tree to pull it down, then chop up the tree, all done barefoot and with an empty belly because the food was so bad.<sup>98</sup>

Survivors in private sessions also spoke about the conditions of historical residential institutions where they had to work, cleaning and caring for other children. 'Lela' explained that the first nun she met at the girls' home run by the Sisters of Mercy was nice, but not the next one.<sup>99</sup> 'Lela' said the second nun did not allow her and other girls to go to school but instead put them to work 'scrubbing, cleaning and dusting'. 'Lela' said they were not allowed to talk to each other and the nun would punish them for any infraction. 'Clarice Jane' told us that she and other girls at the mission looked after the little babies.<sup>100</sup> She told us they all wondered, "'Where's their mothers? I'm only 12, and I've got to look after babies?" I said, "I don't know how to look after babies"'.

In his written account, 'Roger Matthew' described how he was forced to work as soon as he arrived in Australia at age 12.<sup>101</sup> He equated his experience to 'slavery, reinforced with beatings and bullying'. He wrote:

Looking back, the cruel, backbreaking labour we were forced into is unbelievable. I always had terrible back pain from lifting heavy rocks, which we had to collect from the Bush, throw onto trucks and take to the crusher. The Brothers would make us compete to see who could lift the biggest rocks. It was an occupational health and safety nightmare.

After harvest time, I would have to lift 120 pound (54.5 kg) bags of superphosphate; hoist it up onto my shoulder and carry them. I have never in my life since been free of back and neck pain. Even when we attended school, we had to labour afterwards for at least 2–3 hours. Before we were properly physically developed, they had us shovelling heavy loads with long handled spades that placed enormous strain on your lower back, standing out burning under the hot sun, suffering terribly from blistered sunburn. My feet were always in agony from stone bruises, splinters, cuts, from rocks dropping on them – it was torture in the full sense of the word.<sup>102</sup>

Many accounts from survivors in private sessions in different historical residential institutions were consistent with the findings of the Forde Inquiry. That inquiry found that 'one of the consequences of low levels of funding and staffing was that many institutions relied on the labour of children to maintain their functioning.'<sup>103</sup> We reported in our case study that St Joseph's Orphanage in Neerkol was poorly staffed and heavily dependent on work undertaken by children from an early age.<sup>104</sup> The ratio of children to staff was grossly inadequate and made individualised attention to the residents impossible.<sup>105</sup>

Many survivors in historical residential institutions told Commissioners they worked to earn money for the institution. Some survivors were sent out to work on farms, in laundries or as domestic workers. They were hired out to neighbouring farms for cheap labour. Some survivors said they were only nine when they were sent to perform adult work. The *Forgotten Australians* report found that children were mostly not paid or paid very little for their work.<sup>106</sup> 'Aden Patrick' told us in his private session that he was a child migrant and arrived in Western Australia at age 10.<sup>107</sup> 'Aden Patrick' said that at age 13 years he was placed in the kitchen to work and was sexually abused there. He said that when he was 15 years old the Brothers sent him to work on local farms where he was treated badly and never paid.

Female survivors often told Commissioners that people outside the institution took advantage of them when they were sent to live away for short periods of time. We heard from survivors in private sessions that there was a lack of oversight of these families, which made opportunities for child sexual abuse. While some survivors said the families they stayed with on weekends or holidays were kind, others said they were abused and treated as sexual objects. 'Glenys Maree' said in her private session that when she was 15 she was sent from the orphanage to a farm to work during the holidays.<sup>108</sup> She did domestic chores for the family. 'Glenys Maree' said that during her time there she was sexually abused by the family's teenage son. The mother of the family said they were not going to pay her because she liked 'Glenys Maree' so much they were going to treat her like family. 'Glenys Maree' described the impact of her childhood experiences:

I don't trust easily. This is not good, but I have to tell you, I have a resentment of the middle classes – I think you understand why – because I think they're enablers, and they used children like me from homes. They exploited us you know, on their farms and in their houses. They exploited us sexually, physically and emotionally. I hate all religions equally.<sup>109</sup>

'Linda Justine' provided a written account of her experience of live-in employment on a farm:

I had live-in employment with 'Noel' and 'Kylie Carey' on a farm ... Whilst I was at [the farm] 'Noel' sexually abused me when his wife 'Kylie' went away for the weekend. 'Noel' got into bed with me and attempted to rape me but I kept pushing him away until he eventually gave up. The next day I had to clean the house and found a condom that he had masturbated into. His wife saw the condom and blamed me. They rang welfare and I was taken away. I was too scared to report what actually happened because I didn't think I would be believed.<sup>110</sup>

## How children tried to avoid abuse

We learned in public hearings that children in historical residential institutions tried to protect themselves from abuse. Some said they ran away or hid.<sup>111</sup> For most, the remoteness and isolation of the institutions made it difficult for them to escape for long without being found. In the *Youth detention centres, Victoria* case study public hearing, we heard from two survivors, BDC and BHE. BDC and BHE said they ran away from Winlaton many times because they were fearful of other residents and staff or because of the abuse.<sup>112</sup> BDC said that each time she escaped she was picked up by police, charged and returned to the care of the welfare department. She said that the police never asked her why she absconded.<sup>113</sup> We heard evidence from many witnesses in case studies that they had tried to run away to avoid sexual and other abuse.<sup>114</sup>

In private sessions, survivors repeatedly told us that they had tried to run away to escape harsh treatment and child sexual abuse; many said they had wanted to find their families. 'Izzy' was homesick after being sent to Perth as a six-year-old child migrant.<sup>115</sup> 'Izzy' said that when she was 12 or 13 her cottage mother attacked her by hitting her with a hot poker from the fire. That day when 'Izzy' went to school, she told us she 'just got off the bus and started walking'. 'Izzy' said she was soon found and brought back, but she kept trying. She and a friend hoped to get to Fremantle, stow away on a boat and return to England. 'That was our main aim when we were that age, was let's go home. England was home still. It wasn't home where we were.'<sup>116</sup>

We heard from other survivors that they had retaliated against the perpetrator, which was sometimes enough to stop further abuse. 'Ethel' explained in her private session how she fought back against sexual abuse throughout her childhood. She said that when she was very young she was sent to a psychiatrist who put his hand down her pants to feel her vagina, but she bit him on the arm.<sup>117</sup> She also said she was sexually abused in a foster family and when she was in a government-run girls training centre. 'Ethel' said that during her time there she was abused 'on numerous occasions physically, mentally and sexually' by a staff member. She and other girls often tried to escape but were always caught and severely punished. 'Ethel' said the staff member continued to abuse her until she bit his penis. She said, 'You ever touch me again next time I'll bite it off!'<sup>118</sup>

Some survivors in private sessions described putting barriers between themselves and the perpetrator to try to prevent sexual abuse or make it more difficult for the perpetrator to gain access to them. Other survivors explained in private sessions how acting compliant meant the perpetrators were less physically violent. 'Clay David' said he was sexually abused in supported accommodation at age 14.<sup>119</sup> He said that a male group worker would 'do rude things to me', and that he tried to protect himself:

I'd put my pyjamas on backwards so he couldn't get to me doodle. And then I'd put my dressing gown on backwards as well, and tie it in a big knot, and I'd lay on my stomach so he couldn't get to my front. But in the end he just started rolling me over and having his way with me.<sup>120</sup>

### 3.2.2 The institutions

In private sessions, almost two-thirds (62.5 per cent) of survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions said they were abused in a single institution. One-quarter (25.4 per cent) said they were abused in two institutions and over one in 10 (12.1 per cent) said they were abused in three or more institutions.

Most (87.4 per cent) survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions said they were abused in an institution, such as an orphanage, children's home, reformatory, industrial school and/or training farm. More than one in 10 (14.5 per cent) said they were sexually abused while in youth detention or under police custody. A smaller proportion (4.8 per cent) said they were sexually abused while staying in a hospital, including mental hospitals and psychiatric institutions.

Most (58.3 per cent) survivors said they were abused in an institution managed by a religious organisation, which included a wide range of historical residential institutions. Almost half of survivors (46.1 per cent) said they were abused in a government-managed institution. Many survivors were abused in multiple institutions with different management.

Of the survivors who indicated they were sexually abused in an institution managed by a religious organisation, 50.5 per cent said they were abused while living in a Catholic-managed institution, 17.0 per cent while living in an institution managed by The Salvation Army, 15.1 per cent while living in an Anglican-affiliated institution and 9.4 per cent while living in a Protestant-managed institution. Volume 16, *Religious institutions* describes in more detail the abuse experienced at historical residential institutions managed by religious organisations.

### 3.2.3 Adult perpetrators and children with harmful sexual behaviours

Almost half (48.8 per cent) of survivors told us in private sessions that they were sexually abused by multiple people in historical residential institutions. Of these survivors, most (90.2 per cent) said they were sexually abused by one or more males, almost one in five (17.7 per cent) described being abused by one or more females, and one in 10 (10.6 per cent) said they were abused by both males and females.

Among those who indicated the approximate age of the person or persons who abused them (62.3 per cent), more than two-thirds (71.9 per cent) said they were abused by adults and two in five (41.1 per cent) said they were abused by other children.

Most adult perpetrators held some form of authority over the victim in the institution where the sexual abuse occurred. Some held multiple roles in an institution (for example, teacher and Brother). We recorded only the 'primary' role of the perpetrator (for example, teacher rather than Brother if the victim was abused in a school).

Most (94.9 per cent) survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions who attended private sessions provided information regarding the role of the perpetrator. Of these:

- one-third (33.8 per cent) said they were sexually abused by residential care workers, cottage parents or house parents
- one-quarter (24.7 per cent) said they were sexually abused by people in religious ministries (such as a minister of religion, priest, deacon, pastor, rabbi, Salvation Army officer, church elder, religious brother or sister)
- over one in 10 (11.7 per cent) said they were sexually abused by dormitory or house masters including male and female staff working in larger institutions with dormitories
- over one in 10 (11.2 per cent) said they were sexually abused by custodial staff, including staff working in a youth detention institution
- a smaller proportion said they were sexually abused by foster carers or adult members in the foster carer household (7.3 per cent), medical practitioners or nurses (7.1 per cent), members of an institution's ancillary staff (5.6 per cent) or teachers (4.0 per cent).

### **Perpetrators on weekend, holiday and work placements**

Some historical residential institutions sent children to the homes of local families for short term holidays or to work on farms. In private sessions, survivors told us about child sexual abuse that occurred in the homes of people who were caring for them on a weekend or for a holiday. Children were placed in these homes informally by the authorities in historical residential institutions. Families were not screened for suitability or regulated for child safety and children were expected to be grateful for the opportunity to spend time with a 'good' family.

In her private session, 'Peg' said she was sent to a farm during the holidays and was raped by the adult son who lived there.<sup>121</sup> She said the eldest daughter at the farm witnessed what happened, packed her up and sent her back to the children's home. 'Peg' felt as though she was to blame for the assault. She did not tell staff what had happened but said she did not want to go back there. 'Peg' told us, they ignored her and she was sent back on another occasion and again raped by the same man.

## Adult perpetrators

Children in historical residential institutions were often sexually abused by adults who held some responsibility for their wellbeing. Children's vulnerability to abuse was increased when they had to rely on these adults to explain the world to them. In historical residential institutions some of these adults were perpetrators of child sexual abuse and other staff who did not prioritise the wellbeing of the children in their care. Commissioned research suggests that children's dependence on institutional staff make it difficult for them to disclose or protect themselves from abuse, and contributes to a sense of powerlessness.<sup>122</sup>

Perpetrators held a range of positions in different historical residential institutions. We were told some were senior people in religious ministry. In the *Christian Brothers* case study, survivors made allegations of child sexual abuse against 16 Brothers at the Castledare, Bindoon, Tardun and Clontarf institutions.<sup>123</sup> The witnesses' experiences in the different institutions had much in common: the circumstances of the emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse were similar, as were their descriptions of the way that Brothers perpetrated it.<sup>124</sup>

Other survivors of child sexual abuse in residential institutions said they were abused by supervisors, superintendents and others in positions of authority at residential institutions. We heard that these perpetrators used their positions to force children into 'doing things'. In the *Parramatta Training School for Girls* case study public hearing, witness RN gave evidence that Superintendent James Paterson Henderson gave her 'special jobs' and asked her to perform 'special favours'.<sup>125</sup> She said she never had sex with him but he made her do 'other things'.<sup>126</sup> RN said, 'The sexual abuse was bad but I was programmed. I knew what I had to do to survive, to get out and to make life as easy as possible while in there'.<sup>127</sup>

Many survivors in private sessions said that adult perpetrators had told them that child sexual abuse was 'a normal part of growing up'.<sup>128</sup> They told us that they did not know any different because they had no contact with, and were cut off from, the outside world. 'Seymour' attended a private session and described how the perpetrator had explained sexual abuse to him.<sup>129</sup> He said:

He used to invite me over to his presbytery after mass ... I distinctly remember him telling me 'You are no longer a boy. Now that you are part of the Church you're an altar boy now and you have to go through this sort of business'.

I didn't know it was right or wrong because he told me that 'Now that you're a man you have to go through this basically initiation' ... He told me it was quite normal for boys and priests to do this ... He told me, 'By the way, this is a secret. You can't tell people that we're doing this'.<sup>130</sup>

Children in some residential homes were fostered to families on weekends and in school holidays. Families who looked after children were often viewed by the wider public as kind and good people, but many survivors in private sessions described being sexually abused in these short-term placements. 'Kathy' said she was a toddler when she was placed in a residential institution.<sup>131</sup> She said she occasionally spent weekends and holidays with a family, where she was sexually abused by the foster father from the ages of three to 11. 'Kathy' liked and trusted the foster mother and was close to the sisters, and said the abuse took place when the foster mother was not at home.

I remember, excuse the expression, I had to do a hand job. I remember waking up but I can't remember seeing a face. But at 11 [years old] I remember sitting on one side of the table and 'Mr Mackenzie' would be on the other side, but I don't think he realised I could see everything and he was doing his bizzo. And he used to put me in bed and touch me.<sup>132</sup>

'Kathy' told us she had 'a bit of a fallout' with the foster father. She said, 'He slapped me across the face because I think I started retaliating. And this is why after 11 I can't remember him touching me after that'.<sup>133</sup>

In private sessions, many survivors who had lived in psychiatric institutions told Commissioners that the responsibility of protecting and taking care of children appeared to be a low priority for staff. Survivors described living with the constant threat of sexual abuse and violence from institutional staff and older residents. Survivors told us the perpetrators included doctors, orderlies and other staff. The accounts in private sessions suggest there was little oversight of people working in psychiatric institutions.

'Jackie Lyn' was admitted to the psychiatric ward of a hospital in the mid-1970s.<sup>134</sup> She said she was immediately put on the contraceptive pill and the hospital was full of male workers who would taunt her. She was made to shower in front of them. She said, 'I couldn't be a teenager with those men watching me'. 'Jackie Lyn' said she was molested and raped by two male staff members over a period of two years. One of the men had access to her room and would come in at night. 'Jackie Lyn' told us she was 'terrified', not knowing whether he was going to molest her, rape her or just stand in her room.

Other survivors who told us they were abused in hospitals said perpetrators sometimes medicated or drugged them before sexually abusing them. In her private session, 'Meryl' said she was 14 when she was placed in a mental health facility.<sup>135</sup> She said she was yelling and screaming to get out of the room when a male staff member said, 'If you keep it up, you'll cop the consequences'. 'Meryl' said he injected her with a sedative and as it took effect he raped her.

Many survivors who told us they were abused by residential care workers and cottage parents said these people had unsupervised access to the children in their care. They described how these workers sexually abused them while they were in the shower or in bed. Survivors who gave evidence in the public hearing for *Case Study 17: The response of the Australian Indigenous Ministries, the Australian and Northern Territory governments and the Northern Territory police force and prosecuting authorities to allegations of child sexual abuse which occurred at the Retta Dixon Home* told us they were sexually abused by house parents at the institution.<sup>136</sup> One survivor, Mrs Sandra Kitching, told us that she was two when she was made a ward of the state.<sup>137</sup> When she was 12 she moved into cottage-style accommodation at the Retta Dixon Home, where Mr George Pounder was her house parent.<sup>138</sup> Mrs Kitching gave evidence that Mr Pounder chained the children to their beds as a form of punishment.<sup>139</sup> She also described how he watched her while she showered.<sup>140</sup> She said he barged into the showers, sniffed her and told her she had not used soap, and then stayed and watched her shower.<sup>141</sup> Mrs Kitching said that Mr Pounder would insist on driving her to school, and that on these occasions he touched her on the leg in a sexual way.<sup>142</sup>

Survivors also identified perpetrators who were other workers employed by the institution. These were people who performed ancillary or support roles but did not look after children as part of their core duties. Some said they were abused by gardeners or administrative staff. In *The Salvation Army boys' homes, Australia Eastern Territory* public hearing, Mr Kevin Marshall gave evidence that he was abused by a lay resident employee who lived between the institution's two dormitories in the late 1960s.<sup>143</sup>

We heard many accounts from survivors in private sessions about perpetrators who were not directly responsible for children in the institution. 'Seymour' said in a private session that he was abused first by a priest and then later by the milkman at the orphanage.<sup>144</sup>

He used to come and deliver the milk, and he used to take kids out. I remember going out to his place ... and he was the same as 'Father Murphy' ... The same sort of age group, molesting young kids.<sup>145</sup>

## Children with harmful sexual behaviours

We heard that some survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions were abused by children with harmful sexual behaviours. Survivors said that such abuse occurred inside institutions and outside them during short-term family placements. We heard that adults in authority often failed to acknowledge or do anything to prevent the abuse. This is consistent with commissioned research that suggests the backdrop to child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions includes sexist attitudes, a 'boys will be boys' view of male sexuality, a culture of silence about sexual matters and a lack of staff training and understanding.<sup>146</sup>



Commissioned research also suggests that staff's understanding of child sexual abuse and their treatment of children in residential institutions often influenced how children interacted with each other.<sup>147</sup> We heard from some survivors in private sessions that there was a culture of violence within the institution and staff did not identify the difference between age-appropriate sexual activity and abuse. Other survivors told us that some older children mimicked the behaviour of adults at the institution. 'Thomas Steven' was a child migrant who was sent to a state-run care facility when he was nine years old.<sup>148</sup> He explained he was 'whacked', 'bashed' and punched 'straight in the guts' on many occasions by the house parents. He was also sexually abused by the school's barber and then a much older child. 'Thomas Steven' reflected that the abuse by the older child was 'identical' to that of the school barber. He said, 'It was like one had trained the other. One was sort of a rubber stamp of the other'.<sup>149</sup>

We heard that poor adult supervision of children's interactions with each other was common in historical residential institutions. In *The Salvation Army boys' homes, Australia Eastern Territory* public hearing Mr Kevin Marshall gave evidence that 'at night-time you weren't being supervised. There were a couple of people – or one person who was supposed to be looking after you, an adult, in the stairwell, they had two bachelor quarter rooms there, but you weren't really looked after. You were basically left to your own devices, so you were preyed upon by some of the older boys'.<sup>150</sup>

Children with harmful sexual behaviours were often older and bigger than the children they abused. 'Elwyn' arrived in Western Australia as an eight-year-old child migrant and was sent to live on a farm.<sup>151</sup> He said the other children were much older and bigger than he was, and that 'being a smaller victim I was sought out and abused for their "pleasure". I could never get away from it'.

Children on weekend placements from residential institutions often found it difficult to protect themselves from members of the family they were staying with. Survivors told us that they found it hard to disclose any abuse or mistreatment because their views and wellbeing were not respected. Commissioned research suggests that girls may have been at greater risk than boys of victimisation in these environments.<sup>152</sup> 'Tonya' said she was 10 when she was sexually abused by the teenage son of the family she stayed with when she was on a short-term holiday foster care placement.<sup>153</sup> 'Tonya' said she did not disclose the abuse at the time and was sent back to the family two more times until she made a fuss about going. She said she was told by institutional authorities that she 'was ungrateful, and should be thankful that such a good family should want me'.<sup>154</sup>

Volume 10, *Children with harmful sexual behaviours* discusses the issue of children with harmful sexual behaviours.

### 3.3 Characteristics of residential institutions that increased children's vulnerability to abuse

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Information from public hearings, written accounts, private sessions and commissioned research point to characteristics of historical residential institutions that may have increased children's vulnerability to sexual abuse. Aspects of the institutional culture, its day-to-day operations and environmental features such as the institution's physical location and building design all contributed to placing children at risk of sexual abuse by adults and other children.

One particularly relevant feature of many historical residential institutions is their status as a 'total institution'.<sup>155</sup> Research commissioned by us identifies four defining characteristics of total institutions which are applicable to children's historical residential institutions:<sup>156</sup>

- Total institutions are made up of staff and 'inmates', where inmates in this context are the residents of regimented children's homes and reformatories.
- The staff in total institutions exert nearly complete control over all aspects of inmates' lives.
- Rigid rules and procedures amplify staff members' control over inmates.
- Total institutions may have a variety of purposes. However, their principal objective is the transformation of human beings, in line with the purpose of the institution (for example, transforming convicted criminals into model prisoners and ultimately into model citizens).

This section describes aspects of historical residential institutions' culture, operations and environment that were consistent with their status as total institutions and increased children's vulnerability to abuse.

#### 3.3.1 Institutional culture

Institutional culture plays a significant role in explaining why people have been able to sexually abuse children in the care of institutions, and why people at all levels of institutions have failed to respond appropriately.<sup>157</sup> 'Institutional culture' refers to the assumptions, values, beliefs and norms of an institution about what are appropriate and inappropriate attitudes and behaviour.<sup>158</sup> These include shared understandings about what someone should or should not think or do, and what is 'good' and 'bad' behaviour.<sup>159</sup> The culture of the institution is disseminated primarily by those in leadership, through the recruitment and socialisation of staff and volunteers and through policies and practices.<sup>160</sup>

Children are likely to be vulnerable to sexual abuse in institutions with cultures that endorse harmful attitudes and behaviours. Through private sessions, written accounts and public hearings we have observed several institutional cultures that are common in children's historical residential institutions and that directly or indirectly enabled child sexual abuse. These include cultures:

- of secrecy and isolation from the outside world
- that do not listen to, or value, children
- that normalise physical and emotional abuse, neglect and sexual abuse
- that do not support the discussion of matters related to sex
- where children are belittled, degraded and dehumanised, subject to racism and discrimination, and kept in fear.

## Secrecy

Institutions with closed systems or processes that are separate from the external world may create opportunities for abuse, increase the difficulty of detection and undermine appropriate responses to abuse.<sup>161</sup> We heard about some historical residential institutions that had their own processes for dealing with issues, and maintained internal judicial or legal systems to deal with breaches of conduct. These kinds of processes entrenched an alternative moral universe,<sup>162</sup> which did not involve reporting abuse to the police or other authorities.

Evidence from our public hearings suggests secrecy is especially relevant to responses to abuse by religious institutions and authorities. The Catholic Church provided a number of such examples. As discussed in Volume 16, *Religious institutions*, at least up until the mid-to-late 2000s, the Catholic Church sometimes carried out internal investigations to determine what, if any, action to take with respect to alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse, instead of referring allegations to the police for investigation.<sup>163</sup> Action sometimes included referring priests to residential programs, religious counselling or other forms of treatment by private practitioners. It also included transferring alleged perpetrators to other locations and/or placing restrictions on their exercise of ministry.

Other institutions also shifted alleged perpetrators to keep allegations quiet. In *The Salvation Army boys' homes, Australia Eastern Territory* public hearing, we found that between 1965 and 1977, officers who engaged in or were alleged to have engaged in, child sexual abuse were transferred between the four boys' homes, and there were no clear policies for reporting allegations to police.<sup>164</sup> We also found that The Salvation Army did not have a system to allow complaints of child sexual abuse against managers or staff to be independently determined.<sup>165</sup>

## Listening to children

Children are more vulnerable to sexual abuse in institutions where they are not listened to or valued. We commonly heard about historical residential institutions where the belief that 'children should be seen and not heard' prevailed. Commissioned research supports survivor accounts of this view and that physical discipline and corporal punishment were 'seen as having a moral and educative role'.<sup>166</sup> In many cases, historical residential institutions were located in areas that were out of sight of the wider public or had walls and gates preventing access to the outside world. As a result, children in these institutions were often literally unseen and unheard by wider society.

Many survivors who had been abused in an historical residential institution told us that children's opinions and ideas were considered to be lies or not worth knowing.<sup>167</sup> Historians of childhood have documented social views of the child that range from 'innocent' to 'evil', and from 'victim' to 'threat'.<sup>168</sup> In private sessions we repeatedly heard from survivors that they were treated as evil or a threat when they disclosed child sexual abuse. 'Franklin' said in a private session he was sexually abused in various residential institutions in the 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>169</sup> He said that when he was a teenager he and some other children tried to report the abuse to police. He said the police did not take the allegations seriously and returned the children to the home after informing their house parent of their claims.

As it turned out when we got back to the home they told my house parent ... Anyway I got called up to the office ... and he walked straight up to me and he hit me right across the face. I still have a numbness there when I think about it. And boom! He said 'I won't tolerate lies'. I was just called a liar ... That really destroyed me.<sup>170</sup>

A high power differential between adults and children was common in historical residential institutions and is a feature of 'total' institutions.<sup>171</sup> Commissioned research suggests power differentials silence children and diminish their ability to raise safety concerns and disclose abuse.<sup>172</sup>

This power imbalance was often more pronounced for certain groups of children. Staff members in historical residential institutions who supervised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, wards of the state or migrant children diminished the voices of those children. Survivors told us that staff exhibited racist, sexist and other negative attitudes towards the children. In his private session, 'Nyle' told us that cruel treatment at the home was routine and the Aboriginal children got the worst of it.<sup>173</sup>

'Justin David' said in his private session that he was abused by a staff member in a boys' home.<sup>174</sup> He explained that he did not feel able to go to the police because he was a 'home kid':

Even the police, we were petrified of the police because we were home kids and they aren't going to listen to us. That's what people say to us: 'Why didn't you go to the police?' I said we were home kids you know, we had no rights.<sup>175</sup>

Female survivors told us that they were often called degrading names. In the public hearing for *Case Study 33: The response of The Salvation Army (Southern Territory) to allegations of child sexual abuse at children's homes that it operated (The Salvation Army children's homes, Australia Southern Territory)*, BMC, a former resident, gave evidence that Captain Charles Allan Smith, a Salvation Army staff member, dragged or carried her outside and threw her into a large skip bin, which residents called the 'pig slop bin'.<sup>176</sup> BMC said that he then said to her, 'This is where garbage like [you] belong and end up'.<sup>177</sup>

Survivors' accounts in private sessions supported what we were told in public hearings. Female survivors told us they were called names such as 'little sluts' by staff in institutions and by police.<sup>178</sup> Survivor 'Elizabeth Angela' provided a written account: 'We were treated like indentured servants rather than children in care. The staff had such contempt for us, called us awful names – guttersnipes, water rats, little bastards from the gutter'.<sup>179</sup>

We heard how children who lived in youth detention centres were not listened to or believed. In the public hearing for the *Youth detention centres, Victoria* case study, we heard from the Victorian Police Assistant Commissioner that, historically, there was 'a lot of disbelief' in the police force about child sexual abuse – even more so when the complainant was a resident of a youth training or reception centre. There was a view among some members of Victoria Police that residents were 'juvenile delinquents' or 'troublemakers' who were not believable and would not make credible or reliable witnesses.<sup>180</sup> Other survivors described institutional policies that actively suppressed children's voices. Several witnesses in the *Parramatta Training School for Girls* case study public hearing said that residents were only allowed to speak to staff if they were spoken to.<sup>181</sup> This meant that unless a staff member asked a child whether she had been abused, she was unable to disclose the abuse.

Commissioned research also suggests that undermining children's self-expression makes it difficult for them to disclose sexual abuse, as they are less likely to be considered reliable witnesses.<sup>182</sup> Institutional culture that does not listen to children works to undermine them.

## Other harm and child sexual abuse

We were told in private sessions, written accounts and public hearings that many survivors who were sexually abused in historical residential institutions also experienced other physical and emotional abuse and neglect. This is consistent with commissioned research, which suggests sexual abuse often occurs alongside other forms of child maltreatment.<sup>183</sup> In a culture of physical and emotional abuse and neglect, where all forms of abuse are normalised, victims are fearful of reporting and resistance to abuse is reduced.<sup>184</sup>

In public hearings, we examined many historical residential institutions in which children commonly experienced multiple forms of abuse. Commissioned research suggests that staff in these institutions typically considered children to need discipline, reform and punishment.<sup>185</sup>

We were commonly told that adult perpetrators used threats and acts of violence to sexually abuse victims and to prevent them from disclosing. In the public hearing for *The Salvation Army boys' homes, Australia Eastern Territory* case study we heard that physical punishment was used on residents of Riverview Boys' Home to coerce the boys into being sexually abused or covering it up.<sup>186</sup> Multiple survivors from Riverview described the punishments they received. Survivors Mr Raymond Carlile and EG recalled a weekly punishment line-up where Salvation Army officers flogged or caned boys for minor infractions such as wetting the bed.<sup>187</sup> Survivors EY and FP also gave evidence of 'floggings' that the boys received as punishment.<sup>188</sup>

For children with disability, commissioned research outlines an additional risk in the way behaviour that would generally be considered neglectful or abusive could be considered acceptable.<sup>189</sup> Survivors who had a disability at the time of the abuse told Commissioners that they were denied an education, segregated from other children or broader society, and subjected to humiliating treatment.<sup>190</sup> Volume 5, *Private sessions* describes in more detail what we heard about child sexual abuse for survivors with disability, including aspects of the social, cultural and institutional contexts that increased their vulnerability to abuse.

Some survivors told Commissioners that some staff in historical residential institutions colluded and covered up the sexual abuse of children. They believed the institutional hierarchy and culture allowed for child sexual abuse to occur. They told us that some institutional staff, such as religious sisters, would assist more senior members of the institution to sexually abuse children. 'Alfred' explained to us that sometimes the nuns would bring the children to the priests to be abused.<sup>191</sup> He said he was five years old when a nun came to him and said, 'Father wants to cleanse you'. 'Alfred' said he was taken to a room with 'medieval stuff across the wall' and told to take his clothes off and get into a bathtub. He was given something to drink and blacked out. 'When I came to I hurt like bloody hell. I was bleeding from the top of my back down to my shins, but my genitals and bottom hurt worse and I had bite marks on my privates'.<sup>192</sup>

'Alfred' also recalled that one visiting priest, who was much admired, requested the nuns bring a 'bobby top' [a boy who had been circumcised] to him.<sup>193</sup> 'Alfred' said he was the one chosen for that priest. He said he was ordered to take off his clothes, go into the confessional box, and fondle the priest while he heard confession. 'Alfred' said, 'If Catholics knew what was going on they'd be horrified. You'd be playing with his genitals while they're bloody well having confession'. (See Volume 5, *Private sessions* and commissioned research report *Life journeys of victim/survivors of child sexual abuse in institutions: An analysis of Royal Commission private sessions*.)

Many survivors described the loveless environments of the historical residential institutions in which they grew up. 'Murphy' believed he was 'perfect fodder for a paedophile' due to the brutal treatment he experienced in the children's home.<sup>194</sup> 'Murphy' told us that 'my introduction to institutionalised violence' was that on arrival at the children's home the matron 'gave me the biggest slap across the head'. As punishment for bedwetting, 'Murphy' recounted, he was routinely 'frogmarched down to the showers, and flogged' and 'brutalised and bashed'

by staff. ‘Murphy’ said he understood he was isolated by these experiences. He said he was 13 ‘when Brother Boyce got hold of me ...’ He explained that unlike other boys who were ‘viciously bashed and raped’, his instinct was to be compliant ‘because I had this need to be loved and held and touched – it had been 10 years since someone had done that to me ... and I did what I needed to do to survive and keep “safe” for the next two years’.<sup>195</sup>

Commissioned research, previous reports and studies in Australian history also describe the way sexual violence and harm against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were normalised.<sup>196</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors who attended private sessions often described the harsh treatment they experienced as children. ‘Enid’ said that she was severely and frequently physically punished when she lived on a mission.<sup>197</sup> She remembered being hit over the head with heavy metal pots at the mission. She said she was sent there as a four-year-old, and from this time was made to scrub the floors until her knees bled. ‘Enid’ now has orthopaedic issues from this childhood labour.

## Discussion of matters related to sex

Children are likely to be more vulnerable to sexual abuse in institutions that do not enable discussion of matters related to sex or do not provide children with age and developmentally appropriate sex education and sexual abuse prevention information.<sup>198</sup> Commissioned research suggests that risk factors include a lack of expertise about child sexual abuse, a culture of taboo in regard to sex, and avoidance or absence of discussion of the topic.<sup>199</sup> Many survivors of sexual abuse in historical residential care told Commissioners that as children they did not learn about sex or sexual abuse, and did not know what was happening when they were abused. We heard in private sessions from survivors who believed they were targeted because perpetrators perceived them to be naive about sexual matters. These survivors outlined how they were discouraged from reporting because they did not understand what was happening to them was wrong. Others said they were too afraid or ashamed to discuss the abuse because at the time sexual matters were not openly discussed (see Volume 4, *Identifying and disclosing child sexual abuse*).

Former residents gave evidence in the public hearing of the *Retta Dixon Home* case study that they did not report the abuse at the time because they did not understand it to be wrong or felt too ashamed or frightened to do so.<sup>200</sup> One witness, AJA, told us that at the time she ‘thought it was normal behaviour and part of life’.<sup>201</sup>

We heard from survivors about children with harmful sexual behaviours. Some of these accounts echoed the findings in the research, and highlighted abuse that was planned, coercive, and used force or the threat of force.<sup>202</sup> ‘Nanette’ told us in a private session that she was sexually abused by older girls when she lived in a girls’ home.<sup>203</sup> She said the older girls ‘always had someone watching [out] because they played “doctors and nurses”’.

There was one [boy] about my age ... they got him and I downstairs underneath one of the beds to try and have sex. We just thought it was a game. And ... if you did tell anyone you'd end up getting bashed anyway.<sup>204</sup>

'Nanette' said it never occurred to her that what was happening was abuse, or that any adults should be told about it. 'Nanette' said she believed 'children need sex education as young as possible'.<sup>205</sup>

## Perceptions and treatment of children

Commissioned research suggests that children are more vulnerable to sexual abuse when they are considered to be inferior to staff of the institution – which is a common feature in total institutions.<sup>206</sup> In institutions such as reception centres, youth detention, training schools and some children's homes, children were expected to conform and their actions and behaviours were tightly controlled. These institutions were often established to manage and 'reform' children considered to be 'uncontrollable' or criminal, and they prioritised discipline, order and control over the wellbeing of individual children.<sup>207</sup> We heard in some public hearings that the treatment of children in these institutions was cruel, humiliating and degrading.<sup>208</sup>

Research commissioned by us notes that dehumanising children in an institutional context can lead to a 'corruption of care', where staff and volunteers become desensitised to the needs of children.<sup>209</sup> Within these cultures children are not viewed as fellow humans in need of protection or care but as 'other', which weakens the usual moral inhibitions or moral concerns of staff or volunteers.<sup>210</sup> It can be easier in these circumstances for adults to abuse children or overlook abuse.<sup>211</sup>

In the public hearings for case studies of historical residential institutions we heard how children were valued in historical residential institutions. We heard that on arrival at historical residential institutions children were often treated in ways that dehumanised them. Some were separated from siblings and had their belongings removed. Others described the fear and threat of strip searches and beatings soon after they arrived. In the *Parramatta Training School for Girls* case study we learned that the isolation of victims was central to their experiences of abuse. Girls were subjected to a 'system of discipline and control',<sup>212</sup> including a 'silence system' that involved only being allowed to talk to each other for 10 minutes a day, being drugged and locked in isolation cells.<sup>213</sup> Some girls were isolated from their Aboriginal community.<sup>214</sup> We also heard that staff of Parramatta Training School and the Hay Institution often referred to girls as 'sluts', 'blackdogs' and 'prostitutes'.<sup>215</sup> On arrival the girls had their 'hair hacked off'.<sup>216</sup>

In *The Salvation Army children's homes, Australia Southern Territory* case study we concluded that in failing to take action against its staff and officers who were breaching the Orders and Regulations of The Salvation Army prohibiting the mistreatment of children, The Salvation Army provided a culture in the institutions Eden Park Boys' Home, Hollywood Children's Village,



Nedlands, Box Hill Boys' Home and Bayswater Boys' Home, in which:

- children felt afraid to report sexual abuse
- children felt powerless to resist the maltreatment
- the staff and officers whose behaviour was in breach of the Orders and Regulations were able to, and did, continue the prohibited behaviour.<sup>217</sup>

Institutional procedures that devalued children were presented in the public hearing for the *St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol* case study. Evidence presented was consistent with the findings of the Forde Inquiry. In particular:

- There was a practice at the orphanage of humiliating children for bedwetting. This was particularly harmful to children's self-esteem and created a long-term cycle of anxiety in many of the children involved.
- There was insufficient and inadequate food and a lack of appropriate medical attention and treatment.
- Children had personal possessions, including their clothing, removed from them on entry to the orphanage. Children were assigned numbers and were generally referred to by their surnames. Individual birthdays were not recognised.<sup>218</sup>

Survivors in private sessions described to us institutional procedures where they were referred to by cell numbers, rather than by names. Some survivors told Commissioners that they did not know their real names. 'Vernon' said that in the Aboriginal boys' home in which he lived, the boys would get to know each other's real name, 'but as far as the staff were concerned, you were just a number. And you were called by a number'.<sup>219</sup>

We heard from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors about experiences of systemic racism and bigotry. Non-Indigenous survivors often told us that while their treatment in residential institutions was cruel, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were singled out for particularly degrading treatment. In his private session 'Ward Anthony' said that he and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were told:

Our families gave us up and put us in there because they didn't love us. That's what they told us. We started believing it.

Some of the things they used to say to us, like Aboriginal black people don't know nothing, or you'll never amount to anything. Yeah, a lot of put-downs. That's what they used to do ... And I always thought to myself, I'm not going to let this get to me. I wanted to rise above it you know, even though I was a kid I was just determined to get past this ... That was that willpower that kept me going all those years.<sup>220</sup>

### 3.3.2 Operational characteristics

Factors related to an institution's day-to-day operation can increase opportunities for child sexual abuse. These include:

- positions that afford perpetrators more opportunities to sexually abuse children, such as those requiring the intimate care of children (for example, bathing or dressing) or residential supervision, and positions of power<sup>221</sup>
- children's lack of access to a trusted adult with whom they can raise concerns<sup>222</sup>
- a lack of, or ineffective, supervision and external oversight of the institution and its staff.<sup>223</sup>

### Adults in positions of authority and trust

Institutional structures such as the employees' roles and responsibilities contribute to how perpetrators gain access to, groom and abuse children. Commissioned research documents current thinking about the typologies of known perpetrators and suggests that some perpetrators seek employment in institutions providing services for children so that they can access potential victims.<sup>224</sup> Others may not show any interest or motivation to abuse children until their role and responsibilities in the institution provide opportunities for them to do so.<sup>225</sup> Commissioned research into grooming states that adult perpetrators employ a range of grooming techniques that may be premeditated, planned or impulsive.<sup>226</sup>

We learned in public hearings that some perpetrators abused children in the context of carrying out duties required of them in their role. Some staff responsible for maintaining discipline and control in historical residential institutions responded in abusive ways to the power and control afforded to them as part of their role in the institution.<sup>227</sup> Some other staff witnessed abusive behaviour but overlooked or dismissed it as part of the person's role.<sup>228</sup> We were told by survivors in private sessions and public hearings that they were sexually abused while they were strip searched.<sup>229</sup> In the public hearing for the *Youth detention centres, Victoria* case study we learned that while the Winlaton policies and procedures manuals in 1980 and 1987 refer to searches being conducted on residents when they returned from leave, there were no formal policies or procedures on how strip searches were to be conducted and no oversight by senior staff of strip searches.<sup>230</sup>

Survivors in private sessions told us that people in prestigious roles, such as doctors, priests and religious brothers, were afforded high levels of trust, creating opportunities for abuse. We were often told by survivors that they were abused by doctors and other medical personnel who attended the residential institution. Many believed that adults had disregarded their privacy and used the procedures as a demonstration of power. 'Betty Grace' attended a private session and said she was six and separated from her siblings when she was living in a girls' home.<sup>231</sup> She said that soon after her arrival at the home she was examined by a male doctor:

I can't remember his name, only his face. A face that I really don't want to remember. This happened during a medical exam in the orphanage in the front downstairs room next to the front door ... The doctor gave me a check-up starting with my ears, throat, and chest. I was asked to lie down and take off my panties and spread my legs, and when I did this he started penetrating me with his fingers.<sup>232</sup>

I kept pulling away but he kept saying that it was okay, that he had to do this to make sure that I didn't have fleas or diseases. I remember thinking back then that this was a strange place to look for fleas. When he was done, I was allowed to sit and wait for the nurse to come back and get me. I never saw him again after that. There are no words that can describe the horror, pain, agony, suffering and confusion I was going through. I didn't know at that age about sex or touching private parts, only that this what was happening to me was not right.<sup>233</sup>

Many survivors of abuse in historical residential institutions said the perpetrator held an important position in their lives and was responsible for their everyday wellbeing and care. They said it was often difficult to avoid contact with them. 'Will' was seven when he was taken to a Catholic boys' home.<sup>234</sup> He told us he was abused by the Brothers who ran the home, and that he tried his best to avoid one particular Brother but it was no use. He recalled:

There was a time that I knocked him back and he locked me in the cool room, in the fridge. I was trying to avoid him and I had gone into the kitchen. He locked me in there and asked me if I was going to do what he wanted. I was getting colder and told him 'No' and he would lock me in there until I consented to what he wanted me to do. Basically, it was if I didn't do what he wanted, or if I told anyone, he would lock me in there.<sup>235</sup>

Volume 16, *Religious institutions* describes in more detail the trust afforded to people in religious ministry and the vulnerability this created for children in religious institutions.

'Linda Justine' gave a written account to the Royal Commission about abuse at a government-run girls' home in the 1970s.<sup>236</sup> In her account she explains how the supervisor used his authority to abuse girls at the home. She said, 'I saw 'Luke' [the manager of the home] as a father figure, particularly because I didn't know my own father. I trusted him wholeheartedly because he was our guardian'. 'Linda Justine' described the rituals 'Luke' set up, including bedtime hugs and fondling. She also said 'Luke' kept a private room for the girls who had been good. She told us:

As a result of the abuse I barely slept whilst I was at [the home] and I was terrified to be naked at shower time. I used to make sure there were other girls around me and I had very quick showers. If I was there on my own, I sometimes pretended to have a shower by leaving the water running.<sup>237</sup>

## Children removed and isolated from protective adults and family

Commissioned research suggests that an important part of helping children to feel safe in institutions is when ‘people [are] looking out for you’.<sup>238</sup> We heard that many children in historical residential institutions did not have access to a trusted adult, and many felt there was no one with whom they could safely discuss concerns about sexual abuse.<sup>239</sup> Children’s isolation from potentially protective adults in residential institutions likely increased their vulnerability to child sexual abuse.<sup>240</sup>

Many historical residential institutions we examined controlled children’s access to people outside the institution, determining who they could contact and how much contact they could have.<sup>241</sup> Commissioned research suggests lack of contact with people outside the institutional environment helps to destroy the previous identities of those in the institution.<sup>242</sup>

In the *Christian Brothers* case study we found that the boys had little contact with people outside the homes, as many were child migrants or orphans and did not have family to visit them.<sup>243</sup> We heard from Mr John Wells, who gave evidence that the Brothers picked on orphans who had no connections outside the institution.<sup>244</sup> We also heard that many children and parents were deceived by authorities and some children were told that their parents were dead or did not want them. In the public hearing for *The Salvation Army boys’ homes, Australia Eastern Territory* case study, witness Mr Kevin Marshall said he once heard Captain X5’s wife tell him and other boys, ‘Your parents do not love you’, and ‘That is why you are here, so don’t look for them’.<sup>245</sup>

In the public hearing for the *St Joseph’s Orphanage, Neerkol* case study, witness AYO said she was never told why she had been separated from her siblings.<sup>246</sup> Sometimes she would hold hands with them through the fence that separated their dormitories. When staff saw them holding hands they would say things like ‘you have to learn to live apart’.<sup>247</sup>

We heard many accounts of children in historical residential institutions being separated from siblings, increasing their sense of isolation. Some survivors told us that on arrival at the institution they were segregated from siblings of the opposite sex. ‘Izzy’ was six when she arrived in Perth from England.<sup>248</sup> She said, ‘I remember the first day I was here in this country. I remember my little brother was taken away from me. He was pulled away from me. We were holding hands’.

Being separated from brothers and sisters was a common theme among survivors in private sessions. In Volume 5, *Private sessions*, accounts from survivors living close to their siblings highlight how this was sometimes a protective relationship. However, when isolated, children were more vulnerable to abuse.

Some children were allowed to visit family on weekends, but said there was a constant threat of not being allowed out again. In some cases, children were coerced into abusive situations under threat of not being allowed to see their families again. In a private session ‘Leslie’ told us:

He told me to take my pants down. I told him to leave me alone but then he threatened me and said that if I did not do what was going to happen, he would make sure 'Jim' [my brother] and I did not go home on the weekends. He also threatened that 'Jim' would be sent to another boys' home.<sup>249</sup>

In his private session, 'Alfred' described the three classes of children who lived in the Catholic children's institutions he grew up in.<sup>250</sup> From what 'Alfred' told us, these classes were identified by their access to family, protective adults or the outside world. Some children were boarders and returned to their family for holidays and weekends, while others had an aunt or uncle linking them with the outside world. Then there were those like 'Alfred' who 'had nobody at all'.<sup>251</sup> He said children in his group were called 'drones'. They worked and received no education. He said, 'I went to a school, but only in the classrooms to clean up after the other kids'.<sup>252</sup>

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors explained they had family, but their parents had been prevented from seeing them or contacting them. Accounts of families confronting government representatives and challenging policies of child removal have been well documented.<sup>253</sup> We heard that institutional authorities often made it difficult for families to protect their children. 'Ellis Owen' said in his private session that he and his siblings were taken from their parents.<sup>254</sup> His sisters went to an orphanage and he and his brother went to a boys' home. He recalled that one day when his father came looking for them, they were tied up and hidden in a shed until he left.

We could hear his voice. We could hear our father's voice. He said, 'Where are my kids?' He was there for about two hours ... He came looking for us, he knew where we was. It's his country, see, it's my father's country.<sup>255</sup>

'Frank John' was a child migrant sent to Australia at age 10.<sup>256</sup> He wrote about the loss he felt after being separated from his mother:

Before we went, they told us that we were going to the best place in the world where they would teach us everything. But we never got anything. They took everything from us. They took my childhood and then my life. It was all false promises. I left with nothing, I had no tool kit for life.

When we got off the boat, they took all my things off me. I never got them back. My mum tried to write to me but I never got any of the letters, not one. I found out later that they opened the letters and took out the money which my mum had sent to me. I call that theft, it's stealing from a child. Because of what they did, I never had a relationship with my mother. How can I get that back?<sup>257</sup>

## Supervision and oversight

Other operational factors that may increase a child's vulnerability to abuse are a lack of staff training and inadequate supervision of children and adults.<sup>258</sup> We often heard in private sessions and public hearings that historical residential institutions did not have adequate day-to-day supervision of children or supervision of the adults who were interacting with or responsible for the care of those children. In some cases, there was a lack of effective external authorities visiting the institutions and checking on their practices. Lack of proper supervision included a lack of oversight of families where children were sent for holidays or to work.

In the *Youth detention centres, Victoria* case study we accepted that overcrowding at the Turana, Winlaton and Baltara youth training and detention centres hindered the provision of adequate supervision.<sup>259</sup> A witness, Mr Joseph Marijancevic, described the sexual abuse that occurred in dormitories and in regard to supervision said:

there was generally none ... there was an inspection around about 8 or 9 and, after that, nobody came. The distance of the staff quarters ... was fairly significant, so you could yell, shout, muck up and nobody could hear you where they were.<sup>260</sup>

In this case study we found that the supervision of residents at Turana, Winlaton and Baltara was inadequate to keep them safe from sexual abuse, particularly at night.<sup>261</sup>

In some cases, authorities with oversight of institutions ignored evidence of abuse and neglect. Research commissioned by us suggests that humans tend to overlook or minimise the significance of events that would have negative consequences for them if fully appreciated, and would require them to act in conflict with their own interests.<sup>262</sup> Previous inquiries have noted a compromised relationship between government child welfare authorities, which were responsible for regulating and funding residential institutions, and the religious and other charitable organisations which often ran those institutions.<sup>263</sup> Governments often relied on religious and charitable organisations to care for large numbers of children at relatively low cost, and it was not in the interests of authorities to scrutinise the institutions and potentially jeopardise this arrangement.<sup>264</sup> In *The Salvation Army boys' homes, Australia Eastern Territory* case study, we found that from at least 1973, senior officers of the Queensland Department of Children's Services were well aware of frequent sexual activity between many of the boys at Riverview Boys' Home, including occasions of rape.<sup>265</sup> In a 1970 ministerial memorandum, the department wrote:

If the department was not in such urgent need of accommodation for boys in care and control I would not hesitate in recommending that the licence ... should be cancelled ...<sup>266</sup>

We heard in private sessions and public hearings that many external agencies with oversight responsibility for children did not supervise institutions effectively, contributing to children's vulnerability to abuse. In the *Parramatta Training School for Girls* case study we heard that when external social or child protection workers visited, the girls were only allowed to talk about the weather, and not the physical abuse, sexual abuse or denial of food.<sup>267</sup> One survivor said some girls were locked in isolation when welfare officers visited to stop those officers seeing or receiving reports of abuse.<sup>268</sup>

Many survivors in private sessions also said they felt more vulnerable to abuse at night, when staffing levels were low. Many said they would wake up from sleep with the perpetrator touching them or taking them into another room to be abused. 'Elmer' lived in a facility for children with disabilities.<sup>269</sup> He said he was about 10 years old when a staff member who worked the night shift would 'visit' him while he was in bed. He told us:

During the night he would come to my bed and fondle my penis underneath my pyjamas. He ostensibly would do it to see if we had wet the bed, but I knew he was up to mischief ... [He] would play with my penis even when I was asleep, and I would wake to catch him doing this. I saw him fondling other boys in the same way.<sup>270</sup>

Lack of supervision and oversight extended to matters of recordkeeping. Many survivors told us that incomplete or redacted records made it difficult for them to access information about their lives and seek redress from the institution. 'Tommy James' told us that the nuns were 'a bit blasé' about spelling and he ended up with four different surnames, which may have contributed to his mother being told he had died.<sup>271</sup> 'Alf Terry' explained the importance of accurate and informative records in coming to understand his childhood.<sup>272</sup> He said:

One thing that quite disturbs me is the lack of information in my ward file ... I can't remember, for the life of me, the people's names ... I don't know all the things that were done to me ... Was I a bad seed to begin with? ... I'm close to ... topping myself ... all the time ... Depressed? Very much so ... I think I'd describe it as a shadow and it's always present. This effect on you is [always there].<sup>273</sup>

'Ken Peter' said that when he received his records he was stunned to realise how much information was missing about his health or schooling.<sup>274</sup> He said, 'you get nothing ... so you've got no records of any of this'.

### 3.3.3 Environmental and situational characteristics

Certain environmental characteristics of an institution can increase the risk of children being sexually abused. Research commissioned by us categorises these as situational risk.<sup>275</sup> The research notes that situational risk is found where institutional settings, the nature of the activity or the circumstance of the institution mean potential perpetrators 'do not find it difficult to create opportunities to be sufficiently unobserved to facilitate the abuse'.<sup>276</sup> These settings allow potential perpetrators to access children in isolated or unsupervised private locations, and allow children in residential institutions to be placed inappropriately with others.

#### Private locations

Physically isolated spaces place children at risk of sexual abuse because the environment provides adults with a higher level of power and authority over children, often resulting in them feeling powerless to resist and report abuse.<sup>277</sup> We were told about abuse occurring in common areas or in the presence of other children. Commissioned research outlines the risk factors for increased child sexual abuse in institutional settings when interactions with children are not observable.<sup>278</sup> Historical residential institutions where the building was fenced included spaces that were completely in the control of adults, offering little privacy or safety for children. In public hearings, we also heard that some environments were specially designed to contain and punish children, such as isolation cells.<sup>279</sup>

In private sessions and public hearings we heard that children were sexually abused by staff and other residents out of sight of officers or in areas not easily supervised, such as the storeroom or yard.<sup>280</sup> In the *Youth detention centres, Victoria* case study we were satisfied that the physical environments of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara made it difficult to provide effective supervision.<sup>281</sup> Some bedrooms could only be observed through a small observation slit and some rooms and passages were obscured from the view of correctional services officers.<sup>282</sup>

Several of our case studies noted the physical remoteness of the institution and the impact of that isolation on children. The Tardun and Bindoon farm schools discussed in the *Christian Brothers* case study were geographically isolated, as was the home profiled in the *Retta Dixon Home* case study. Children were out of sight of the wider society. Inspectors who visited the Christian Brothers farm schools did not address the welfare of the children in an individual way; their primary concern was the cleanliness of the physical environment in which the children were being kept.<sup>283</sup> The *Lost Innocents* report noted that previous inquiries into institutions accommodating child migrants found the children were isolated, and lacked appropriate educational and employment opportunities.<sup>284</sup>

Commissioned research suggests that while abuse often occurs in private or out-of-sight locations, it does sometimes occur in common areas or in the presence of other children.<sup>285</sup>



## Child placement in residential institutions

The inappropriate placement of younger children with older children, and children with adults in residential institutions increases children's vulnerability to sexual abuse. In the *Youth detention centres, Victoria* case study we heard that children's placement and interaction increased the risk of children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours, including the placement of younger children with older children and the inappropriate placement of children with disability.<sup>286</sup> We were satisfied that the placement and interaction of children admitted as wards of the department with children committed as juvenile offenders, and of older children with younger children, increased the risk of sexual abuse by a child with harmful sexual behaviours.<sup>287</sup> Residents were often placed in sections based on the availability of beds, rather than compatibility, suitability and safety, often because of overcrowding.<sup>288</sup> In the *Christian Brothers* case study we learned that the Bindoon Farm School was intended to house boys from age 10 to 16, but some children were sent there before they were 10.<sup>289</sup>

We heard in private sessions that young children were placed in residential institutions without adequate regard for their safety or protection from older children in the institution. 'Mina' said in her private session that she was placed in a children's home in Sydney in the mid-1980s when she was nine years old and was sexually abused in multiple institutions by older residents.<sup>290</sup>

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors told us they were bullied and sexually abused by staff and other residents in institutions that also housed non-Indigenous children. In the public hearing for *The Salvation Army children's homes, Australia Southern Territory* case study, witness Mr Jack Charles told us he was made a ward of the State of Victoria in the 1940s when he was about four months old. Mr Charles said that for most of his time at the Box Hill home where he was placed he was the only Aboriginal child, and he believed this made him especially vulnerable to abuse because he stood out and was regarded as an 'item of interest'.<sup>291</sup> He said he suffered a lot of racism and was always called 'Blackie', and that he was sexually and physically abused by staff and other boys throughout his time in the institution.<sup>292</sup>

Other survivors said they were placed in adult institutions as children, where they were often the targets of sexual and other abuse. 'Lucas David' explained in his private session that he was taken from his parents and sent to a boys' home in the mid-1970s.<sup>293</sup> He said:

I was only about 16 when I first went to jail and I was only a kid, put in with murderers and that ... hit a few times and you couldn't go and tell the screws and that because everyone [would] take a set on ya and then you'd have the whole yard, 30 or 40 blokes picking on ya.

[The jail was] horrible ... When I think back on it, [it was] bullshit. You got no protection from no one ... Tried to commit suicide a couple of times. Slashed me wrists and that ... as a child ... When I went to prison ... cut me wrists and that as well.<sup>294</sup>

'Lucas David' said he was placed in an observation cell in the jail that he called 'the fish tank'.<sup>295</sup> He said:

They took me bloody clothes off me ... The prison officers ... would walk past ... just chucked in the fish tank in the nude. They used to walk past and look in the window ... pull funny faces and that, to torment ya ... You were sitting there with no clothes, no mattress, no blanket, no nothing.<sup>296</sup>

## Vulnerable children in residential institutions

Some institutions accommodated a high concentration of very vulnerable children. When these institutions operated as 'closed environments' there was increased risk of abuse for vulnerable children. For example, children with disability or chronic illnesses often spent long periods in hospital.<sup>297</sup> Extended time in hospitals can increase a child's exposure to potentially abusive staff, visitors, volunteers and other children. Many children with disability or illness required increased assistance with education, communication, health and other support services, and children with more severe impairments required daily intimate care, allowing adults to regularly 'handle' children's bodies.<sup>298</sup> Commissioned research suggests that for children with disability, vulnerability to sexual abuse is increased when they have less opportunity to develop a sense of their bodily integrity, when the attending adults believe that the child would not know what is right or wrong, and would be unlikely, or unable, to report any wrongdoing.<sup>299</sup>

'Deon's' learning and cognitive abilities had been affected by an accident when he was six.<sup>300</sup> 'Deon' was in state care and spent some time in youth detention. He said the boys were often strip searched after visiting their parents on weekends. 'Deon' described where the abuse occurred was 'like a medical centre', where one of the Brothers would instruct the others, 'Right, take Deon, strip search him through that room over there'. He said he thought abuse in youth detention was normal:

I never talked about it and I never heard anyone talk about it ... I didn't think that I needed to. I didn't know any difference ... [He'd say] 'This is alright. There's nothing wrong with this. This is normal what we do in here' ... At that age you didn't think anything of it.<sup>301</sup>

# Endnotes

- 1 For example, survivors who did not mention the frequency of abuse have not been included in either the calculation of the proportion of survivors who experienced a single episode of abuse, or in the calculation of those who experienced multiple episodes.
- 2 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay*, Sydney, 2014, p 10; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015, p 7; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 33: The response of The Salvation Army (Southern Territory) to allegations of child sexual abuse at children's homes that it operated*, Sydney, 2016, pp 62, 87–92; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 26: The response of the Sisters of Mercy, the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton and the Queensland Government to allegations of child sexual abuse at St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol*, Sydney, 2016, pp 6, 38.
- 3 We were told in numerous private sessions about violence in historical residential institutions. For example: Name changed, written account, 'Michael Barry'; Name changed, private session, 'Ethel'; Name changed, private session, 'Barry Robert'; Name changed, private session, 'Allan John'.
- 4 P Anderson, M Bamblett, D Bessarab, L Bromfield, S Chan, G Maddock, K Menzies, M O'Connell, G Pearson, R Walker & M Wright, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and child sexual abuse in institutional contexts*, report prepared for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, 2017, pp 16, 23.
- 5 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 33: The response of The Salvation Army (Southern Territory) to allegations of child sexual abuse at children's homes that it operated*, Sydney, 2016, p 63; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014, p 12; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015, p 29.
- 6 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay*, Sydney, 2014, p 34.
- 7 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 3: Anglican Diocese of Grafton's response to child sexual abuse at the North Coast Children's Home*, Sydney, 2014, p 12.
- 8 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 3: Anglican Diocese of Grafton's response to child sexual abuse at the North Coast Children's Home*, Sydney, 2014, p 12.
- 9 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015.
- 10 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015, p 29.
- 11 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014, p 12.
- 12 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 26: The response of the Sisters of Mercy, the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton and the Queensland Government to allegations of child sexual abuse at St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol*, Sydney, 2016, p 42.
- 13 See in particular Volume 5, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors who attended private sessions.
- 14 Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - report on child migration*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2001, p 36.
- 15 Name changed, written account, 'Neil Jeffrey'
- 16 Name changed, private session, 'Fred Michael'.
- 17 Name changed, private session, 'Fred Michael'.
- 18 Name changed, private session, 'Fred Michael'.
- 19 Name changed, private session, 'Fred Michael'.
- 20 Name changed, private session, 'Cameron John'.
- 21 Name changed, private session, 'Seymour'.
- 22 Name changed, private session, 'Elwyn'.
- 23 Name changed, private session, 'Elwyn'.
- 24 Name changed, private session, 'Elwyn'.
- 25 Name changed, private session, 'Alfred'.
- 26 Name changed, private session, 'Alfred'.
- 27 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 26: The response of the Sisters of Mercy, the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton and the Queensland Government to allegations of child sexual abuse at St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol*, Sydney, 2016, p 6.

- 28 Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record - report on child migration*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2001, pp 72–3, 80–82.
- 29 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014, pp 18, 21.
- 30 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014, p 21.
- 31 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014, p 27.
- 32 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014, p 27.
- 33 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay*, Sydney, 2014, p 10.
- 34 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay*, Sydney, 2014, p 10.
- 35 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay*, Sydney, 2014, pp 5, 14.
- 36 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay*, Sydney, 2014, p 5.
- 37 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay*, Sydney, 2014, pp 10, 14.
- 38 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015, p 7.
- 39 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015, p 7.
- 40 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015, p 7.
- 41 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015, p 7.
- 42 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015, p 7.
- 43 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015, p 7.
- 44 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015, p 7.
- 45 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015, p 7.
- 46 Name changed, private session, 'Elva'; Name changed, private session 'Talia'.
- 47 Name changed, private session, 'Kenrick'.
- 48 Name changed, private session, 'Kaye'.
- 49 Name changed, private session, 'Carl'.
- 50 Name changed, private session, 'Carl'.
- 51 Name changed, private session, 'Elmer'.
- 52 Name changed, private session, 'Merve Rose'.
- 53 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 30: The response of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, and the Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria to allegations of child sexual abuse*, Sydney, 2016, p 38.
- 54 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 30: The response of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, and the Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria to allegations of child sexual abuse*, Sydney, 2016, p 38.
- 55 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 30: The response of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, and the Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria to allegations of child sexual abuse*, Sydney, 2016, p 38.
- 56 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015, p 26.
- 57 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys homes in New South Wales and Queensland*, Sydney, 2015, p 34.
- 58 Name changed, private session, 'Toby James'.
- 59 Name changed, private session, 'Toby James'.
- 60 Name changed, private session, 'Paul Andrew'.
- 61 Name changed, private session, 'Paul Andrew'.

- 62 Name changed, private session, 'Sally'.
- 63 Name changed, private session, 'Sally'.
- 64 Name changed, private session, 'Lisa Michelle'.
- 65 Name changed, private session, 'Lisa Michelle'.
- 66 Name changed, private session, 'Ruby'; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Interim report: Volume 2*, Sydney, 2014, p 49.
- 67 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Interim report: Volume 2*, Sydney, 2014, p 49.
- 68 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 30: The response of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, and the Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria to allegations of child sexual abuse*, Sydney, 2016, p 39.
- 69 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 30: The response of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, and the Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria to allegations of child sexual abuse*, Sydney, 2016, p 39.
- 70 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 30: The response of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, and the Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria to allegations of child sexual abuse*, Sydney, 2016, p 39.
- 71 Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT, 2004, p 87.
- 72 Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT, 2004; J Penglase, *Orphans of the living: Growing up in 'care' in twentieth-century Australia*, Curtin University Books, North Fremantle, 2005, pp 241–5.
- 73 Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT, 2004; J Penglase, *Orphans of the living: Growing up in 'care' in twentieth-century Australia*, Curtin University Books, North Fremantle, 2005, p 117.
- 74 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay*, Sydney, 2014, p 16.
- 75 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay*, Sydney, 2014, pp 4, 8.
- 76 Name changed, private session, 'Minnie'.
- 77 Name changed, private session, 'Minnie'.
- 78 Name changed, private session, 'Walter Louis'.
- 79 Name changed, private session, 'Walter Louis'.
- 80 Name changed, private session, 'Walter Louis'.
- 81 Name changed, private session, 'Joy'.
- 82 Name changed, private session, 'Joy'.
- 83 Name changed, private session, 'Joy'.
- 84 Name changed, private session, 'Sam'.
- 85 Name changed, transcript, 'Sam'.
- 86 Name changed, written account, 'Trent Patrick'.
- 87 Name changed, written account, 'Trent Patrick'.
- 88 Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, *Lost Innocents: Righting the record - report on child migration*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2001, pp 73, 85–90, 91–6; Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT, 2004 pp 39–41, 111–2.
- 89 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, Commonwealth of Australia, Sydney, 1997; Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, *Lost Innocents: Righting the record - report on child migration*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2001; Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT, 2004.
- 90 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014, p 14.
- 91 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014, p 14.
- 92 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014, p 14.
- 93 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014, p 16.



- 94 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014, p 16.
- 95 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014, p 16.
- 96 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014, p 18.
- 97 Name changed, written account, 'Michael Barry'.
- 98 Name changed, written account, 'Michael Barry'.
- 99 Name changed, private session, 'Lela'.
- 100 Name changed, private session, 'Clarice Jane'.
- 101 Name changed, written account, 'Roger Matthew'.
- 102 Name changed, written account, 'Roger Matthew'.
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- 131 Name changed, private session, 'Kathy'.
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## 4 Institutional responses to child sexual abuse

Survivors told Commissioners that the way institutions responded when they disclosed their experiences of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions had a profound impact on their lives. Many tried to disclose the sexual abuse as a child, but were not believed. They were often accused of telling lies or punished, and the abuse continued. As adults, many confronted institutions where they were abused to seek redress, an apology or help, but they were not believed or supported. Some survivors began to raise awareness of the abuse in historical residential institutions and the responses of those institutions to disclosure of abuse. They became advocates for care leavers, members of the Stolen Generations or child migrants. They took legal action and campaigned for inquiries, redress schemes and better protection of children.

### 4.1 At the time of the abuse

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#### 4.1.1 Experiences of disclosure as a child

Of the survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions who spoke in a private session, 88.3 per cent told Commissioners about their first disclosure. Of those, 40.8 per cent said they first disclosed as a child. Not all survivors who first disclosed as a child provided information on who they disclosed to, but of those who did (88.2 per cent), more than half (53.8 per cent) said they disclosed to a person in a position of authority in the institution. Fewer than one in five (17.1 per cent) said they disclosed to the police or a criminal justice representative. Some survivors also disclosed the abuse to a parent, sibling, counsellor, welfare or child protection officer, or to another child.

Most survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions said they found the process of disclosure difficult. Commissioners heard that children were treated unkindly, and without respect or protection, by authorities and by the institution when they tried to disclose. Few survivors said they were supported and protected following disclosure, and many said they were returned to abusive environments. Children's experience of disclosure at the time of the abuse is discussed further in Volume 4, *Identifying and disclosing child sexual abuse*.

#### Disclosure and barriers to disclosure

Many survivors told us in private sessions they were confused about who they should or could tell about the abuse at the time. This is consistent with what we heard in public hearings: many historical residential institutions lacked specific policies or procedures for receiving or responding to complaints of child sexual abuse. Many survivors told us that even with evidence of child sexual abuse, police, welfare and health personnel did not respond to protect them from further abuse.

In the public hearing for *Case Study 30: The response of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, and the Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria to allegations of child sexual abuse (Youth detention centres, Victoria)* we heard that the supervising Department of Youth Detention Centres, Victoria had no formal policies or procedures for receiving and responding to complaints of child sexual abuse before the 1980s.<sup>1</sup> In the absence of policies provided by the department, or instructions from the department to assist institutional staff members, some institutions developed their own written policies.<sup>2</sup> The Turana Youth Training Centre 'Manual of Instructions' required officers to complete written reports for 'unnatural acts' but did not define that term or inform officers about how to deal with incidents involving 'unnatural acts', other than to write a report.<sup>3</sup>

Many survivors told Commissioners that there were few trusted persons in authority in historical residential institutions to whom children could disclose sexual abuse. In some institutions senior staff and management were among the perpetrators of sexual abuse. Three former residents of the homes profiled in *Case Study 5: Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys' homes in New South Wales and Queensland (The Salvation Army, Australia Eastern Territory)* gave evidence that they were sexually abused by Captain Victor Bennett, who was the manager of Indooroopilly Boys' Home from 1960 to 1969 and then the manager of Riverview Boys' Home until 1974.<sup>4</sup> We also heard Captain Bennett received allegations of sexual abuse from three residents, but did not report the allegations to police or to divisional or territorial headquarters of The Salvation Army.<sup>5</sup>

Some survivors in the public hearing for *Case Study 26: The response of the Sisters of Mercy, the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton and the Queensland Government to allegations of child sexual abuse at St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol (St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol)* told us that at the time they told a department inspector from the State Children's Department about the sexual abuse, but nothing changed. Ms Diane Carpenter and AYE both gave evidence that the sexual abuse continued despite their disclosure to an inspector. Ms Carpenter gave evidence that she told 'Mr Connor' [the inspector] that she was sexually abused by the son of the property owner to which she was billeted, and that upon her return to the orphanage she was beaten by the nuns for mentioning it to him.<sup>6</sup>

In private sessions, many survivors described the barriers to disclosing child sexual abuse at the time. They told us how institutional structures and relationships made it difficult for them to disclose. 'Lela' explained how she understood the situation for girls in the home run by the Sisters of Mercy in the 1960s. She said:

We were sad lonely kids torn away from our family and did no one any harm. We should have been cared for and shown compassion for whatever reason we were unable to stay safe with our family. We had no safety net and would have been terrified to tell anyone.<sup>7</sup>

'Mack' said he was 'severely' sexually abused at a youth detention centre in Queensland during the 1980s, but he did not report the abuse:

Making a complaint in those days – you didn't know how to do it. And officers just treated you like crap. And you didn't want to talk to someone about [the abuse] – so you just tried to hide it. And that doesn't work.<sup>8</sup>

'Terence' said he was sexually abused in a Christian Brothers orphanage. He said, 'Who are you supposed to tell? How are you supposed to go about it? You're only a kid, you don't know these things. You're stuck in an orphanage. You have to do what they say when they say it'.<sup>9</sup>

We were told by survivors that in many cases medical evidence of sexual abuse and mistreatment was not addressed by health professionals. Some female survivors explained they were taken by institutional staff to have abortions without any questions asked by the doctor performing the operation. 'Joy' told us that following sexual abuse by a priest who lived near the orphanage two junior nuns took her to have an abortion.<sup>10</sup> 'George John' said when he was eventually taken to a doctor after a serious injury from a beating by one of the Brothers, the doctor was told he had fallen over.<sup>11</sup> Many survivors had felt medical staff did not intervene on their behalf.

Other survivors said they found creative ways to try to communicate with adults, but were still ignored. In her private session, 'Stacey' said she was sexually abused by an older woman who slept in the same room as her at a children's home.<sup>12</sup> 'Stacey' remembers drawing a picture of a naked woman on a chalkboard at the home in an attempt to communicate the abuse to the staff. She said the picture was removed and she was not asked any questions about it.

## Disclosing to police

Many survivors who were sexually abused in historical residential institutions said they felt they could not trust police to respond appropriately to their disclosure of child sexual abuse. We heard in public hearings that the relationship between the police and the authorities in historical residential institutions was often one of mutual support, which left the child without any external help. Historical relationships between police and children were discussed in research commissioned by us. The research states:

More broadly, the literature suggests a reluctant legal system reflected in, for example, the judicial wisdom that children have a tendency to lie. Police who became aware of sexual abuse allegations have been described as either unwilling to follow up reports made by children because of the political and reputational repercussions for organisations that in the 1950s were regarded as the community's social and moral conscience, or as disbelieving of the allegation or the harm it caused.<sup>13</sup>



The *Criminal justice* report discusses police responses to reports of child sexual abuse since the 1950s.<sup>14</sup> The report notes that we heard about many negative experiences of police responses in earlier time periods, and some as recently as the early 2000s. The report notes that the criminal justice system, including the police response, has improved considerably over recent times.<sup>15</sup>

Witnesses in the public hearings told us about what happened when they disclosed to police. In *The Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory* public hearing, ES gave evidence of being locked in a cage on the verandah at Riverview Training Farm.<sup>16</sup> ES said that, once, after absconding from Riverview, he was caught by the police. He told officers at Ipswich about the cage and what Salvation Army officers were doing to him. The police rang Captain Bennett to ask whether the allegations were true. When Bennett denied them, ES said, the police took no further action.<sup>17</sup>

We heard similar evidence in other case studies. In the *Youth detention centres, Victoria* case study Assistant Commissioner Fontana stated that, historically, there was ‘a lot of disbelief’ within Victoria Police about child sexual abuse – even more so when the complainant was a resident of a youth training or reception centre. There was a view among some members of Victoria Police that residents were ‘juvenile delinquents’ or ‘troublemakers’.<sup>18</sup>

In the public hearing for *Case Study 19: The response of the State of New South Wales to child sexual abuse at Bethcar Children’s Home in Brewarrina, New South Wales (Bethcar Children’s Home)*, we heard that children who ran away from the home were returned. We were satisfied that the actions of police and New South Wales Community Services placed the children at an unacceptable risk of harm at that time and Community Services failed to adequately support those children who had made complaints.<sup>19</sup>

Many survivors told similar stories in private sessions about attitudes to children in state care and perceptions of girls. Survivors who had been child migrants and state wards said they had felt the police and institutional authorities worked together against the child. ‘Cameron John’ said that as for reporting to police:

that was a joke. The state government worshipped the Christian Brothers ... And the Christian Brothers worshipped the state. That was their cosy arrangement. So it was pointless reporting anything to the police.<sup>20</sup>

‘Lucille’ attended a private session and told us she was from a dysfunctional family and was sexually abused by her father and brothers.<sup>21</sup> After running away from home she was picked up by the police and taken to a government-run children’s home. She said she was sexually abused by a male staff member at the home when she was 14, and ran away again. ‘Lucille’ said she found the courage to disclose the abuse to the deputy superintendent of the home, who reported the abuse to the police. The perpetrator was convicted with contributing to ‘Lucille’s’ neglect and received a fine. ‘Lucille’ was devastated by the Magistrate’s decision.

Reading that undone me, completely, because he was more about feeling sorry for [the perpetrator]. I think one of the sentences are, 'It must have been really hard to work in an environment with well-developed young women'.<sup>22</sup>

In private sessions many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors spoke about specific barriers they faced in reporting sexual abuse to police. Many told us they were removed from their families and communities as children by police under 'protectionist' government policies of the time. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors of missions and reserves described experiences of the police enforcing the racially discriminatory permit system, arresting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because of their race, or for nothing more than walking on the street.

Some reported being sexually assaulted by police when they sought to report child sexual abuse. 'Heather Joan' explained how these negative relationships with police acted as a barrier to disclosure:

In those days, there was no capacity to report these types of incidents to the police. Due to the historical relationship between Aboriginal people and the police, the police were the enemy.<sup>23</sup>

In the written account of her childhood in historical residential institutions, 'Linda Justine' explained how she understood the relationship between being Aboriginal and the police.<sup>24</sup> She explained how racist policies and practices produce trauma and impact on identity:

I never reported the abuse to Police. Being Aboriginal, I felt like nobody would believe me if I reported it. [The perpetrator] was in a respected position and I was a child. I was also worried they would see me as a criminal.

I believe that the Police think Aboriginal people are all the same. There is a lot of racism and they think that we all have alcohol issues. Sometimes I am ashamed of being Aboriginal.<sup>25</sup>

Survivors often described feelings of powerlessness in historical residential institutions, which for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was compounded by racism. 'Colette' told us she was sexually abused repeatedly by a priest in a Catholic mission home.<sup>26</sup> She explained this in her private session:

You know us Aborigines had no voice, no say, and besides, under the Native Welfare Act Aborigines were downcast in white society. They were superior over Aborigines. So it would have been a joke if I went to a white person and told them all about me.<sup>27</sup>

## 4.1.2 Institutional responses to disclosure by children

In public hearings and private sessions we often heard that children were disbelieved, punished and ignored when they tried to disclose child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions. Social attitudes towards children, in combination with institutional operations and environmental factors, made it difficult for children to speak up about sexual abuse and be heard. Adults in authority within historical residential institutions and external authorities did not usually pay attention to children's complaints. Many survivors said this reflected widespread attitudes at the time which undervalued children in residential institutions and insisted they be kept out of sight from wider society. Children were rarely given a voice in the broader community before 1990, but the population of children in residential institutions were particularly disadvantaged, with little or no power to influence adults.

### Staff responses to disclosure

Survivors often said they were not believed when they tried to tell adults – mostly staff within the institutions – about child sexual abuse. Many historical residential institutions were punitive places where the correction of children's behaviours and maintaining discipline were central concerns. We heard that harsh physical punishments were often meted out to children who disclosed child sexual abuse. Some survivors told us they were locked up, beaten and threatened when they disclosed child sexual abuse.

Some survivors said that after disclosing, institutional responses made them feel as if they were the instigator rather than the victim of sexual abuse.<sup>28</sup> During the *Youth detention centres, Victoria* public hearing, a survivor, Mr Robert Cummings, said when he tried to disclose the sexual abuse he experienced at Turana Youth Training Centre to an officer at that institution, he was told it was only happening because of his 'homosexuality'.<sup>29</sup> Mr Cummings was treated with electric shock 'aversion therapy' and when he made further disclosures of sexual abuse the dosage of electricity was increased.<sup>30</sup> He was stigmatised and other residents began to abuse him.<sup>31</sup> Another witness at the same public hearing gave evidence about how she attempted to tell staff at Winlaton Youth Training Centre that her father had raped her.<sup>32</sup> She said while some staff were supportive, others did not believe her and made her feel as though she was to blame.<sup>33</sup> The survivor also said she was made to participate in 'triad therapy', which required participants to accept blame for any problems they raised.<sup>34</sup>

Many survivors described being placed in isolation after attempting to disclose their experiences of child sexual abuse. Sometimes, the perpetrator of the sexual abuse was responsible for isolating the child. Other survivors said they were placed in isolation by other members of staff. Ms Karen Hodgkinson, who gave evidence in the *Youth detention centres, Victoria* case study, said that when she disclosed the abuse the first time she was taken to Goonyah, a maximum security section of Winlaton Youth Training Centre, and locked in isolation for a few days. Alongside children who had been removed from their families for their own protection, Goonyah housed

sentenced youth with 'hard core' problems such as severe 'acting out' behaviour, violence, habitual drug taking and prostitution.<sup>35</sup> When Ms Hodgkinson again tried to disclose the sexual abuse, the staff member said that if she continued to lie she would be locked up again in Goonyah, which discouraged her from making further attempts at disclosure.<sup>36</sup>

Many private session accounts reflected what we heard in the public hearings. 'Sarah Elizabeth' arrived in Australia aged 10 as a child migrant.<sup>37</sup> Sent to a farm school, 'Sarah Elizabeth' said she was 'pretty much classed as ... trash'. She said, 'You were taught, from the day you got there, that if you said no to an adult, it was a hiding ... You just did not say no to an adult'. When 'Sarah Elizabeth' told her cottage mother that she did not want to go to the vegetable garden to pick vegetables because '[the gardener] does things ... intimate touching him, things like this', she was belted for saying so. 'Sarah Elizabeth' said the cottage mother told her:

'Don't you ever tell anybody that', so I never did. And I believe to this day, although I didn't work it out until I was in my 20s, that I had a termination when I was 13 or 14 ... I didn't have any clue about pregnancy or anything like this ... It was one of the teachers ... but he was still there years later. He was a primary school teacher. And I was a liar, so why bother telling them? It's hard to explain just how much brutality there was in that place.<sup>38</sup>

Some survivors told us they were labelled by institutional leaders as bad, morally deficient or deserving of punishment, which sometimes extended to deserving sexual abuse. 'Freda' attended a private session and said she was placed in a historical residential institution during the mid-1960s.<sup>39</sup> She told us she was violently assaulted by one of the supervisors at the home, who beat her up in a cell before brutally raping her. 'Freda' also said she was continually sexually abused by another female resident. 'Freda' explained she disclosed the abuse to a church minister who visited the home. 'Freda' told us, 'He said, "Well, you've been a bad girl"' and no action was taken.

Many survivors said they felt unable to come forward and disclose sexual or any other form of abuse in this culture of disbelief and punishment. They told us perpetrators exploited the knowledge that victims would not tell and used it as a means of avoiding scrutiny and continuing the abuse. 'Symon' attended a private session to describe his experience of sexual abuse in several institutions, including an historical residential home.<sup>40</sup> He told us about the 'quiet room':

I wouldn't put a dog in this room. Three foot by three foot, bare grey concrete floor, window about 10 foot high in the room. Locked in there. And there's nothing in there, there's no table, there's no chair, there's no cushion, no carpet, no toilet – there's no nothing. Ten minutes to an hour depending on how much punishment you were deemed to need ... you'd be left in there ... until you calmed down ... The idea was that, 'If you calmed down, we'll let you out, otherwise we'll just lock you in there and leave you there'. It was ... terrifying.<sup>41</sup>

‘Symon’ said he knew what would happen if he tried to tell anyone about the abuse:

I was left in no doubt by any and all abusers that you know, speaking of this to anyone would result in me either being locked up, called a liar, they would deny everything and, because they were the adult, they would be believed and I wouldn’t be.<sup>42</sup>

Another survivor ‘Gregg’ reflected the frustration and anger felt by many former residents of children’s institutions.<sup>43</sup> He asked:

Why didn’t society listen to the children? Why were we treated like we were all liars? ... We weren’t allowed to have a voice and when we did we were threatened, we were squashed or we were beaten. So we learnt very young to shut up.<sup>44</sup>

In private sessions many survivors told us that inaction by those responsible for their care following disclosure of child sexual abuse meant ongoing sexual abuse. ‘Ronan’ said he was placed in a boys’ home run by nuns during the early 1970s.<sup>45</sup> As well as being physically and sexually abused by the nuns, ‘Ronan’ said he was sent to stay with several men in a nearby town for the holidays. During this time, ‘Ronan’ said, the men raped him, and when he told one of the nuns at the boys’ home she ‘yelled at me for being a liar, and I was then given a beating’. ‘Ronan’ said he was sent back to the house numerous times, and raped ‘time and time again’. He said the matter: ‘should have been investigated. I should have been treated with respect and listened to. I should not have been beaten for telling the truth as a little child’.<sup>46</sup>

## Staff responses to witnessing child sexual abuse

Many survivors told us that staff at historical residential institutions overlooked signs of child sexual abuse, and even in circumstances where staff knew sexual abuse was recurrent, no action was taken. In the public hearings, we heard accounts of child sexual abuse being witnessed and ignored. In private sessions we heard many similar accounts of staff overlooking signs of and direct disclosures of child sexual abuse. Commissioned research suggested individual errors of reasoning might better explain barriers to reporting and responding to child sexual abuse.<sup>47</sup> Volume 2, *Nature and cause* provides a detailed discussion of how individuals and institutional authorities respond to reports of child sexual abuse.

In some cases, survivors said staff directly witnessed sexual abuse occurring, and failed to act to protect the victim. In the public hearing for *Case Study 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay (Parramatta Training School for Girls)*, one witness, Ms Wendy Patton, gave evidence that a female officer saw the deputy superintendent sexually abusing her in the ‘dungeon’.<sup>48</sup> The officer burst into tears and wrapped Ms Patton in a blanket and took her to the hospital block. Ms Patton was attended to by a nursing sister and a doctor, but nobody supported her, nobody said anything and nobody did anything.<sup>49</sup> Some survivors told us that they made direct, deliberate disclosures of sexual abuse

– including disclosing injuries they had received, which were ignored or dismissed. We heard evidence in the *Parramatta Training School for Girls* case study that direct disclosures to staff at the institution were ignored. Ms Diane Graham, a witness in this public hearing, said she visited the matron with black eyes and a split lip after an attempted sexual assault by other children in detention. Ms Graham said the matron had warned her to keep quiet – ‘You can’t say anything because you will only get it again’.<sup>50</sup>

In the public hearing for *Case Study 17: The response of the Australian Indigenous Ministries, the Australian and Northern Territory governments and the Northern Territory police force and prosecuting authorities to allegations of child sexual abuse which occurred at the Retta Dixon Home (Retta Dixon Home)* Mrs Lorna Cubillo gave evidence she was physically and sexually assaulted by Mr Desmond Walter, a missionary.<sup>51</sup> Mrs Cubillo ran away from the home while on Easter camp. She was located by another missionary who took her back to the home. The next day, she saw Mrs Mamie Merlin who was in the ‘welfare office’. She believes that at the time she had injuries she had sustained from a flogging from Mr Walter and that Mrs Merlin would have seen her injuries. She was returned to the home.

In private sessions we heard that some survivors said they had been injured by physical or sexual abuse but staff did not provide access to medical attention. Some survivors said that their injuries were minimised or dismissed. ‘Netty’ attended a private session and told us about her experience of sexual abuse at a Catholic orphanage in New South Wales.<sup>52</sup> ‘Netty’ said she was raped by an odd-jobs man at the orphanage. After the rape ‘Netty’ went to the Mother of the home and told her what had happened, but the Mother did nothing. ‘She said that I’d hurt myself in the playground. So I was cleaned up and there was nothing done.’ ‘Netty’ said the odd-jobs man stayed on at the orphanage and raped her five or six more times.

We heard from some female survivors in private sessions that medical authorities overlooked pregnancies that had resulted from child sexual abuse. Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors told us that girls who became pregnant after being abused were sent away to have the baby, who was then forcibly taken and adopted. ‘Sherrill’ said she knew of at least six girls from the mission who became pregnant from the rapes.<sup>53</sup> She said they were sent to a hospital for unmarried women, on the pretext of a holiday. She told us that once the babies were born they were adopted out without consultation or consent.

Survivors who had been physically injured at historical residential institutions were often frustrated by what they perceived to be active ignorance by adults with authority in the institution in the face of their physical injuries. Others said the abuse was witnessed and covered up or they told adults and were ignored.

Many survivors told us they regularly had obvious cuts, bruising and bleeding after being physically or sexually abused, and it was incomprehensible that other adults did not notice that something was wrong. 'Casey' told us about injuries to him and other children after being caned by a house parent at a children's home administered by the Aborigines Inland Mission.<sup>54</sup> 'Casey' told us he saw one of the house parents do serious injury to other children, including bursting the eardrum of one boy. He could not understand why other adults did not pick up on their visible injuries and take some action.

He bashed us, caned us, and that's what I can't understand; why didn't the teachers see all the blood, blisters, here, here? Why didn't the teachers just pick it up? We couldn't even hold our pens. The teachers should have picked it up as well.<sup>55</sup>

Survivor accounts of other staff witnessing the abuse and ignoring what they had seen were common. 'Bevan William' told us he was locked in a room with the perpetrator when the matron opened it with her key.<sup>56</sup> 'Bevan William' said:

The matron came in and she stood there, was leaning against the wall, and watched him. She said 'what's going on here?' And he said 'oh nothing, nothing'.<sup>57</sup>

'Bevan William' argued back:

What's going on here is I'm trying to protect myself from this animal. And I think I called him a fucking animal or something, but I'd just had enough. I'd just had enough, he's just a predator. The matron didn't say 'stop immediately' or do anything ... I think she'd seen it before, to be quite honest.<sup>58</sup>

'Bevan William' recalled that a while later the matron gave him a pen and paper to write to his mother, with strict instructions. 'I don't want to hear anything [that has] been going on here, any nonsense ... You just say what a lovely time you're having'.

'Lisa Michelle' said that as a child she lived in Catholic-run children's homes and state-run psychiatric facilities where she was physically and sexually abused.<sup>59</sup> She said:

Every person, from family, from relatives, to professionals that I went and asked for help not only didn't give me the help, they put me in a worse situation ... How can a child be protected if the adults and the professionals choose to ignore the abuse?<sup>60</sup>

'Lisa Michelle' told us that once she reported the abuse to the principal of the institution and her former psychiatrist, and both said there was nothing they could do and advised her to 'keep your head down and try to stay out of trouble'.



## Institutional procedures regarding alleged perpetrators

Survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions often told us that along with disclosures of sexual abuse being disbelieved or ignored, adults who had allegations of child sexual abuse made against them were often allowed continued access to children. Perpetrators had open access to children within institutions where harm and child sexual abuse was normalised. Many survivors understood that the institution where they were abused had no process or strategy for managing risks to children. They often told us these institutions failed to remove those under investigation, or subject to complaint, from contact with children.

In the *Retta Dixon Home* public hearing we heard from a number of survivors who said they disclosed being sexually abused by house parents at the home to the superintendent during the 1960s, but the alleged perpetrators were not removed from the cottages.<sup>61</sup> Despite numerous complaints by children there was only one conviction of indecent assault at the time.<sup>62</sup> Survivors gave evidence in this case study that in 1973 several girls told a female house parent that a male house parent had behaved in a sexually inappropriate way with some of the boys.<sup>63</sup> The female house parent informed the superintendent, and the then secretary of the missionary institution running the home travelled from Sydney to the home in Darwin.<sup>64</sup> Survivors said they were told there was insufficient evidence to take any action against the house parent. They said there was no discussion of reporting the matter to police, and no one spoke to any of the children. The alleged perpetrator continued to work at the home, and in 1975 was charged with seven sexual offences against five children at the home.<sup>65</sup> He resigned in the same month.<sup>66</sup>

Other survivors told us that alleged perpetrators were moved to other residential homes after complaints were made about their conduct towards children. In the public hearing for *Case Study 33: The response of The Salvation Army (Southern Territory) to allegations of child sexual abuse at children's homes that it operated (The Salvation Army children's homes, Australia Southern Territory)*, we heard that a Salvation Army staff member, Captain Charles Allan Smith, had been subject to complaints of 'unseemly behaviour' towards a child in 1964 and 1965. We heard the response of The Salvation Army was to transfer Smith to the Nedlands Boys' Home where he was placed in a position of trust over other children.<sup>67</sup>

We frequently heard that staff in historical residential institutions were given no training on child protection, and that many of these institutions lacked basic processes and checks to ensure that people applying to work at the organisation were suitable to be in contact with children. In *The Salvation Army boys' homes, Australia Eastern Territory* public hearing, we heard the ability of The Salvation Army and its officers to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse was affected by staff training.<sup>68</sup> The case study looked at four institutions which were in operation until 1983. We heard that The Salvation Army had no child protection policies to guide staff, and staff shortages meant that it had a limited capacity to care for individual boys during this time.<sup>69</sup> Officers and staff were generally transferred to the homes from elsewhere in The Salvation Army without going through a selection process or background check.<sup>70</sup> The lack of child protection policies meant that when complaints were made against one of its staff



members, Captain Lawrence Wilson, in 1964–1965, 1972 and 1974–1975, there was no formal investigation.<sup>71</sup> The lack of adequate and formal investigation meant that Captain Wilson was able to move from home to home without hindrance.<sup>72</sup> In the majority of cases, incidents of child sexual abuse were not conveyed to Salvation Army officers outside the institutions where they had occurred.<sup>73</sup>

In private sessions we heard similar accounts of perpetrators who remained in positions of trust over children after disclosures of child sexual abuse had been made. Some perpetrators were able to manipulate how the victim was viewed by others, calling the victim's word into question. When she was 14, 'Nova' was moved from a children's home to a young persons' hostel, which was run by a married couple.<sup>74</sup> They lived in the home with their biological children and six or seven other girls. The husband was also a counsellor and 'Nova' said he touched and kissed her inappropriately. 'Nova' told us one day she met a girl who had been living at the home previously and asked her about it. 'She started shaking her head, screaming, "That man, that man", and ran away.' 'Nova' said 'I had no idea what she was talking about. I was a bit bewildered'. When she discussed what happened with the house mother at the hostel, she was told the girl was 'crazy'. 'Nova' then felt she was unable to disclose the sexual abuse, and was sure the husband was sexually abusing other girls in the home.

## Reporting procedures within institutions

We often heard about reporting lines in historical residential institutions that may have allowed for the continuation of the sexual abuse of children. In some cases the complexity of institutional policies and procedures for reporting child sexual abuse may have undermined staff members' compliance with such regulations.<sup>75</sup> We heard in the *Youth detention centres, Victoria* public hearing that the culture among some mid-level staff members prevented reports of the sexual abuse of residents being passed on to senior management.<sup>76</sup> Within these institutions, reports of sexual abuse were subject to a strict chain of command in the staffing structures.<sup>77</sup> Former staff said it was the responsibility of youth officers to report 'incidents' up the chain of command to senior youth officers who, in turn, reported incidents to the superintendents.<sup>78</sup> One former staff member said that incident reports were seen to reflect badly on senior youth officers responsible for any particular section of the centre, and may have career consequences for them.<sup>79</sup> Another staff member said it was not uncommon for senior youth officers to instruct juniors to either not submit an incident report or report that the incident was less serious than it was.<sup>80</sup> We heard that staff were discouraged from deviating from the chain of command, and staff who did not adhere to the reporting hierarchy, or repeatedly raised issues, were ostracised, transferred, allocated less desirable shifts, not promoted or pressured to leave.<sup>81</sup>

In the case studies we heard that senior staff with regulatory roles in the institution were responsible for referring reports of sexual abuse back to the management of the home in which the abuse took place, even when the complaint was about the management. We were told in *The Salvation Army boys' homes, Australia Eastern Territory* public hearing that between 1965

and 1977 the divisional and territorial headquarters had a practice of deferring to the manager of the boys' home when a subordinate officer or resident complained about that manager.<sup>82</sup> If complaints arose during an inspection, the manager had the right to be notified and to respond, even if a complaint was about him.<sup>83</sup> Complaints were rarely raised with divisional or territorial headquarters.<sup>84</sup> Senior officers and managers were often believed over more junior staff who reported misconduct. No conflicts of interest were acknowledged.<sup>85</sup> The manager of the homes had the central role in determining all complaints about the boys' care and discipline, including child sexual abuse.<sup>86</sup> In theory, a boy or junior staff member could complain to the manager, but this was neither advertised nor encouraged.<sup>87</sup> Those boys who did come forward with allegations found that their complaints were unlikely to be believed and were not referred to the police.<sup>88</sup> Witnesses told the public hearing they were called liars and troublemakers, and some received further physical and sexual punishment.<sup>89</sup>

Survivors told us in private sessions that children who were being sexually abused in historical residential institutions were often aware that staff were not motivated to report the abuse. 'Ethel' said in her private session that she was sent to a government-run girls' training centre where she was sexually abused by a staff member.<sup>90</sup> 'Ethel' explained, 'there was a lot of people that knew. People knew, they just didn't want to lose their jobs or anything'.

## Reporting of child sexual abuse by institutions

We frequently heard that historical residential institutions lacked policies and procedures for reporting allegations of child sexual abuse to police where they were made against their staff and officers. We were told in public hearings by a number of institutions that they did not have such policies until recently. Some institutions also conceded that their staff received complaints of child sexual abuse that were not passed on to police, before and after implementation of such policies. We heard few examples of proper reporting by historical residential institutions and prosecution by police before 1990.

The *Criminal justice* report discusses the failure of institutions to refer allegations of criminal conduct to police, and the failure of police and public prosecutors to act effectively when allegations of child sexual abuse are referred to them.

The approach of historical residential institutions to reporting allegations of child sexual abuse to police was generally inconsistent and ad hoc. Many institutions we heard about had a tendency to withhold information about their operations from the rest of society.<sup>91</sup> In *The Salvation Army children's homes, Australia Southern Territory* public hearing, the Commissioner of The Salvation Army gave evidence that, at the time of the operation of The Salvation Army homes and subsequently, members of The Salvation Army received complaints of child sexual abuse which were not passed on to police.<sup>92</sup> We heard that in 1950 Captain Arthur Clee admitted to indecently touching four boys at Box Hill Boys' Home, and also exposing 'his own organs'.<sup>93</sup> Authorities at The Salvation Army responded to the confession by transferring Captain

Clee to Bayswater Boys' Home and later placing him on sick leave.<sup>94</sup> Captain Clee was not presented for court martial as required under The Salvation Army's own orders and regulations, and no police report was made.<sup>95</sup>

Similarly, in the *Retta Dixon Home* public hearing survivors told us that they disclosed sexual abuse by house parents to the superintendent of the home in the 1960s.<sup>96</sup> The superintendent at the time did not notify police and did not remove the house parents from the home.<sup>97</sup> We heard that Aborigines Inland Mission (from 1998 the Australian Indigenous Ministries), who governed the home, had no policy of referring allegations of child sexual abuse to police, despite one of their staff members having pleaded guilty to three counts of indecent assault on children in the home in 1966.<sup>98</sup> One former house parent of the Retta Dixon Home, AKR, said that when she was told about sexual abuse allegations, there was a view among house parents at the time that the matter should be dealt with internally and should not be reported to police.<sup>99</sup>

There was a general lack of policies and procedures for reporting allegations of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions, but some individual centres developed their own. We heard in the *Youth detention centres, Victoria* public hearing that Turana Youth Training Centre had a policy of responding to complaints of child sexual abuse that included reporting incidents to police.<sup>100</sup> We heard staff could report abuse to police after consultation with the principal youth officer and the superintendent.<sup>101</sup>

This practice was not consistent with other centres considered in the case study. We heard in the same public hearing that in 1980 the Winlaton Youth Training Centre had policies that the superintendent or his delegate could ask police to enter the centre, but 'Police must never be asked to enter the institution grounds for any reason except that of intercepting intruders'.<sup>102</sup> In 1987 the policy was amended: 'Staff should avoid calling the police, but when they must, the night Senior or ranking officer should do the calling, or if that is impossible, must be immediately informed of the situation'.<sup>103</sup> Criminal proceedings at Winlaton were contemplated for 'major grievances' but not 'serious incidents'.<sup>104</sup> Sexual assault fell under the latter category until 1987.<sup>105</sup> We also heard from Victoria Police that there was no overarching protocol between the centres and police for receiving and responding to reports of sexual abuse of residents. The Victoria Police Assistant Commissioner told us it was likely local police stations developed their own standard operating procedures for responding to particular incidents in their specific areas.<sup>106</sup>

We heard there was a lack of procedural protection for children in some historical residential institutions. In the public hearing for *Youth detention centres, Victoria* case study, we heard evidence from Katherine X that she disclosed rape by her father that occurred on weekend home visits and Winlaton staff did not report the matter to police. Katherine X's father continued to be allowed to visit her. We are satisfied that staff of Winlaton and of the Department of Community Welfare Services released Katherine X on weekend and day leave without taking any action to minimise the risk that her father would continue to sexually abuse

her. This exposed Katherine X to a serious risk of further harm.<sup>107</sup> We were satisfied that there was a lack of:

- policies and procedures for dealing with reports of sexual abuse of residents in 1979 at Winlaton, which resulted in
  - lack of clarity about who was ultimately responsible for making key decisions
  - the response to Katherine X's disclosures of sexual abuse falling to inexperienced, junior staff members
  - Katherine X's disclosures of sexual abuse not being reported to Victoria Police
- training for staff to understand the dynamics of incest and the impact on the child.<sup>108</sup>

We heard evidence that in some cases child sexual abuse was reported to police and the perpetrator was prosecuted. In the *Retta Dixon Home* case study we heard about several instances of the abuse being reported to police and a conviction followed.<sup>109</sup> We heard evidence that Retta Dixon Home missionary Reginald Powell pleaded guilty and was convicted of three counts of indecent assault between 1 January 1966 and 23 February 1966.<sup>110</sup> He was released on 23 May 1966 after entering into recognisance.<sup>111</sup>

## External oversight of historical residential institutions

In private sessions and public hearings we often heard about failures of external authorities to protect children from sexual abuse in historical residential institutions. Many survivors in public hearings told us they were not visited by welfare officers during their stay at the institution, or if they were, that the visits were tokenistic, with welfare officers sometimes interviewing children in the presence of adult staff members, including in some cases the perpetrator. In general, external oversight of historical residential institutions did not provide a system of supervision for the delivery of care to children that properly guarded against children being mistreated and suffering harm. *The Salvation Army children's homes, Australia Southern Territory* case study heard evidence that they were unable to find records of regular inspections of some institutions.<sup>112</sup>

We heard that often external authorities did not act on reports of child sexual abuse at historical residential institutions, despite receiving official confirmation of the abuse. In the *Retta Dixon Home* public hearing we heard evidence that the welfare division of the Australian Government, which had an oversight function over the institution running the Retta Dixon Home, were aware of sexual abuse and sexualised behaviours of children at the home in the 1960s.<sup>113</sup> There is evidence of this knowledge in reports made by Australian Government officers, social workers and child welfare councils up until 1966, and, for instance, records of

court proceedings and court outcomes for a member of staff convicted of offences against children. A number of survivors of sexual abuse at the Retta Dixon Home said they were unable to recall anyone from welfare or the government checking on them.<sup>114</sup> There was a common view among these survivors that no one ever enquired about their welfare and there was no one they could speak to about the abuse.<sup>115</sup> Questions remain as to whether the Australian Government should have taken remedial action to protect the residents of the home from sexual abuse.<sup>116</sup>

In the *St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol* public hearing we heard that despite two inspectors attending the institution, there was no record of complaints of child sexual abuse to the relevant government departments.<sup>117</sup> We also heard evidence that very few of the former residents could remember actually speaking to an inspector or child welfare officer.<sup>118</sup>

We heard that some oversight institutions did not comply with their own legislation that required them to regularly inspect and regulate children's residential institutions.<sup>119</sup> When inspections were conducted, they focused on physical aspects of the institution, with only general observations about the wellbeing of residents.<sup>120</sup> In *The Salvation Army children's homes, Australia Southern Territory* public hearing we heard that the State of Victoria did not inspect The Salvation Army children's homes with the frequency required by the relevant legislation.<sup>121</sup> We heard that at the time Bayswater and Box Hill homes were in operation, the Victorian Government had statutory oversight of and responsibility for the homes, including statutory powers of inspection.<sup>122</sup> We heard evidence from the Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria that they could find no records of inspection for these homes before 1957 and only a small number of records for later periods.<sup>123</sup>

Many survivors who attended private sessions said they rarely saw department inspectors or welfare officers in the institutions, and when they did see them, they were not allowed nor encouraged to speak with them. They often told Commissioners they were frightened of reprisals from the staff of the residential institution if they complained about sexual or physical abuse. 'Carol' was abused in a foster family and then in a girls home.<sup>124</sup> She moved between foster families, her mother's home and children's homes in her teenage years. 'Carol' said:

I was just lost and alone and there was no social workers coming to check up on me, and I was at risk all the time: drugs, alcohol, at that age, strange men, men threatening me, just horrendous. It was just a risky situation and I could have ended up just as easily pregnant as my sister, or dead.<sup>125</sup>

## 4.2 After the abuse

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### 4.2.1 Experiences of survivors who disclosed as adults

Of the survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions who talked to Commissioners about when they first disclosed their sexual abuse (88.3 per cent), the majority (57.3 per cent) said they first disclosed as an adult. Of this group, one in five (19.5 per cent) made their first disclosure to the Royal Commission. Many had disclosed to their partner or a family member, to a counsellor or health professional, or to the police.

Many survivors who disclosed as adults said they were cautious about who they disclosed to and when they disclosed their experience of child sexual abuse. Some survivors did not tell their partners or children because of shame, or wanting to protect them. 'Izzy' told us she was a child migrant and had not told her children she was sexually abused as a child.<sup>126</sup> They knew she was a child migrant and that she had grown up in a home, but she did not want to tell them other details about her childhood. 'Izzy' said, 'I don't tell my kids stuff. I'm ashamed. I don't want them to know what a horrible person I was. I just want them to know I love them'.<sup>127</sup>

Survivors disclose sexual abuse in different ways, if they do disclose. For some survivors, the experience of child sexual abuse is a lifelong secret. Some survivors do not disclose as children and wait many years before they tell anyone. Others disclose parts of the story to some people and not others. Many survivors in private sessions said they did not tell their children because they wanted to protect them from knowledge of the abuse or felt ashamed about what had happened. Some survivors told us they reported to the institution where the abuse occurred, to police or to redress schemes, counsellors or psychologists. Some survivors said they had disclosed at the time of the abuse and, following negative or abusive responses, never told anyone again until coming forward to the Royal Commission. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors felt they had told their story time and again but nothing had changed and some experienced 'inquiry fatigue'.<sup>128</sup>

Volume 4, *Identifying and disclosing child sexual abuse* describes what we have learned about disclosure in more detail.

### 4.2.2 Institutional responses to disclosure by adult survivors

Many survivors told Commissioners in private sessions that institutional responses through redress schemes had not been helpful or supportive. Some survivors found the application process for redress re-traumatising because they felt the institutions took the opportunity to protect themselves rather than the adult survivor of child sexual abuse. Survivors' experiences of police responses and the criminal justice system were more varied. Poor recordkeeping by institutions has also hampered effective responses by the institutions.

This section focuses on what happened when, as adults, survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions disclosed their experiences of child sexual abuse to those institutions and other authorities. The *Redress and civil litigation* report also explores these issues and makes recommendations associated with redress and civil litigation for survivors of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts, drawing on findings from public hearings, commissioned research and private sessions.<sup>129</sup>

## Institutional responses to allegations

Adult survivors often told us institutional authorities were ill-equipped to handle allegations of child sexual abuse. In public hearings we were told that in some cases this was due to a lack of training in detecting and responding to child sexual abuse.<sup>130</sup> In the *St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol* case study, we heard how authorities responded to allegations of child sexual abuse in that institution.<sup>131</sup> We were satisfied that a lack of training undermined staff members' capacity to deal effectively with complaints of sexual abuse made by former residents of the orphanage from 1993 until mid-to-late-1996.<sup>132</sup> We heard and were satisfied that before 1997 the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton and the Sisters of Mercy failed to provide an adequate or compassionate response to several survivors.<sup>133</sup> We heard that despite accepting the truthfulness of one survivor's complaint of child sexual abuse in early 1994, the Bishop of Rockhampton failed to take steps to place any restrictions on the alleged perpetrator's contact with children within the ministry. In particular, from June 1993 until May 1996 he did not organise for the alleged perpetrator to vacate the presbytery or suspend or restrict his ministry within the diocese.<sup>134</sup>

## Adult survivors, police and the criminal justice system

Many survivors of abuse in historical residential institutions found dealing with the police and criminal justice system very difficult and often re-traumatising. Evidence from witnesses in public hearings and survivors accounts to Commissioners in private sessions support the findings of commissioned research and the *Criminal justice* report.<sup>135</sup> The criminal justice system was often seen as less effective at responding to institutional sexual abuse than to other crimes, with lower rates of reporting, charging and prosecution, fewer guilty pleas and fewer convictions.<sup>136</sup>

Some adult survivors told Commissioners they would not report child sexual abuse to police because of the negative responses they had experienced as children. Some had reported the abuse to police and been returned to the care of the institution.<sup>137</sup> They said these early experiences of disclosure made it difficult for them as adults to trust and engage with authority or police. 'Brendan Arthur' was in jail when he spoke to the Commissioner, and said he had never reported the abuse to the police. 'I've wanted to, but I thought, "Nuh. I'll let sleeping dogs lie. I'll leave it where it is".'<sup>138</sup>



In private sessions, many survivors who did report to police as adults, said that police responses had been quite different to responses they received as children. They believed their reports made as adults were taken seriously by police, but that the process of making a report to police and the subsequent court processes and outcome negatively affected their wellbeing. 'Nova' told us that several years ago she reported her experience of child sexual abuse during the 1970s to the police.<sup>139</sup> She described the police as 'lovely' and 'very good', but said she never heard from them again. 'It doesn't matter to me what the result is, because I can't change anything. I can't take it back. There's nothing I can do about it now, except I suppose deal with it properly.'<sup>140</sup>

Other survivors felt the police were not interested in allegations of historical child sexual abuse. 'Davey' said in his private session that he had approached the police at the same time as he contacted the Royal Commission.<sup>141</sup> He said he felt he was treated with a lack of interest and respect by the police. He said appointments had been cancelled and rescheduled and after many months he is yet to give a full statement. 'I didn't expect someone to feel sorry for me but I did expect they'd be more sympathetic.'<sup>142</sup>

Survivors often told Commissioners in private sessions that they were dissatisfied with the criminal justice system when they tried to press charges against perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Some said that police followed up on allegations but were unable to press charges. Others said that charges were laid but were unsuccessful in court. In his private session, 'Murphy' said that in the 1990s he saw on television that the perpetrator who had abused him was fined for the abuse of another boy.<sup>143</sup> He made his first disclosure to police and later discovered seven other former students had also reported the perpetrator. 'Murphy' said the court proceedings were stayed when the perpetrator became ill and it was decided 'he was too old and frail' for a court case. 'Murphy' said: 'I was completely shattered by that. My main goal was not to seek compensation but it was to see this man punished. The church shipped him back [overseas] ... hopefully he's impotent by now.'<sup>144</sup>

In public hearings we often heard survivors were dissatisfied when police and prosecutors did not pursue allegations of child sexual abuse. In the public hearing for *Case Study 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School (Christian Brothers)*, the then Director of Public Prosecutions described why his department decided not to prosecute allegations of child sexual abuse and physical abuse by some Christian Brothers up to 40 years earlier.<sup>145</sup> In outlining his reasons, the former director said that aspects of the case made a conviction less likely, including the long period of delay since the offences were alleged to have been committed, a lack of confirmatory or corroborative evidence and a lack of particularity as to when the alleged offences occurred.<sup>146</sup>



The decision not to charge an alleged perpetrator was sometimes a difficult one for police. In the public hearing for *Bethcar Children's Home* we heard that police decided not to charge an alleged perpetrator, Mr Burt Gordon, because of a lack of corroboration and because Mr Gordon was elderly, in poor health and unlikely to live to see the matters progress to trial.<sup>147</sup> Mr Gordon died in 2006.<sup>148</sup> We also heard evidence in this case study that Detective Senior Constable Peter Freer, who had been involved in the prosecution of Mr Gordon's son-in-law, Colin Gibson, said in a memorandum dated 20 February 2008 that:

It is my view that [the alleged victim's] complaints [against Mr Gordon] are legitimate. There should not be a negative inference taken from the fact that Police were unable to prosecute in her specific case. [The alleged victim] presented as a person of excellent character and integrity. Further to this she showed a great deal of courage to travel from her home in North Queensland and give evidence in a tendency/witness capacity at the trials of Colin Gibson in Dubbo.<sup>149</sup>

Many survivors in private sessions also told us they were frustrated and in some cases re-traumatised by the high threshold for pursuing a prosecution. Some felt this was an impossible standard that favoured perpetrators and institutions over victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. 'Sonny' was three months old when he was placed in a government-run children's home.<sup>150</sup> He said he experienced multiple forms of abuse in different residential institutions. 'Sonny' was upset that of the many perpetrators, only one was ever convicted of a crime.

The *Criminal justice* report provides more detailed information about the issues associated with adults giving reliable and relevant evidence in criminal cases of historical child sexual abuse. That report recognises that most survivors' experiences of reporting were negative before 1990. It notes that although experiences of reporting vary, support has been better for victims since the early 1990s.<sup>151</sup> The *Criminal justice* report also examines the particular challenges children, and especially children with disability, face when negotiating with the criminal justice system.

## Redress schemes

During the course of our inquiry and in response to our *Redress and civil litigation* report, the Australian Government announced a Commonwealth Redress Scheme for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse. The scheme is scheduled to begin in early 2018, thus at the time of this report no survivors could access redress through the scheme. This section focuses on survivors' comments and suggestions for redress schemes at the time of writing.

The *Redress and civil litigation* report recommends redress schemes include three key components:<sup>152</sup>

1. a direct personal response by the institution if the survivor wishes to engage with the institution, including an apology, an opportunity for the survivor to meet with a senior representative of the institution and an assurance as to the steps the institution has taken, or will take, to protect against further abuse
2. access to therapeutic counselling and psychological care as needed throughout a survivor's life, with redress supplementing existing services and filling service gaps so that all survivors can have access to the counselling and psychological care that they need
3. monetary payments as a tangible means of recognising the wrong survivors have suffered.

Some survivors told us they had been restricted by time limitations imposed on some redress schemes. Other survivors said there were no redress schemes available to them, even in cases where the institution had acknowledged its past failings. Many survivors told us they found the process of redress schemes unsatisfying, disrespectful and unsupportive. Others found accessing redress schemes difficult. At the *Parramatta Training School for Girls* public hearing, the State of New South Wales acknowledged that there had been failings in the past.<sup>153</sup> In 2005 and 2009, the state publicly apologised to those who suffered in institutional care.<sup>154</sup> At the time of the public hearing, New South Wales had not set up any schemes to provide redress to those who were abused or neglected in its care.<sup>155</sup>

Financial compensation through redress schemes managed by states and territories received a mixed response from survivors. Most survivors who spoke about redress schemes reflected that while they were thankful for the money, they felt it could never compensate for the suffering they had endured. Some said they were insulted by the process. We examined Western Australia's scheme, Redress WA, in the *Christian Brothers* case study.<sup>156</sup> Redress WA was open to adults who had been abused in state care before 1 March 2006. The scheme was set up in response to the *Forgotten Australians, Lost Innocents* and *Bringing them home* reports.<sup>157</sup> At the time it was announced, the scheme allowed for payments of up to \$10,000 for abuse or neglect and up to \$80,000 where there was evidence that abuse or neglect resulted in physical or psychological harm. In 2010, Redress WA was restructured to reduce the maximum amount payable to \$45,000 and to set various payment levels beneath that amount.<sup>158</sup> We heard in the *Christian Brothers* case study that some applicants to Redress WA found the apology they were given helpful.<sup>159</sup> Some took up the offer of counselling through Redress WA and found that helpful.<sup>160</sup>

Some survivors found the redress process difficult, and were disappointed by the sudden change in the maximum compensation amount in 2010. In his private session, 'Allan John' said he spent most of his life in factories, doing 'hard physical labour'.<sup>161</sup> As a child migrant he was sent to a farm school, where he said he was mistreated, physically and sexually abused. He did not receive a good education. 'Allan John' participated in the Western Australian redress scheme and was disappointed when the government made substantial cuts to payments:

To be quite honest, I've spoken to a few people, what the Western Australian government did to us, that was a kick in the pants, the redress scheme. I thought that was a bad decision ... But it's happened now.<sup>162</sup>

In his private session, 'Sonny' said he was treated brutally and sexually abused from a young age in government-run children's homes.<sup>163</sup> 'Sonny' said he was six years old when he was raped by an older resident and sexually abused by a dormitory master. He said he was later sexually abused by a cottage mother at a children's home, and was physically abused in a youth centre for 'troublemakers'. In the late 1990s he reported the sexual abuse to police but the case did not succeed. 'Sonny' received what he termed 'shut your mouth' money from the Queensland Government Redress Scheme. 'Sonny' told us he thought the money was inadequate and said he wanted some public acknowledgement of wrongdoing by the government. 'Sonny' said: 'We'd been diddled, that's all you can put it down to. We'd been diddled. They've diddled us all our life and they diddled us now'.

Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors who had spent their childhoods in historical residential institutions told us they had applied for redress through government schemes. 'Kaye' said she was well cared for and had lived with her family, swimming, fishing and riding horses until she was taken into the girls' dormitory on the mission.<sup>164</sup> 'Kaye' said she was training as a nurse when she was raped by a white police officer. 'Kaye' and her sisters applied for compensation and she had found both the process and the amount they received 'pathetic ... like a slap in the face'.<sup>165</sup>

We examined The Salvation Army's responses to allegations of child sexual abuse in *The Salvation Army boys' homes, Australia Eastern Territory* and *The Salvation Army children's homes, Australia Southern Territory* case studies.<sup>166</sup> We were told in public hearings about the Model Scheme, developed following the arrest and conviction of Charles Allan Smith in 1997. We concluded that some claimants experienced the scheme as legalistic, and the scheme failed others.<sup>167</sup> This was because, among other reasons, apologies made before 2013 were 'generic' and did not specifically acknowledge and accept that sexual abuse had occurred; and claimants who were legally represented were not offered counselling.<sup>168</sup> Members of The Salvation Army were, routinely, not present at settlement conferences, and negotiations were conducted by solicitors.<sup>169</sup> This could have conveyed the impression that The Salvation Army had a lack of interest in the claimant.<sup>170</sup>

In the *Christian Brothers* case study we also heard from survivors who had accessed redress through the church-based redress scheme, Towards Healing.<sup>171</sup> Mr Ellul said Towards Healing was an awful process.<sup>172</sup> He felt bullied and they used big words he did not understand.<sup>173</sup> In the *St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol* case study we heard from witnesses who felt the Towards Healing process was a negative one.<sup>174</sup> The *Redress and civil litigation* report outlines our recommendations based on what we heard from survivors and support groups.<sup>175</sup>

Many survivors found the process of applying to redress schemes managed by religious authorities difficult and lacking in transparency. 'Clarence' came to the Royal Commission and described his experience with a redress scheme managed by the Catholic Church.<sup>176</sup> After contacting the Church he met with a counsellor, several religious sisters from the order which managed the institution, and a psychologist. 'Clarence' said he believed the psychologist was acting on his behalf but later found out this was not the case. He told the meeting he wanted to learn to read and write and needed financial support to look after his brothers and sisters who had also been in the institution. He said:

I was reassured that that was okay. The \$3000 was to get me started so I would go off and learn to read and write ... They basically saw me out the door and said, 'Don't worry Clarence, everything's going to be fixed up and it'll all be all right'.<sup>177</sup>

'Clarence' said he thought the Church had not helped him in any other way, and with the support of his own advocate he was seeking further support.

Some survivors were critical of how redress schemes facilitated the telling of their story. We heard that survivors' preferences for how they told their story varied: some preferred to tell in person and others by writing. 'Enid' said she was seven years old and living on a mission when she was sexually abused by a man who looked after the water heater.<sup>178</sup> She explained she had not written about the sexual abuse on the redress form and did not have the opportunity to speak to anyone. She received a small amount of money and felt like it was 'bribery'. Other survivors told Commissioners they valued the opportunity to share their story through writing. 'Aden Patrick', a child migrant, wrote that he had found writing the statement 'was a relief ... to be able to share it with someone ... just get it off my shoulders'.<sup>179</sup>

## Legal action

Some survivors told Commissioners they had taken part in legal action against the institution. Most said the process had been difficult. In several public hearings we heard that survivors found it difficult to establish who they might sue and who was responsible for the actions of the perpetrator.

Some survivors had pursued redress through joint class actions. Their experiences varied. In the *Christian Brothers* public hearing we heard of several issues arising from civil litigation proceedings conducted by Slater & Gordon seeking damages from the Christian Brothers for physical, sexual and psychological abuse. These included:<sup>180</sup>

- the amount of time that had passed since the time of the incidents, which was an issue because statute of limitation requirements meant that many survivors were not allowed to begin litigation
- the difficulty in establishing who was the proper person or body to sue (proper defendant issues)
- the different legislation that applied in the various states.

During the public hearing for *Case Study 3: Anglican Diocese of Grafton's response to child sexual abuse at the North Coast Children's Home*, we heard from survivor, Mr Richard 'Tommy' Campion among others.<sup>181</sup> Mr Campion gave evidence that he wrote to the Anglican dioceses of Sydney and Grafton to report the abuse he had experienced at the North Coast Children's Home.<sup>182</sup> The Diocese of Grafton initially dealt with Mr Campion's complaint by providing him with a copy of the Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme adopted in 2005. The scheme stated that claimants should be offered counselling, an apology and payment in line with specified amounts, which Mr Campion understood to be \$70,000 to \$80,000.<sup>183</sup>

In 2006, Mr Campion led a group claim against the Diocese of Grafton with more than 40 former residents.<sup>184</sup> When faced with the group claim, the diocese changed its response, stating that the diocese and its corporate trustees had no legal liability for sexual or physical abuse of a child by people in religious ministry, staff or other people associated with the North Coast Children's Home.<sup>185</sup> We heard that settlement negotiations between the diocese and claimants were conducted in a hostile manner and the amounts offered to Mr Campion and the other group claimants were considerably less than if the claim been resolved under the diocesan Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme.<sup>186</sup> With deductions and legal fees, Mr Campion, for example, would have received only \$10,326.64.<sup>187</sup>

Although part of the group claim he began in 2006, in March 2007, Mr Campion and his sister CA rejected the diocese's offer for group claimants.<sup>188</sup> Mr Campion wanted the Anglican Church to acknowledge its involvement in running the home and provide compensation in line with the Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme.<sup>189</sup> In June 2010, Mr Campion yielded to the diocese group claim offer, citing his 'desperate need to regain my sanity, my health, pay the rent and electricity and purchase decent food to keep that health'.<sup>190</sup> During the public hearing, Mr Campion gave evidence about his legal fees and the amount of compensation offered by the diocese:

I was upset. I mean, the amount of abuse that I suffered was pretty bad. I just thought that settlement was – the church had schemed a bit to get out of paying the correct amount of money. I was pretty heartbroken that he only offered that much ... All these people had gone through hell and then you get the situation where you have the lawyers telling you what to have, without asking beforehand, and knowing that [the claimants] had to pay half of what they got. I just didn't think that was fair.<sup>191</sup>

Many survivors who had engaged with the legal system told Commissioners their concerns about the high cost of legal fees. Some told Commissioners they felt it was unfair that a significant proportion of the compensation they were awarded was paid to their legal team. 'Mamie' attended a private session and told us she was abused in the 1970s in a home for children with intellectual disability.<sup>192</sup> In the early 2000s, 'Mamie' engaged a lawyer to seek compensation for the abuse she experienced in the home. She said it took a few years but she eventually received \$60,000 in compensation, of which the lawyers took \$20,000. When asked about how she felt about the redress process, 'Mamie' said 'Money-wise, crap. But I felt good. I've done it. I got a bit off my chest'.<sup>193</sup>

Other survivors also told us legal action did not bring the resolution they had hoped. For these survivors, apologies meant little and compensation was disputed and meagre. In his private session 'Fisher' said he had been physically and sexually abused in a boys' home in the 1980s.<sup>194</sup> 'Fisher' has never reported the abuse to police, but he did sue the institution and received some compensation. While his solicitors were good, 'Fisher' said he felt that the process was rushed and he was pressured into accepting a settlement. He received an apology from the institution, but said it meant little. 'I think it was just a speech, said to everybody. He couldn't even look me in the eye.'<sup>195</sup>

'Arnold Douglas' said he was involved in a class action against the Christian Brothers in the late 1980s, which resulted in a compensation payment of \$2,000.<sup>196</sup> He said that when he approached the Catholic Church about five years ago in an effort to get more compensation, the Brother he spoke to said:

'What do you want, mate? Oh, you signed a paper ... That's all you're getting. All you boys are liars. At least we taught you to work. Now, get out of here'. That's the exact words he said. How I didn't knock his arse over tits ...<sup>197</sup>

The *Redress and civil litigation* report outlines changes to current redress practices and recommendations. The *Analysis of claims of child sexual abuse made with respect to Catholic Church institutions in Australia* report documents claims and payments made to child sexual abuse victims since 1980.<sup>198</sup>

# Endnotes

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- 40 Name changed, private session, 'Symon'.
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163 Name changed, private session, 'Sonny'.

164 Name changed, private session, 'Kaye'.

165 Name changed, private session, 'Kaye'.

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167 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 33: The response of The Salvation Army (Southern Territory) to allegations of child sexual abuse at children's homes that it operated*, Sydney, 2016, p 25.

168 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 33: The response of The Salvation Army (Southern Territory) to allegations of child sexual abuse at children's homes that it operated*, Sydney, 2016, p 25.

169 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 33: The response of The Salvation Army (Southern Territory) to allegations of child sexual abuse at children's homes that it operated*, Sydney, 2016, p 25.

- 170 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 33: The response of The Salvation Army (Southern Territory) to allegations of child sexual abuse at children's homes that it operated*, Sydney, 2016, p 25.
- 171 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 11: Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School*, Sydney, 2014, p 62.
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- 181 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Report of Case Study No 3: Anglican Diocese of Grafton's response to child sexual abuse at the North Coast Children's Home*, Sydney, 2014, pp 5–7, 23–8, 33–6.
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- 194 Name changed, private session, 'Fisher'.
- 195 Name changed, private session, 'Fisher'.
- 196 Name changed, private session, 'Arnold Douglas'.
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## 5 Lessons for the future

Many survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions spoke to Commissioners about how children could have been better protected and supported. In private sessions and public hearings, survivors made suggestions on the broader issues of quality care and support for children in need, and on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse, and supporting victims and survivors. This chapter focuses on their suggestions. Research commissioned by us on what increases safety for children in institutions is consistent with much of what we learned from survivors' knowledge and experiences.<sup>1</sup>

Survivors told us in public hearings and private sessions that children need emotional, educational and financial support while living in care and during the transition into their adult lives. We heard from many survivors that disadvantage during childhood had affected their relationships, future employment and financial security. Many missed out on educational opportunities and support from protective adults and the community.

Many survivors who gave their accounts of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions were Former Child Migrants, members of the Stolen Generations and Forgotten Australians.

This volume presents an overview of survivors' experiences. Survivors' suggestions for the future are echoed in recommendations in other volumes of the Final Report including, Volume 8, *Record keeping and information sharing*, Volume 9, *Advocacy, support and therapeutic treatment services*, Volume 12, *Contemporary out-of-home care*, Volume 15, *Contemporary detention environments* and the *Redress and civil litigation* and *Criminal justice* reports. Recommendations in Volume 12, *Contemporary out-of-home care* and Volume 15, *Contemporary detention environments* aim to improve the prevention and detection of, and response to, child sexual abuse in these settings. Further support for survivors' suggestions can be found in the responses to our issues papers from advocacy and support groups including the Alliance for Forgotten Australians, Care Leavers Australasia Network and the Child Migrants Trust.

The information presented in these volumes from public hearings, private sessions, commissioned research and community engagement suggests that some of the issues described by survivors of abuse in historical residential institutions persist in residential institutions today.

### 5.1 Supporting children in contemporary residential institutions

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Drawing on their childhood experiences, many survivors of abuse in historical residential institutions gave us their views on how children should be cared for. They told Commissioners they believed the best way to protect children from abuse in residential institutions would be to prevent children from being admitted to these institutions in the first place. Many survivors were clear in their belief that children should not be removed from their families. These survivors suggested that if support for their families had been available, in particular support for their mothers, they may not have been placed in the institutions where they were abused. Survivors proposed a need for better and more effective support mechanisms for families struggling with the impact of intergenerational trauma, substance use or domestic violence.



### 5.1.1 Oversight of children

Survivors in private sessions repeatedly told Commissioners that during childhood they had needed someone to act in their best interests and advocate on their behalf when they were children. They suggested children and young people who are away from their families or protective adults need an independent advocate, someone who has no role or responsibility in the organisation or institution. Survivors believed an independent advocate would ensure support for the child, help to address any problems and prevent conflicts of interest, and assist with appropriate responses to any allegation of abuse.

In the public hearing for *Case Study 41: Institutional responses to allegations of the sexual abuse of children with disability*, Ms Jane Rosengrave gave evidence on the panel focusing on disability issues. Ms Rosengrave described how she had suffered from epilepsy, was institutionalised at the age of six months, and lived in a number of residential institutions throughout her childhood. She gave evidence as ‘one of the survivors from institutions and orphanages when [she] was still young’.<sup>2</sup> Ms Rosengrave’s evidence described the importance of children living in institutions having someone they could trust outside the institution to whom they could speak openly. ‘I think it would be a good idea not to do it in the institution ... Take them out. They’ll be more open – if they want, with a close family friend or ... someone they can really trust.’<sup>3</sup> She said, children needed help to learn they have a ‘voice to be heard’.<sup>4</sup>

‘Lisa Michelle’ attended a private session and explained that she was 11 when she was taken away from her physically abusive mother.<sup>5</sup> She said she was sexually abused in multiple institutions, including an orphanage, a psychiatric institution and a state-run processing centre. Despite reporting to adults about the abuse in these institutions, she said no one came to her aid. ‘Lisa Michelle’ said she had needed an adult to step in and support her, find her a place to live so she could continue school and be safe, but that in her case, ‘the authorities, the people who were responsible didn’t make any intervention’.<sup>6</sup>

In private sessions, many survivors stressed the importance of external and internal oversight of organisations and institutions providing residential care for children. Some survivors told Commissioners that institutions needed better complaints and reporting processes, including accessible child protection workers. Other survivors suggested that an independent and confidential phone service be established, similar to Kids Helpline, for children who are under the care of the state.<sup>7</sup> Many of these survivors had lived in institutions where government or welfare inspections were conducted at a superficial level only. The inspections did not focus on the welfare of the children or provide opportunities for children to safely raise their concerns. Survivors believed that improved internal and external oversight would better protect children in care, and make it easier for them to disclose abuse.

### 5.1.2 Transition out of residential institutions

Survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions often identified the need for additional support for young people as they transitioned out of care. Research examining life outcomes for Forgotten Australians shows that children in historical residential institutions were, on average, 15 years old when they left care.<sup>8</sup> Most were not given any warning they were leaving, and most did not have a job.<sup>9</sup> Survivors attending private sessions often said that on leaving residential care they did not have family or a community they could depend on, and did not have any support outside the institution where they had spent their childhoods. In addition, some told Commissioners the way they were treated in residential institutions meant they lacked important life skills, education and confidence. Some thought this made them vulnerable to being taken advantage of by others and to homelessness. In her private session ‘Ann Meredith’ said there needed to be better housing support for children coming out of care. She reflected that having her own home would have provided some stability for her and her children.<sup>10</sup>

‘John Lucas’ prepared a written account for the Royal Commission.<sup>11</sup> Reflecting on his time in, and then transitioning from, a Christian Brothers residential institution he wrote:

When I read back on these notes, I will find it harder and harder to remember any good things that I can say the Brothers did to improve my life or any good thing I could give them credit for. If it was not bad enough going through what I did, it got close to worse, when I was told I was leaving the school to go to work. Unprepared for what I was about to experience is an understatement. Taken in darkness to a town 50 miles away, dumped at a hostel, given a set of clothing, that by the way may be considered good fashion in today’s dress sense, hanging on by a thread, listening to people sniggering behind your back in broad daylight about your clothes and making fun of you, was just horrible. I could never forget those days. Ever.<sup>12</sup>

‘Roger Matthew’ also wrote about what it was like leaving a residential institution:

I left there barely literate; I could read but not really comprehend the meaning. So I could not express myself in writing and anything that looked official filled me with such anxiety that I would avoid dealing with it. I feel enormously resentful today – they stole my future along with my childhood. What kind of work could I do after that educational deprivation?<sup>13</sup>

Volume 12, *Contemporary out-of-home care* notes that the transition out of care is still a difficult time for children and young people. Many children experience heightened vulnerability during this period in accommodation, employment and health. They also have increased vulnerability to sexual abuse.

### 5.1.3 Child protective behaviours and community education

Some survivors talked to Commissioners about how improved community understanding of child sexual abuse might protect children and prevent sexual abuse. In particular, they believed it was important for children to be taught child protective behaviours so they might have a chance to defend themselves against abuse. In her private session ‘Tamsin’ talked about her experience in the 1980s, when she was living in a home that was part of a group of residences overseen by an evangelical Christian church organisation.<sup>14</sup> She told us while she was there she was sexually abused by an older child. Now involved in children’s education, ‘Tamsin’ said:

Child protection is taught in primary schools and I’ve had to teach it on occasions myself, but it is voluntary for children to do it. It needs to be mandatory. You’d be surprised how many children don’t [attend]. They have to go to another room when the lessons are on.<sup>15</sup>

### 5.1.4 Support to disclose

Many survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions suggested that adults needed to build trust with children and form better relationships so that the children could feel comfortable disclosing abuse. They often said that the culture of fear and violence towards children in historical residential institutions meant that children felt they were not respected or listened to. Some said they might have disclosed sooner if they had felt someone outside of the institution was interested in their wellbeing. In particular, adults responsible for children with disability need to pay attention to different forms of disclosure. Many survivors’ suggestions for change and calls for support for children to disclose child sexual abuse align with our findings and research discussed in further detail in Volume 4, *Identifying and disclosing child sexual abuse*.

‘Tamsin’ told us if someone independent of the church and the home had kept an eye on her and checked to see how she was going, it would have made a difference. She said, ‘I think if I had a safe place I might have said something, but there was nowhere’.<sup>16</sup>

In the public hearing for *Case Study 7: Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay (Parramatta Training School for Girls)*, Ms Robyne Stone, a former resident of the institution, made suggestions for how to support children to disclose abuse in the future and of attitudes to children. She said:

In order to keep kids safe today, I think it is important that people speak to children. Some children won’t open up straight away as it takes time to get their trust, but if you are fair with them, nine times out of 10 a child will be fair with you. I’m a strong believer that there is no such thing as an evil child. There’s a hurt child and an angry child, but not an evil child.<sup>17</sup>

Many survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions told us in private sessions they wanted children to be believed if they disclosed sexual abuse to the adults around them, and for children to know they would be believed. These sentiments were especially strong for survivors who, as children, were wards of the state or had lived in youth detention institutions. Many said they were mistrusting of adults as children and had little opportunity to develop trusting relationships as they were cycled between placements or in and out of detention. 'Nova' said she was sexually abused in a youth hostel in the 1970s. She told us she was visited by her social worker every month or so but did not disclose the abuse. 'Nova' said she liked her social worker and wanted to tell her about the abuse, but was worried she would be labelled 'crazy' like another girl who had claimed she was being abused at the same hostel.<sup>18</sup>

Survivors in private sessions, regardless of when they were abused, commonly discussed the importance of effective institutional responses to the disclosure of child sexual abuse. Most survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions had experienced ineffective responses, such as being ignored, dismissed, punished or ostracised. Most survivors said children's reports of sexual abuse should be taken seriously. 'Ida' said she was raped by another patient after her father took her to an adult psychiatric ward.<sup>19</sup> 'Ida' reported the incidents to staff but was ignored. 'I was shut down on every occasion', she said. 'Ida' told us: 'any reporting has to be taken seriously. Everything. It doesn't matter how insignificant it might sound, or whatever. Everything has to be taken seriously'.<sup>20</sup>

Volume 12, *Contemporary out-of-home care* details the experience of children in contemporary out-of-home care and suggests that many children still feel that their voices are devalued. This is especially the case for children in residential care.<sup>21</sup> Commissioned research suggests children in residential care judge safe services as those that provide children and young people with an opportunity to have their say.<sup>22</sup> This research also suggests it is not common practice for institutions to facilitate opportunities for children to speak up. As one young person told the researcher:

I think workers should rely more on young people. We know what is going on, we know what it's like, we know what works and we know what is going to work ... It makes sense – but I don't think they'd even think about asking us.<sup>23</sup>

### 5.1.5 Institutional staff training and supervision

Many survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions were concerned that institutions should take care to employ appropriate people to work with children. Some called for better monitoring, screening, training and ongoing supervision of adults looking after children. This included workers in residential institutions as well as foster or 'holiday' carers. Some suggested background checks and better screening of potential employees. Some felt the most important thing was for workers to treat children with respect and build trust.

In the public hearing of *Disability service providers* case study, Ms Jane Rosengrave gave evidence regarding the importance of police checks and appropriate screening of staff before they are employed in children's institutions. Police checks on staff were important because, as Ms Rosengrave pointed out in her evidence, 'they could have a bad experience and not tell anybody'.<sup>24</sup>

Survivors who gave evidence in the public hearings for our case studies often stressed the importance of training staff who worked with children in detecting and responding to child sexual abuse. The *Parramatta Training School for Girls* public hearing heard evidence from former resident Ms Wilma Robb.<sup>25</sup> She said that even if the girls were allowed to speak to welfare officers or other staff, they were never asked any questions like 'Why are you sick?' or 'Why are you here?' The answers to these questions might have indicated that the girls were being abused.<sup>26</sup> In the public hearing of *Case Study 33: The response of The Salvation Army (Southern Territory) to allegations of child sexual abuse at children's homes that it operated (The Salvation Army children's homes, Australia Southern Territory)* we heard from survivor Mr Philip Hodges,<sup>27</sup> who said:

From my work, I believe there is inadequate training of staff who work with children. The staff don't have enough time to listen to the children they work with and make adequate reports. I also believe that there needs to be independent mechanisms that allow and assist children in reporting abuse.<sup>28</sup>

We heard evidence from BMS, a former resident of the Bayswater Home in *The Salvation Army children's homes, Australia Southern Territory* case study. He told us that at the home he suffered persistent and regular sexual abuse, and was aware of the abuse of other children.<sup>29</sup> He said:

I think that if there had been proper supervision by the children's welfare department then I wouldn't be going through this hell. The schooling we were given should also have been supervised.<sup>30</sup>

We heard evidence from Mr Michael Coutts-Trotter, Secretary of the Department of Family and Community Services (formerly Community Services), in *Case Study 19: The response of the State of New South Wales to child sexual abuse at Bethcar Children's Home in Brewarrina, New South Wales*.<sup>31</sup> Mr Coutts-Trotter accepted that in March 1980, and again in 1983 and 1984, Community Services had information suggesting that children were at risk in Bethcar. He gave evidence that Community Services could have done more to protect the children at Bethcar once its officers were aware of the risk.<sup>32</sup>

Consistent with what we heard in the public hearings was the common theme in private sessions, and that was the need for better training and supervision of institutional staff. In her private session, 'Robin' told us, she and her brother 'Cole' were sexually abused in various institutions in the 1960s and 1970s. She shared their story to inspire change, hoping to make the system safer for kids who grow up in out-of-home care. 'Robin' said:

I would like the Royal Commission to make a recommendation to the government that they use common sense and do what is morally right on how to rear children in care; to treat our children as they would like to be treated themselves, to respect our future children as we would respect ourselves. It should not be a very hard job if you think about it: make the rules as if you are making them for yourself.<sup>33</sup>

'Linda Justine' in her written account explained:

I want to see better screening of people employed to work at institutions, particularly when they are responsible for children in out of home care. It has been too easy for the wool to be pulled over people's eyes.<sup>34</sup>

Many survivors who spoke in private sessions felt that institutions could do more to ensure it was not possible or permissible for adults to be alone with children. Survivors often told Commissioners they were abused while they were alone with an individual perpetrator, and said that better supervision of children and staff in institutions would help protect children from abuse, including abuse perpetrated by older children or peers. 'Queenie Alice' said she was sexually abused on a government-run mission in central Queensland in the 1940s.<sup>35</sup> She said one of the dormitory masters abused girls in the context of checking for lice. Speaking to us, 'Queenie Alice' recommended greater vigilance in looking after children, and that more than one adult is required at all times when supervising or caring for children.<sup>36</sup>

## 5.2 Supporting adult survivors

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Survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions told Commissioners about the support they need now and in the future. Many had experienced multiple childhood traumas including physical and emotional abuse and neglect. Most continued to experience hardship and disadvantage throughout their lives. Many survivors told Commissioners that they needed access to a range of services throughout their lives. Volume 9, *Advocacy, support and therapeutic treatment services* discusses how to support adult survivors and makes recommendations for advocacy and therapeutic support.

### 5.2.1 Health care

A number of survivors called for better access to medical and dental care, mental health services and housing for people who grew up in residential institutions. Some survivors called for a free national health scheme to give them priority access to medical and allied health services. Others proposed an integrated service centre – a ‘one-stop-shop’ – for all survivors of child sexual abuse. They suggested these service centres could provide counselling support, advocacy, case management and information for survivors and their families. Some also suggested they be able to receive referrals for qualified and skilled professionals, such as counsellors to help them find work or help with relationships. ‘Raph’ told us in his private session that he was sexually abused in a children’s home when he was five years old.<sup>37</sup> ‘Raph’ was clear about what he considered were the services needed to support survivors and their families.

We need people in an organisation who are going to take it and say, ‘This is a one-stop-shop. Right? This is a one-stop shop. You ring me up, I’m going to go out and bat for you. I’m going to talk to you, I’m going to give you all the procedures that you can take and if you get a door slammed in your face, then I’m going to open it for you’.<sup>38</sup>

In other private sessions we heard that improving access to counselling services was a priority for survivors. ‘Ann Meredith’ suggested lifetime counselling should be offered to those survivors who want it. However, she is unsure whether she would participate because she believes counselling would ‘be opening up a tin of worms again’.<sup>39</sup> Other survivors talked about the need for more specialised counselling services both immediately after the abuse and in the years and decades following. Many said such counselling needed to be independent of the institution where the abuse occurred and counsellors needed specific skills to deal with the specific needs of survivors of child sexual abuse.<sup>40</sup>

### 5.2.2 Peer support, advocacy and services for survivors

Many adult survivors who were institutionalised as children in historical residential institutions told Commissioners how much they valued the support from survivor organisations and support groups. Survivors in private sessions and in the public hearings told Commissioners about the value of peer support and talking to other people who were sexually abused as children or who were raised in historical residential institutions. Sometimes these groups were set up by, or for, specific survivor groups, such as child migrants or survivors of a particular institution. Some organisations received government funding to provide services while others were smaller, more informal peer support groups.

Support services for survivors of child sexual abuse are mostly government and community based. Many of these services made submissions to discussion papers for the Royal Commission.



Commissioners heard from many survivors how support service organisations gave a sense of belonging and family. One survivor, 'Narelle Jane' said, 'They had saved my life actually'.<sup>41</sup> Often these organisations supported the participation of survivors in the Royal Commission through raising awareness of the opportunity to attend private sessions, accompanying survivors during their session and providing follow-up support. 'Hillary' explained she had not ever had counselling but had become involved in a care leavers' group which she found helpful and supportive.<sup>42</sup> A representative of the organisation supported her during her private session. 'Alfred' suggested that former state wards such as himself should be used to contact past and present state wards who may need help.<sup>43</sup> He and his wife had helped many young people with difficulties over the years.

Some survivors had established support groups with other survivors from the same institution and felt that this had been important to their wellbeing as they aged. In Aboriginal community consultations we heard peer-based organisations are an important part of the service system and offer culturally safe support and healing. One example is the Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation, established by survivors of Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Training Home, a government-run institution for Aboriginal boys removed from their families in New South Wales. The organisation 'encourages and supports sustainable healing programs that address the legacy of physical, sexual, psychological and cultural abuse ... as well as the intergenerational trauma experienced by [survivors'] descendants'.<sup>44</sup> Commissioners worked with the Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation to hear from survivors about their experiences and their suggestions for change.

Meeting up with other survivors through peer support organisations has been helpful for many survivors. 'Mikaela' attended a private session supported by her husband 'Dave'.<sup>45</sup> 'Dave' explained how 'Mikaela's' contact with a Forgotten Australians' support group supported both of them. He said:

It was the first time she'd had real confirmation that someone else had been through the same kind of thing. Prior to that it was always doubting whether anyone believed her, and a hell of a lot of doubt. Just the acknowledgement made a whole world of difference.<sup>46</sup>

Many former child migrants have been supported by organisations to return to their country of birth and find their family. Often this was too late to find their parents although some had been able to find siblings and other relatives. Reconnecting with family was an important experience for many of those who had come to Australia. The Child Migrant Trust and many other survivor support organisations facilitated written accounts sent to us and participation in private sessions by survivors.

‘Cameron John’ told us: ‘Parents were told their children had been adopted out by loving British families. As we know, that didn’t happen, that was a lie’.<sup>47</sup> ‘Cameron John’ said that like many child migrants he was physically and sexually abused and did not receive an education. He described his childhood as ‘unbearable’ and ‘void of all love’. In his private session ‘Cameron John’ outlined the value of support services many survivors had talked about.<sup>48</sup> He said:

I don’t think I would have wanted to go on living if it hadn’t been for ... the Child Migrant Trust. Finding my family has truly turned my life around. At last I wanted to make a go of things.<sup>49</sup>

In the private sessions, some survivors referred to support they had felt through their religious beliefs. ‘Carol’ said in her private session she had managed to keep her own life together because of ‘the grace of God’ and her determination to make a good life for her children.<sup>50</sup> ‘Carol’ said:

No matter what, if my marriage didn’t work out – which it didn’t – if I was a single mum – which I was – that was not going to stop me making sure that these kids mattered, that the unconditional love and support they needed was going to be there no matter what.<sup>51</sup>

### 5.2.3 Records and family reunification

Many survivors of sexual abuse in historical residential institutions told Commissioners that they needed support to access their records, including information about their birth families. Some had been unable to access information about their families or had found the experience traumatic. Survivors told us access to records affected how they were able to reconnect with family. For some survivors, such as child migrants, it could involve travelling overseas. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors recordkeeping has been important to restoring and making connections with culture and family. For many, failures in accurate recordkeeping have hindered restoration of community relationships. Some survivors and organisations that support survivors shared stories of poorly supported family reunions that had been distressing for survivors and their families. Survivors suggested services be funded to support all care leavers to identify and contact family members. Volume 8, *Recordkeeping and information sharing* discusses institutional recordkeeping and survivors of child sexual abuse.

We heard from many survivors that their search for family had been lifelong. ‘George John’ said in his private session he had spent 40,000 pounds on looking for his mother.<sup>52</sup> By the time he found her, she had died. ‘George John’ said when he tried to get a passport he found his legal status as an Australian citizen was uncertain, due to a lack of documentation. After some intervention by his federal member of parliament, he was able to travel to the United Kingdom and meet other family members.

In *Case Study 30: The response of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, and the Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria to allegations of child sexual abuse (Youth detention centres, Victoria)* we heard evidence from witnesses who had experienced problems with accessing their records. Survivors explained there were delays in receiving files after making a request, they received incomplete and/or heavily redacted files, or they were told files had been destroyed. They had received little or no support from the institution.<sup>53</sup>

Survivors and their family members commonly said that finding out their family's history with the care system was important in preventing children going into care in the future. Mr Frank Golding, a survivor of abuse in historical residential care, and Vice President and Life Member of Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN) gave evidence in *Case Study 57: Nature, cause and impact of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts* regarding the 'ripple effects' of sexual abuse. Mr Golding talked about the importance of records to help create an understanding of 'child incarceration'.<sup>54</sup> He said his family, and the families of many other care leavers, had a history of being in care.

When [my mother] died, I began some research, and I found that her grandfather in 1865 had been committed as a neglected child and was put, effectively, into gaol until he was 16. I was charged with the same charge. I was a neglected child those generations down. And there have been five generations on my mother's side who have been incarcerated in care.<sup>55</sup>

#### 5.2.4 Parenting and relationship support

Many survivors who were raised in historical residential institutions told Commissioners they struggled with parenting and relationships, and needed extra support. The legacy of intergenerational trauma affected their relationships, and their ability to parent. Many survivors told Commissioners they had been in abusive relationships, and some were estranged from their family, including their children.

In many private sessions we heard from survivors who made a direct connection between their experience as a child in care and their ability to parent their own children. 'Blake William' described his life as 'tough', with little education and no parental role models.<sup>56</sup> He believed this had affected his ability to parent his own children. Now, he and his partner care for his daughter's children who has issues with substance use. 'Blake William' gave up drinking after a transplant operation, because the doctor told him otherwise he would die. 'Blake William' explained, 'I really thought about it. I want to live, see my grandkids'.

'Hugh Christopher' also told us he found raising children a challenge.<sup>57</sup> He said:

I was very concerned that my idea of bringing children up would be based on what was experienced by me as a person, you know. I remember I smacked my son once and I went and cried. And I thought 'Geez, you can't do that. There's got to be a better way of doing that'.<sup>58</sup>

'Ann Meredith' told us she struggles to be a parent because she grew up in institutions. She said her first child was adopted out when she was 14 and her other children were removed when she had a breakdown.<sup>59</sup> 'Ann Meredith' said, 'I don't know how to be a mum to them'. They say, 'We're still growling today, about why weren't you there, Mum?'

In the public hearing into *Parramatta Training School for Girls*, survivors told us their relationships with their children had suffered as a result of their experiences in childhood. Ms Yvonne Kitchener gave evidence that she does not have a relationship with some of her children and believes they hate her.<sup>60</sup> She thinks that she was not a good role model and did not have the necessary parenting skills.<sup>61</sup> She said the abuse she suffered has affected all of them: 'Because of the generational effect from me, it's gone on to them and they've both got mental health problems'.<sup>62</sup> Another survivor, Ms Lee Powell, told the Royal Commission that she was raped as a 17-year-old and had a child who was taken away by the welfare department.<sup>63</sup> She does not believe that she was a good mother to her other children.<sup>64</sup> At one stage, she gave them to the Red Cross because the family was homeless and she did not want them to end up with child welfare.<sup>65</sup>

Many survivors who were removed from their family as a child told Commissioners how they were deeply distressed when their own children or grandchildren were removed from their families. Commissioned research outlines how for survivors who are parents, their childhood experiences with the welfare system and sexual abuse is an additional barrier to engage with the child welfare system.<sup>66</sup> This makes interacting with the system and advocating for their families even more difficult. Commissioners were told by many survivors that they thought they needed specific parenting programs and advocacy support to avoid their own children ending up in care and to 'break the cycle' of generations of children being removed.

Members of the Stolen Generations also told Commissioners about the need for extra support for families. When 'Kaye' was around eight years old she and her little sister were placed in the girls' dormitory on the Queensland mission where they grew up.<sup>67</sup> 'Kaye' explained that growing up in the dormitory, without her mother's love, affected the way she showed her kids affection and care. She knows she was very protective of them, as she was with her siblings on the mission.

I did the best I could, I couldn't really show them, but I'd say it by doing things. Because I wanted them to have a better life than what I did, to make sure they had food, they had blankets, they were warm during the winter.<sup>68</sup>

'Kaye' said she knows many Aboriginal families were intentionally broken up, like her own.<sup>69</sup> She explained to the Commissioner that multiple generations of children being institutionalised made it hard for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to learn how to raise children. Commissioned research supports her view.<sup>70</sup> Kaye would like to see more education for parents to improve their skills. This would help keep children in their families and out of care, and reduce their chances of being abused.<sup>71</sup>

### 5.2.5 Education and employment

Many survivors said they needed support to gain skills, including literacy, and access to employment. Survivors of sexual abuse in historical residential institutions often told Commissioners the poor quality of education they received while in the institution affected their access to employment and their quality of life. We heard in public hearings that many residential institutions did not prioritise children's education.

Commissioned research and other inquiries have also noted the poor quality of education provided to children in residential institutions, and have examined the negative impact of child sexual abuse on education and employment.<sup>72</sup> Studies have found victims of sexual abuse in institutions reported the trauma of the abuse impacted their ability to learn and engage in education.<sup>73</sup> Key inquiries have reported on the long term impacts of poor education in historical residential institutions, including unemployment, poverty and homelessness, and the intergenerational impacts on the children of survivors.<sup>74</sup>

We found in several case studies that many children did not have any real education and instead were put to physical labour.<sup>75</sup> Survivors also told us in public hearings that sexual abuse had affected their capacity to continue their education.<sup>76</sup> Volume 3, *Impacts* discusses the findings regarding the impacts of child sexual abuse on survivors.

In private sessions many survivors made suggestions to Commissioners about how to address the disadvantages they faced because of their lack of education. 'Ivan Peter' recommended a special access card to help care leavers manage education and medical expenses.<sup>77</sup> He said many care leavers had limited literacy and numeracy skills and this 'should be acknowledged as the norm rather than the exception'.

Some survivors told Commissioners they would benefit from particular support to find employment and establish economic security for their old age. 'Maria' arrived in Australia aged eight, as a child migrant from Europe.<sup>78</sup> She told us she worked two jobs and would like to access her superannuation so she could pay off her house:

I want to learn, I want to play, be a bit of a kid. I can't do that working 13 hours a day. I've struggled you know. I've bought a house, I've still got a little bit of mortgage ... I wish that really the government could say to me ... 'What would you like?' You know what I would say to them? 'Let me have \$40,000 out of my super so I can pay my house off, so that I can quit one of my jobs, so that I can have the rest of my aged life a little bit more easy'. That's what I would want.<sup>79</sup>

### 5.2.6 Redress and justice

Many survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions discussed the need for appropriate redress for what had happened to them. However, in private sessions there were different opinions about whether financial compensation or an apology would be meaningful. Survivors said redress schemes needed to acknowledge the trauma of children who had been sexually abused in institutions, and noted the importance of recognising and remembering what had happened in a way that would help survivors in the future. Survivors told us they wanted redress schemes to be more efficient and straightforward, and for institutions and those responsible for the abuse to bear the cost. Former child migrant and survivor, 'Cameron John' questioned who was responsible:

Who takes the blame for what happened? Is it the British Government or the Australian Government or the 'un-Christian Brothers'? I would think it is all three organisations that made this happen ...<sup>80</sup>

We were told by survivors in private sessions that the process for determining the amount of compensation needed to be transparent and fair. Many found navigating redress schemes difficult. Some said survivors should be provided with an independent caseworker or advocate to help them manage their way through the complaints process. 'Raquel' said she applied for redress but had not disclosed all her experiences on the application.<sup>81</sup> She thought the process had not been properly explained and compensation was money to keep quiet. 'Raquel' told the Royal Commission the money: 'didn't mean nothing ... It was like, shut your mouth and say no more ... We were told to shut up, that's what I felt it was ... But we've still got to live with it'.<sup>82</sup>

Many survivors wanted institutions to apologise for the abuse. These survivors felt that apologies were more valuable than monetary compensation. Some survivors who wanted an apology said they should be personalised and recognise the ripple effects of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts by apologising to survivors' family members as well. 'Dee' said she would like to receive some kind of apology for the abuse she experienced in her childhood, 'not for me, but for my grandchildren ... [for] what they done to me, and what they done to my family, and their families'.<sup>83</sup>

As noted in the *Redress and civil litigation* report, Ms Leonie Sheedy, representing CLAN, told the public hearing:

CLAN has been advocating over many years for formal apologies from every religious organisation, all charities, State governments and the police in all States. We would like to see this apology issued from a single national platform, such as Parliament House in Canberra. Each organisation should say sorry to those children who were abused in their orphanages and children's homes, but the apology should also be to the nation because these organisations collectively failed in their duty of care to these children.<sup>84</sup>

Other survivors suggested memorials and official days to remember survivors and victims of child sexual abuse. They said the memorials could become places of healing and support for survivors. Some felt remembering was one way to prevent child sexual abuse and protect children in the present and the future. 'Ellis Owen' said he was placed in an Aboriginal boys' home where he was abused. He suggested historical residential institutions could become museums and places for remembering the past.<sup>85</sup> 'Cory' said he would like to see a memorial for all the children who had been abused, in recognition of the suffering and injustice they experienced. He said he was abused in a Baptist-run mission in Western Australia in the early 1960s and wanted people who passed the memorial to know everyone had a story. He explained people need to know that 'not all the stories were the same. Each story is different'.<sup>86</sup>

We heard evidence in *Case Study 17: The response of the Australian Indigenous Ministries, the Australian and Northern Territory governments and the Northern Territory police force and prosecuting authorities to allegations of child sexual abuse which occurred at the Retta Dixon Home* that former residents of the Retta Dixon Home in the Northern Territory also expressed a desire for an on-site memorial.<sup>87</sup>

Survivors' views varied on what should happen to these residential institutions and how the history of abuse within them should be remembered. 'Sally' said she was abused in a government-run girls' home in western Sydney.<sup>88</sup> She has heard the home might be turned into a museum but she believes the building should be blown up.

Some survivors told Commissioners that legislation and sentencing regarding child sex offenders needed to be stronger. They were angry that perpetrators had not been punished. Some said that more severe penalties for sexually abusing children would act as a deterrent for potential perpetrators. 'Clay David' said he thought sex offenders received preferential treatment and protection in custody.<sup>89</sup> He said he would like to see 'harsher sentencing' for people convicted of these crimes.

The *Redress and civil litigation* report outlines recommendations for redress schemes based on our findings and research. Our *Criminal justice* report outlines recommendations for the criminal justice system.



### 5.2.7 Aged care

Many survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions told Commissioners they were afraid that they may need institutional care as they grew older. These survivors wanted to be confident the aged care system would be sensitive to their childhood experiences of abuse in institutions. In the *Nature, cause and impact of child sexual abuse* public hearing we heard from Research Fellow, Dr Philomena Horsley, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University about the challenges faced by older survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions.<sup>90</sup> Dr Horsley told us that as survivors age they can become physically frail and socially isolated. Some older people may also experience some form of cognitive impairment, which can lead to feelings of vulnerability and not feeling safe, and this can trigger traumatic memories. Dr Horsley noted that in hospital and aged care settings people lose their privacy and may be subject to intrusive physical examinations and personal care, and be surrounded by people who they do not know or trust, or who may be abusive.<sup>91</sup>

Reflecting Dr Horsley's evidence we heard that concerns about ageing and the prospect of returning to residential institutions for aged care were common in private sessions. Some survivors told Commissioners they would suicide rather than enter residential aged care. Childhood experiences of abuse and neglect in residential institutions made survivors fearful of further abuse.

'Glenys Maree' told us she lived in an orphanage until she was 16 years old and was very concerned about the future and the needs of survivors in aged care environments.<sup>92</sup> She said, 'That's the greatest fear for us 'homies', that we'll be re-abused in a nursing home'.

'Regina' also told us in her private session that after being abused and neglected in an orphanage, her biggest fear was having to live in a nursing home, as she was scared of being abused again.<sup>93</sup> 'I believe it's happening in nursing homes, is really bad ... I'd rather die than go to a nursing home, I really would.'

Some survivors had suggestions to improve aged care for survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions. 'Cecil Thomas' told us he was sexually and physically abused in a Catholic mission.<sup>94</sup> Now in his late 60s, he cares for his wife who is unwell, and suffers from many health issues himself. He told us that he thinks about what will happen to him in the future, and recommended that survivors should be helped to stay with their families when they get older. He said he thought nursing homes can seem too similar to the places where they grew up.

‘Naomi’ explained in her private session that she was sexually abused many times by nuns in a Catholic girls’ home.<sup>95</sup> She said her life had been transient for decades, and that she found ‘refuge in drugs and alcohol’ and entered violent relationships. Recent health problems led to her being housed temporarily in an aged care facility but the staff did not appreciate the difficulty she had with being contained within four walls. ‘Naomi’ told us it would be good if staff from government, care and community service organisations could become better ‘trauma-informed’.

They need people who can support us at the end of our time because we go into our shells. We get scared. I’ve run away from the nursing home a couple of times because in my head it was like being back in that home, and they don’t understand. They just don’t understand.<sup>96</sup>

Volume 9, *Advocacy, support and therapeutic treatment services* discusses the needs of older survivors of child sexual abuse.

### 5.2.8 Hopes for the future

Many survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions who came to the Royal Commission outlined clearly their hopes for the future. We were repeatedly told by these survivors how important it was for them to tell their story and have their accounts believed and respected. They highlighted that inquiries, government institutions and others should listen to survivors of child sexual abuse. Commissioners were impressed by the depth of survivors’ current concern for other children. Survivors came to us in the hope that by telling their story they could ensure that what happened to them would not happen to other children. Survivors’ knowledge contributed to our findings across the Final Report. Survivor’s concerns, and the need for change in children’s institutions (including the 10 Child Safe Standards) are acknowledged in Volume 6, *Making institutions child safe*, Volume 7, *Improving institutional responding and reporting* and in other research commissioned by us.

In private sessions and in their written accounts survivors often told Commissioners about the hardships in their lives now. With anger and sadness, many survivors described the impacts that child sexual abuse and other aspects of life in historical residential institutions had had on their adult lives. Survivors’ views of the impacts of child sexual abuse told to us in private sessions are discussed in Volume 5, *Private sessions*.

Other survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions also talked about the things that bring joy into their lives. Some talked about work and the benefit of working for others. ‘Anita’ talked about her work.<sup>97</sup> She now works in disability services and was passionate about protecting children with disability. She said, ‘It’s difficult to find the right protections without impinging on the freedoms of people you support. It’s such a hard balance’. Volume 9, *Advocacy, support and therapeutic treatment services* discusses the needs of survivors of child sexual abuse and the services available to them.

Many survivors told us in private sessions and in written accounts that they had drawn some strength from their relationships with friends, partners, wives, husbands and family, and from their responsibilities for grandchildren and others. They talked about the value of their relationships with others, especially with family. 'Jackie' had met her husband at 16 and, aside from a brief separation, they had been together ever since.<sup>98</sup> She said, 'Like they say, you only have one best friend in your life and I found him'. 'Allan John' told us his main goal in life was to 'get a home' after he left the historical residential institution.<sup>99</sup> 'Allan John' had married and now helped take care of his grandchildren. He told us:

I'm always there for my daughter and I pick up the little grandchildren from school. I don't need a lot of friends, that suits me fine. I worked hard for my home and that's my castle. I don't go to pubs or nightclubs or anything like that.<sup>100</sup>

Survivors of child sexual abuse in historical residential institutions talked about how they negotiated the trauma of their childhoods. 'Walter Louis' told us that now:

I just want some happiness in my life ... I just feel so damaged by all that's happened to me and ... I just hope that my life can improve. I don't want to be miserable all my life ... find some peace and get some help'.<sup>101</sup>

'Andreas' explained, 'When you were so young, this is what happened to you – how can you trust anyone, you know?' 'Andreas' now had support from his family and a new grandchild, and described his life as 'peaceful'.<sup>102</sup> He said:

I collect water from the rain, I got a big tank. I live mostly from the earth. Grow vegetables, plenty of vegetables, yeah. That's my interest in life, that's my stress relief.<sup>103</sup>

# Endnotes

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- 94 Name changed, private session, 'Cecil Thomas'.
- 95 Name changed, private session, 'Naomi'.
- 96 Name changed, private session, 'Naomi'.
- 97 Name changed, private session, 'Anita'.
- 98 Name changed, private session, 'Jackie'.
- 99 Name changed, private session, 'Alan John'.
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- 102 Name changed, private session, 'Andreas'.
- 103 Name changed, private session, 'Andreas'.

# APPENDICES



# Appendix A Case studies of historical residential institutions in this volume

**Table A.1 - Case studies of historical residential institutions in this volume**

Case Study	Report title
3	<i>Anglican Diocese of Grafton's response to child sexual abuse at the North Coast Children's Home</i>
5	<i>Response of The Salvation Army to child sexual abuse at its boys in New South Wales and Queensland</i>
7	<i>Child sexual abuse at the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay</i>
11	<i>Congregation of Christian Brothers in Western Australia response to child sexual abuse at Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School</i>
17	<i>The response of the Australian Indigenous Ministries, the Australian and Northern Territory governments and the Northern Territory police force and prosecuting authorities to allegations of child sexual abuse which occurred at the Retta Dixon Home</i>
19	<i>The response of the State of New South Wales to child sexual abuse at Bethcar Children's Home in Brewarrina, New South Wales</i>
26	<i>The response of the Sisters of Mercy, the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton and the Queensland Government to allegations of child sexual abuse at St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol</i>
30	<i>Case Study 30: The response of Turana, Winlaton and Baltara, and the Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria to allegations of child sexual abuse</i>
33	<i>Case Study 33: The response of The Salvation Army (Southern Territory) to allegations of child sexual abuse at children's homes that it operated</i>

# Appendix B Inquiries into children's residential institutions 1950-2013

**Table B. 1 - Inquiries into children's residential institutions 1950 – 2013**

Date	Jurisdiction	Title	Focus	Institutions named
1950	WA	Royal Commission appointed to inquire into alleged cases of brutality at the Claremont Mental Hospital	Allegations of physical abuse	Claremont Mental Hospital
1951	Tas	Public Service Commissioner's Investigation	Allegations by a former staff member of harsh punishments	Ashley Boys Home
1951–53	Tas	Inquiry into management of Ashley Boys Home	Concern that boys did badly on release	Ashley Boys Home
1952	Tas	Standing Committee on Public Works	Plans for rebuilding Ashley Boys Home	Ashley Boys Home
1954	WA	Investigation into the administration of the Child Welfare Department		Seaforth Home Swan Homes
1961	Qld	Commission of Inquiry into Farm Home for Boys, Westbrook	Primarily punishments. No specific mention of sexual abuse, but does note homosexual behaviour among boys	Westbrook
1965	Tas	Public Service Commissioner's Investigation	Allegations concerning conditions and treatment of inmates	Weeroona Girls' Training Centre
1965	Tas	Select Committee Inquiry into Weeroona Girls' Training Centre	An accusation that Director of Social Welfare had misled the Parliament about operation of the unit	Weeroona Girls' Training Centre
1973–74	Tas	Inquiry into Weeroona Girls' Training Centre	Allegations of corporal punishment	Weeroona Girls' Training Centre
1976	WA	Committee of Inquiry into Residential Child Care	To examine the role and involvement of religious organisations providing residential child care	Castledare Clontarf Catherine Macauley Centre Good Shepherd Teen Centre Parkerville Methodist Homes for Children Sister Kate's Salvation Army: Cottesloe and Hollywood
1978	Tas	Social Welfare Weeroona Inquiry	Again on excessive punishment	Weeroona Girls' Training Centre

Date	Jurisdiction	Title	Focus	Institutions named
1978	Tas	Committee of Review into the <i>Child Welfare Act 1960</i>	Government and non-government child welfare services	
1983	NSW	Ombudsman's Report	Initial focus on financial irregularities; shifted to physical and emotional abuse	Brougham
1987–91	National	Royal Commission	Deaths in police custody and other places of detention	Birralee Minda Remand Centre Rockhampton Prison SAYTC
1992–93	WA	Duty of Care Inquiry	Sexual abuse of two children in state foster care	
1993–95	Qld	Criminal Justice Commission Inquiry	Abuses and neglect of clients and harassment of staff	Basil Stafford Centre
1995–97	National	National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families	Tracing history and effects of removal. No specific reference to sexual abuse in terms of reference	Castledare Cootamundra Kinchela Sister Kate's
1996	WA	Select Committee into Child Migration	Outcomes for people who had been sent to WA by British and Maltese governments as unaccompanied child migrants	Bindoon Castledare Clontarf Fairbridge, Pinjarra Methodist Children's Home Nazareth House St Joseph's Girls Orphanage St Vincent's Foundling Home Swan Homes Tardun Farm School
1996–97	NSW	Community Services Commission	Quality and standard of care at Hall for Children (disability home)	Hall for Children, Hazelbrook
1996–98	NSW	Community Services Commission	Care and treatment of residents at Cram House	Cram House
1999	Qld	Commission of Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions (Forde Inquiry)	Allegations of abuse, positioning sexual abuse as the third of four forms of abuse identified.	John Oxley Centre Moreton Detention Centre Nazareth House Riverview St Vincent's Orphanage Silky Oaks Sir Leslie Wilson Centre Warilda Westbrook Wilson Youth Hospital

Date	Jurisdiction	Title	Focus	Institutions named
2001	National	Inquiry into Child Migration	Unsafe, improper or unlawful care or treatment of children in institutions: sexual abuse is the first of eight forms of abuse identified	<p>Barnardos, Mowbray Park  Barnardos, Normanhurst  Bindoon  Castledare  Clontarf  Dhurringile, Vic  Fairbridge, Molong  Fairbridge, Pinjarra  Goodwood, SA  Magill, SA  Melrose, Parramatta  Murray Dwyer, Newcastle  Salesians, Tas  St Joseph's, Neerkol  St Vincent's, Westmead  Tardun</p>
2003–04	National	Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care	Unsafe, improper and unlawful care or treatment of children in institutions	<p>Ashley Home, Tasmania  Ballarat Orphanage  Bayswater Boys' Home  Berry Training Farm  Bexley  Bidura  Bindoon  Box Hill (Salvation Army)  Brougham, Woollahra  Burn Brae  Burnside  Carlingford  Castledare  Clontarf  Gill Memorial, Goulburn  Good Shepherd, Abbotsford  Hartnett House  Hopewood  Kilmany Park  Mater Dei, Camden  Melbourne Orphanage  Methodist Cottages, Brisbane  Morningstar  Nazareth Boys House  Nazareth House, Ballarat  Nazareth House, Brisbane  Nedlands (Salvation Army)  Queen Alexandra Home  Phillip House, Gosford  Riverview (Salvation Army)  Royleston  St Augustine's, Geelong  St Heliers  St John of God  St John's, Goulburn  St Joseph's, Kincumber  St Joseph's, Lane Cove  St Joseph's, Largs Bay  St Joseph's, Surrey Hills  St Vincent's Orphanage (Goodwood)  St Vincent's Orphanage (Neerkol)  St Vincent's, South Melbourne  Salvation Army Box Hill  Sandgate  Tardun  The Laurels  Turana  Westbrook  Westmead  Winlaton</p>

Date	Jurisdiction	Title	Focus	Institutions named
2003–04	Qld	Crime and Misconduct Commission	Abuse of children in foster care	
2003–06	Tas	Listen to the Children: Ombudsman's Report	Arose out of media exposure of paedophilia in institution for children	Barrington Boys Home Gilburn Receiving Home Glendel Children's Home Laroona Family Group Home Omaru Receiving Home Rochebank Hostel St Joseph's Orphanage Weeroona Girls Training Centre
2004–08	SA	Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry (Mullighan Inquiry)	Allegations of sexual abuse and death of children in state care	<p> <u>Government institutions</u>            Seaforth Home, 1921–75            Glandore Industrial School/Glandore Children's Home, 1950–73            Struan Farm            School, Naracoorte, 1947–69  <u>Non-government institutions</u>            Farr House, Anglican Church, 1860–1982            Kennion House, Anglican Church, 1886–1984            Lochiel Park Boys Training Centre / Community Unit, 1958–present            Minda, 1898–present  <u>Government cottage homes</u>            Clark Cottage, 1963–79            Merrilama Cottage, 1960–79            Hay Cottage, 1968–79            Fullarton Cottage, 1970–79            Stirling Cottage, 1962–79            Pleasant Avenue Cottage, Glandore, 1975–79            Slade Cottage, Glandore/Somerton Park, 1973–88         </p>

Date	Jurisdiction	Title	Focus	Institutions named
2004–08	SA	Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry (Mullighan Inquiry)	Allegations of sexual abuse and death of children in state care	<p>Southern Region Group Home, Glenelg 1979–81, Glandore 1981–90</p> <p><u>Non-government cottage homes</u></p> <p>Smith Street Cottage, 1976–84</p> <p>Kennion Cottage, 1984–unknown</p> <p>Rose Cottage, 1988–93</p> <p><u>Government hostels</u></p> <p>Allambi Girls' Hostel, 1947–77</p> <p>Davenport House, 1964–77</p> <p>Elizabeth Grace Hostel, 1972–79</p> <p>Nindee Hostel, 1971–present</p> <p>Kumanka Boys' Hostel, 1946–80</p> <p>Stuart House, 1964–90; North Adelaide Community Unit, 1990–97</p> <p><u>Youth shelters</u></p> <p>Exodus Youth Shelter, 1985–unknown</p> <p>Unit Living, Marion, 1974–90</p> <p>Residential care units</p> <p>Gilles Plains Community Unit, 1979–90; Gilles Plains Assessment Unit, 1992–present</p> <p>Hay Community Unit, 1979–88</p> <p>Clarence Park Assessment Unit, 1989–92</p> <p>Northern Region Admission Unit, 1979–90</p> <p>Southern Region Admission Unit, 1979–90</p> <p>Central/Western Region Admission Unit, 1979–86</p> <p>Sturt Assessment Unit, 1995–present</p> <p>Enfield Community Unit, 1990–present</p> <p>Campbelltown Community Unit (Cornerways), 1995–present</p> <p>North Adelaide Community Unit, 1990–97</p>
2005	WA	Independent Review	Allegations of abuse against children in state care	Bindoon
2007–08	WA	Taskforce to identify the scope and extent of the 'stolen wages' issue, and to suggest policy options and administration issues	Wages held in trust for Aboriginal youth and adults	<p>Carrolup</p> <p>Karralundi Mission</p> <p>Marribank</p> <p>Mogumber</p> <p>Moola Bulla Station</p> <p>Moore River Native Settlement</p> <p>New Norcia Mission</p> <p>Roelands</p> <p>Sister Kate's</p>

Date	Jurisdiction	Title	Focus	Institutions named
2012	WA	Special Inquiry	Allegations of sexual abuse in hostels	Albany Residential College Kartanup Carnarvon High School Hostel Merridin Residential College Craig House Narrogin Residential College Dellahale House St Andrew's Hostel Hardie House St Christopher's Hostel John Frewer House Swanleigh
2012–13	Qld	Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry	To review the progress of implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions; and Protecting Children: An inquiry into the abuse of children in foster care To review the effectiveness of the current child protection services system in Queensland	John Oxley Youth Detention Centre
2013	Vic	Select Committee	Handling of child abuse in religious and other non-government organisations	Bayswater Boys Home Box Hill Boys Home Morningstar St Augustine's Boys Home St Vincent de Paul's Boys Home

Source: S Swain, *History of inquiries reviewing institutions providing care for children*, report prepared for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2014 pp 12–45.





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