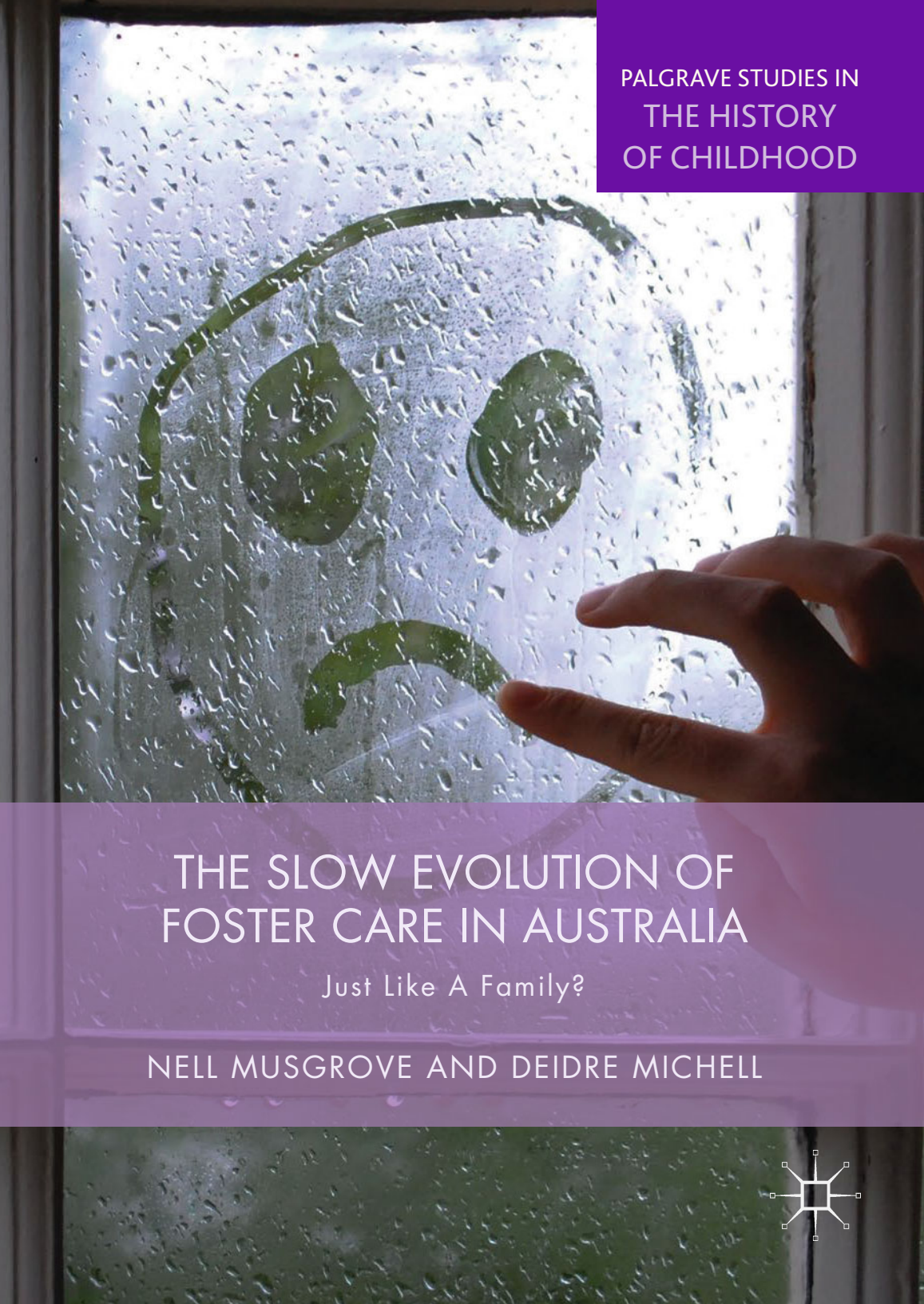

PALGRAVE STUDIES IN
THE HISTORY
OF CHILDHOOD

THE SLOW EVOLUTION OF FOSTER CARE IN AUSTRALIA

Just Like A Family?

NELL MUSGROVE AND DEIDRE MICHELL

Palgrave Studies in the History of Childhood

Series Editors
George Rousseau
University of Oxford, UK

Laurence Brockliss
University of Oxford, UK

Palgrave Studies in the History of Childhood is the first of its kind to historicise childhood in the English-speaking world; at present no historical series on children/childhood exists, despite burgeoning areas within Child Studies. The series aims to act both as a forum for publishing works in the history of childhood and a mechanism for consolidating the identity and attraction of the new discipline.

More information about this series at
http://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14586

Nell Musgrove · Deidre Michell

The Slow Evolution of Foster Care in Australia

Just Like a Family?

palgrave
macmillan

Nell Musgrove
Australian Catholic University
Fitzroy, VIC, Australia

Deidre Michell
University of Adelaide
Adelaide, SA, Australia

Palgrave Studies in the History of Childhood
ISBN 978-3-319-93899-8 ISBN 978-3-319-93900-1 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93900-1

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018945194

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2018
This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.
The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.
The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover credit: © veryan dale/Alamy Stock Photo

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Preface

This book attempts the enormous task of placing a robust critical examination of foster care in a deep historical context, and communicating that to as wide a readership as possible. Writing a book with multiple audiences in mind is never an easy task, yet we saw no other option when we began our discussions about how to capture the years of research we had completed into the complex history of foster care in Australia. From the first time we spoke about researching this topic together we shared an understanding that there was important information to record and understand for the benefit of scholars, care leavers, policy makers, social workers, foster carers, other people directly touched by foster care—and the wider Australian public. As our work progressed we realised how much our findings resonated with people from across the globe too. In recognition of these multiple audiences, throughout the text we have referenced lightly, being careful to show where our ideas and evidence have come from, but emphasising readability and accessibility over rigid adherence to academic stylistic conventions. Similarly, we decided that detailed theoretical and methodological discussions were largely not suited to this work—for those interested, our engagement with these can be accessed in the other scholarly publications from the project.

From the beginning we also thought broadly about who has been touched by foster care. This is not just a book for those who have been foster children, or foster carers, but also for people who have worked within foster care systems, people who have grown up with foster siblings in their families, families who have been separated through foster care,

and anyone who has gained or lost loved ones linked with foster care. We have been more successful in capturing some of these experiences than others. In particular, the voices of parents who have lost children to foster care are not as present as we had initially hoped—yet they have always been in our minds. We also acknowledge that the work is often critical of the people responsible for administering foster care—yet we also found people who had devoted their professional lives to making foster care as strong as possible, and we want to praise their good will and good work. But the truth as we found it was that systems have failed many families, many times, over many years, and we need to confront that.

Although this work was conceptualised as part of the post-inquiry and post-apology responses to historical child welfare policies and practices, a conversation which has been heavily shaped by considerations of the failures of past welfare systems, we have also tried to keep an eye on where foster care has succeeded. There are some stories of survival, resilience, flourishing and love, but they are almost always tempered by suffering and sadness. There have been decent and devoted people involved in foster care, and there has often been good will, but we could—and should—do things so much better than we have in the past. Therefore, with this book we have interrogated what we see as the most important questions: Why have we as a community largely forgotten or not noticed foster care? What has worked? What has failed? Why have we returned to using foster care when problems with the system recycle with alarming regularity?

At its heart, this book is a social history. People's voices are central, and for the period within living memory we approach this through a combination of original oral history interviews and engagement with other survivor testimony and autobiography. For the period beyond living memory we use a range of techniques to write people's experiences into the history we reconstruct through archival records. One of our key strategies has been to construct microhistories of the people we found in the archives, and we also want to acknowledge the extent to which our reading of those sources has been informed by the questions that more recent care leavers have asked about how they found themselves constructed in their own child welfare records.

Completing this research has stretched over more years than we had originally planned, and taken us across much of the Australian continent. We have so many people to thank for their contributions to that

research. First and foremost, we thank all of the people without whose stories we could not have written this book. Some of you know you have shared your stories, because you were part of our national oral history project; some have shared your stories publicly through other oral history collections, media articles, submissions to inquiries, or autobiographical works. Others are stories of people from earlier generations we found in archival records. We have valued and respected all of your contributions, and thought deeply about how to proceed when the voices we heard were in tension with one another. We hope that what we have to say is meaningful to you, although we know it can never hope to capture your entire truth.

In practical terms, this research was able to take on the scope it did because of funding received through an Australian Research Council Discovery Project (DP130104578) for which we are deeply thankful. The work would also not have been possible without the help of many colleagues and supporters whose intellectual insight and generosity of spirit and time have been incredibly valuable. We are profoundly grateful for the support and advice of a number of people within key organisations including Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN), Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA), OzChild, Relationships Australia, and the South Australian Government, as well as numerous care leaver support services and foster carer associations across the nation. We have also been fortunate to have the support of a number of talented researchers who have contributed to the project in a range of ways: Sari Braithwaite, Kerrie Fisher, Amanda Peters, Caroline Evans, Suzanne Mitchell, Pam Petrilli, Nathan Kauschke and Jemma Tonkin. At various points during this project numerous colleagues in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Adelaide have provided administrative and intellectual support, and almost all of the historians at Australian Catholic University (ACU) have shared their insight and advice with us. To all, we want to express our warm appreciation of their contributions. Naomi Wolfe, historian and Aboriginal Academic in the ACU School of Arts, has been a tireless supporter of the project in general, and provided cultural advice, as did other Elders including Aunty Janet Turpie-Johnstone, Aunty Doseena Fergie, and Aunty Delsie Lillyst. Shurlee Swain—thank you—this book would not exist as it is without you. Finally, we also want to thank our friends and families—without you such a long and emotionally demanding project would never have been possible.

We began this project with the lofty goal of wanting to make a difference—to give voice to those previously not heard, to provide an historical context for informing future policy and practice of out of home care in Australia, and to write the first national history of foster care in this country. We have achieved our final aim, and hope that this book will encourage more Australians to talk about foster care so that past problems are not repeated.

Fitzroy, Australia — Nell Musgrove
Adelaide, Australia — Deidre Michell

Contents

1 Introduction: There Is No Typical Story of Foster Care 1
The Image of the Child 1
The History of Foster Care in Australia 4
Talking About Foster Care in the Aftermath of Inquiries and Apologies 13
About This Book 18
References 22

Part I Looking for the 'Care' in Foster Care

2 Did Anybody Care? The Death of John Wood Pledger 27
John Wood Pledger's Early Life 28
John Becomes a Foster Child 32
Shocking Discoveries of Abuse 35
Explaining Physical Abuse 39
Ignoring Sexual Abuse 41
What Can We Learn from the Death of John Wood Pledger? 43
Luke Anthony Borusiewicz 46
References 49

3 Making and Breaking Families 51
The Thomas Family 52

Living Under the Control of the Department for Neglected Children 57
Fighting for Family Connections 63
Siblings and Foster Care 68
What the Archives Cannot Tell Us 75
References 83

4 Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care 87
Priscilla 89
Reasons for Foster Care 95
Surviving Foster Care 102
Education 110
Legacies of Growing Up in Foster Care 117
References 124

5 They're Just Doing It for the Money 127
Remunerating Foster Carers 128
Who Are Australian Foster Carers? 137
Matthew 142
Motivations for Foster Care 145
It's Not About the Money 150
References 153

Part II Shaping the Lives of the Invisible Children of the State

6 Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices 159
Implementing Foster Care 160
'Deserving' and 'Undeserving' Cases 172
Arresting, Criminalising and Stigmatising Children 181
References 192

7 Rediscovering Foster Care 197
Finding Foster Care in the Historical Press 199
Looking More Closely at Foster Care in the Historical Press 205
References 217

8 Writing to Heal—The Emergence of Foster Care in Literature 221
Nineteenth-Century Heroic Foster Parents 224
Children's Books 226
Adult Fiction 233
Autobiographical Accounts of Foster Care 238
References 252

9 Are We Getting Better at This? 259
The Decline of Foster Care and the Rise of Kinship Care 263
Support for Foster Carers 269
Permanency Planning 277
Outcomes 283
References 289

10 Conclusion—What Can History Tell Us About the Future of Foster Care? 293
References 305

Index 307

List of Figures

Fig. 7.1 Relevant articles per year 1865–1954—As percentage of all articles on Trove for each year 202

Fig. 7.2 Coverage of children's institutions against unemployment and immigration—As percentage of articles on Trove for each 204

Fig. 7.3 Articles relevant to children's institutions vs. Foster care 1865–1954—As percentage of all articles on Trove for each year 205

List of Tables

Table 3.1	Siblings admitted as state wards together in Victoria, 1870–1893	72
Table 7.1	Article themes	207

Check for updates

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: There Is No Typical Story of Foster Care

The Image of the Child

The early twenty-first century has exposed the plights of vulnerable children to the world in new and disturbing ways. In the age of digital media, the rapid circulation of images and personal stories gives a sense of immediacy to the global community's expressions of outrage against inhumanities inflicted on children—yet, this outrage can be fleeting. In 2015, photographs of drowned Syrian refugee child Alan Kurdi made a sensation in the international press and then across numerous social media platforms. For a time, this stimulated widespread support for, and interest in, the Syrian refugee crisis. Opinion remains divided as to whether we should understand such public moral outcries as genuine expressions of desire for humanitarian intervention, or as armchair emoting to take the place of direct action, but no matter how we understand the phenomenon, it is clear that the effect, for most, is ephemeral.[1] The world may have had sympathy for one child but, on the whole, we were reluctant to confront our own complicity in the systemic economic and social disadvantages which created the situation. The problem with foster care is the same—not only does popular concern rise and fall in reaction

[1] Mette Mortensen and Hans-Jörg Trenz, "Media Morality and Visual Icons in the Age of Social Media: Alan Kurdi and the Emergence of an Impromptu Public Moral Spectatorship," *Javnost—The Public* 23, no. 4 (2016): 343–62.

© The Author(s) 2018

N. Musgrove and D. Michell, *The Slow Evolution of Foster Care in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in the History of Childhood,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93900-1_1

to periodic scandals, it also gathers around the 'simple' parts of the stories. It is not a bad thing that people feel moved by tragic stories of innocent children's deaths or other suffering; but the urge, which so often accompanies these scandals, to assign blame so that the problem can be solved and left in the past, rarely adequately grapples with the complexities of events. The many experiences of foster care we have uncovered in researching this book—which go back as far as the mid-nineteenth century and stretch forward to the present—make it impossible for us to paint such a simple picture. There is no typical story of foster care: no universal truths about why children are sent to foster care; no widely applicable archetype of a failing family; and no simple answers about why, as a society, we cannot stem the tide of children we send to foster homes.

Personification of individual cases can serve a purpose. By its very nature foster care is largely hidden, both because it is located in the private homes of geographically scattered families, and because a combination of social and legal factors mean that foster children are not always easily and openly identifiable as such. When foster care goes really wrong—typically when a child dies in foster care (or dies because authorities failed to intervene and initiate foster care)—media coverage of the individual child's plight can turn public scrutiny to this major social welfare institution which, for many of us, is not a part of our everyday lives. But the question remains: does this promote long-term positive reform? The two examples of boys who died in foster care examined in Chapter 2 of this book, would suggest not.[2] These boys were born more than one hundred years apart, yet there were striking similarities in the systemic failures which resulted in their deaths, and in each case, the response was a formal investigation of the individual case but little action with regards to systemic change.

In contrast, some cases provoke such public outrage that anything less than a clear and decisive government response would be tantamount to political suicide. Such was the case in the 2012 death of Chloe Valentine in South Australia. Why, people asked, had the child not been removed from her mother despite the case being well known to local child protection authorities? Many details of the case came to light as Chloe's mother and her partner both faced criminal charges—each eventually pleading guilty to manslaughter. More than two and a half years after the little

[2] Chapter 2: Did Anybody Care? The Death of John Wood Pledger.

girl's death the government department responsible, Families SA, faced an inquest into their part in the case. Many of the recommendations of the inquest, as well as the pushes from parliamentarians for systemic and legal reforms which followed (only some of which were implemented), tended to share the starting assumption that the department needed to be more proactive in separating children from their families. This satisfied the public appetite for seeing the government 'take action' in the Chloe Valentine case, but sat uncomfortably with the national government's formal apologies recognising the great harms done to children in the past through policies which too readily turned to family separation—to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people separated from their families (apology in 2008), to those sent out as child migrants and all other children separated from their families through historical child welfare policies and practices (apology in 2009), and to those separated through forced adoption (apology in 2013).

The purpose of highlighting this tension is not to suggest that nothing went wrong in Chloe Valentine's case. Clearly, it did—not just because she died, but because the court cases and inquest revealed a child welfare system that was not always following its own ideas about best practice. However, the reasons for this were not primarily that the department's workers did not have the power to remove children from their homes—they did. But there were other important contributing factors, like the chronic under-resourcing of child welfare, social worker burn-out and turn-over, and the complexities of the social problems which arise from marginalisation, poverty and addiction. It is hard for governments to 'take action' in ways which account for all of this, let alone the fact that no law or policy can provide case by case answers about when the risks to a particular child in its family home are greater than those we know come with removing children to foster care. This, of course, is not the response the public is seeking in the wake of the death of a child.

Perhaps one of the most internationally famous cases which led to a government 'taking action' was that of Welsh foster children Dennis and Terence O'Neill, whose harrowing experience of foster care inspired the Agatha Christie play *The Mousetrap*.[3] The horrific conditions in the O'Neill brothers' Shropshire foster home were only

[3] Also Christie's story *Three Blind Mice* upon which the play was based.

discovered after Dennis died there on 9 January 1945.[4] The boys had been starved, beaten, terrified and humiliated—virtually on a daily basis. Newspapers across Britain covered the story, and in his autobiography, Terence recalls throngs of supporters gathering outside the courtroom when he was called to give evidence against his former foster parents.[5] The British Parliament called for an inquiry, and the resulting Monckton Report identified many failures to comply with regulations relating to the placement, inspection and medical care of children in foster homes. It also highlighted problematic inconsistencies between the regulations for placing foster children under Poor Law provisions as compared to those, like the O'Neill boys, under the *Children and Young Persons Act 1933*.[6] The Care of Children Committee, chaired by Dame Edna Curtis, was established in the wake of the Monckton inquiry, and its landmark report, tabled in British parliament in 1946, had a significant influence on child welfare in Britain and internationally—including in Australia.[7] It would, therefore, be glib to suggest that nothing happens in response to foster care scandals, but we also know that many of the failures we see in foster care today, share much with those of more than a century ago.[8]

The History of Foster Care in Australia

This book's focus is on Australia, yet the issues it raises resonate globally, and the contours of the histories it traces intersect and contrast with studies of child welfare, and foster care more specifically, in other nations.[9]

[4]Walter Monckton, *Report on the Circumstances Which Led to the Boarding Out of Dennis and Terence O'Neill at Bank Farm, Minsterley, and the Steps Taken to Supervise Their Welfare* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1945), 4.

[5]Terence O'Neill, *Someone to Love Us: The Shocking True Story of Two Brothers Fostered into Brutality and Neglect* (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 2010).

[6]Monckton, *Report on the Circumstances Which Led to the Boarding Out of Dennis and Terence O'Neill at Bank Farm, Minsterley, and the Steps Taken to Supervise Their Welfare*, 17–18.

[7]Myra Curtis, *Report of the Care of Children Committee* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1946).

[8]For further development of this point see Chapter 2: Did Anybody Care? The Death of John Wood Pledger.

[9]Selecting accurate and appropriate terminology is a challenge, both because popular terms and usage have changed considerably over the long period covered by this book, and because we consciously position ourselves in a critical relationship with language. For

Although the purpose of the book is not to provide a detailed chronological charter of the laws and policies which governed foster care and its place within government welfare systems, it is useful to place the broader trajectory of foster care in Australia in an international context. Foster care was used widely across continental Europe, but the nations which influenced practice in Australia most were other anglophone nations.[10] In some ways, this is not surprising. Veronica Strong-Boag notes that, in Canada, English and French provinces were often more influenced by other nations within their own language group than they were by each other.[11] Yet Australian child welfare departments' lack of engagement with non-English-speaking nations' foster practices is notable in the sense that they did compare their institutional design to places in continental Europe like the well-known *Rauhes Haus* and *Mettray*. These institutions had advocates who, from the 1830s and 1840s, actively promoted the value of their models to the wider community of social reformers whose intellectual reach spanned English and non-English-speaking Europe (and to a lesser extent their colonies and former colonies).[12] Comparable ideological advocates of foster care emerged later in the century, and those with influence in Australia were firmly located within what Elizabeth Harvey has described as "layered networks" of the British Empire.[13]

example, the phrase being 'in care' has often been used to describe children separated from their families and placed in other living arrangements, but people who have experienced this have argued that there was little that was genuinely *caring* about being 'in care'. The following section of this introduction probes this dilemma more deeply and outlines the approach to terminology adopted in this book.

[10]Some useful works examining the history of foster care in various part of Europe see: Elisabeth Engberg, "Boarded Out by Auction: Poor Children and Their Families in Nineteenth-Century Northern Sweden," *Continuity and Change* 19, no. 3 (2005): 431–57; Susan Broomhall, ed. *Emotions in the Household, 1200–1900* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[11]Veronica Strong-Boag, *Fostering Nation? Canada Confronts Its History of Childhood Disadvantage* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011).

[12]Eileen Janes Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996).

[13]Elizabeth Harvey, "'Layered Networks': Imperial Philanthropy in Birmingha, and Sydney, 1860–1914," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwelath History* 41, no. 1 (2013): 120–42.

A comparison between the development of foster care in Australia and Scotland is useful. Despite the fact that Australian commentators most often compared Australia to England, the idea of using foster care (often called boarding out) for as many children as possible was far more like the practice in place in Scotland. Lynn Abrams argues that boarding out had a long history in Scotland, but that from the 1860s, it was rapidly taken up as the primary means of placing children.[14] From the 1870s, Australian colonial governments also began to see foster care as the preferred way of placing the vast majority of children under their authority. Australian advocates of foster care shared the Scottish rhetoric about the benefits of sending urban children to the country, but often the available foster homes were in the cities, largely because of the difficulties of inspecting foster homes in areas remote from centres of population.

The rise and fall of reliance on foster care also followed a different pattern in Australia than in Scotland. Abrams has shown that foster care placements accounted for a considerable majority of children 'in care' in Scotland from 1845 until World War Two, but for a declining proportion during the second half of the twentieth century.[15] In Australia, the 1850s and 1860s saw a spike in the number of institutions specifically for children, some run by religious organisations and others under the control of colonial governments. Between 1870 and Word War One foster care emerged as the preferred mode of providing for the majority of children under government guardianship, and even many of the Protestant orphanages and Children's Homes incorporated boarding out schemes into their work, although the Catholic organisations generally opposed this trend. In the interwar period, reliance on institutions became heavier as foster homes became harder to find—a phenomenon rapidly accelerated by the Great Depression—and foster care once again became the

[14] Lynn Abrams, *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1998), 35–37.

[15] Abrams notes that part of the apparent rise in the number of non-foster care placements in the statistics is due to the inclusion of more categories of institutions and children under supervision in their own homes, but the decreasing reliance on foster care over the period is clear (38–39). Nonetheless, Abrams notes that, "Residential care continues to be regarded as the poor relation of foster care" (117).

primary mode for placing children in the 1980s following the retreat from large scale institutions in the 1970s.[16]

In Canada, as in the United States, foster care emerged as a major component of child welfare systems from around the 1890s, and in both nations historians have associated it with the shift towards government-based child welfare provision, discourses promoted by the child rescue movement and societies for the prevention of cruelty to children, and the concomitant emotional revaluing of the child.[17] Australia was profoundly influenced by all of these same ideological shifts, but foster care was already in place as the predominant way of providing for most children under government control by that time.[18] Another element that Australian child welfare shared with Canada and the United States was its interventions into the lives of Indigenous children. Across all three nations Indigenous children were the targets of policies intended to obliterate their culture through family separation, and while places like residential schools, mission schools and other institutions are the most infamous sites associated with Indigenous child removal, foster care also played a role—often more effectively isolating children from their families because foster homes were more difficult for them to locate than institutions.[19]

[16]For a more detailed exploration of this see: Nell Musgrove, *The Scars Remain: A Long History of Forgotten Australians and Children's Institutions* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013). For an examination of the distinct approach of Catholic institutions, particularly their resistance to foster care until quite late in the twentieth century, see: Jill Barnard and Karen Twigg, *Holding on to Hope: A History of the Founding Agencies of Mackillop Family Services 1854–1997* (Kew, VIC: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2004). Strong-Boag, *Fostering Nation?*, notes a similar trend by Catholic institutions in Quebec.

[17]Strong-Boag, *Fostering Nation*; Tim Hacsi, "From Indenture to Family Foster Care: A Brief History of Child-Placing," *Child Welfare* 74, no. 1 (1995): 162–68; Catherine Rymph, *Raising Government Children: A History of Foster Care and the American Welfare State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); and Lori Askeland, ed. *Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages and Foster Care: A Historical Handbook and Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006).

[18]Dorothy Scott and Shurlee Swain, *Confronting Cruelty: Historical Perspectives on Child Protection in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002); Shurlee Swain and Margot Hillel, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Resuce Discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850–1915* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

[19]Margaret Jacobs, *A Generation Removed: The Fostering and Adoption of Indigenous Children in the Postwar World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014); Strong-Boag, *Fostering Nation*; and Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000* (Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000).

The first arrangements that we might call foster care in Australia can be found in the early years of European colonial occupation, which began at what is now the city of Sydney, in 1788. Before this, Aboriginal nations had no need for such a system, because children were at the centre of social structure, existing within intricate and extensive kinship networks which ensured that all children had people to parent and protect them. In contrast, Australian colonial society began producing orphaned and abandoned children from almost its first moment. The very earliest arrangements for providing for these children were akin to what we now call foster care; children were boarded with approved families for extra rations or land, but the institutionalisation of children quickly became the preferred practice. A similar pattern of ad hoc boarding out, followed by the adoption of either government or philanthropically run institutions, repeated as Europeans arrived to establish what would become the capital cities of the colonies of Tasmania (1803), Queensland (1824), Western Australia (1829), South Australia (1834) and Victoria (1834).[20]

Child welfare followed similar arcs across the Australian colonies, tailored to the different social, demographic and economic conditions, and when the colonies federated and became the states of the new Australian nation in 1901, child welfare remained under state rather than federal control. Therefore, in writing about foster care in Australia, we are attempting to weave together the histories of the six states and two territories of Australia. Our approach has been to balance nationwide survey research, and a national oral history project, with deep case studies of two states: South Australia and Victoria. South Australia and Victoria provide useful comparisons because they were two of the earliest colonies to adopt boarding out as a central component of government child welfare provision, yet they did so under quite different circumstances.

[20]These years represent the establishment of the colonial towns which became capital cities rather than the formal recognition of the independent colonies since many were formally governed by New South Wales for a considerable period, but had actually operated quite autonomously for much of that time. These years provide the best sense of how long the societies and infrastructures had been developing by the middle of the nineteenth century. For more detail on the differences in child welfare developments across these early colonies, see Musgrove, *The Scars Remain*.

From the early 1850s, Victoria had a booming economy, fuelled by the discovery of gold in 1851. Massive numbers of people migrated into the colony, and while some made their fortunes on the goldfields, many struggled to keep food on the table. This placed enormous pressure on welfare relief—which was provided by charities partly supported by government funds—and produced large numbers of urban poor whose children became viewed as a 'social problem'. The government established industrial and reformatory schools in 1864, and while this was intended as a means of redirecting 'wayward' children and preventing 'criminal' youth from entering prison, it effectively operated as the first social welfare relief provided directly by the government.[21] The government schools were designed for children old enough for training and work—roughly ten years and older—but they were flooded with very young children, and many more than they had expected. Overcrowded, and not fit for purpose, these institutions attracted great public criticism.

Two Royal Commissions in two years—one examining industrial schools and the other reformatories—recommended boarding out as a means of improving conditions in the colony's institutions.[22] There were certainly people in the colony who supported boarding out for philosophical reasons, seeing it as a better way of providing for children, but its implementation by the Victorian government (through its Neglected and Criminal Children Office) was largely pragmatic. It would be expensive to expand the schools to accommodate the number of children entering the system; good staff were difficult to obtain; conditions in the schools had become a public embarrassment; infants were dying at alarming rates; and the single mothers who made up the majority of the wet nurses were seen as an undesirable influence on the older girls in the schools. In fact, the visibility of infant mortality and the urgency of removing wet nurses from the schools led to the government boarding out infants as early as 1872 even though the legislation which made

[21] Christina Twomey, *Deserted and Destitute: Motherhood, Wife Desertion and Colonial Welfare* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2002).

[22] Shurlee Swain, *History of Inquiries Reviewing Institutions Providing Care for Children* (Sydney: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2014).

boarding out legal was not passed until 1874.[23] Foster homes were found and supervised in each district by voluntary Ladies Committees, and although the number of women performing this work dropped away in the interwar years, these committees were not officially disbanded until 1954.

In contrast, South Australia served as a kind of social laboratory in which a group of women established themselves as experts on child welfare. The colony of South Australia was created officially in 1834 for 'free' rather than convict settlers. While the ideal was full employment, the reality during the 1850s was economic depression, and many men fled to search for gold in Victoria. With few men left to work, authorities sought to encourage poor Irish girls—especially orphans between 14 and 18—to migrate. When the girls arrived in Port Adelaide and realised how poorly they would be compensated for hard physical labour, or on hearing stories about women broken by the work, many refused to commence their intended positions and took up sex work instead. From this came the 'pauper' children who attracted the reformist attention of Caroline Emily Clark (1825–1911), niece of the noted Birmingham-based social reformer Matthew Davenport Hill (1792–1872).[24]

Unlike Victoria, the South Australian government involved itself directly in poor relief from as early as 1849. By 1852, the year Caroline Clark emigrated to South Australia from England, there were already children accommodated in the government's Destitute Asylum.[25] In 1866, Caroline Clark began lobbying the South Australian Government to adopt a model of boarding out which she was informed had been in use in Edinburgh for eighteen years. Her argument in a letter to the editor of the *Register*, the first newspaper in South Australia (in which her brother had shares), was that rather than increase the capacity of

[23]This reading of the period emerges from the annual reports of the Neglected and Criminal Children's Office, but also from many pieces of correspondence between the Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools and the Chief Secretary (the person in government responsible for the schools): Public Record Office Victoria (PROV), Chief Secretary's Inward Registered Correspondence II, VPRS 3991.

[24]Mary Geyer, *Behind the Wall: The Women of the Destitute Asylum Adelaide, 1852–1918* (Adelaide, SA: Wakefield Press, 2008), 23. Also see Bernard Smith, *The Boy Adeodatus* (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin, 1984), 83–84.

[25]"Find & Connect: Destitute Asylum," https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/guide/sa/SE00062, last accessed 27 February 2018.

the Destitute Asylum—currently under discussion—housing "the aged and the young, the unfortunate and the criminal" and where the "pauper children" were being "foster[ed] in the hot bed of their own moral disease," the children should be "boarded with families in the country" where they could be put to work. "It is not training of the mind half so much as training of the habits that is wanted" she said, "and the habits are far more easily trained during manual labour than in the schoolroom."[26] In 1872, the South Australian Government amended the *Destitute Act* to allow for foster parents to take children in return for five shillings a week, and Clark formed the Boarding Out Society to provide volunteer supervisors to the Destitute Board. In 1887, Clarke was appointed to the new State Children's Council, by which time 666 children were boarded out and scattered across 200 city, suburban and country districts.[27] As we discuss in Chapter 9, South Australia, which once led the country in instituting foster care, is now in the forefront of a decline of the practice.[28]

Clark was assisted in her campaign by other middle-upper-class philanthropic women. Noted journalist, reformer and preacher Catherine Helen Spence (1825–1910), for example, served as a visitor to foster homes and on the State Children's Council. Marian Jefferis (1833–1917) was another. When she moved with her husband, a congregational minister, from Adelaide to Sydney in 1877, Jefferis successfully promoted foster care in New South Wales. By 1896, boarding out was firmly established as that state's preferred method of providing for children, although institutional care of children continued with industrial and reformatory schools, and through various charitable institutions as it did in all states.[29]

[26] "The Destitute Asylum. To the Editor," *South Australian Register* (Adelaide), 14 March 1866. "Clark, Caroline Emily (1825–1911)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/clark-caroline-emily-3212, last accessed 22 April 2018.

[27] South Australia, State Children's Council, *Report for the Year Ending June 30th, 1887*.

[28] Chapter 9: Are We Getting Better at This?

[29] Catherine Helen Spence, *State Children in Australia: A History of Boarding Out and Its Developments* (Adelaide: Vardon, 1907); Catherine Helen Spence, *Ever Yours* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2005), 99–108; Smith, *The Boy Adeodatus*, 84–85; and Brian Dickey, *No Charity There: A Short History of Social Welfare in Australia* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Australia, 1980).

There was much international praise of formal boarding out in Australia and, in fact, colonial Australia was a key node in a transnational network of philanthropic women crafting out public profiles for themselves as experts in child welfare.[30] Englishwoman Florence Davenport Hill (1829–1919), Caroline Clark's cousin, took a particular interest in boarding out. In 1868, she wrote about boarding out in preference to workhouses for the care of children in England and included a brief and tentative mention of trials in Australia.[31] In 1873, along with her sister Rosamond, she visited Australia. As Shurlee Swain has argued, the sisters presented themselves as experts on boarding out in England, yet the reality was that the practice was implemented far more extensively in Australia than in England. At the same time as Australian colonial authorities used the testimony and writings of the Hill sisters as sources of authority and reassurance that a move to reliance on foster care was a good idea, the Hill sisters presented the large-scale implementation of foster care in Australia as a means of urging English authorities to do the same.[32] American children's writer, Henrietta Christian Wright (1854–1899), was also wildly enthusiastic about the Australian system of boarding out, or fosterage as she also called it, describing it in her 1900 review of international practice as "perhaps, the most perfect system of boarding out yet evolved," and again highlighting "the saving to the government, as well as the rapid decrease in the pauper class."[33]

The confidence of these nineteenth-century women in the social curative power of foster care sometimes prevented them from seeing (or at least admitting) some of its clear failures. Catherine Helen Spence's own account published in 1907, three years prior to her death, proudly

[30] Shurlee Swain, "Florence and Rosamond Davenport Hill and the Development of Boarding Out in England and Australia: A Study in Cultural Transmission," *Women's History Review* 23, no. 5 (2014): 744–59; Harvey, "Layered Networks," 120–42.

[31] Florence Hill, *Children of the State: The Training of Juvenile Paupers* (London: Macmillan, 1868).

[32] Swain, "Florence and Rosamond Davenport Hill and the Development of Boarding Out in England and Australia," 744–59.

[33] Henrietta Wright, "State Care of Dependent Children," *The North American Review* 171 (1900): 115.

proclaimed that the "children of the State are scattered over the length and breadth of the settled districts of our island continent," just as Caroline Clark had wanted in 1866.[34] Spence neglected to mention the Way Royal Commission, however, which ran from 1883 to 1885 and found many children were adopted rather than fostered out to save the state money, and then used as slaves, just as opponents to boarding out who had read *Oliver Twist* suspected might happen. The commission also found that the inspection process Spence participated in and gloated about was inadequate.[35]

Despite emerging out of such different circumstances, and despite the apparently different ideological influences shaping its incorporation into government welfare systems, our research has shown that foster care tended to fail and succeed for similar reasons in both South Australia and Victoria. Furthermore, the experiences of foster children across the century and a half studied in this book, and across the nation, were far more profoundly shaped by the nature of being a foster child than by the specificities of the system under which they lived. Therefore, at times, this book paints with broad strokes in an attempt to capture a national picture; in other places the work drills down to individual case studies in order to examine the intricate connections between people, social structures and welfare systems. Always, we hope to convey the humanity of all the people whose lives have been touched—for better and for worse—by their experiences of foster care.

Talking About Foster Care in the Aftermath of Inquiries and Apologies

Histories are always shaped by when they are written, yet we are particularly conscious of it in this case. Since the 1990s, there has been a proliferation of survivor testimony-driven inquiries into historical child

[34] Spence, *State Children in Australia: A History of Boarding Out and Its Developments*, 15.

[35] Samuel James Way, *The Destitute Commission Final Report, Children Under the Care of the Government* (South Australia: Commission Appointed to Report on the Destitute Act, 1881, 1885), XLV, XLIX, L, LXIV. Also see Margaret Barbalet, *Far from a Low Gutter Girl: The Forgotten World of State Wards: South Australia 1887–1940* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983), 202–5.

welfare provision across much of the Western world.[36] These inquiries have tended to concentrate on institutional placement of children, or on themes relating to abuse and neglect, rather than specifically centring on foster care. However, the inquiries which have examined foster care within their wider reports provide evidence that the experiences of foster children across generations, and across nations, have a great deal in common.[37] In nations as far apart as Ireland, New Zealand and Norway—whose contrasting social, economic, demographic, historic and religious contexts have each produced distinct approaches to implementing child welfare systems—foster care failed people in similar ways.[38] Common findings were that: foster home selection and supervision was inadequate, leaving children susceptible to abuse; foster children often felt they had a lowly status within their foster homes, many feeling they had to earn their keep in ways not expected of the family's biological children; foster children's education suffered, sometimes because of frequent movement between foster homes, but also because expectations of children's labour or abusive environments within foster homes disrupted study; foster homes were intentionally isolated from children's families; and all of these things had lifelong consequences for foster children.

Some people found that when it came to formal inquiries, their foster care experiences did not 'count'. That is, most inquiries have the remit of determining the role of a particular government or other organisation,

[36]For a study of the chronological emergence of such inquiries see: Johanna Sköld, "Historical Abuse—A Contemporary Issue: Compiling Inquiries into Abuse and Neglect of Children in Out-of-Home Care Worldwide," *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention* 14, no. suppl. 1 (2013): 5–23. For a survey of how various nations have approached the task of responding to care leavers and discussions of best practice see: Suellen Murray, *Supporting Adult Care-Leavers: International Good Practice* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015).

[37]Katie Wright, Shurlee Swain, and Johanna Sköld, *The Age of Inquiry: A Global Mapping of Institutional Abuse Inquiries* (Melbourne: La Trobe University, 2017), http://doi.org/10.4225/22/591e1e3a36139.

[38]"Final Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse—The Ryan Report," http://www.childabusecommission.ie/publications/index.html; Carolyn Henwood, *Some Memories Never Fade: Final Report of the Confidential Listening and Assistance Service* (Wellington, 2015); Omsorg og overgrep: Granskning av barnehjem, skolehjem og fosterhjem benyttet av Trondheim kommune fra 1930-årene til 1980-årene, English summary availabel at: Wright, Swain, and Sköld, *The Age of Inquiry: A Global Mapping of Institutional Abuse Inquiries.*

and where adequate records are not locatable, it can be virtually impossible to tell whether a child was placed by a government authority, a private agency or directly by family. This book has the advantage of not being bound by the terms imposed on inquiries, and while its focus is on statutory foster care systems in Australia—those auspiced by government departments with legal guardianship of children—we also found it essential to incorporate other experiences of foster care. Over the course of the project, we have spoken with many people who lived away from birth parents as children but wondered if their experience could 'properly' be considered foster care. Some had lived with paid strangers, but family rather than the state had arranged the care. Others were sure they were raised in foster care because they were living away from parents and with relatives who were paid for their care, yet today this is called kinship care, an increasingly popular alternative since the 1990s, as we discuss in Chapter 9.[39] Still others went to stay for short periods with paid strangers—often but not exclusively organised by the state—but were uncertain how to characterise it—was it foster care, emergency care, or respite care? Some, as we discuss in Chapter 4, even found foster homes for themselves.[40]

Thus for the period covered by the oral history part of this book's research, which included people born from 1940 to 1995, we adopted an open definition, being guided primarily by whether people themselves understood their experiences as foster care. For the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries research, which is predominantly based on archival records, we focused on the government-run child welfare systems, keeping a lookout for the points at which they intersected with, or differed from, other privately run foster schemes. The early period provided other challenges around defining foster care. For instance, prior to the introduction of legal adoption, which was from around the 1920s in most parts of Australia, the distinction between adoption and foster care was poorly defined. Child welfare departments typically used the term adoption when a person took a foster child without payment, but the letters applying to 'adopt' children often included a clear description of the work the child would be expected to perform. These children occupied a position between that of a typical foster child and that of an indentured

[39] Chapter 9: Are We Getting Better at This?

[40] Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

(but unpaid) worker, and so despite the use of the language of adoption, we saw them as within the scope of our foster care study.

Selecting appropriate terminology to describe this complex history has its challenges. In some places, foster care is used as an umbrella to describe all placements of children apart from their parents. In this book, we use it in its more specific sense—to describe the placement of children in private homes, distinguishing it from placing children in institutions, and also distinct from models like family group homes—and their present-day equivalent, residential care—in which staff are paid to live in and run a home for a number of children or young people.[41] Our research has convinced us that there are elements of foster care in this specific usage which are worthy of study in their own right, rather than broadly combined with all forms of placements, but it also shows that many people experienced both foster care and other placements once they entered child welfare systems. The term out of home care is frequently used in Australia today to describe children in all types of placements, and at times this term appears in this book, although we acknowledge that it is fraught. One issue is that, like the term foster care, it invokes the notion of 'care', and while we use these terms throughout this book, we wish to acknowledge that for many people a sense of *being cared for* was largely absent from their experiences of foster care and out of home care more broadly.

Another query we have with the term out of home care is the way it invokes the notion of home. The intention is to signify that children are being provided for away from their original homes, but it could also be read as implying that their foster (or other) placements might not be 'real homes'. How then do we understand the meaning of the term 'home-based care' to describe modern foster care and kinship care? Yet, we have found no other entirely satisfactory substitute for describing children in out of home care. For example, the term 'looked after children', which is commonly used in Britain, might be critiqued much as the use of the term 'care' has been, but also raises the question of whether this means that children outside of welfare systems are

[41] The most significant distinction between family group homes and modern residential care is that residential care is staffed by shifts of workers whereas family group homes were run by paid house parents who lived in the house full time. Thus, while young people in residential care today are unlikely to conflate their placement with foster care, we encountered people from family group homes who did describe their placements as foster care.

not 'looked after'? The terms 'state ward' and 'ward of the state' were used across Australia, as well as in other jurisdictions, until late in the twentieth century to describe children under state guardianship. These terms appear in this book as historical language. Also in keeping with language-use of the historical periods we examine, we do not adopt the expression 'young people' as distinct from 'children' except when discussing the period from the last decades of the twentieth century when this expression came into usage.

This reflection on terminology is not pedantic musing. Particularly in the wake of survivor-driven inquiries into historical child welfare systems, the power of language has been reinforced. One example is the importance of finding appropriate ways of referring to people who grew up in out of home care. The term care leavers has emerged as a popular choice, and one which we use in this book, although we note that not all people we spoke with would describe themselves as such, and others have asked for how long their childhoods must define them in this way. For some, naming and belonging to a survivor group is important, giving them a sense of social identity, and particularly those who are affiliated with survivor activist groups might prefer the proper noun Care Leavers. We acknowledge the validity of all these positions, and for the sake of consistency and clarity, we have adopted what we see as the most widely used and widely applicable terminology.

Similarly, we have put much thought into the use of the terms 'child welfare' and 'child protection' to describe the government-run systems in which statutory foster care has existed. In some Australian colonies, such as South Australia and Queensland, the term child protection appears in late nineteenth-century legislation and this indicated the influence of child rescue in these locations—specifically the notion that the state should be proactive in identifying children as 'neglected' and that institutions and foster care could be more than modes of relief for orphaned, abandoned and impoverished children. In most other parts of Australia, although the ideas of child rescue were also influential in the late nineteenth century, the term 'child protection' was not widely applied until the very end of the twentieth century, by which time it was commonly used in many parts of the world to describe statutory work with children and families. Child protection has long been associated with often unwanted interventions into family life, yet it also reflects the duty felt by the state to be responsible for the wellbeing of children whose families cannot provide for them. Where we use this term we do

so with full recognition of the underlying contested questions of whether particular children needed 'protecting' and how effectively they were, in fact, 'protected'.

Child welfare was a term adopted in legislation across other parts of Australia, such as Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania and Western Australia, during the 1920s and 1930s in an attempt to soften the language of 'neglected children' and 'state children' which had become hated and stigmatised notions associated with wards of the state. In reality, this changed little in terms of the practices of government departments or the experiences of children separated from their families.[42] This book's nation-wide scope and long chronological gaze makes it impossible to find a single term for the work of government departments which is universally historically accurate, and we use the terms child welfare and child protection somewhat interchangeably, although we see child welfare as a slightly more generic term which recognises the connections between government and non-government bodies, and positions this work in the wider field of welfare history. We also use the terms child welfare and child protection to describe the work of departments prior to the appearance of this language in legislation in order to demonstrate a sense of historical continuity, although we do note the slight anachronism this might imply.

About This Book

Rather than chart a progressivist narrative of how each generation attempted to improve foster care little by little, this book starts from a presentist gaze, and asks why current conversations around foster care have come to be shaped as they are. It is profoundly influenced by the impact that survivor testimony has had on this field of history over the past twenty-five years. Historians, indeed scholars in general, are often called upon to produce 'expert' or definitive accounts of the subjects they research. In writing this book, we have understood ourselves differently. We have been trusted with people's stories, and whether they are from recent times or from generations past, our goal is to represent them fairly and with dignity, to provide historical context, and to show how they relate to the experiences of others. This book recognises the

[42] For more on this see: Musgrove, *The Scars Remain*.

importance of collaborative approaches to research which place people directly involved with foster care (now or in the past) as key knowledge holders and contributors. As a former foster child, Deidre Michell brought to the project both a visceral understanding of, and an intellectual interest in, foster care. Her lived experience, and the research skills she employs to examine topics from multiple standpoints, combined well with Nell Musgrove's expertise in Australian child welfare history and oral histories. Together we designed a history project which included archival material, media representations of foster care, fictional and autobiographical accounts of foster care, and oral histories.

Oral histories have played a significant role in our collaborative approach. There are some important collections of oral histories available through the National Library of Australia which include discussion of foster care, but no oral history collections which specifically focus on foster care.[43] Our oral history project was guided by the Human Research Ethics Committees of both Australian Catholic University and the University of Adelaide. We sought out people who had grown up in foster care, but also former foster carers, people who had foster siblings, and people who had worked in foster care systems. The majority of our participants were living in capital cities at the time of our interviews, but the foster homes they spoke about were in suburbs of major cities and around regional towns across Australia. We refer to all oral history participants by first name only in this book, and each person named in the text was given an opportunity to decide whether to use their own name or a pseudonym. In order for people to be free to speak openly about their experiences without risk of being identified, in most instances we also removed any information which might reveal the specific geographic location of people's foster care experiences. Their contributions influenced the way we understood all of the material we examined during our research, indeed for the period from 1940 onward it provided our most important source of social history to add to our analysis of public discourse and child welfare policy.

[43] National Library of Australia's Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants Oral History Project (206 interviews, 113 publicly available online, 51 identified as relating to foster care), available at https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/4707359, last accessed 29 January 2018; and National Library of Australia's Bringing Them Home Oral History Project (338 interviews, 187 publicly available online, 36 identified as relating to foster care), available at https://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn833081, last accessed 29 January 2018.

We also saw the importance of tracing individual stories beyond the period of living memory. Our research draws on a range of resources to accomplish this, the most expansive of which is archival records relating to the Victorian child welfare system (called the Industrial and Reformatory Schools Office from 1864 to 1874, the Department of Industrial and Reformatory Schools 1875–1886, Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools 1887–1923, Children's Welfare Department 1924–1960). This research examined almost 1500 records from the correspondence files of the Chief Secretary (covering the period 1864–1960), as well as the 136 volumes of state ward registers, each with entries for between one hundred and three hundred children (covering the period 1864–1919). These materials are all publicly available—some online but most as physical records held at the Public Record Office Victoria—and we have opted to use the real names of people who are identified in this material where relevant, rather than adopting pseudonyms. Particularly in the case studies presented in Chapters 2 and 3, to do otherwise would have been difficult since we connect these archival records to other publicly available documents, such as newspaper articles, which openly identify people.[44] Therefore, people may recognise themselves, or more likely their ancestors, in this book. For those who do, we hope the stories we tell add something to your family histories, because we cannot overstate the value of those same stories to our work and to the big picture of foster care which we paint in this book.

As the book's title suggests, foster care has changed very slowly, and in some respects very little, over the past century and more. As a society, we continue to believe that family situations, and the types of relationships they ideally foster, are beneficial to children and young people, yet, we have also long acknowledged that attempting to implement family environments for children through foster care is a fraught process. The two parts of this book grapple with this difficult and complex history in different ways. The first part, *Looking for the 'Care' in Foster Care*, is primarily concerned with the experiences, perspectives and voices of people whose lives have been directly touched by foster care. The first two chapters in this part,[45] are nineteenth-century case studies each providing

[44] Chapter 2: Did Anybody Care? The Death of John Wood Pledger; Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Families.

[45] Chapter 2: Did Anybody Care? The Death of John Wood Pledger; Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Families.

a rich exploration of the human cost of foster care in that period, and establishing connections with more recent events and debates. Chapter 4 focuses on the oral histories to convey the ways in which foster care impacted the lives of people across the second half of the twentieth century.[46] Chapter 5 considers the motivations of foster carers over time, and tackles the ongoing anxieties around the payment of people who take foster children into their homes.[47]

The second part of the book, *Shaping the Lives of the Invisible Children of the State*, steps back to look at the larger social and popular discourses which have shaped the way we have understood and operated foster care. Chapter 6 examines some of the underlying philosophies deployed to advocate for implementing foster care, and argues that despite rhetorically shifting away from models such as the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, and the supposed removal of child welfare from a criminal justice framework to one based on the notions of care and protection, many things have remained the same.[48] Chapter 7 examines the relative invisibility of foster care in the nation's media over the course of more than a century.[49] Chapter 8 explores the question of why we are only beginning to hear the voices of former foster children so recently, especially when so much popular literature includes heroic characters with an out of home care experience.[50]

Finally, Chapter 9 surveys recent debates around foster care, arguing for the importance of understanding foster care's long history and of listening to care leavers in assessing the best way to respond to contemporary challenges.[51] Thus, as a whole, the book argues that we must think systemically and think big picture, but not at the cost of forgetting that each individual has their own story. We need to remember that and keep our hearts and compassion engaged when we think about how to do our best for the children in out of home care now and in the future.

[46] Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

[47] Chapter 5: They're Just Doing It for the Money.

[48] Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

[49] Chapter 7: Rediscovering Foster Care.

[50] Chapter 8: Writing to Heal—The Emergence of Foster Care in Literature.

[51] Chapter 9: Are We Getting Better at This?

References

Abrams, Lynn. *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day*. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1998.

Askeland, Lori, ed. *Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages and Foster Care: A Historical Handbook and Guide*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006.

Barbalet, Margaret. *Far from a Low Gutter Girl: The Forgotten World of State Wards: South Australia 1887–1940*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Barnard, Jill, and Karen Twigg. *Holding on to Hope: A History of the Founding Agencies of Mackillop Family Services 1854–1997*. Kew, VIC: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2004.

Broomhall, Susan, ed. *Emotions in the Household, 1200–1900*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

"Clark, Caroline Emily (1825–1911)." Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University. http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/clark-caroline-emily-3212.

Curtis, Myra. *Report of the Care of Children Committee*. London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1946.

"The Destitute Asylum. To the Editor." *South Australian Register* (Adelaide), 14 March 1866.

Dickey, Brian. *No Charity There: A Short History of Social Welfare in Australia*. Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Australia, 1980.

Engberg, Elisabeth. "Boarded Out by Auction: Poor Children and Their Families in Nineteenth-Century Northern Sweden." *Continuity and Change* 19, no. 3 (2005): 431–57.

"Final Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse—The Ryan Report." http://www.childabusecommission.ie/publications/index.html.

"Find & Connect: Destitute Asylum." https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/guide/sa/SE00062.

Geyer, Mary. *Behind the Wall: The Women of the Destitute Asylum Adelaide, 1852–1918*. Adelaide, SA: Wakefield Press, 2008.

Hacsi, Tim. "From Indenture to Family Foster Care: A Brief History of Child-Placing." *Child Welfare* 74, no. 1 (1995): 162–68.

Haebich, Anna. *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000*. Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000.

Harvey, Elizabeth. "'Layered Networks': Imperial Philanthropy in Birmingha, and Sydney, 1860–1914." *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwelath History* 41, no. 1 (2013): 120–42.

Henwood, Carolyn. *Some Memories Never Fade: Final Report of the Confidential Listening and Assistance Service*. Wellington, 2015.

Hill, Florence. *Children of the State: The Training of Juvenile Paupers*. London: Macmillan, 1868.

Jacobs, Margaret. *A Generation Removed: The Fostering and Adoption of Indigenous Children in the Postwar World*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014.

Monckton, Walter. *Report on the Circumstances Which Led to the Boarding Out of Dennis and Terence O'Neill at Bank Farm, Minsterley, and the Steps Taken to Supervise Their Welfare*. London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1945.

Mortensen, Mette, and Hans-Jörg Trenz. "Media Morality and Visual Icons in the Age of Social Media: Alan Kurdi and the Emergence of an Impromptu Public Moral Spectatorship." *Javnost—The Public* 23, no. 4 (2016): 343–62.

Murray, Suellen. *Supporting Adult Care-Leavers: International Good Practice*. Bristol: Policy Press, 2015.

Musgrove, Nell. *The Scars Remain: A Long History of Forgotten Australians and Children's Institutions*. Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013.

National Library of Australia. "Bringing Them Home Oral History Project." https://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn833081.

National Library of Australia. "Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants Oral History Project." https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/4707359.

O'Neill, Terence. *Someone to Love Us: The Shocking True Story of Two Brothers Fostered into Brutality and Neglect*. Glasgow: HarperCollins, 2010.

Public Record Office Victoria, Chief Secretary's Inward Registered Correspondence II, VPRS 3991.

"Report for the Year Ending June 30th, 1887." Adelaide: State Children's Council, Government of South Australia, 1887.

Rymph, Catherine. *Raising Government Children: A History of Foster Care and the American Welfare State*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

Scott, Dorothy, and Shurlee Swain. *Confronting Cruelty: Historical Perspectives on Child Protection in Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002.

Sköld, Johanna. "Historical Abuse—A Contemporary Issue: Compiling Inquiries into Abuse and Neglect of Children in Out-of-Home Care Worldwide." *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention* 14, no. suppl. 1 (2013): 5–23.

Smith, Bernard. *The Boy Adeodatus*. Ringwood, VIC: Penguin, 1984.

South Australia, State Children's Council. *Report for the Year Ending June 30th, 1887*.

Spence, Catherine Helen. *State Children in Australia: A History of Boarding Out and Its Developments*. Adelaide: Vardon, 1907.

Spence, Catherine Helen. *Ever Yours*. Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2005.

Strong-Boag, Veronica. *Fostering Nation? Canada Confronts Its History of Childhood Disadvantage*. Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011.

Swain, Shurlee. "Florence and Rosamond Davenport Hill and the Development of Boarding Out in England and Australia: A Study in Cultural Transmission." *Women's History Review* 23, no. 5 (2014): 744–59.

Swain, Shurlee. *History of Inquiries Reviewing Institutions Providing Care for Children*. Sydney: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2014.

Swain, Shurlee, and Margot Hillel. *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Resuce Discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850–1915*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010.

Twomey, Christina. *Deserted and Destitute: Motherhood, Wife Desertion and Colonial Welfare*. Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2002.

Victoria, Industrial and Reformatory Schools Office. *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department: Reports of the Inspector*, 1872–1874.

Way, Samuel James. *The Destitute Commission Final Report, Children Under the Care of the Government*. South Australia: Commission Appointed to Report on the Destitute Act, 1881, 1885.

Wright, Henrietta. "State Care of Dependent Children." *The North American Review* 171 (1900): 112–23.

Wright, Katie, Shurlee Swain, and Johanna Sköld. *The Age of Inquiry: A Global Mapping of Institutional Abuse Inquiries*. Melbourne: La Trobe University, 2017. http://doi.org/10.4225/22/591e1e3a36139.

Yeo, Eileen Janes. *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class*. London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996.

PART I

Looking for the ‘Care’ in Foster Care

Check for updates

CHAPTER 2

Did Anybody Care? The Death of John Wood Pledger

John Wood Pledger was born in Melbourne, Australia in 1892, and found dead in a rocking chair in the home of his foster mother just under three and a half years later. His body was battered and bruised, and showed signs of ongoing brutality. The poor child's final weeks were punctuated by abuse that was witnessed by neighbours, and known to local authorities, all of whom ultimately failed to prevent his suffering. More than a century later, another foster child, Luke Anthony Borusiewicz, died in North Queensland under strikingly similar circumstances. Neither boy's foster mother was found responsible for the death of the child, but both of these cases urge us to ask how and why foster care systems can fail, and who should be held accountable when they do.

The question is simple: "Why do children die under the care of state welfare systems which are supposed to protect them from that very end?" It would be easy to blame a 'wicked' or simply 'incompetent' foster mother, but the reality is far more complex. No one person failed John Wood Pledger or Luke Anthony Borusiewicz—if we can locate responsibility it lies in the decisions made by multiple individuals, and the foster care systems themselves. The stories of these boys, born 114 years apart, provide a tragic illustration of how much is at stake when we place children in foster care. They call for answers to some crucial questions

© The Author(s) 2018

N. Musgrove and D. Michell, *The Slow Evolution of Foster Care in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in the History of Childhood,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93900-1_2

about foster care, both past and present. What value does society place on children in state care? How effectively can child welfare systems protect children placed in foster homes? How can we understand the needs and vulnerabilities of such children? How effectively have modern foster care systems resolved the issues which have plagued them since the nineteenth century?

John Wood Pledger's Early Life

John Wood Pledger's mother, the unmarried Rachel Pledger, did her best to give her son a safe entry into the world. Like so many other working-class single mothers, she gave birth to her son at the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne where both mother and child received proper medical care, despite the social stigma attached to illegitimate births and the mother's inability to pay for a midwife. Rachel was twenty-six years old when she gave birth, and John, although born with a large bulge on the right-hand side of his skull, seemed to be a healthy baby boy. As she carried him home to her parents' Brunswick home on an autumn day in 1892, she could have had no idea that thirty-five months later her son would be dead, or that she herself would only outlive him by a year and a half.

Rachel Pledger was the eldest child of John and Harriet Pledger, who came to Victoria as assisted immigrants from England.[1] John and Harriet had direct experience of exnuptial pregnancy, but unlike Rachel, they had married to preserve their respectability. Their wedding took place at Cambridgeshire in December 1863. Harriet must have been between three and four months pregnant at the time.[2] The newly-wed Pledgers boarded a boat and arrived in Victoria just days before Rachel was born on 30 May 1864. John and Harriet were part of the wave of British immigrants who came to the Australian colonies during the mid-nineteenth century seeking better opportunities for themselves and their children. They may well also have seen an opportunity to escape local village scrutiny and conceal the pre-marital conception of their child.

[1] Public Record Office Victoria (PROV), VA 683, VPRS 3502, Register of Assisted Immigrants from the United Kingdom.

[2] John and Harriet Pledger marriage certificate.

Little remains on the historical record about Rachel Pledger's life before her pregnancy. She had five siblings, the youngest one born when Rachel was twenty years of age.[3] Her father was a labourer; her mother a homemaker. As the eldest, and a girl, Rachel undoubtedly did a good deal to help with the household chores and the care of her brothers and sisters until she was old enough to take work as a domestic servant and supplement the family finances. This was a typical story for a working-class girl in nineteenth-century Melbourne. It is not clear whether Rachel had a live-in position as a domestic servant, or whether she lived with her parents, but she had a good enough relationship with her family for them to support both her and her son in the family home following his birth.[4] This would not have been easy. The Pledgers were still providing for Frederick (six years), Ethel (nine years), Herbert (thirteen years) and probably also partially supporting Ada (sixteen years). Harriet was 51, but not a strong woman—she died of senile decay (a nineteenth-century term used to describe death from old age) less than a year later. That is almost all that is known about Rachel Pledger's life before 1892, though it is clear that she contracted syphilis before giving birth. Given the timing of her death, which appears to have been from syphilis-related heart failure, she was probably exposed to the disease during a sexual encounter quite sometime before the conception of her child.[5]

Rachel's pregnancy was almost certainly unplanned. She was like many unmarried women who faced difficult decisions about what to do with their children in a society which offered few means of support. Some of these women sought abortions. Overall access to abortion was higher in Australia than in England, but it is very difficult to assess what proportion of women seeking abortions were unmarried.[6] Abortions were certainly not available for every woman who faced an unwanted pregnancy, and so there were women who gave birth to children they could not or would not keep.

[3] Harriet Pledger death certificate.

[4] PROV, VA 475 Chief Secretary's Department, VPRS 4527/P0 Ward Registers, Unit 41, 92 (hereafter cited as PROV, VPRS 4527, Unit 41, 92).

[5] Rachel Pledger death certificate.

[6] Hera Cook, "Unseemly and Unwomanly Behaviour: Comparing Women's Control of Their Fertility in Australia and England from 1890 to 1970," *Journal of Population Research* 17, no. 2 (2000): 125–41; Shurlee Swain and Renate Howe, *Single Mothers and Their Children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 36–37.

Some mothers responded to the birth of an unwanted child by killing or abandoning the infant to a likely death from exposure. Colonial authorities sometimes prosecuted this crime of infanticide, but there was also deep ambivalence about whether such women should be seen as vicious murderesses or victims of circumstance.[7] Sometimes panicked mothers could think of nothing else but the desperate need to conceal the infant's body, and others left corpses tenderly wrapped and tied with lace, even though the baby had apparently been wilfully suffocated.[8] Women who did not have the heart or the stomach to kill their newborn could abandon it in hidden places where it was likely to die before it was discovered, or leave it in a public area to ensure the survival of the child yet maintain their anonymity.[9]

Of course, even in a society which stigmatised children born out of wedlock, not all unexpected pregnancies were necessarily unwanted. Many unmarried mothers, like Rachel Pledger, made efforts to maintain their children. Some, like Rachel's mother Harriet, were willing and able to marry the father of their child, in order to secure some financial security and social respectability. Others relocated and posed as widows, an avenue which preserved respectability and increased the likelihood that they would be viewed as worthy recipients of charitable support. Others, ultimately, parted with their children, yet recent political activism amongst women separated from their children in the twentieth century reminds us that apparent relinquishment should not be automatically read as evidence that a child was unwanted.[10]

[7] Nicola Goc, *Women, Infanticide and the Press, 1822–1922: News Narratives in England and Australia* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013); Michelle Oberman, "Understanding Infanticide in Context: Mothers Who Kill, 1879–1930 and Today," *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 92, no. 3/4 (2002): 707–38; and Sherri Broder, *Tramps, Unfit Mothers, and Neglected Children: Negotiating the Family in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

[8] PROV, VA 475 Chief Secretary's Department, VPRS 3992 Inward Registered Correspondence II, Unit 699, 98/449 and Unit 747, 99/3251.

[9] Swain and Howe, *Single Mothers and Their Children*, 114–21.

[10] Marian Quartly, Shurlee Swain, and Denise Cuthbert, *The Market in Babies: Stories of Australian Adoption* (Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing, 2013), 25–38; Nell Musgrove, *The Scars Remain: A Long History of Forgotten Australians and Children's Institutions* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013), 51–74.

Rachel Pledger identified her son's father as John Wood—an undistinctive name which, in the absence of further details, makes him impossible to trace reliably through historical records. She employed the common technique of making this man's name part of her child's as a way of asserting paternity, but there is no evidence that she ever expected to receive any assistance from him. According to Rachel's statement to the Department for Neglected Children, she knew very little about John Wood, other than that he was a plasterer. She said that, "she only saw him twice and as that was in the evening it [was] very probable that she would be unable to identify him should he be found."[11] Whether this was the entire truth, or whether she was unwilling to undertake the intrusive process of attempting to establish legal paternity is impossible to know.

Rachel had a huge advantage despite having little hope of financial support from her child's father—parents willing to provide for her and her son under their roof. Had she not been so lucky, she might have been able to keep working as a domestic servant in order to pay a private nurse to care for John. This would have meant parting with her infant almost immediately, and babies often died in these settings. In some cases these infant deaths were due to so-called baby farmers who delivered poor care to maximise profit, but more often simply due to the unreliability of artificial infant feeding and because all infants were susceptible to illness and disease which nineteenth-century medicine could not treat reliably. The most effective way of keeping infants alive was providing them with breast milk, and survival rates were better for children nursed by their mothers than those placed with wet nurses.

So in November 1892, Rachel and her new-born son John added to the numbers at her parents' Brunswick home. We can only imagine what her life must have been like over the next nine months. She almost certainly took over many of her ailing mother's responsibilities in return for the roof over her head. She was unable to find an employer willing to take her on with her son in tow, so most of her days were probably occupied in nursing John and domestic chores for the rest of the family. Even though this was a solution that allowed her to remain with her son, it was probably a difficult time for her. She had been a working woman for roughly ten years, and had been accustomed to more personal freedom and greater financial independence than she experienced after giving birth.

[11] PROV, VPRS 4527, Unit 41, 92.

Things got tougher in the Pledger household in April 1893. Harriet's health rapidly deteriorated and she was placed under the care of a doctor. Rachel was no doubt helping to nurse her dying mother for the next three months until Harriet died, in her home, on 30 June 1893, of "senile decay, diarrhoea [and] exhaustion."[12] Rachel pushed on for about a month after her mother's death, but by the beginning of August, she decided that things had to change. She needed to find work, and this meant parting with her son. John was nine months old and strong enough to be weaned, so Rachel would have known that his chances of survival apart from her were far better than they would have been had she parted with him as a new-born.

What was Rachel to do? Other mothers used midwives or private nurses to facilitate private adoptions, but there was usually a fee, and little hope of mother and child ever being reunited.[13] There were orphanages that would take children and provide for them in large dormitory style buildings, but these were private organisations which could be selective about the children they accepted—often favouring cases which they saw as respectable and innocent victims of misfortune. There is little detail about how Rachel Pledger presented herself, but the Brunswick magistrate's court described her as living in "very poor circumstances" and as being of "very indifferent character"—not a likely case for an orphanage.[14] Her only option was to convince a judge that she was unable to support her son and place him under the control of the government's Department for Neglected Children.

John Becomes a Foster Child

On 2 August 1893, John Wood Pledger became a ward of the state of Victoria. He never saw his mother again. He had a short stay in the infamous Royal Park Depot, but by the 5th he was in his first foster home. The Department for Neglected Children had introduced foster

[12] Harriet Pledger death certificate.

[13] Quartly, Swain, and Cuthbert, *The Market in Babies*, 47–49; Annie Cossins, *The Baby Farmers: A Chilling Tale of Missing Babies, Shameful Secrets and Murder in 19th Century Australia* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2013).

[14] PROV, VA 475 Chief Secretary's Department, VPRS 3992 Inward Registered Correspondence II, Unit 618, Item 96/2561, Report and Compilation of Documents Concerning the Death of John Wood Pledger (hereafter cited as PROV VPRS 3992, Unit 618, 96/2561).

care—or boarding out as it was usually known at the time—to its child welfare system in the 1870s. By the 1890s, the department's goal was to place as many state wards as possible in foster homes, leaving only a very small number in institutions. The department's policy stated that foster children were to have no contact with their parents, except under exceptional circumstances. Children were put under the control of the department through court orders, and then their placement became the responsibility of the department. Officially the small staff of the department had authority over approving the placement of children in either an institution or a foster home, but in practice they relied on the judgement of the medical officers who assessed each child, and the women of the Ladies Visiting Committees who volunteered their time to provide the essential service of finding and supervising foster homes.

The doctor who examined John on 4 August 1893, noted the "want of symmetry" of the boy's skull—referring to the bulging right-hand side of the skull which had been present since John's birth—but observed no other problems and declared the child fit for boarding out.[15] Mary Agnes Madden, the correspondent for the local Ladies Committee where John was to be placed, followed the doctor's advice and found him a foster home with a Mrs Hillman, of Flemington. The department's records provide no detail about how Madden found Mrs Hillman, or how she decided she was well placed to care for John. Madden had been the correspondent for the local Ladies Committee for fifteen years, and so she no doubt had established recruitment networks which, as we discuss in Chapter 7, were crucial to the operation of foster care in the nineteenth century.[16] The records also tell us little about what life was like for John with Mrs Hillman, but on the face of it the placement was relatively successful, at least for a while, because the foster home had been found quickly and John remained there for almost two years.[17]

However, after almost two years of fostering John, Mrs Hillman reported that the boy had begun "knocking his head about" and was "subject to screaming fits" so severe that she could not keep him on.[18]

[15] PROV VPRS 3992, Unit 618, 96/2561.

[16] Chapter 7: Rediscovering Foster Care.

[17] PROV, VPRS 4527, Unit 41, 92.

[18] Ibid.

It is difficult to determine when and how quickly John's symptoms developed. The movement of his head which Mrs Hillman described as "knocking about" was subsequently reported by Madden as "rolling his head from side to side" yet neither of these capture the violence of action that would have been required to produce the extravasation (leakage) of blood beneath John's scalp which his post mortem attributed to his head thrashing.[19] It is difficult to say whether Hillman and Madden understated the movement, or whether it progressed to a more alarming action later, but in either case, this change in John's behaviour was almost certainly an early sign of congenital syphilis, although it was not described as such at the time.

Madden found John a second foster home, sending him to Mrs Gordon on 15 June 1895. This foster placement lasted four months, but it had become clear that John needed a formal assessment of his suitability for foster care.[20] He was examined by the Government Medical Officer, Dr Andrew Shields, who determined that the child was an 'imbecile'[21] and recommended his placement in the Kew Idiot Asylum's children's ward. However, when Madden insisted that she felt the boy would be "better in a [foster] home," the doctor consented, and so John remained a foster child.[22] It is clear that this was a crucial point in John's story, and it would be very easy to suggest that Madden made an error here which might have cost John his life. However, there are at least two factors which we should consider carefully before rushing to such a conclusion. First, the extent of John's mental impairment may not have been

[19] PROV, VPRS 3992, Unit 618, 96/2561.

[20] PROV, VPRS 4527, Unit 41, 92.

[21] Terms such as 'imbecile' and 'idiot' had specific meanings in the nineteenth century—they were used to distinguish between people with intellectual disabilities (in children this was often, but certainly not always, associated with congenital syphilis) and people with 'lunacy' which was used to as a generic term for mental illness. The terms are used here to capture the specific views and meanings of the archival material. However, we acknowledge that these words are now considered highly offensive, and so we place them in inverted commas to acknowledge the very negative connotations associated with these terms. For more on the uses of these terms in their historical setting see: Lee-Ann Monk, "'Made Enquiries, Can Elicit No History of Injury': Researching the History of Institutional Abuse in the Archives," *Provenance*, no. 6 (2007): 13. For further discussion of the shifting usage and meaning of these words see: Anne Digby, "Contexts and Perspectives," in *From Idiocy to Mental Defective: Historical Perspectives on People with Learning Disabilities*, ed. David Wright and Anne Digby (London and New York: Routledge), 3.

[22] PROV VPRS 3992, Unit 618, 96/2561.

all that clear. Dr George Dixon Dickenson examined John as the medical attendant for boarded-out children in Flemington, and even shortly before the boy's death, Dr Dickenson found him to be "of ordinary intelligence" and without "any signs of imbecility."[23]

Second, we need to ask what life would have been like for John inside the Kew Asylum. The children's ward was established in 1887, and its original intention was to provide better care for children with intellectual disabilities than was possible when they were mixed within the adult 'lunatic' population. The plan was to provide the children with remedial training which would ultimately equip them to leave the asylum and live independently in the wider society. But this optimistic vision faded quickly, and the ward adopted what Lorna Hallahan has described as a "brutal custodial regime."[24] The so-called industrial training degenerated into unpaid exploitation of child labour, and children were also subjected to physical and verbal abuse.[25] The facilities were overcrowded, and multiple inspections during the 1890s observed that the "closet accommodation [was] in every way bad, a standing nuisance and a menace to the health of the inmates."[26] Taking all of this into account helps us understand Madden's decision. This does not absolve her from any responsibility in the miserable situation John endured in his final foster home, but it does help explain why she felt a foster home was the best option.

Shocking Discoveries of Abuse

John Wood Pledger died in a rocking chair in the home of his third foster mother, Mrs Mary Ann Rout of Flemington, on 14 March 1896. It was not his death in and of itself which makes his story a remarkable one. Infant mortality within the Australian population, in general, was high in the nineteenth century.[27] The situation was worse for children

[23] Ibid.

[24] Lorna Hallahan, "Inside Kew Cottages," *History Australia* 7, no. 3 (2010): 63.1.

[25] Lee-Ann Monk, "Exploiting Patient Labour at Kew Cottages, Australia, 1887–1950," *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 38, no. 1 (2010): 86–94; Monk, "'Made Enquiries, Can Elicit No History of Injury': Researching the History of Institutional Abuse in the Archives," 11–22.

[26] Official Visitors' Report, PROV, VPRS 3992, Unit 700, 98/772.

[27] Pat Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006), 3–8.

who were wards of the state, especially infants who required wet-nursing. Cases such as John's—which doctors determined was the result of "softening of the brain" related to congenital syphilis—where children entered the department with existing medical problems from which they later died were not uncommon.[28] What was shocking about John's death was that it revealed he had been subjected to ongoing abuse. His case is important as a historical study not just because a vulnerable boy suffered a terrible fate, but because it reveals systemic failings which inhibited the identification, prevention and responses to abuse.

Did Madden make an error in selecting Mary Ann Rout as John Wood Pledger's foster mother? Madden knew that John was going to have high needs, so a careful selection was important. Rout was a first-time foster mother, who applied for two high needs children at once (John and also a girl described as having a "weak spine").[29] The Department for Neglected Children's paperwork described Rout as "specially recommended," but the reason for this was not provided, nor are there any details about what Madden saw as Rout's particular skills. Rout had experience with children: she had six daughters through her first marriage and three sons with Matthew Rout. But she still had her youngest two daughters (fifteen and thirteen) as well as her three sons (ten, eight and five) at home with her, and her husband spent long periods of time away prospecting in Gippsland. She was engaged in some form of paid work—probably something like taking in sewing which did not keep her away from the house for very long.[30] She had a lot of demands on her time.

Both the department and the ladies who arranged foster placements understood that many women became foster mothers to help supplement the family income,[31] and that foster mothers sometimes spread themselves thinly in order to keep their family economy viable. Preventing foster mothers from over-extending themselves by taking in so many foster children that they could not actually provide for them was the role of both departmental policies and the judgement of the Ladies Committees.

[28] PROV VPRS 3992, Unit 618, 96/2561.

[29] PROV VPRS 3992, Unit 618, 96/2561.

[30] PROV VPRS 3992, Unit 618, 96/2561 and PROV VPRS 3992 Unit 112, 86/1245.

[31] We return to this point in Chapter 5: They're Just Doing It for the Money; and Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

Given that Mary Ann Rout had a large number of children of her own to care for, little support—even accounting for any assistance the older girls might render—and was also taking on paid work, it is reasonable to suggest that Madden might have had reason to take pause and consider the wisdom of placing two children with high needs with a busy and inexperienced foster mother. Indeed, a police report following John's death observed that it seemed "strange how a woman like Mrs Rout" who had "to earn her livelihood by work" and also had numerous "children of her own to mind and care for could be entrusted with the care of two state children."[32] On the other hand, there was constant pressure to find enough foster homes, especially for children like John who were considered 'difficult to place'.

Madden made two inspections of the Rout house in five months and said that she found conditions most satisfactory. However, she also revealed that she learned of questionable conduct on the part of Rout. Each month, Rout attended Madden's home to collect her payment and present her foster children for inspection. On one such occasion Rout reported that John "had a habit of drinking drain water" and that she had "slapped his head" for punishment.[33] Madden's response reveals the impact of poorly defined boundaries around corporal punishment of foster children. She said, "I told Mrs Rout that in whatever way she was in the habit of chastising her own children to chastise him but to make him understand what the punishment was for."[34] Her concern, then, was not that the child had been hit, but that corporal punishment did not serve a constructive purpose if the child did not understand why the punishment had been imposed. Corporal punishment was allowed by departmental regulations governing children's institutions well into the twentieth century, as it was in Australian schools; and Madden's guide that foster children should be disciplined as any other child in the family might be reflects the belief that *some* corporal punishment of even young foster children could be acceptable. There were limits to what was appropriate, but they were hard to define. Certainly, there was little doubt that the bruises all over John Wood Pledger's dead body revealed physical violence which had exceeded permissible limits, and Madden had concerns

[32] PROV VPRS 3992, Unit 618, 96/2561.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

about the boy being slapped around his head—but she was not alarmed enough to do more than provide cautionary advice. While we cannot expect historical actors to apply the values we now expect of people supervising foster care placements, it is fair to ask whether Madden's failure to intervene more proactively in a situation where she had identified punishments she could not condone unnecessarily extended John's exposure to abuse.

We also need to consider the impact of a general shortage of foster parents, particularly for children with high needs, during the mid-1890s. As we return to discuss in Chapter 6, the economic depression of the 1890s caused a general shortage of foster parents which impacted the department heavily from 1893.[35] By 1896, the year John died, the effects of the depression were easing and foster homes were once again becoming more plentiful, but it remained difficult to find homes for children with higher care needs. Even after initial concerns about the signs of abuse on the deceased John Wood Pledger's body had been placed before the department, the Secretary and Inspector, Thomas Millar, was concerned about losing the services of a foster mother prepared to take on children like John, and he initially opposed the prosecution of Rout for ill-treatment. He wrote, "As it is difficult enough to obtain suitable foster mothers who will take the responsibility of properly training children, weening them from bad habits &c it would be highly undesirable to harass Mrs Rout by a prosecution unless there are reasonably strong grounds for believing that she behaved cruelly to the child Pledger."[36]

Madden was no doubt also aware of how difficult Rout would be to replace as a foster mother. Not only had she taken on two children who were seen as 'difficult to place', she had done so for the normal boarding out rate of five shillings per week, even though the department had approved the higher special rate of eight shillings per week.[37] It is impossible to quantify the impact this had on Madden's actions when she observed issues in the foster home, but it was almost certainly a factor because Madden would have had to weigh up the risks to John in that home with the likelihood of being able to secure a better foster home

[35] Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

[36] PROV VPRS 3992, Unit 618, 96/2561.

[37] Ibid.

for him. Millar's subsequent comments also suggest that the department supported the view that foster mothers for 'difficult to place' children were valuable and should be managed rather than removed from foster care. The combination of factors at play led to what we would consider a failure of the system—warning signs were missed and, as it was later revealed, slapping a mentally impaired child around the head was far from the worst abuse meted out to the poor boy.

Explaining Physical Abuse

From the very beginning of the police investigations into John Wood Pledger's death there were contradictions and unanswered questions. Mary Ann Rout's timeline of the day John died did not match those of her sister-in-law and neighbour, Charlotte Ring. Rout said she noticed 'Johnny', as she called him, looking unwell around 11 am on Saturday, 14 March. Her response, she said, was to rush him to Dr Dickenson, who had been treating the boy in his capacity as medical officer for boarded-out children in the district. Rout recalled speaking with the doctor's housekeeper, who said he was not in, and then returning home with the ailing boy. She then said she left the boy in a rocking chair and only noticed that he "was dying" around 3:30 pm when she brought him some milk. In response, she said, she called for Charlotte Ring. Ring stated that John was already dead when she came to Rout's house, suggesting that the boy had died earlier in the afternoon. Rout reported the death of John Wood Pledger to the Flemington police station around 9:20 pm that evening.

The next morning, Constable Whiddett went to the house with an undertaker to see the body and investigate the appropriate response, and immediately noticed signs of trauma. He said:

> On looking at the child I saw a lot of small wounds and bruises about the thighs and lower part of the belly. The privates were also bruised. There was a black wound on the upper lip like an old burn…At the Morgue I turned the child over and saw a large black mark on the back of the buttock.[38]

[38] Ibid.

As investigations continued, the conflicting timelines provided by Mary Ann Rout and Charlotte Ring may have raised passing suspicion, but by 19 March an inquest had determined that John had died from natural causes. It was found that while the cause of death had been "softening of the brain" Mary Ann Rout had indeed "shown great cruelty to the deceased—not amounting to manslaughter" and that it ought to be brought to the attention of the authorities.[39]

From this point on, the timeline of John's death was of less interest to the police than was the question of how he sustained the non-fatal injuries to his body. She had already admitted to giving him "five or six cuts of the strap because [she] found him in the closet trying to eat his own excreta out of a chamber there," and had produced a leather strap she claimed to have used to inflict the punishment.[40] This strap, and the number of occasions she had administered whippings, became the focus of the ill-treatment case pursued against Rout. Two doctors examined John's body, and both agreed that the strap Rout produced could not fully account for the nature of his injuries. Leaving aside the burn on his lip (which Rout claimed was the result of the boy accidentally drinking scalding water) and the injuries to his anus and genitals (which we return to discuss below), the doctors agreed that the puncture marks on John's body could have been the result of being whipped with the buckle end of a belt, but that the smooth strap Rout produced could not be solely responsible for the wounds. Furthermore, Rout admitted to having whipped the boy once, but the doctors found the injuries had been "inflicted at different periods extending for some weeks to within 2 or 3 days of death."[41] Testimony collected from a number of neighbours also described the sounds of a child screaming from being beaten on multiple occasions over a period of time. Despite all of this evidence, at Rout's trial for wilfully ill-treating John Wood Pledger on 11 May 1896, the charge against her was dismissed.[42]

The failure to convict seems astounding given the evidence of abuse, but perhaps there was doubt about whether someone else might have been at least partially responsible for the injuries to the boy. For instance,

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

Charlotte Ring testified that she had seen Rout's thirteen-year-old daughter, Kitty, assaulting John a little over a week before his death. Looking through a gap in her fence, she said she could see into the Routs' bathroom and witnessed the incident.

> Kitty…was beating the child Pledger. I saw her strike the child on the head with her hand. The child fell against the bath but got up and made towards Kitty who again knocked down the child. I then called out to her that she ought to be ashamed of herself and passed on.[43]

The timing of this assault fit with the theory that Kitty may have been responsible for a partially healed wound on John's head, but there is no evidence that this was ever seriously investigated. Legally, there was likely little that could have been done to hold a thirteen-year-old girl criminally liable for such behaviour. The Infant Life Protection Act, under which Rout was charged, was framed around the concern that adults might mistreat children, but in this case, it seemed that John was just as much at risk from injury by his foster siblings as from adults in the household.

Ignoring Sexual Abuse

Evidence about the possible sexual abuse suffered by John Wood Pledger was also not rigorously interrogated, and again, conceptual and legal ambivalence about the culpability of foster siblings was a factor. After completing the post mortem examination, Dr James Edward Neild concluded that there were "signs which suggested that an unnatural offence had been committed or attempted." He described trauma to the skin around the boy's buttock and anus, and stated that the anus was "dilated," "slightly fissured" and "thickened and reddened for about a quarter of an inch within the gut." "The end of the penis," he continued, "was thickened and the opening narrowed," and on its underside "there was a partly healed sore about half an inch long."[44] Police made some investigations into whether there were any men who might have had access to John while he was in his final foster home, but Dr Neild argued

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

that while he was confident that "the child's anus showed clear signs of an unnatural offence having been committed" he believed "the appearance was more indicative to a boy than a man" having been responsible.[45] Thus the most likely perpetrator would have been Mrs Rout's ten-year-old son, and it seems that little action was taken to respond to this possibility.

The idea that a ten-year-old boy might have sexually abused a toddler was, and is, disturbing. Indeed, there was a silence around child sexual abuse generally in colonial Australian society, and even when presented with evidence such as a child with a sexually transmitted disease, authorities were often prepared to search for other explanations—even if they seemed improbable.[46] This helps explain why Mary Ann Rout's rather extraordinary explanation was accepted. She said that John "suffered from diarrhoea," "was in the habit of scratching his fundament" (anus) and that he also "fell on a tin a few days prior to his death."[47] This might have been laughable were it not responding to such a disturbing allegation. Dr Shields, who had earlier suggested that John be sent to Kew Asylum, also examined the boy's body and gave some medical authority for escaping the troubling possibility that there had been sexual abuse by a foster sibling. He testified that while there "appeared to be clear signs of an unnatural offence" he found it plausible that the injuries could have been sustained as Rout contended.[48] It is difficult to claim with absolute certainly that John Wood Pledger suffered sexual abuse, particularly given that the two doctors who examined the boy's body could not entirely agree on this question. However, even with the passing of more than a century, the sense of relief that there might be a less disturbing explanation than child on child sexual abuse is almost palpable in the records.

Leaving aside the question of how the boy sustained the injuries which suggested sexual abuse, both the testimonies of the two doctors and the post mortem photograph reveal that the injuries were both significant and very visible. Rout must have known about them. She shared a bed with John—as was permitted by the boarding out regulations—and would have seen him naked daily in caring for him. Why, then, did she not reveal these injuries to Dr Dickinson? She took John to see the doctor twice

[45] Ibid.

[46] Dorothy Scott and Shurlee Swain, *Confronting Cruelty: Historical Perspectives on Child Protection in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 40–42.

[47] PROV VPRS 3992, Unit 618, 96/2561.

[48] Ibid.

during the five weeks leading up to his death. The first time she sought treatment for "a little blistered mark extending over the upper surface of the [upper] lip" which she said had been caused by John drinking from a tin of scalding water. Dr Dickinson thought this possible, and prescribed an ointment. Two weeks later, when Rout returned with John, Dr Dickinson asked about the boy's general wellbeing. Rout told him that "the child was languid" but that "he always ate very well." Apparently, the doctor saw no reason for a physical examination at either appointment, or he would have seen bruises and puncture marks on the boy's torso and the trauma around his anus.[49] Dr Dickinson directly stated that he had never been told about injuries to the penis or anus and that he had not treated the child for diarrhoea "within a short period of its death."[50]

If the key question at stake was Rout's responsibility, surely the question of why she did not seek treatment for injuries she clearly knew about was an important one. Yet none of the records show any sign that this was pursued at all. What role did Rout play in limiting Dr Dickenson's access to John's body, and how thoroughly did the doctor undertake his responsibility to examine his young patient? Given the passing of time, we can probably never definitively answer these questions, but there does seem to have been a willingness on the part of numerous people, both before and after John's death, to avoid vigorous interrogation of the possibility that he had suffered sexual abuse, and who might have been responsible.

What Can We Learn from the Death of John Wood Pledger?

The overall tenor of the response from all of the people working for the Department for Neglected Children, in this case, was defence. In particular, both Madden and Millar were careful to clarify that they had done everything required of them and that they had breached no regulations. However, nobody went further than this to seriously consider whether the existing regulations and procedures were, in fact, adequate to limit the possibility that another foster child might suffer a similar fate in the future. The difficulty of placing children with mental impairments in foster homes had been a challenge for the department since it

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

introduced foster care in the 1870s.[51] As we return to show in Chapter 7, the question of how to accommodate children, like John, who were not necessarily suited to institutions like Kew, but who were also not easily provided for in foster homes, was still a critical problem for the department in the 1930s.[52] John's case could have given departmental authorities pause to interrogate the question of what could be changed for children who seemed to fall between the cracks, but it did not.

Perhaps expecting such radical reconsideration of the structure of the child welfare system is unrealistic, even if with the benefit of knowing how history unfolded we can see that the department was avoiding an issue which would only get more pressing with time. However, it is more credible to suggest that John Wood Pledger's case did highlight the consequences of 'settling' when it came to selecting foster homes. Certainly, Sergeant Gleeson, who commented that it seemed "strange how a woman like Mrs Rout…could be entrusted with the care of two state children," articulated his view that the Rout house did not meet the usual expectations of a foster home.[53] Constable Whiddett's statement that Rout was known to the local police as "highly respectable" suggests that the concerns about the Rout home related to Rout's ability to provide for the number of children as well as her own paid work rather than to suspicions about her character. The make-up of the Rout household, as well as Mary Ann Rout's other commitments were known to Madden when she selected the home, and a case such as John's could have stimulated reflection on how appropriate homes were selected, but it did not. Indeed, even after the weight of evidence revealed by the inquest, the head of the department defended not only the processes employed to select foster homes but Mary Ann Rout specifically. He wrote that he felt it unwise to "harass" her by charging her because the department needed women who would take on 'difficult to place' children.[54] Millar's response reflects an implicit acceptance that 'difficult to place' children were at the bottom of the social heap and might simply have to endure whatever accommodation the state could arrange for them.[55]

[51] VPRS 3991, Unit 739, 74/76258.

[52] Chapter 7: Rediscovering Foster Care.

[53] PROV VPRS 3992, Unit 618, 96/2561.

[54] Ibid.

[55] For a similar argument relating to twentieth-century children in institutions see: Harry Ferguson, "Abused and Looked After Children as 'Moral Dirt': Child Abuse and Institutional Care in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Social Policy* 36, no. 1 (2007): 123–39.

On the evidence, there appear to have been two primary factors which guided Madden's acceptance of Rout as a foster mother for Pledger and the other girl placed in her home. First, Rout was willing to take the children at the regular boarding rate of five shillings per week. Many other women negotiated higher rates of pay for children with high care needs.[56] The department's records stated that it was sending Madden eight shillings per week for John Wood Pledger, yet Rout was receiving only five. This fact was noted twice in the file documenting the investigation into the boy's death, yet was not examined, and Madden continued on as correspondent. Perhaps it was a bookkeeping error which was resolved and noted elsewhere. Perhaps Madden was using the extra money to help with other parts of her work. Whatever the case, finding a home for these two children at the lower rate would have been a coup.

The other basis on which Madden appears to have selected the foster home was her receipt of a reference from a Church of England minister for the district which specially recommended her. The reference itself is not in the investigation's file, and so it is not clear whether the reference specifically recommended her as suited for high needs children or whether it was a character reference of the usual type provided by ministers to the department. There remain questions about why an inexperienced foster mother wanted to take on two 'difficult to place' children when others were available—especially given that she accepted the standard rate of pay—and about why her suitability was not considered more carefully. If, in fact, the department needed homes for children like John so badly that rigorous evaluation of those homes was not possible, then it is disturbing to note that it was decades before the department made any clear moves towards providing alternate solutions.

Finally, the Pledger case should have led to more serious consideration of how to account for any risks posed by other children in a potential foster home. As we discuss in Chapter 9, foster siblings continue to be rendered invisible in a number of ways (to the detriment of both foster children and the foster siblings themselves).[57] There were already regulations in place to prevent foster children sharing beds with older children, but the Pledger case could have been an opportunity to extend, if not regulations, at least procedures for assessing the suitability of the entire

[56]For example see: PROV VPRS 3992, Unit 414, 91/5961; PROV VPRS 3992, Unit 499, 93/1970; and PROV VPRS 3992, Unit 746, 99/3021.

[57]Chapter 9: Are We Getting Better at This?

household, including its existing children. As it is today, foster care in the nineteenth century was run with fewer resources and fewer people than was ideal, and so it seems that the momentum was often with pragmatic responses rather than deep reflection on best practice. As the following section of this chapter shows, this lack of in-built adaptation and reform had long-term consequences.

Luke Anthony Borusiewicz

It would be comforting to think that cases like John Wood Pledger's could never happen today. Surely after more than a century of government-run foster care systems in Australia, and over fifty years of active professionalisation within child protection services, things must be different? The case of Luke Anthony Borusiewic, who died in 2009 from injuries sustained in his Queensland foster home, calls such beliefs into question.[58]

Precisely what happened to Luke in his foster home before his death, including the specifics of how he sustained his fatal injuries, is contested. The inquest into the death of Luke Anthony Borusiewicz concluded the following was true:

> On 12 January 2009 Luke was 2 years and 2 months of age and in foster care with Joy [pseudonym]. She was 74 years of age and had the care of three other children in foster care. Luke had a fall while Joy was having a 'lie down'. Afterwards, when Joy checked on Luke, he appeared to be sleeping. It was not until later in the afternoon when Joy attempted to wake Luke [that it was] discovered that he was unconscious. Luke was taken by Ambulance to Cairns Base Hospital and died on 18 January 2009.[59]

Unlike Rachel Pledger, who was entirely removed from her son's life once he entered foster care, Luke's father had some visitation with his son. Michael Borusiewicz has publicly claimed that Luke's foster mother

[58] Luke Anthony Borusiewicz was in foster care in the Australian state of Queensland. Child welfare in Australia developed in the colonial era (prior to 1901) and remained under state control following federation. Each state has its own system, although they have followed similar patterns and trends across the nation. For more detail see: Musgrove, *The Scars Remain*.

[59] Coroners Court at Cairns—Coroner Kevin Priestly, "Inquest into the Death of Luke Anthony Borusiewicz" (Queensland Courts: Office of the State Coroner, 2013), 1.

mistreated the boy, and also that the system as a whole failed his son.[60] Despite Luke's death being so much more recent than that of John Wood Pledger, it is no easier to be certain about exactly what his time in foster care was like, and we offer absolutely no assessment of Joy as a foster mother. What do we argue is that Luke's case has some disturbing parallels with John Wood Pledger's from a systemic perspective, and that is important to discuss.

Like John, Luke experienced multiple foster placements, and the instability was exacerbated by his high needs—Luke had been diagnosed with developmental delay. Two days before Christmas, 2008, Luke's then foster carers said they could no longer provide for him, and Child Safety Services urgently had to search for a new foster home. Finding a foster home for a child with complex needs at short notice is always a difficult task, but the timing exacerbated the situation. Not only do Australians often have significant family commitments at Christmas time, it coincides with the height of summer when many people are away on holidays or are otherwise out of their usual routines. Child Safety Services turned to Joy, a seventy-four-year-old woman who had provided respite care for Luke in the past. Joy had been trained as a foster carer for children with medium to high needs, but had previously said that she was no longer physically capable of caring for toddlers. She was reluctant to take Luke on for this reason, but with few other alternatives, Child Safety Services persisted with the request and ultimately Joy consented.

During the time that Luke was with Joy, she reported to Child Safety Services that she was not coping with Luke's needs and requested that he be placed elsewhere. Luke's father also reported concerns with the treatment his son was receiving in the foster home. However, for a variety of reasons, explained in detail within the inquest into Luke's death, he was not moved.[61] On the day Luke sustained his fatal injuries, there were four other children in Joy's home, identified only as G12, G9, B4 and B3. The inquest ultimately determined that these children's evidence about what happened to Luke was unreliable due to their age and that G12 spoke English as a

[60] Luke's father, Michael Borusiewicz, developed a public campaign via social media condemning Queensland's Child Safety Services, and also established a website called 'Luke's Army': http://lukesarmy.blogspot.com.au/, last accessed 4 September 2015. We return to this in the concluding chapter of this book: What Can History Tell Us About the Future of Foster Care?

[61] Coroners Court at Cairns, "Inquest into the Death of Luke Anthony Borusiewicz."

second language. However, the basic overview of events endorsed by the inquest was that Joy spent part of the day lying down because she was unwell, and that during that time there was an accident which resulted in Luke sustaining an ultimately fatal head injury. Some of the other children were probably present, but the precise sequence of events was unclear.[62]

The case is complex, and there are aspects which remain in dispute, but there are some obvious parallels between the stories of John Wood Pledger and Luke Anthony Borusiewic. Although their deaths occurred more than one hundred years (and roughly 3000 km) apart, both boys were victims of systems which struggled to find foster homes for 'difficult to place' children. John and Luke both needed to be placed urgently, and this influenced decisions about where to place them. In both cases, the people responsible for supervising the foster homes had indications that all was not well, and in both cases, the difficulty in identifying other options for placements resulted in the boys remaining in those homes. Both cases also reveal the challenges around assessing the risks posed by other people within the household and the limits of a foster carer's ability to supervise. We make these observations not to suggest that there are any easy solutions which have simply been ignored, but to ask why, after almost 150 years of statutory foster care in Australia, we still face so many of the same problems.

One of the clearest issues is that crucial decisions about both John and Luke were heavily influenced by a shortage of suitable foster homes. We need to understand why child welfare departments suffer such shortages—noting that attrition from the work is as much of an issue as attracting interest in the first place. There have long been arguments about the philosophical desirability of foster care as a form of out of home care, but its appeal to governments has also been financial.[63] Money is not a magic bullet, but greater investment in foster care systems would help. The foster carers we spoke with in this project, and whose experiences we return to in Chapter 5, had mixed opinions about whether simply increasing foster care allowances was a desirable approach, but most agreed that they would have benefitted from more resources.[64] Foster carers should not be left largely unsupported because

[62] Ibid.

[63] See Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practice.

[64] Chapter 5: They're Just Doing It for the Money.

welfare workers are stretched beyond capacity with enormous caseloads, and welfare workers should not be so overwhelmed by their work that, for many, it is unsustainable in the longer term. Best practice in supporting foster carers, as well as foster children and their families, takes time and staff, and these cost money. Child welfare has rarely been a vote-winning area of investment for governments in Australia, but as a society, we need to be bold enough to decide that we value vulnerable children enough to invest in their wellbeing.

References

Births Deaths and Marriages Victoria. "Birth, Death and Marriage Certificates of the Pledger Family." https://www.bdm.vic.gov.au/.

Broder, Sherri. *Tramps, Unfit Mothers, and Neglected Children: Negotiating the Family in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

Cook, Hera. "Unseemly and Unwomanly Behaviour: Comparing Women's Control of Their Fertility in Australia and England from 1890 to 1970." *Journal of Population Research* 17, no. 2 (2000): 125–41.

Coroners Court at Cairns—Coroner Kevin Priestly. "Inquest into the Death of Luke Anthony Borusiewicz." Queensland Courts: Office of the State Coroner, 2013.

Cossins, Annie. *The Baby Farmers: A Chilling Tale of Missing Babies, Shameful Secrets and Murder in 19th Century Australia*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2013.

Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools, Victoria. *Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools: Report of the Secretary and Inspector*, 1896.

Digby, Anne. "Contexts and Perspectives." In *From Idiocy to Mental Defective: Historical Perspectives on People with Learning Disabilities*, edited by David Wright and Anne Digby, 1–21. London and New York: Routledge.

Ferguson, Harry. "Abused and Looked After Children as 'Moral Dirt': Child Abuse and Institutional Care in Historical Perspective." *Journal of Social Policy* 36, no. 1 (2007): 123–39.

Goc, Nicola. *Women, Infanticide and the Press, 1822–1922: News Narratives in England and Australia*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.

Hallahan, Lorna. "Inside Kew Cottages." *History Australia* 7, no. 3 (2010): 63.1–63.3.

Jalland, Pat. *Changing Ways of Death in Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006.

'Luke's Army.' http://lukesarmy.blogspot.com.au/.

Monk, Lee-Ann. "'Made Enquiries, Can Elicit No History of Injury': Researching the History of Institutional Abuse in the Archives." *Provenance*, no. 6 (2007): 11–22.

Monk, Lee-Ann. "Exploiting Patient Labour at Kew Cottages, Australia, 1887–1950." *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 38, no. 1 (2010): 86–94.

Musgrove, Nell. *The Scars Remain: A Long History of Forgotten Australians and Children's Institutions*. Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013.

Oberman, Michelle. "Understanding Infanticide in Context: Mothers Who Kill, 1879–1930 and Today." *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 92, no. 3/4 (2002): 707–38.

Public Record Office Victoria, VA 475 Chief Secretary's Department, VPRS 4527/P0 Ward Registers.

Public Record Office Victoria, VA 475 Chief Secretary's Department, VPRS 3391 & 3992 Inward Registered Correspondence II & III.

Public Record Office Victoria, VA 683, VPRS 3502, Register of Assisted Immigrants from the United Kingdom.

Quartly, Marian, Shurlee Swain, and Denise Cuthbert. *The Market in Babies: Stories of Australian Adoption*. Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing, 2013.

Scott, Dorothy, and Shurlee Swain. *Confronting Cruelty: Historical Perspectives on Child Protection in Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002.

Swain, Shurlee, and Renate Howe. *Single Mothers and Their Children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Check for updates

CHAPTER 3

Making and Breaking Families

The headline in the Melbourne *Age* newspaper read: "Extraordinary Case Under the Boarding Out System: Mother Charged with Stealing Her Own Child."[1] On Wednesday, 20 June 1894, Annie Thomas entered the home where her daughter (also Annie) was living as a foster child, and ran away with her. Newspapers across the Australian colonies reported this scandalous case, and the historical record suggests that many of the articles played fast and loose with the facts. Annie Thomas certainly did 'abduct' her three-and-a-half-year-old daughter from a foster home in the inner Melbourne suburb of Brunswick, but she had not, as one article euphemistically put it, lost her child to the state through "gaining her livelihood in an uncertain and precarious way," nor was she properly titled "Mrs. Thomas."[2] The newspapers painted Annie as a "dark and sallow woman" who frequented "Chinese dens" in the notorious Little Lonsdale Street in the city, and who viciously violated the trust of the woman fostering the young Annie.[3] But there is another side to

[1] "Extraordinary Case Under the Boarding Out System: Mother Charged with Stealing Her Own Child," *Age* (Melbourne), 25 June 1894, 6.

[2] "A Child Kidnapped by Its Mother," *Argus* (Melbourne), 25 June 1894, 5; "Extraordinary Case Under the Boarding Out System," *Age* (Melbourne), 25 June 1894, 6.

[3] "Mother and Child: Strange Case of Kidnapping," *Weekly Times* (Melbourne), 30 June 1894, 32; several articles make reference to "Chinese dens," for example, see "Latest News from the Metropolis," *Hamilton Spectator* (VIC), 28 June 1894, 3.

© The Author(s) 2018

N. Musgrove and D. Michell, *The Slow Evolution of Foster Care in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in the History of Childhood,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93900-1_3

the story—one which shows how desperately Annie Thomas fought to maintain connections with her daughter and her own siblings, struggling against the forces of a foster care system which did more to keep them apart than bring them together. This chapter places Annie's story as a centrepiece for illustrating the many ways—intended and unintended—that foster care separated families, and the fewer opportunities it provided for some families to remain together.

The Thomas Family

Annie Thomas was born to Harry and Mary Thomas of Geelong, Victoria, on 9 December 1873.[4] She had two older brothers (Harry Edward b. 1863 and Walter b. 1865), three older sisters (Clara b. 1866, Elizabeth b. 1868 and Rose b. 1870), and another sister, Kate, was added to the family in 1878. The Thomases were a family of some notoriety in Geelong, which was a relatively small city at the time—the population around the time of Annie's birth was roughly 20,000 people, making it about one-tenth the size of the colony's capital, Melbourne.[5] This, in terms of researching Annie's story, was a great help, given the family's relatively common names, and the propensity of the Department for Neglected Children to incorrectly record details.[6]

[4]This birth date is given on her official birth certificate and also her entry in the Children's Register, VPRS 4527, Unit 29, 220.

[5]See Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families" (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997); "Demongraphy" in Encyclopedia of Melbourne Online (The School of Historial Studies, The University of Melbourne, 2009), http://www.emelbourne.net.au/home.html.

[6]For example, in several places Harry and Mary Thomas were recorded as Henry and Elizabeth Thomas. It is possible these were aliases used by the parents, and it is also possible that this was simply an error in the admission records. Harry once appeared in court reports as Henry: "Town Talk," *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 5 August 1884, 3. Through cross-checking a number of documents from within the records of the Neglected Children's Department and the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria, it has been possible to reconstruct enough information to be sure that all of the members of the Thomas family (and other families discussed later in this chapter) are correctly linked with historical records relating to them.

The Thomas family's connection to Geelong can be traced back at least to 5 July 1862, when Harry and Mary married at St Mary's Catholic Church. The impression of the Thomas family's life that emerges from the historical sources is a tumultuous one. They were evicted from their home by multiple landlords, once when Mary was little more than a month away from giving birth to Annie, and on at least one occasion came very close to losing one of their sons to sudden illness.[7] Family arguments also came to public notice more than once. On a spring night in 1872, intent on retrieving her husband from a local hotel, Mary attempted to force her way into the male-only bagatelle room. She accused the landlord of assaulting her by pushing her to the ground. In his defence, the landlord portrayed Mary as agitated and abusive, and stated that she had "entered his place without hat or bonnet, and with her hair all disarranged."[8] The evidence of Harry Edward Thomas, aged nine, persuaded the Police Magistrate that excessive violence had been used to block Mary's entry to the bagatelle room, and the case was decided in her favour. However, as the title of the newspaper report of the case made clear, there was little doubt that there had been quite a "Scene at the Bush Inn."[9]

Eight years later, a similarly heated interaction between the married couple brought Harry to court. Perhaps the unusual heat of March 1881, had quickened their tempers. The temperature had topped 47 degrees Celsius in the sun, and in the evening the glow of bushfires in surrounding areas could be seen from town. But whatever had instigated the row between the couple, their argument became so loud that people outside on the street could hear it—landing Harry in court for having used obscene language to his wife. In defending himself Harry "urged that his wife, was a great trouble to him, and that he was driven at times to employ rough language towards her."[10] Even taking into account the trope of the 'difficult wife' which Harry was employing—one which would have held currency with at least some of the people in the court that day—this event was but one in a series of family conflicts.

[7] "Town Talk," *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 30 October 1873, 2; "To the Editor of the Advertiser," *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 30 January 1868, 3.

[8] "A Scene at the Bush Inn," *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 31 October 1872, 4.

[9] Ibid.

[10] "Town Talk," *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 24 March 1881, 3.

The Thomas family may have been very happy at times—certainly the sisters maintained family bonds well into adulthood—but they were also plagued by instability and numerous run-ins with the law, some of which resulted in gaol sentences for both Harry and Mary.[11]

The two Thomas boys also had skirmishes with the law. In 1873, nine-year-old Harry Edward Thomas appeared in court, accompanied by his mother, charged with having stolen two bricks from a ruined wall. The court reporter gave the impression of being rather impressed by the "intelligent looking little boy" who had an "ingenious" plan for using the bricks to trap sparrows, "thus protecting the orchards."[12] Harry was confined for the sitting of the court, but then released. In 1876 Walter Thomas, then also nine, found himself in court for operating a scrap iron selling scheme which might equally have been described as ingenious had the court reporter been inclined to see Walter in a favourable light. However, Walter and another boy had stolen and sold iron of considerable value, and implicated local storekeepers in receiving stolen goods.[13] Walter also probably did not present as pleasingly in court as his brother had three years prior. When he arrived at the reformatory to commence his two-year term, his condition was described as, "Lousy and dirty. Clothes useless and destroyed."[14]

In 1881, Walter was recommitted to the industrial schools for another year for stealing pigeons.[15] The significance of this recommittal for the family story is that it placed him under the charge of the department at the same time as his sister Elizabeth was committed, yet neither child's record makes note of the family connection.[16] It was standard practice

[11] The police and court records which would have provide direct details of the Harry and Mary's convictions could not be located, and they have likely been destroyed, but the *Geelong Advertiser* reports of court proceedings note that Harry had been convicted more than ten times for offenses which held a £5 fine or three months imprisonment: "Town Talk," *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 28 December 1883, 2. The ward register entry for Annie Thomas notes that at the time of her admission to the department in 1885, Harry was serving three months in gaol for obscene language and Mary was serving the same for larceny.

[12] "A Paltry Charge," *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 14 January 1873, 3.

[13] "Young in Crime," *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 14 November 1876, 3.

[14] VPRS 4527, Unit 20, 35. His parents are incorrectly listed as Henry and Elizabeth, but his father's employment is correct, and his birth date lines up with the birth certificate of Walter Thomas to Harry and Mary.

[15] "Larceny," *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 2 February 1881, 2; VPRS 4527, Unit 20, 202.

[16] VPRS 4527, Unit 20, 202; VPRS 4527, Unit 24, 231.

to record sibling relationships on children's ward register entries, but the reasons for doing so were administrative—to facilitate the management of children through the system, and to identify parents who might have maintenance payment orders in place for some of their children but not others. Through these lenses, the sibling relationship between Elizabeth and Walter was insignificant. Walter was in the reformatory arm of the department, and Elizabeth, twelve, had been admitted as a neglected child, so from the department's view their cases were entirely separate. Elizabeth's record provides no detail about precisely why she was admitted to the department, and when her father was summoned to court "to show cause why he should not contribute towards the support of his child" the police stated that they "did not know anything of circumstances of the girl's committal."[17]

Elizabeth's time under the control of the department was a solitary one in terms of connections with her siblings. She was placed in a foster home in the Melbourne suburb of Caulfield, and when she turned fifteen this same home kept her on as a paid domestic servant, still under the control of the department. On the face of it, this suggests a relatively successful placement. Foster mothers who took in older children generally expected them to perform work within the house, and many returned them to the department when the children turned fifteen and foster payments ended. While this foster mother quite likely saw herself as training a future domestic for her home when she first fostered Elizabeth, she must have been happy with her in order to keep her on in a paid position in 1883 when the girl turned fifteen. We can draw no similar conclusion about Elizabeth's contentment. She absconded once, in 1884, which suggests she was not entirely happy, but otherwise she remained in this one home until she turned eighteen and was released by the department. She was still there in 1885 when Annie and Kate Thomas were committed to the department—the sibling relationship was noted on the sisters' files, but followed by a question mark.

From the periodic outbursts of the Thomas family's conflicts that were recorded by the local press, the family appears to have been hanging together by a thread throughout the early 1880s. However, reading into the gaps of these records, it is also evident that they did not want to lose any more of their children to the department. At the end of August 1883, Mary

[17]VPRS 4527, Unit 24, 231; "Town Talk," *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 5 August 1884, 3.

was in court facing charges of being drunk and disorderly—not for the first time.[18] She told the court that her husband was currently in the local gaol, begged for mercy, and promised to leave town as soon as her husband was released. She was unable to pay the twenty-shilling fine imposed on her, and so served a fourteen-day sentence. She made no mention of her children. As a veteran of the court, she likely knew that bringing attention to the children would place them at risk of being committed as neglected.[19] In December the same year, Harry was once again facing charges in the Geelong Police Court for having been heard screaming obscenities at his children. He was convicted, and the children were ordered to be brought before the court as neglected.[20] However, in neither of these cases were any of the Thomas children deemed neglected by the court.

It is not clear what arrangements were made to provide for the Thomas children while both of their parents were in gaol during early September 1883, nor what representation was made to avoid their committal following Harry's conviction that December, but clearly the Thomas family did what they could to keep their remaining family together. Their options had run out by May 1885. Harry was in gaol on a charge of obscene language, and on 5 May, Mary was sentenced to three months in gaol for stealing her neighbour's waterproof coat.[21] This time Annie (aged eleven) and Kate (aged seven) were committed as neglected children—neither were ever returned by the department to the custody of their parents.[22] Mary applied to have Annie and Kate returned to her in 1886, but the police reported to the department that she, her husband and the older children (although they did not specify which children were included in this) were "most disreputable people" and "not fit people to have charge of their daughters."[23] After that, the Thomas parents disappear from their children's records, and the most important family relationships which emerge are those between the Thomas siblings.

[18]For at least one previous example see "Inebriates," *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 12 July 1881, 3.

[19]"Town Talk," *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 31 August 1883, 2.

[20]"Town Talk," *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 28 December 1883, 2.

[21]VPRS 4527, Unit 29, 220; "Town Talk," *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 5 May 1885, 2.

[22]VPRS 4527, Unit 29, 220 (Annie); VPRS 4527, Unit 29, 221 (Kate, Listed as Catherine); VPRS 4527, Unit 12, 233 (Second Entry for Kate, Listed as Catherine).

[23]VPRS 4527, Unit 29, 220.

Living Under the Control of the Department for Neglected Children

For the first three and a half years that Annie and Kate were wards of the state, they were together; first, they spent two weeks in the department's receiving depot, then almost two years in a foster home in the Melbourne suburb of St. Kilda, followed by six months in another St Kilda foster home, a week back in the receiving depot, and then a new foster home in Ballarat (a goldfields town larger than Geelong but smaller than Melbourne).[24] In the absence of other evidence, it is impossible to say why the sisters were moved from St. Kilda to Ballarat. Even when new foster homes were needed, it was more usual for the local Ladies Committee to keep the case under their own jurisdiction and find a new placement within their district; indeed the Thomas sisters were the only two children transferred to another boarding out district from the St. Kilda district that year.[25] It is possible that an attempt to gain maintenance payments from their father just two weeks prior to their move was related.[26] The proceedings may have somehow alerted the sisters' parents to the approximate location of their foster home, and given the department's policy of preventing contact between foster children and their families except in exceptional circumstances, the move may have been effected in order to prevent the parents from locating their daughters. The timing of these events could also have been pure coincidence, and the reason for the move something altogether different. If the women who ran the local Ladies Committees ever made notes about why they made such transfers, those records have not survived.

On 10 December 1888, the day after she turned fifteen, Annie was removed from her foster home and placed at service. Her position was in Ballarat, so she may well have been able to maintain some kind of contact with her sister Kate, who remained in their previously shared foster home for a further six months, and then another foster home in the same district.[27] The next direct information of Annie is that she gave birth to a baby girl on 11 October 1890, and nine days later, the pair were placed in an

[24]VPRS 4527, Unit 29, 220; VPRS 4527, Unit 29, 221. Over time the relative sizes of Geelong and Ballarat reversed and today Geelong is considerably larger.

[25]Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools, Victoria. *Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools: Report of the Secretary*, 1887, 35.

[26]VPRS 4527, Unit 29, 220.

[27]VPRS 4527, Unit 29, 220; VPRS 4527, Unit 29, 221.

infant asylum where Annie nursed her daughter for eleven months. After that, Annie was sent to a new service position, and her daughter (Annie Jnr.) to a foster home.[28] Annie's first employer did not (as many others did) return her to the department when her pregnancy was discovered, so perhaps there was a positive relationship between she and Annie. Other than that, we have no detail about Annie's life at service, but it is possible to construct some sense of what her life might have been like during that time.

Although children at service were still wards of the state, many found that their status as employees rather than foster children offered certain opportunities for greater independence. While they were expected to work long hours, and many resented the low status they held within the household, they might also run errands outside the house and spend less time under direct supervision.[29] They should have also had some money to spend. Part of their wages were paid directly to the department for safekeeping, and the rest given to the children at service. When the department found out that a child was not receiving his or her portion of the wages, it did intervene, but evidence presented to the *Forgotten Australians* senate inquiry suggests that, at least in the twentieth century, many children never received their wages and never had assistance from the department in recovering them.[30] Particularly in parts of Australia such as Queensland and Western Australia, where child welfare was run separately for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, non-payment of wages to Aboriginal workers was systematic, and across the nation the issue of non-payment of wages to Aboriginal workers has been highlighted by a number of scholars.[31]

[28]VPRS 4527, Unit 29, 220; VPRS 4527, Unit 37, 142.

[29]For a detailed exploration of this in the South Australian context see Margaret Barbalet, *Far from a Low Gutter Girl: The Forgotten World of State Wards: South Australia 1887–1940* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983).

[30]For some examples of the department intervening to help recover owed wages see VPRS 3992, Unit 29, 84/5548 and VPRS 3992, Unit 701, 98/942.

[31]Penelope Hetherington, *Settlers, Servants and Slaves: Aboriginal and European Children in Nineteenth-Century Western Australia* (Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 2002); Shirleene Robinson, *Something Like Slavery—Queensland's Aboriginal Child Workers, 1842–1945* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008); Rosalind Kidd, *Trustees on Trial: Recovering the Stolen Wages* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006); and Andrew Gunstone and Sadie Heckenberg, *The Government Owes a Lot of Money to Our People: A History of Indigenous Stolen Wages in Victoria* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2009).

One consequence of licensed children living under lighter supervision was that sexual activity became more likely—whether this meant that they chose to engage in sex, or that they became targets of sexual predators. Little historical work has been done on the sexual activity of boys licensed out by the state, and comprehensive evidence to do so for the period beyond living memory would be difficult to source. Conceptions of male sexuality in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many of which still hold some popular currency, could not conceive of young men (boys) as victims in heterosexual encounters. This, combined with a culture of silence within child welfare systems around the question of sexual abuse, means that the department's records reveal very little about the sexual lives of boys under its charge.[32] One exception is in relation to sodomy, though even here, the department was loathe to take boys' accusations against employers seriously unless there was physical evidence. It was difficult for boys living out at work placements to make immediate reports of such assaults, and what were perceived as 'behavioural problems' might emerge in the aftermath—the result being that boys could easily be assessed as troublemakers and thus disbelieved.[33]

For girls, pregnancy was an undeniable marker of sexual activity, and one which the department could not ignore. For some, pregnancy resulted from consensual relationships, and occasionally the discovery of pregnancy was followed by a marriage to the father.[34] However, there is absolutely no doubt that others suffered rape and sexual coercion.[35] Authorities failed to recognise this as endemic to the system, and their interest in identifying the fathers of the expected children had the intention of locating someone besides the department who could be financially liable for the child, rather than in assessing whether charges ought

[32] Shurlee Swain, "Giving Voice to Narratives of Institutional Sex Abuse," *Australian Feminist Law Journal* 41, no. 2 (2015): 289–304; Louise Jackson, *Child Sexual Abise in Victorian England* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

[33] For example, see VPRS 3992, Unit 1746, 26/9157. The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse, noted in its Final Report (2017) the contribution of factor such as this to the under-reporting of abuse. In particular see Volume Seven, available at https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/final-report, last accessed 21 March 2017.

[34] For example, see VPRS 3992, Unit 747, 99/3219.

[35] This issue has been well explored by historians in relation to Aboriginal girls, for example, see Victoria Haskins, "'A Better Chance'? Sexual Abuse and the Apprenticeship of Aboriginal Girls Under the NSW Aborigines Protection Board," *Aboriginal History* 28 (2005): 33–58.

to be brought against the man.[36] The department was not entirely without a sense of responsibility for the girls it sent out to service, and some were able to get support from the department even if they fell pregnant after their term had officially expired—this was particularly true in the 1890s and 1900s, and if they were still working in the placement which had been initially arranged for them while they were wards of the state.[37]

Prior to the 1890s, girls who fell pregnant at service rarely spent more than a few days with their children after birth. In June 1884, sixteen-year-old Norah O'Brien was sent to a service position on a rural property outside the northern Victorian town of Shepparton, and met a local labourer named John Murphy, who was quite likely working on the same property as Norah given the isolation of the area. Murphy later acknowledged paternity of Norah's child, although he almost certainly had no idea that she was pregnant when she was returned to the department in May 1885, since she could have been only a few weeks' pregnant at most. Perhaps, the sexual relationship between Murphy and O'Brien was discovered by her employer, but perhaps the return of the girl was related to something else entirely. Norah spent four months in the Abbotsford reformatory, and was then licensed to a home in South Melbourne where she worked until about two weeks before she gave birth. She then entered a women's refuge with a mandate that her child would be placed on remand and placed under the control of the department.[38] Her baby boy, John Murphy O'Brien, was sent to a wet nurse just nine days after he was born, and when Norah recovered from the birth she was sent back to work. Baby John's ward register read, "all letters to be addressed to father by private envelope, married aunt in Gippsland will take child when weaned."[39] This plan would never eventuate, because baby John died when he was two months old.

Under the innovative leadership of George Guillaume, the Victorian Department for Neglected Children took a new approach, starting in the late 1880s. Rather than emphasising the need to punish girls who

[36]See multiple contributions addressing this issue in: Yorick Smaal, Andy Kaladelfos, and Mark Finnane, eds., *The Sexual Abuse of Children: Recognition and Redress* (Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing, 2016).

[37]For example, see VPRS 3992, Unit 738, 99/235.

[38]VPRS 4527, Unit 23, 116.

[39]VPRS 4527, Unit 31, 100.

fell pregnant by depriving them of their babies, Guillaume urged for the importance of keeping babies alive—which was much easier if their own mothers nursed them than if they were sent to wet nurses. For most, this meant being placed in an institution, like Annie Thomas, but from the late 1880s Guillaume was able to board some pregnant wards—those he saw as deserving cases—in foster homes for both their confinement and nursing periods. This inspired the establishment of a scheme for boarding 'deserving' young single mothers in foster homes with their own children, but that formal trial scheme was for young women who came before the courts with their babies rather than those who were already under the control of the department.[40] Providing similar opportunities for some pregnant state wards appears to have simply slipped into practice rather than being proposed as a formal policy.[41]

Sarah Lovett was an early beneficiary of Guillaume's innovation. In 1889, after spending two years in the Coburg Reformatory, she was sent to service—one month before her sixteenth birthday.[42] A little less than two years later her employer wrote to the Matron of the reformatory to state that she was returning Sarah because the girl was pregnant, and to explain what she could of the circumstances. She wrote:

> The only information I have been able to get from the girl about her destroyer is that he is a lad…[who worked at a local grocer] but as she has not seen him for three months thinks he has left [the area]. She knows him only by the name of Charlie. She affirmed that he never visited her at my house, but was in the habit of seeing him out of doors.[43]

The letter encouraged a favourable assessment of Sarah's character, adding that Sarah had been with her for nearly two years "and up to the time of her getting into this trouble [she] was well conducted."[44] At the same time, it was crafted to diminish the employer's responsibility by pointing

[40]Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools, Victoria. *Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools: Report of the Secretary*, 1893.

[41]It was not reported on in the department's annual reports, and the only correspondence about it located in this research related to approval of applications for such assistance on a case by case basis.

[42]VPRS 4527, Unit 8, 42.

[43]VPRS 3992, Unit 393, 91/1673.

[44]Ibid.

out that the pair had never met within her home. The Matron observed that she felt "there must have been a little laxity of supervision and too much trust placed in the girl herself" but that apart from this the home offered "everything that could be desired" in a situation for a girl.[45]

As for Sarah, she became a model example of Guillaume's theory that boarding out young mothers with their own children could not only keep babies alive, but also prevent them from becoming wards—and thus a cost to the state. The Matron found a suitable foster home in a rural town roughly 30 km east of Melbourne. She explained the arrangement to the foster mother:

> The girl [is] to give her services as long as she is able to do so for her keep—say about three months—after which time until she leaves your house you are to be paid at the rate of 10/- weekly for her board and your protection and supervision.[46]

Sarah gave birth to a healthy daughter roughly one month after her eighteenth birthday. Six months later, she married a man from the same town as her foster home, and her daughter was not made a ward of the state.[47]

Guillaume died in 1891, and while his practice of allowing state wards to nurse their children continued, the strategy of seeking foster homes for 'suitable cases' dwindled. This was partly because his successors were not philosophically committed to the idea, as Guillaume had been, but also because the latter years of the 1890s saw an expansion in the number of institutions which would take girls while they delivered and nursed their babies. Maternity homes typically required a payment from the department for the period of confinement and for the length of time the mothers were there nursing their children.[48] Thus, the department continued the practice of placing some wards in foster homes with their children into the twentieth century, either when institutional placements were hard to find, or when easy boarding out options presented themselves. For example, in 1900 Alice Purser's married brother offered to

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] VPRS 4527, Unit 25, 107.

[48] For example, see VPRS 3992, Unit 876, 02/3183.

take in his sister. He was "respectable but in poor circumstances" and represented that with some financial assistance he could provide for Alice, and that his wife would "give her all the necessary attention."[49] A payment of 10/- per week was approved.

From around 1908 a number of ad hoc practices which stretched the limits of the boarding out legislation began to be questioned. One of them was the custom of extending support to wards whose terms had expired but who were unfit for work—some through pregnancy or recent birth, but many through other physical or mental ailments. The Auditor General, in denying one such request on the basis that it was beyond the scope of the Act, acknowledged that he was "questioning a long standing practice which had been acquiesced by this office" but stood firm in his opinion that all such payments should cease.[50] Eleven years later, the custom of paying boarding out allowances to 'deserving' and 'respectable' mothers to provide for their own children was declared illegal, and the government raced to write new legislation to enable this practice which, as we will return to show in Chapter 6, had become core business of the department.[51] Somewhere between these two events, boarding out pregnant state wards fell out of favour, but it disappeared with a whimper rather than a bang.

Fighting for Family Connections

Sixteen, pregnant, and a ward of the state, Annie Thomas stood a very high chance of being parted from her child. Her term of wardship expired on her eighteenth birthday, so even after nursing her child for nearly a year, she still faced another placement in a reformatory or work situation after her child was weaned. There was no question of her child being sent with her to either. The only other alternative was finding a friend or family member to whom the department would discharge

[49]VPRS 3992, Unit 800, 00/6365.

[50]VPRS 3992, Unit 1074, 08/438.

[51]In 1919, 6206 children were boarded out by the department, and 3989 (64%) of these were boarded with their own mothers. Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools, Victoria. *Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools: Report of the Secretary*, 1919. For more on boarding out children with their own mothers and the dismantling of the scheme see Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

her. Given the previous assessments of her parents and older siblings, the prospect of that was unlikely. So, with no choice in the matter, on 4 September 1890, Annie Jnr. went to a foster home in the inner northern Melbourne suburb of Brunswick, and five days later her mother, Annie Snr., headed off to serve her final three months of wardship as a domestic servant for a family in Melbourne's eastern suburbs.[52]

Whether Annie was eager for a fresh independent start, or whether her employer simply did not offer to keep her on, Annie set out on her own when she turned eighteen in December 1891. By the middle of January, she had found at least one of her sisters, Elizabeth (Bessie), living in Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne—just on the edge of a notorious slum and red-light district known as Little Lon.[53] This was to become an important area in the reunion of four of the Thomas sisters—Clara (who was never a ward of the state) and the three who had been through the system, Bessie, Annie and Kate. On 11 July 1892, Clara married Ling Sin, a cabinet maker living in Little Lonsdale Street, whose place of birth was given as Canton, China.[54] Three months later, Clara gave birth to the couple's first child at an address in Little Lonsdale Street—the beginning of a large family.[55]

Precisely when Kate found her sisters in Little Lon is not clear. She absconded from her foster home in February 1892, and then disappears from the department's records until 30 June 1894, when she was sent to the Oakleigh Reformatory. She was thirteen-years-old, when she ran away from her foster home, and would have needed help to remain independent from the department for more than two years. Possibly this help came from her sisters—certainly, she knew where they were by 1898 when her wardship ended. Another thing which suggests the possibility that Kate was with her sisters is that her return to the department precisely coincided with Annie's court case. The department did not typically expend huge resources on locating absconded foster children, but if the police identified her in the process of investigating Annie's case (which included surveillance of both Annie's and Clara's homes), then

[52]VPRS 4527, Unit 29, 220; VPRS 4527, Unit 37, 142.

[53]VPRS 4527, Unit 29, 220.

[54]Marriage certificate of Ling Sin and Clara Thomas, Victoria, 1892.

[55]Based on births registered in Victoria, Clara gave birth to at least eight children between 1892 and 1912 who all bore the surname Ling Sin, although the father's details were not recorded on the certificates of the children born after 1900.

she would have been returned to the department by the police. In any case, a little over eight months after being returned to the department and entering the reformatory, Kate gave birth to a baby girl, Eveline. She was then licensed out to the same woman listed as Eveline's foster mother, where they both remained until Kate's wardship ended, on her twentieth birthday, in January 1898. Eveline remained a ward of the state until her twentieth birthday.[56] In April 1898, Kate married Yee Louey, a friend of her older sisters and countryman of Clara's husband. In October 1898, she gave birth to their first child.[57]

Apart from the scattered evidence that the Thomas sisters remained in contact during the early 1890s, there is little to reveal what Annie's life was like during this time. The contact information she left with the department was via her sister Bessie, and there are no notes in the ward registers to show that she had any contact with her daughter in foster care. She was presumably working as a domestic servant, and according to newspaper reports she was living in Carlton in June 1894, but there is no indication of how long she had been there.[58] Somewhere in this period, she met her future husband, and in late 1893, she conceived her second child. Perhaps it was the discovery of her pregnancy that prompted her to renew connections with her daughter, perhaps she anticipated her marriage and hoped that this might put her in a position to ask the department to reunite her with her daughter.

Almost all of the information about the events leading up to, and following, Annie's abduction of Annie Jnr. from her foster home come from newspaper reports, many of which conflict on numerous facts. Annie Jnr.'s ward record simply notes "taken away by her mother on 30/5/94 [sic]" and the date of the girl's return to her foster home.[59] In normal circumstances no direct contact was allowed between parents

[56]VPRS 4527, Unit 12, 233; VPRS 4527, Unit 29, 221; VPRS 4527, Unit 44, 86.

[57]Marriage certificate of Yee Louey and Kate Thomas, Victoria, 1898. Based on the births registered in Victoria, the couple had at least two children one in 1898 and another in 1902. In some indexes Yee Louey has been transcribed as Yee Souey, but the marriage certificate shows Louey.

[58]"Extraordinary Case Under the Boarding Out System: Mother Charged with Stealing Her Own Child," *Age* (Melbourne), 25 June 1894, 6.

[59]VPRS 4527, Unit 44, 86. Departmental correspondence which may have existed about the case has since been destroyed, and any records that may have been created by the minor court where the case was heard have probably also been destroyed.

and their children in foster care, and there is nothing to suggest that Annie's case was any exception. Somehow, though, she located the foster home, and appears to have obtained permission from the foster mother to visit her daughter. Here, there are no official records, and the newspapers present conflicting stories. One report claimed that the foster mother said Annie "was in the habit of visiting her [daughter] from time to time," and that she "always displayed great affection for her offspring, and was evidently very much attached to it."[60] By contrast, an article titled "Child Kidnapped by its Mother: Arrest of the Woman in the Chinese Quarter" reported that a "strange woman was observed loitering" near the foster home and that the little girl simply disappeared while "playing round about the house."[61]

On balance, it seems probable that at least on the day of the abduction, the foster mother knew Annie Snr. was in her home. The majority of articles reporting the case explained that Annie Snr. had been in the house on the evening of 20 June, and that the foster mother had been called away, leaving Annie Snr. with her daughter. One article wrote that Annie Snr. left a note on the sewing machine saying:

> You need not be alarmed about Annie because I have taken her to look after her myself. I wrote to the inspector [of the Department for Neglected Children] and told him that I intended taking her.[62]

The others omitted this detail but agreed that when the foster mother returned to her home, both Annie Snr. and Annie Jnr. were gone.

Annie ran with her daughter to Little Lonsdale Street. The newspapers painted this as a sordid scene, emphasising the connections with the Chinese community to draw on popular racist stereotypes about vice in the city. There was some truth in this depiction of that part of the city. There was gambling, there was prostitution, there were opium dens—but it was also a vibrant community, and it was where Annie's sisters lived.[63]

[60] "Extraordinary Case Under the Boarding Out System: Mother Charged with Stealing Her Own Child," *Age* (Melbourne), 25 June 1894, 6.

[61] "Child Kidnapped by Its Mother: Arrest of the Woman in the Chinese Quarter," *Argus* (Melbourne), 25 June 1894, 5.

[62] "The Child Stealing Case," *Age* (Melbourne), 28 June 1894, 6.

[63] Alan Mayne, "Big Notes from a Little Street: Historical Research at Melbourne's 'Little Lon'," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 10, no. 4 (2006).

Annie Snr. left her daughter in the shop of Ling Sin, Clara's husband, which was apparently also where the family lived. In one account of the arrest, a police officer looked through the glass door of the shop and noticed a European child sitting with two Chinese children. Alerted to the policeman's attention, a "Chinese picked up the European child and ran away with it." According to this version, the arrest of Annie took place right there in the shop.[64]

Another more colourful account of the arrest, although ostensibly based on the same policeman's evidence, told quite a different story.

> Detective Britt on Sunday night went to a house frequented by Chinese in Little Lonsdale-street, and there he found the woman with others of low character. There was no sign of the child there, and Britt took the woman with him in a search of other Chinese dens. In one of these there was trouble. His intrusion was resented, and he was set upon by several of the occupants of the house. His prisoner, who had not been handcuffed, joined in the struggle, and Britt was rapidly getting the worst of the fight when Constable Trainor went to his assistance and rescued him. The detective carried away painful evidences of his encounter in the shape of a bleeding hand, a dislocated thumb, and torn and disarranged clothing.[65]

These vastly different accounts highlight the danger of relying too heavily on newspapers for details of events, even when they are reputedly based on the court proceedings, but it is clear that, one way or another, Annie Snr. and Annie Jnr. were located within a few days.

The department suggested to the court that the charges against Annie ought to be dropped as long as the woman agreed to stay away from her daughter. Annie said that "she would until she was married, but that she would then claim her child, as the inspector said she could."[66] The court then turned its attention to the welfare of the heavily pregnant Annie. Mrs. Lord of the Salvation Army Refuge Home said that she had made arrangements for Annie to be admitted to her institution, but Annie replied, "I won't go there as I have a home of my own."[67] Given her

[64] "Alleged Child Abduction Case: The Charge Against Annie Thomas," *Argus* (Melbourne), 28 June 1894, 6.

[65] "Stealing Her Own Child," *Advocate* (Melbourne), 30 June 1894, 17.

[66] "The Child Stealing Case," *Age* (Melbourne), 28 June 1894, 6.

[67] "A Peculiar Case: A Mother Charged with Stealing Her Own Child," *Coburg Leader* (VIC), 30 June 1894, 1.

previous experience of having been confined in an institution for the birth of her first child, her emphatic resistance is understandable. Furthermore, her sister (presumably Clara although the article gives the name Mrs. Ah Lin) was called to provide evidence that Annie had means of support. She testified that Annie "was getting money every week from a man who was going to marry her."[68] With a warning that she would not be treated so lightly should she repeat the offence, Annie was discharged and "left the court in the company of her friends" though without her daughter.[69]

Annie Thomas married Osborne Westland Anderson, an engine driver from South Melbourne, who had himself been in foster care with five siblings in the 1870s. The couple wed on 28 June 1894—so soon after Annie's court case that some of the articles reporting it were not published until two days after the marriage. Annie's sister Bessie was a witness to the union.[70] Almost immediately, Annie applied to have her daughter returned to her, but this request was denied. Although Annie kept her contact details up to date with the department, her daughter was never returned to her. Annie Jnr. was placed back in her original foster home, and discharged to her foster parents on probation in 1897 (meaning that they took her without payment but that she remained a ward of the state), and she remained with them until at least 1906. After that, no trace of young Annie has been found in the historical record. As for Osborne and Annie, they went on to have seven children together, none of whom became wards of the state.[71]

Siblings and Foster Care

As the Thomas family's story demonstrates, the Victorian department typically opted to keep siblings together if they were considered suited to the same kind of placement, but children's needs tended to be assessed as individuals rather than as family units. Thus, when Elizabeth (Bessie) was admitted to the department as neglected, there was no consideration of the family bond between her and her brother Walter who was serving a reformatory sentence. Similarly, when Annie and Kate were

[68] Ibid.

[69] "The Child Stealing Case," *Age* (Melbourne), 28 June 1894, 6.

[70] Marriage certificate of Osborne Westland Anderson and Annite Thomas, Victoria, 1894.

[71] As far as this research could disceren from the available records of the Victorian department.

admitted as neglected children, Bessie was already in a work placement, and so there was no question of placing the three sisters together. The question mark, literally left hanging as a query over their relationship as sisters on their files, indicates the lack of priority that confirming the family connection held for the department. Finally, when Annie aged out of foster care, she had to leave her sister Kate behind to go to work. The momentum of a child welfare system which prioritised efficient handling of individual children over maintaining family units had progressively funnelled Walter, Bessie, Annie and Kate Thomas each on their own path through to the end of their wardships.

By contrast, the case of Osborne Anderson and his siblings demonstrates that the department did make an effort to keep even large sibling groups together if they were considered in need of the same type of placement. Large sibling groups like the Andersons sometimes entered departmental control together when a crisis suddenly incapacitated the family unit. In February 1876, Ellen Anderson was admitted to the Kew Lunatic Asylum, and her six youngest children (John, eleven, Osborne, nine, Stanley, seven, Adelaide, five, Gertrude, three and Gordon, one) were placed under government control. Their father was away in New Zealand, and although the children's ward registers state that he had deserted his family, the Andersons' mobility between Victoria and New Zealand over a number of years, and his listed occupation of "traveller" suggests that he was probably away on an extended work trip.[72]

The Victorian department had formally introduced foster care in 1874, but there were still a number of different institutions in operation until the end of the decade. Thus, when the Anderson siblings entered the system in 1876, department officials had several choices: first, they could have placed the older children in the different institutions available (which each took specified ages or genders of children), and sent the younger ones to a foster home; second, they could have found two or three foster homes each willing to take some of the Anderson children; or third, as they did, they could search for a foster home willing to take all six. The experience of the seven Lester siblings who were admitted that same year, suggests that keeping sibling groups together if they were admitted together was a philosophical preference, but also the limits of

[72]VPRS 4527, Unit 5, 36–37; VPRS 4527, Unit 6, 96–97. An older brother was not admitted with the other siblings.

this approach. The Lester siblings were Catholic, and Catholic foster homes were harder to find.[73] Rather than split up the sibling group, the department placed all but the eldest in a Catholic institution for several months until a suitable foster home for all of them was found. The eldest brother, aged thirteen, was sent to the industrial schools for training with view to a work placement after he turned fourteen.[74]

The Anderson children were, for a time, beneficiaries of the department's principle of boarding out siblings in one home in preference to splitting them up across foster homes. They spent just over a year together in a foster home, but then the two eldest siblings, John and Osborne, were moved to the Sunbury Industrial school. No reason for this move is provided in the ward registers. Then, roughly a year and a half after the children had been admitted, their father applied for their discharge and this was granted. Although their mother was not mentioned in relation to the discharge, she did return to the family home, and the following year gave birth to another son.[75]

Microhistories like these help us demonstrate the operation of foster care, and to examine standard practices that were never explicitly set out in regulations, and were not the subject of regular reporting. Of course, quantitative evidence about the prevalence of particular practices would provide useful context for these close qualitative readings. How typical were the experiences of the Thomas and Anderson children, and importantly for this study, what role did foster care, as a form of out of home care, play in sibling unity? The statistics reported about the placement of children in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both in Australia and in places like Britain and the United States, were predominantly

[73]There are a number of reasons that Catholic foster homes were less plentiful. In part, it related to the fact that more of the women who made up the Ladies Committees that supervised the boarding out programme were Protestant, and so their connections with Catholic households were fewer. The Catholic Church itself had a preference for institutional placement of children to ensure their religious education. Social tensions between Protestants and Catholics were very real in the colony, and although it did occur, the department was reluctant to place Catholic children in non-Catholic foster homes. See also Jill Barnard and Karen Twigg, *Holding on to Hope: A History of the Founding Agencies of Mackillop Family Services 1854–1997* (Kew, VIC: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2004).

[74]One of the Lester children died in the institution, and so eventually five of the seven were boarded out together. VPRS 4527, P003, Unit 1, 253–54; VPRS 4527, Unit 5, 69–70.

[75]See Births, Deaths and Marriages Index, Victoria.

concerned with the numbers and placements of individual children. In certain situations the numbers of families assisted might be reported—for example, when children were boarded out to their own mothers, the total number of mothers was often seen as a relevant figure in addition to the total number of children boarded out in this way. However, statistics that might provide insight into whether siblings remained together in out of home care, and how this might have changed over time, are simply not available.

We have found no instant remedy to this absence, but one possibility for developing our own data was opened up through the Public Record Office Victoria's digitisation of the early ward registers—the admission records for children entering government control. This resource now provides a complete set of the ward registers for the years 1864 through 1893, and due to the way that the records were digitally listed, it was possible to harvest the metadata and compile our own index which had some basic information for every entry in the admissions books: name, registration number and date of admission. From this index, we could identify siblings who were admitted together.[76] With our particular interest in foster care, as opposed to institutional placement of children, we chose to begin our analysis in 1870 to capture the decade of transition (no foster care in 1870 and almost all children in foster placements by 1880) and then continue through the remaining years for which complete data was available (1893).

This data made it possible for us to identify how frequently siblings were admitted together. There were more than 16,800 ward register entries, relating to roughly 14,300 admissions—some children were admitted to the department more than once, sometimes retaining their original ward number and sometimes being allocated a new one, so this figure of 14,300 is higher than the actual number of individual children admitted to the department during the period 1870–1893. Of these admissions, 6117 children (43%) were admitted with one or more

[76]Most siblings who entered together were admitted on the same date or within 2–3 days, however we also included siblings who were admitted within one month of each other. The digital records and their online listing is part of VPRS 4527, P0002 and is accessible through the Public Record Office Victoria Website: https://www.prov.vic.gov.au/, last accessed 28 January 2018.

Table 3.1 Siblings admitted as state wards together in Victoria, 1870–1893

Year	*Sibling groups of 2*	*Sibling groups of 3*	*Sibling groups of 4*	*Sibling groups of 5*	*Sibling groups of 6 or more*	*Number of children admitted with at least one sibling*	*All admissions*	*Sibling admissions as % of total admissions*
1870	68	33	18	4	3	345	587	58.8
1871	80	34	17	4	2	363	762	47.6
1872	93	40	11	3	1	371	832	44.6
1873	77	35	8	7	2	338	726	46.6
1874	79	37	7	4	4	342	770	44.4
1875	83	26	20	4	0	344	781	44.0
1876	73	22	12	8	3	318	805	39.5
1877	74	25	15	1	0	288	764	37.7
1878	75	33	10	5	0	314	729	43.1
1879	65	27	15	0	1	277	663	41.8
1880	49	12	11	6	0	208	473	44.0
1881	38	25	4	2	0	177	511	34.6
1882	40	29	10	2	6	256	512	50.0
1883	45	20	7	3	1	199	466	42.7
1884	41	17	8	5	1	196	435	45.1
1885	32	15	5	3	0	144	367	39.2
1886	34	16	7	5	0	169	420	40.2
1887	57	19	15	5	1	262	556	47.1
1888	41	15	10	3	1	188	465	40.4
1889	27	25	13	6	3	231	539	42.9
1890	41	24	9	5	2	227	515	44.1
1891	38	16	17	1	0	197	516	38.2
1892	41	13	10	5	0	186	547	34.0
1893	38	20	5	3	1	177	569	31.1

sibling. Across the entire period admissions of sibling groups were as follows: groups of 2 (1329); groups of 3 (578); groups of 4 (264); groups of 5 (94); groups of 6 (26); groups of 7 (5); groups of 8 (1). Table 3.1 shows the distribution of these sibling admissions over time. It shows a fairly consistent pattern of smaller sibling groups being more frequent, and a general downward trend in the proportion of admissions being children entering the department with any of their siblings.

In order to move beyond this global data and examine the placement of state wards after they were admitted to the department, we needed to examine the ward registers for each individual child. Doing so for more than 6000 children was not feasible, and so we conducted two sample studies. The first examined the period 1870–1880 to consider the impact that

the introduction of foster care had on the likelihood of siblings remaining together. The second compared a sample of sibling admissions from 1885 (the year Annie Thomas was admitted, and a time of relative economic stability in the colony) with a sample from 1893 (the final year for which we had complete data, and a time of economic depression in the colony).

Our sample of 135 children admitted with siblings during the years 1870–1880 provided some clear evidence that foster care did prove itself more capable of keeping sibling groups together than institutions: of the forty-four children in our sample who had at least one placement with their whole sibling group, twenty-seven spent their entire time in foster care, twelve were placed separately in institutions and then sent to foster care, two were in an institution together and then a foster home together, and only five were together in an institution for their entire term.[77] The larger the sibling group, the more likely they were to be separated for at least part of the time, but even for sibling groups of two, foster care proved more likely to keep siblings together: 50% of the children in our sample who entered as a group of two remained with their siblings in a foster home, as compared to the 17% who were placed together in an institution. Sibling groups of three were twice as likely to remain altogether in a foster home as compared to an institution, and for larger sibling groups the only cases where entire sibling groups remained together were foster placements.

Gender played an important role because many institutions only accepted either boys or girls. Foster care proved much more capable of keeping mixed-gender sibling groups together: of the sixty-six children in our sample who were placed in an institution with at least one of their siblings, fifty-four were the same gender as their siblings; of the fifty-five children who remained with at least some of their siblings, but in mixed-gender sibling groups, forty-three were in foster care. The age distribution of our sample was also significant. Despite the large numbers of very young children being admitted to the department, only eight of the children in our sibling group sample were under two years of age, suggesting that the types of difficulties that pushed sibling groups into the department were different from those confronted by mothers of young infants.[78]

[77] Based on the total number of state wards in this period, this sample size gave 95% confidence with an 8.79% margin of error.

[78] For further discussion of the position of single and deserted mothers, and their use of the department as a coping strategy for their young children, see Chapter 2: Did Anybody Care? The Death of John Wood Pledger.

Analysis by age also confirmed that children over the age of thirteen were not sent to foster care, even if their other siblings were, because they were viewed as ready to be prepared for a work placement. This general age profile was consistent with the ages of children in our 1885 and 1893 samples.

The image of the colony's foster care system which emerged from our 1885 and 1893 samples was a far more stable one, at least with regard to the number of placements that most children experienced, than that of the early years of foster care.[79] In 1885, 62% of all children in our sample had only one foster home, and in 1893 the figure was 55%. Furthermore, the likelihood of siblings remaining as a whole group, especially for their first foster placement was very high in this period. In 1885, 90% of the children in our sample remained with their whole sibling group in their first foster home, and for our 1893 sample, the figure was 87%. This makes a striking comparison with the earlier period: through 1876 less than 30% of the children in our sample remained with their whole sibling groups, between 1877 and 1879 this figure remained under 50%, and then quickly rose to 86% in 1880 when all institutions except the receiving depot and reformatories had been closed, and the department relied almost exclusively on foster care.

The stability of the system in both our 1885 and 1893 samples was clearest in relation to initial foster placements. As older children were sent out to work placements, the younger ones who remained in foster care often shortly thereafter moved to a new foster home, and these subsequent foster homes tended to last for shorter stretches of time. Larger sibling groups were typically placed together in their initial foster home, but frequently split up if subsequent foster placements were required. Thus, sibling unity relied heavily upon the success of the initial foster placements, although it is clear that the department prioritised placing siblings who were admitted at the same time in a foster home together. Given the placement instability which has been a constant challenge to foster care systems across Australia since the mid-twentieth century, the ability of the late nineteenth-century Victorian system to deliver long-term foster homes to so many children is quite remarkable.

[79] In 1885 we examined 58 of the 144 children who were admitted with siblings that year, and in 1893 we examined 63 of the 177. Both of these sample sizes give a 95% confidence with just under 10% margin of error.

What the Archives Cannot Tell Us

"My grief. Loss of a continuing relationship with my natural parents." So begins the second journal entry in Deidre Michell's record of her 'breakdown' when she was thirty-three years of age. "Loss of a continuing relationship with my sister and three brothers" continues the entry dated Friday 21 July 1989. Deidre was on extended sick leave from work, seeing a counsellor, and desperately trying to understand what was wrong, why she felt incapacitated although not physically sick. What seemed like a particularly bad bout of depression became a time of intense grieving as Deidre finally mourned the loss of her family thirty years earlier. In later writings, Deidre talks about grief too; she wonders if "the hole in [her] heart can ever be closed up…if the pain can ever go away," whether the grief "will ever end" since "the depths of it are impenetrable." Part of the grief for Deidre came from a realisation that she had little from her family to pass onto her own children, "no sentimental pieces…nor… access to the huge extended family they inherited…nothing in the way of grandparenting."[80] Part of it came from a yearning for the sort of mothering she never had—"tender, gentle, nurturing"—from her birth mother, nor foster mother. Another part was the loss of connection with a sister and three brothers she did not see for thirty years.[81]

The pain of loss felt by those who have been displaced from birth families is evident in stories they tell, such as to official government inquiries.[82] *Forgotten Australians* reported heart wrenching testimony from people who still ached for the relationships they had lost with family: "I never ever had the opportunity to say goodbye to either of my parents" said one person, while another said, "not to have seen my mother again after we were taken away and not to have been able to find my brothers has been quite traumatic for me." The challenge of

[80] Deidre Michell, *Ways of the Wicked Witch* (Elizabeth, SA: People's Voice Publishing, 2012), 8; Deidre Michell, "Two Mothers—Twice the Blessing or Was I Cursed?," *WomenChurch* 31 (Spring 2002): 15–16; and Deidre Michell, "Putting Down Roots," in *Women Journeying with Spirit*, ed. Deidre Michell and Jude Noble (Port Adelaide, SA: Ginninderra Press, 2010), 18.

[81] Deidre Michell, "Systemic Familial Alienation and the Australian Foster Care System," in *Challenges to Living Together: Transculturalism, Migration, Exploitation*, ed. Susan Petrilli (Italy: Mimesis International, 2017), 395–96.

[82] Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge" (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2005), 9–10.

reconnection is summed up by another testifier: "How can you get back together when you don't know each other?"[83] Similarly with *Bringing Them Home*, where the pain of displacement from birth family and siblings included displacement from community, since Aboriginal families are constituted by their entire community, loss of family and identity feature as having had more devastating impacts, in many cases, "than all the abuses."[84] Feeling torn away from family and culture was also a persistent theme in the testimonies of Former Child Migrants reported in *Lost Innocents*: "From my own point of view I have lived my life with a hole at the centre of my being" commented Eamon Brown.[85]

Beyond official government inquiries, the grief and loss experienced by children removed from their birth families—and their birth parents—has received little attention until recently. And yet, as Deirdre Murphy and Hilary Jenkinson point out, children entering foster care "can lose so much," not only their parents and siblings, but also "extended family, home, school, friends, pets, toys, clothes," familiar smells, sounds and sights, even "normalcy."[86] And birth parents are at risk of intensifying feelings of loss over time and adverse consequences to their mental health.[87] Children who are moved multiple times experience multiple "non-death losses" as Monique Mitchell calls the loss experienced by children in foster care and which she equates to loss through death.

[83] Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Forgotten Australians: A Report on Australians Who Experienced Institutional or Out-of-Home Care as Children" (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2004), 105.

[84] Bringing them home, 10.

[85] Commission, "Bringing Them Home Report," 10. Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Lost Innocents: Righting the Record, Report on Child Migration" (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2001), 148.

[86] Deirdre Murphy and Hilary Jenkinson, "The Mutual Benefits of Listening to Young People in Care, with a Particular Focus on Grief and Loss," *Child Care in Practice* 18, no. 3 (2012): 248–49. Monique Mitchell, "'No One Acknowledge My Loss and Hurt': Non-death Loss, Grief, and Trauma in Foster Care." *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 35, no. 1 (2018): 2. Also see Kerrie Fineran, "Helping Foster and Adopted Children to Grieve the Loss of Birthparents," *The Family Journal* 20, no. 4 (2012).

[87] See, for example, Nina Memarnia et al., "'It Felt Like It Was Night All the Time': Listening to the Experiences of Birth Mothers Whose Children Have Been Taken into Care or Adopted'," *Adoption & Fostering* 39, no. 4 (2015).

Added to the emotional and psychic burden of self-doubt, uncertainty, loyalty conflicts and difficulty adjusting to a new family situation,[88] this often unacknowledged and therefore disenfranchised grief may well contribute to the oft-cited negative outcomes for children in foster care.[89]

The policy of the South Australian child welfare agency in its various incarnations from the nineteenth century until the 1940s, as in other jurisdictions over a similar time span, was to refuse access by birth relatives to children in state care. There were exceptions, as in "the case of a child becoming seriously ill, or under special circumstances" and parents could apply for information "as to the health and general well-being of their children."[90] In Chapter 6 of this book, we return to the question of how authorities determined when exceptions would be made, and how they went about offering families opportunities to stay in touch, but here, our concern is the human cost of the determination of child welfare departments across the nation to keep families apart.[91] Many children separated from their families during the period examined by Margaret Barbalet, 1887–1940, were not fostered as infants, and they often had memories of their birth family, which could become what Barbalet calls "a romanticized dream…a memory that could haunt."[92] Although the South Australian agency, and foster mothers, were concerned that contact with birth family was distressing for the foster child, the majority of girls in Barbalet's study wanted contact with them, even when they were happy in their foster care placement. Many also wrote to the agency asking for information about their siblings and parents,

[88] Monique Mitchell and Leon Kuczynski, "Does Anyone Know What Is Going On? Examining Children's Lived Experience of the Transition into Foster Care," *Children and Youth Services Review* 32, no. 3 (2010).

[89] Mitchell, "'No One Acknowledge My Loss and Hurt': Non-death Loss, Grief, and Trauma in Foster Care," 2. Also see Mitchell and Kuczynski, "Does Anyone Know What Is Going On? Examining Children's Lived Experience of the Transition into Foster Care"; and Monique Mitchell, "The Family Dance: Ambiguous Loss, Meaning Making and the Psychological Family in Foster Care," *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 8, no. 3 (2016).

[90] Regulation 11, "State Children's Council Regulations," in *GRG 27/1 Correspondence Files ('SCD' Files)* (Attorney-General's Department, Government of South Australia, 1887), 33.

[91] See Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

[92] Barbalet, *Far from a Low Gutter Girl*, 170. Also see Hazel Smith, "The Need for Revaluation and Assessment of Australian Foster Care Programmes," *Australian Journal of Social Work* 16, no. 2 (1963): 25.

sometimes writing angrily, because they had suddenly found out they did have a mother who had paid maintenance for their care but not been allowed access, and sometimes sadly, when they felt their families needed them.[93]

Many people feel some ambivalence towards birth families and they may not begin the search for them immediately. That was the case for fourteen-year-old Walter Jacobsen, born in 1918, on running away from a violent eight-year foster care placement. He felt rejected by his birth family and "had no burning desire to find them."[94] When he was sixteen Jake, as Jacobsen was called, needed proof of his age so he contacted the welfare office in Melbourne and had an extract of his birth certificate posted out. Knowing the names of both parents gave the young man "some slight sense of identity" and he then approached the office for information about his birth family. This inquiry turned up three sisters, all of whom were in foster care. At the age of eighteen Jake applied for and was granted legal custody of his youngest sister, twelve-year-old Joan. The new arrangement meant that Joan would remain a ward of the state until she turned eighteen "as far as upkeep was concerned" but in the meantime the girl could not be moved again "at the whim of the church or anyone else"; Jake would need to be consulted first.[95]

From the 1940s government agencies began a slow shift towards emphasising keeping children within their own families and where children were in foster care, permitting 'natural' or birth parents to maintain contact. Progress in this direction was made slightly more rapidly within non-statutory foster care schemes. By the 1960s, it was possible, even the norm, for parents to visit their 'voluntarily'[96] placed children—under the

[93] Barbalet, *Far from a Low Gutter Girl*, 169–76. Research from the 1990s onwards shows that children in foster can spend a great deal of their time, and therefore energy, worrying about the welfare of their birth families, see for instance Robin Sen and Karen Broadhurst, "Contact Between Children in Out-of-Home Placements and Their Family and Friends Networks: A Research Review," *Child & Family Social Work* 16, no. 3 (2011).

[94] Walter Jacobsen, *Dusa and the Maiden's Prayer* (Melbourne: The Law Printer, 1994), 97, 157.

[95] Ibid., 195, 232.

[96] Voluntary placement was the expression used from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century to describe parents who placed their children in non-statutory out of home care rather than having them made wards of the state. It was voluntary in the sense that they had not been subjected to a legal order to place their children, but for many it was a last resort solution to an otherwise irresolvable crisis.

age of seven—in a foster care home,[97] as several foster parents speak of in Chapter 5.[98] Such voluntary placements were made by mothers without breadwinners who needed to find work, or by fathers whose wives had died, disappeared, or fallen ill (as in the case of Adelle in Chapter 4).[99] Arrangements for visiting were made privately without welfare officer involvement and some foster carers always maintained an 'open house'. David Jackson, for example, was fostered informally in 1967 as a baby to a woman who "would never stand in the way of a family or a parent's needs and rights to see their children." Even so, he had two older brothers he did not know existed until he was well into his teens, "potentially vital connections and resources" he feels he missed out on.[100]

Where children were made wards of the state on the grounds they were neglected, it was often more difficult to maintain birth family connections. This was particularly the case when foster parents did not want to have the birth parents in their home, or if there was considerable geographical distance between parents and foster parents. As social work academic Hazel Smith wrote in 1963:

> No published study is available, but it is felt if a study were made of children in foster homes it would be found that very few have regular contact with the natural parents, some have sporadic contact, often in a departmental room and many have no contact all.[101]

Visits with birth parents, even in neutral places such as a park or department office, could result in "confusion, disturbance, difficulties in the foster home, nightmares sometimes, talk of returning home 'tomorrow'." And when visits became "too disturbing," they stopped.[102] Ki Meekins,

[97] Ellen Mitchell, "The Place of the Natural Parents in a Foster Care Programme," *Australian Journal of Social Work* 16, no. 2 (1963).

[98] Chapter 5: They're Just Doing it for the Money.

[99] Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

[100] David Jackson, "I Was Just Trying to Matter," in *Recipes for Survival*, ed. Deidre Michell and Priscilla Taylor (Elizabeth, SA: People's Voice Publishing, 2011), 43, 50.

[101] Smith, "The Need for Revaluation and Assessment of Australian Foster Care Programmes," 27.

[102] Ellen Mitchell, "The Place of the Natural Parents in a Foster Care Programme," ibid.

born in 1965, writes of his foster mother wanting visits to his birth mother banned because she "blamed my mother for my post contact distress and resented her intrusion in my life and the household routine."[103]

Ki and his siblings were intermittently returned home so they had at least some relationship with their mother and each other. When they went back into out of home care they were all separated, with Ki missing his "twin brother enormously."[104] Forgotten Australians Margot O'Byrne, in *Left Unsaid*, and Karen Lee Wilson, in *Gaining a Sense of Self*, have both written of the importance to them while in out of home care of their sibling relationships. Contemporary research bears this out: siblings placed together in foster care can offer each other a sense of familial continuity and safety, and a positive relationship can mitigate the effects of trauma.[105] However, being placed with a sibling has been problematic for some, especially when there are large families, and sibling placements do not always work out. Amanda Gargula, for example, after being in a children's home with her sister, went to live in foster care with her youngest brother. She was there for less than a year before she was ejected on the grounds that the siblings argued too much, "Yet I can't remember arguing with my brother at all," writes Amanda.[106]

Australian government-run child welfare systems did not adopt policies for encouraging reunification or maintaining contact with birth families until well into the final third of the twentieth century.[107] Even then there was variation in practice; the 1985 report on the findings of a national inquiry into children in institutional and foster care included complaints from young people that there was a "lack of continuing contact with natural parents" and they were often separated from their siblings.[108] Today

[103] Ki Meekins, *Red Tape Rape: The Story of Ki Meekins* (Adelaide, 2008), 30, 33. Social workers were well aware of children developing rich fantasy lives about their birth parents when they were not in contact with them, see, for example, Smith, "The Need for Revaluation and Assessment of Australian Foster Care Programmes," 28.

[104] Meekins, *Red Tape Rape: The Story of Ki Meekins*, 16.

[105] See, for example, Armeda Stevenson Wojciak et al., "Sibling Relationship in Foster Care: Foster Parent Perspective," *Journal of Family Issues* Online (2018).

[106] Amanda Gargula, "Cloudy Wishes," in *Recipes for Survival*, ed. Deidre Michell and Priscilla Taylor (Elizabeth, SA: People's Voice Publishing, 2011), 55–64.

[107] Senate Standing Committee, "Children in Institutional and Other Forms of Care: A National Perspective" (Commonwealth of Australia, 1985), 15.

[108] Ibid., 59.

siblings may not be living together—and for some young people this can mean the breaking of an important bond—but there is greater emphasis on at least keeping siblings in contact with each other which can reduce "feelings of loneliness and sadness," particularly when the contact is face to face, coordinated willingly and harmoniously by significant adults, and not conducted in the office of a child protection agency.[109]

Some children and young people in foster care also develop close bonds and a familial relationship with other foster children and with the birth children of foster parents—more relationships which have been neglected until recently.[110] An important relationship for Amanda Gargula, who was bounced around the system between children's homes, foster homes and cottage homes during the 1970s and 1980s, was that with a foster sister. When Amanda was thirteen she was living with her "youngest brother's foster aunt and uncle." The man had sexually abused Amanda when she was six but she thought at thirteen she was "tougher and he wasn't going to get the chance to do that again." Besides, says Amanda, she "had a foster sister who was close in age and an ally."[111] The two girls ran away together but after three days were located and persuaded by social workers to return. Knowing her foster sister was going to continue running away, Amanda "manoeuvred things" to get herself out of the situation. More recently, Ashlee advocated to continue seeing her foster brother when she left a placement. She missed him, but this important relationship was not seen as such by child protection authorities.[112]

[109] "'She's My Sister and She Will Always Mean Something to Me…' Report on the Inquiry into What Children Say About Contact with Their Siblings and the Impact Sibling Contact Has on Wellbeing" (Online: Guardian for Children and Young People, Government of South Australia, 2011), 53, 54.

[110] See for instance S. Serbinski and Aron Shlonsky, "Is It That We Are Afraid to Ask? A Scoping Review About Sons and Daughters of Foster Parents," *Children and Youth Services Review* 36 (2014).

[111] Gargula, "Cloudy Wishes," 61–62.

[112] Dee Michell and Claudine Scalzi, "I Want to Be Someone, I Want to Make a Difference: Young Care Leavers Preparing for the Future in South Australia," in *Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Care*, ed. Philip Mendes and Pamela Snow (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 125–26.

Peter, whose mother fostered Aboriginal girls in 1971 when he, the youngest of four biological children, was thirteen, continues to see the women he calls his sisters. "I can still remember it clearly," Peter said, "this social worker bringing [the oldest foster sister] this little baby, she's been my sister ever since really." Peter did, however, experience some consternation when he went to university in recent years and realised that his family had been complicit in the Stolen Generations. "I just struggle with that" he said.[113] Evie, on the other hand, whose parents fostered a girl and boy from Vietnam between 1973 and 1978, was plucking up courage to contact her former foster sister. When the children came to stay, Evie recalls feeling disappointed that the baby sister she had always wanted was a little girl of six and "not grateful, not one bit. Just upset and crying and wanting to go home." Evie's family was already in strife, "there was no love in our family at all" and Evie's mother would make ends meet by collecting "yesterday's bread from the factory" and dividing it among a number of large Catholic families. Plus, Evie's father was violent. "I'll always feel terrible about it," said Evie, now fifty-two, "I was cruel and mean and she was just a poor little traumatised kid."[114]

The emotional ramifications of foster care on all involved are clear—it disrupts, changes, severs, and builds new relationships all the time. Understanding the value of all these relationships and supporting their sustenance through policy and practice is a recent, and still imperfectly executed, phenomenon. For more than a century, Australian foster care systems placed far less value on familial relationships than did the foster children themselves. Some, like the Thomas sisters, determinedly found ways to stay in touch, although it is unclear whether they ever reunited with their brothers or parents. Others grew up unaware that they had family who might be longing for them, were unable to find them, or were simply overwhelmed by the enormous prospect of reforming bonds which had been broken so long ago. At its best, foster care offers new relationships to support children through some, or all, of their lives, but if we forget the human cost of historical policies which inhibited or neglected family contact, then we do a disservice both to generations of foster children past, and to those yet to come.

[113]Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Peter," 2014. All interview content has been edited to remove any information which might identify an individual, including geographical locations within Australia. For further information on the ethical protocols of these interviews, see the introduction to this book.

[114]Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Evie," 2014.

References

"A Child Kidnapped by Its Mother." *Argus* (Melbourne), 25 June 1894, 5.

"A Paltry Charge." *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 14 January 1873, 3.

"A Peculiar Case: A Mother Charged with Stealing Her Own Child." *Coburg Leader* (VIC), 30 June 1894, 1.

"A Scene at the Bush Inn." *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 31 October 1872, 4.

"Alleged Child Abduction Case: The Charge Against Annie Thomas." *Argus* (Melbourne), 28 June 1894, 6.

Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse, "Final Report," 2017. https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/final-report.

Barbalet, Margaret. *Far from a Low Gutter Girl: The Forgotten World of State Wards: South Australia 1887–1940*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Barnard, Jill, and Karen Twigg. *Holding on to Hope: A History of the Founding Agencies of Mackillop Family Services 1854–1997*. Kew, VIC: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2004.

Births Deaths and Marriages Victoria. "Birth, Death and Marriage Certificates of the Thomas and Anderson Families." https://www.bdm.vic.gov.au/.

"Child Kidnapped by Its Mother: Arrest of the Woman in the Chinese Quarter." *Argus* (Melbourne), 25 June 1894, 5.

"The Child Stealing Case." *Age* (Melbourne), 28 June 1894, 6.

Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools, Victoria. *Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools: Reports of the Secretary* 1887, 1893 and 1919.

Encyclopedia of Melbourne Online. The School of Historial Studies, The University of Melbourne, 2009. http://www.emelbourne.net.au/home.html.

"Extraordinary Case Under the Boarding Out System: Mother Charged with Stealing Her Own Child." *Age* (Melbourne), 25 June 1894, 6.

Fineran, Kerrie. "Helping Foster and Adopted Children to Grieve the Loss of Birthparents." *The Family Journal* 20, no. 4 (2012): 369–75.

Gargula, Amanda. "Cloudy Wishes." In *Recipes for Survival*, edited by Deidre Michell and Priscilla Taylor, 55–64. Elizabeth, SA: People's Voice Publishing, 2011.

Gunstone, Andrew, and Sadie Heckenberg. *The Government Owes a Lot of Money to Our People: A History of Indigenous Stolen Wages in Victoria*. Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2009.

Haskins, Victoria. "'A Better Chance'? Sexual Abuse and the Apprenticeship of Aboriginal Girls Under the NSW Aborigines Protection Board." *Aboriginal History* 28 (2005): 33–58.

Hetherington, Penelope. *Settlers, Servants and Slaves: Aboriginal and European Children in Nineteenth-Century Western Australia*. Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 2002.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. "Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families." Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997.

"Inebriates." *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 12 July 1881, 3.

Jackson, Louise. *Child Sexual Abise in Victorian England*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.

Jackson, David. "I Was Just Trying to Matter." In *Recipes for Survival*, edited by Deidre Michell and Priscilla Taylor, 43–50. Elizabeth, SA: People's Voice Publishing, 2011.

Jacobsen, Walter. *Dussa and the Maiden's Prayer*. Melbourne: The Law Printer, 1994.

Kidd, Rosalind. *Trustees on Trial: Recovering the Stolen Wages*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006.

"Larceny." *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 2 February 1881, 2.

"Latest News from the Metropolis." *Hamilton Spectator* (VIC), 28 June 1894, 3.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Evie," 2014.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Peter," 2014.

Mayne, Alan. "Big Notes from a Little Street: Historical Research at Melbourne's 'Little Lon'." *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 10, no. 4 (2006): 317–28.

Meekins, Ki. *Red Tape Rape: The Story of Ki Meekins*. Adelaide, 2008.

Memarnia, Nina, Lizette Nolte, Clare Norris, and Alex Harborne. "'It Felt Like It Was Night All the Time': Listening to the Experiences of Birth Mothers Whose Children Have Been Taken into Care or Adopted." *Adoption & Fostering* 39, no. 4 (2015): 303–17.

Michell, Deidre. "Two Mothers—Twice the Blessing or Was I Cursed?" *Women-Church* 31 (Spring 2002): 11–16.

Michell, Deidre. "Putting Down Roots." In *Women Journeying with Spirit*, edited by Deidre Michell and Jude Noble. Port Adelaide, SA: Ginninderra Press, 2010.

Michell, Deidre. *Ways of the Wicked Witch*. Elizabeth, SA: People's Voice Publishing, 2012.

Michell, Deidre. "Systemic Familial Alienation and the Australian Foster Care System." In *Challenges to Living Together: Transculturalism, Migration, Exploitation*, edited by Susan Petrilli. Italy: Mimesis International, 2017.

Michell, Dee, and Claudine Scalzi. "I Want to Be Someone, I Want to Make a Difference: Young Care Leavers Preparing for the Future in South Australia." In *Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Care*, edited by Philip Mendes and Pamela Snow, 115–33. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Mitchell, Ellen. "The Place of the Natural Parents in a Foster Care Programme." *Australian Journal of Social Work* 16, no. 2 (1963): 38–40.

Mitchell, Monique. "The Family Dance: Ambiguous Loss, Meaning Making and the Psychological Family in Foster Care." *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 8, no. 3 (2016): 360–72.

Mitchell, Monique. "'No One Acknowledge My Loss and Hurt': Non-death Loss, Grief, and Trauma in Foster Care." *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 35, no. 1 (2018): 1–9.

Mitchell, Monique, and Leon Kuczynski. "Does Anyone Know What Is Going On? Examining Children's Lived Experience of the Transition into Foster Care." *Children and Youth Services Review* 32, no. 3 (2010): 437–44.

"Mother and Child: Strange Case of Kidnapping." *Weekly Times* (Melbourne), 30 June 1894, 32.

Murphy, Deirdre, and Hilary Jenkinson. "The Mutual Benefits of Listening to Young People in Care, with a Particular Focus on Grief and Loss." *Child Care in Practice* 18, no. 3 (2012): 243–53.

Public Record Office Victoria, VA 475 Chief Secretary's Department, VPRS 4527/P0 Ward Registers.

Public Record Office Victoria, VA 475 Chief Secretary's Department, VPRS 3992 Inward Registered Correspondence III.

Robinson, Shirleene. *Something Like Slavery—Queensland's Aboriginal Child Workers, 1842–1945.* Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008.

Sen, Robin, and Karen Broadhurst. "Contact Between Children in Out-of-Home Placements and Their Family and Friends Networks: A Research Review." *Child & Family Social Work* 16, no. 3 (2011): 298–309.

Senate Community Affairs References Committee. "Lost Innocents: Righting the Record, Report on Child Migration." Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2001.

Senate Community Affairs References Committee. "Forgotten Australians: A Report on Australians Who Experienced Institutional or Out-of-Home Care as Children." Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2004.

Senate Community Affairs References Committee. "Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge." Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia, 2005.

Senate Standing Committee. "Children in Institutional and Other Forms of Care: A National Perspective." Commonwealth of Australia, 1985.

Serbinski, S., and Aron Shlonsky. "Is It That We Are Afraid to Ask? A Scoping Review About Sons and Daughters of Foster Parents." *Children and Youth Services Review* 36 (2014): 101–14.

"'She's My Sister and She Will Always Mean Something to Me…' Report on the Inquiry into What Children Say About Contact with Their Siblings and the Impact Sibling Contact Has on Wellbeing." Online: Guardian for Children and Young People, Government of South Australia, 2011.

Smaal, Yorick, Andy Kaladelfos, and Mark Finnane, eds. *The Sexual Abuse of Children: Recognition and Redress.* Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing, 2016.

Smith, Hazel. "The Need for Revaluation and Assessment of Australian Foster Care Programmes." *Australian Journal of Social Work* 16, no. 2 (1963): 25–29.

"State Children's Council Regulations." In State Records of South Australiam *GRG 27/1 Correspondence Files ('SCD' Files)*: Attorney-General's Department, Government of South Australia, 1887.

"Stealing Her Own Child." *Advocate* (Melbourne), 30 June 1894, 17.

Swain, Shurlee. "Giving Voice to Narratives of Institutional Sex Abuse." *Australian Feminist Law Journal* 41, no. 2 (2015): 289–304.

"To the Editor of the Advertiser." *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 30 January 1868, 3.

"Town Talk." *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 30 October 1873, 2.

"Town Talk." *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 24 March 1881, 3.

"Town Talk." *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 31 August 1883, 2.

"Town Talk." *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 28 December 1883, 2.

"Town Talk." *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 5 August 1884, 3.

Wojciak, Armeda Stevenson, Bryan P. Range, Dumayi M. Gutierrez, Nathan A. Hough, and Casey M. Gamboni. "Sibling Relationship in Foster Care: Foster Parent Perspective." *Journal of Family Issues* Online (2018): 1–25.

"Young in Crime." *Geelong Advertiser* (Geelong, VIC), 14 November 1876, 3.

Check for updates

CHAPTER 4

Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care

At sixty-two years of age, Priscilla reflected on her time in foster care during the 1950s and 1960s, and a childhood that seemed like a perpetually revolving door of placements. "I found out that I'd actually had sixty different movements," she said. "When I say movements that wasn't like foster homes; obviously every time I went back to [the state-run children's home] that was probably counted…Too many foster homes."[1] Like generations of foster children before her, Priscilla felt deeply wounded by the uncertainty and rejection of moving in and out of foster homes, and struggled with the cycle of readjusting to institutional life only to be removed and returned to foster care. Early advocates of foster care, Florence and Rosamond Hill, contrasted institutions, in which they saw children as just "parts of a machine," with foster care, which they described as "restoring the child to the conditions of family life, in a well-ordered cottage home."[2] But the reality for Priscilla was different. Foster care felt like chaos and the institution felt like the closest thing she had to home.

[1] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Priscilla," 2014. All interview content has been edited to remove any information which might identify the individual, including geographical locations within Australia. For further information on the ethical protocols of these interviews, see the introduction to this book.

[2] Rosamond Hill and Florence Hill, *What We Saw in Australia* (Digitsed by the Internet Archive in 2007 with Funding from Microsoft Corporation: http://www.archive.org/details/whatwesawinaustr00hilliala, 1875), 138.

© The Author(s) 2018

N. Musgrove and D. Michell, *The Slow Evolution of Foster Care in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in the History of Childhood,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93900-1_4

"I used to think 'Well how long before [my new foster parents] got sick of me?' And they would send me back so what was the point in going?… 'Let's just hurry up and just get it over with and let me go back to the security of the institution'…I felt that's where I belonged."[3]

The title of the introductory chapter to this book, "There Is No Typical Story of Foster Care," reflects the enormity of the task we face in attempting to bring some sense of coherence to the history of foster care. The first part of this book, with its focus on hearing the voices of people directly impacted by foster care, recognises the importance of understanding the nuances of individual stories; yet, it also argues that these stories' meanings are all the more powerful when we can relate them to the experiences of others. Survivor-activism in Australia played a crucial role in establishing a collective narrative that enabled many care leavers to publicly share their stories of growing up in out of home care. No longer were they lone voices contesting the popular belief that Children's Homes did 'good work' for 'unwanted children'; no longer were they silenced by the sense of shame about their childhoods in out of home care.

Yet as this first wave of survivor narratives emerged, experiences of institutional care dominated. The Forgotten Australians Senate Inquiry received over five hundred written submissions, the majority of which were from people who spent part or all of their childhoods in out of home care. Of these, only ninety-five made any mention of foster care at all.[4] Foster care was never explicitly excluded, indeed following the 2009 apology to people who grew up in out of home care, the Australian government funded a museum exhibition on "Life in Children's Homes and Foster Care." But the exhibition's curator, Jay Arthur, reflected on the overwhelming task of conveying the meanings of children's institutions and foster care in one cohesive narrative. She "thought 'I can't do that' as I couldn't talk about everything. So not foster homes, just institutions."[5] The result was a visually and emotionally powerful exhibition with a clear story to tell—but one which did not include foster care.

[3] "Priscilla".

[4] The submissions to the inquiry are publicly available via the Parliament of Australia website at https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/2004-07/inst_care/submissions/sublist, last accessed 29 January 2018.

[5] Peter Read, "You Have to Let Out the Scream: Curated Exhibitions of Violence Inside and Outside the Site of Infamy," *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (2013): 226.

Now, with so much work having been done to create a public and political space for recognising the treatment of children in out of home care as an important social issue, it is time to turn our attention more directly to foster care. We need to think about what kinds of experiences mark foster care out as different from institutional placements, as well as reflecting on the things that children across all forms of out of home care might share. This chapter opens with Priscilla's story, and then develops thematic discussions that resonate with her experiences, as well as those of the nineteenth-century people who featured in Chapters 2 and 3.[6]

Priscilla

Priscilla's experience of foster care was among the most harrowing we listened to, and part of what made it so horrific was that she became entrapped in a cycle of abuse. As a foster child, she recalls thinking:

> Stop this forward and backward, forward and backward and just being used and abused and then sent back. While I didn't feel safe in the institution I certainly was never sexually abused like I was in the foster homes and so…in that way it was more pleasant for me even though it was a horrible life.[7]

For Priscilla, coming to terms with the abuse she suffered in foster care has been a long process, one which has been profoundly shaped by viewing her departmental records later in life, and by the recent—she would say much overdue—public interest in the mistreatment of children in out of home care.

Through accessing her welfare records, Priscilla discovered an agency inspector had arrived at her first foster home on complaints that Priscilla's older sister, who was five, had developed sexualised and destructive behaviours. Instead of removing the children, the inspector concluded that "the house was clean and tidy" and the girls seemed fine. On reading her files, Priscilla also realised that her foster mother, the woman she lived with for four years from the age of three, was complicit

[6] Chapter 2: Did Anybody Care? The Death John Wood Pledger; Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Families.

[7] "Priscilla".

in the sexual abuse Priscilla suffered in the woman's home, and that her inability to report subsequent abuse was profoundly shaped by this early experience.

> I always wondered why I didn't tell of the abuse and then when I read my [child protection agency] files and realised at three I was telling my foster mother who knew about it and [she] didn't do anything about it and washed my mouth out with soap and then I get taken to this horrible huge place which was [a large, government-run institution].[8]

The young Priscilla concluded she was being punished "for being honest [and] telling the police what my [foster] dad was doing." Even though there were another six perpetrators of child sexual abuse during her time in foster care, she "never told of any more abuse for years" until the state and national government inquiries began to investigate the experiences of people like her.[9]

Priscilla, understandably, remains angry at the government agency responsible for continuing to try and place her into foster care—usually by first sedating her with Largactil—without explaining to prospective foster parents about the sexual abuse and the resultant behavioural problems.

> …you can't really blame the foster parents that followed…I suppose they just thought "This child is just uncontrollable"…Those that didn't abuse me they sent me back anyway because of my behaviour which was from… being abused for years.

The cost of this was not only the rejection that the young Priscilla felt each time a foster placement broke down; the excessive placements, or "movements" as she calls them, significantly disrupted her education. Each new foster home meant starting at a different school and, as she says, even though all schools are "supposed to have the same structure of work," the teaching is different. Priscilla's longest period of stable

[8] Ibid. It was also not unusual for children to be disregarded by the welfare authorities, often the information on file for some people was from the perspective of the foster carers, not from the perspective of the foster child, see Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Forgotten Australians: A Report on Australians Who Experienced Institutional or Out-of-Home Care as Children" (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2004), 297.

[9] "Priscilla".

schooling was when she, at the age of eight, was in a foster care home for six months in a country town. That six months of stable schooling saw a vast improvement in her school work. But after she was raped in her second year of high school, she left to get a job. "Fifteen, I started to work…I got a job at a [fast food outlet], thank goodness for the food places 'cause I didn't have any other education." Since she was still a state ward, the child protection authorities assisted with accommodation in a boarding house with other girls who had been in out of home care, but the focus was on getting her to work rather than returning to school. All this has since prompted Priscilla to reflect on the loss of education, which as she rightly points out, then negatively impacted on her future.

The lack of education, combined with the impact of trauma and abuse, and the inability to talk about what had happened to her, means that Priscilla, at sixty-two, still feels the powerlessness, isolation and hopelessness she felt as a state ward being shuffled from abusive foster home, to institution, and back out again. "Nobody actually cared or wanted to know until the [state government] inquiry," she said, and so she struggled to find her place in the world without the skills and supports that a more usual childhood should have given her.

> [M]y legacy is…[that]…because of lack of education, because of the abuse, the trauma, no family connections…nothing, only one sibling who I haven't seen who was so traumatised…What social skills did I have? All I wanted to do was to be loved.

Priscilla is a survivor—she has made a life for herself, against the odds, but it is a life scarred by profound struggles and loss. She said, "there's just so much, my life's gone now, so as far as I'm concerned, I'll always be a ward of the state, that's the truth."[10]

Priscilla's grief is heightened by the knowledge that her mother had tried to maintain contact with Priscilla and her sister, but had been thwarted by a system which, after almost a century of providing foster care, still had not adapted to accommodate parent–child relationships.[11] Today, family access remains a flashpoint for foster carers, who bear the emotional burden of recovering stability in the aftermath of visits when they are difficult. The mid-twentieth-century child welfare authorities

[10] Ibid.

[11] See also Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Families.

who made decisions about Priscilla and her peers were correct in noting that allowing parental access complicated the dynamics of foster care, but in emphasising the importance of stability, they missed the lifelong damage done to children who felt abandoned by their parents. Even in institutions, where parents were supposed to be able to visit their children, this was not always allowed. Parents could be turned away at the door, and even letters written to children were sometimes withheld and stored on children's files so that some only discovered as adults that their parents had indeed tried to maintain contact.[12] Until quite late in the twentieth century, foster care went a step further—its explicit premise was that children would be immersed in a new family and carry on as if their own had never existed. This was particularly cruel at a time when significant numbers of children were still entering out of home care for essentially economic reasons.

In the post-World War Two years, Australia was entering an economic boom, but the growing prosperity and burgeoning welfare state did not reach all. Single mothers, widows and deserted wives often found it impossible to obtain work and child care arrangements that would allow them to maintain their children. They also had to battle the social stigma of being on their own raising children, no matter what the reason for that.[13] Priscilla's mother was a deserted wife who had moved from a regional town to the city, and was struggling to provide for her two tiny girls. She had initially sought help, but ended up permanently losing her children to the state.

> Somebody must've got in contact with the welfare…back then and they got Mum to bring us to the refuge…and then Mum got a job and wanted to take us with her and she was told…she could have us back, just go and start her work…So she did, but they took us and made us wards of the state.[14]

[12] Access visits were not seen as a right, they were regarded as a privilege to be earned, see Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Forgotten Australians," 134; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families" (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997), 84, 130.

[13] Shurlee Swain and Renate Howe, *Single Mothers and Their Children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[14] "Priscilla". There are other stories of children ending up as wards of the state because their parents needed help, for example, Paul (b. 1964) was fostered when his mother needed temporary help while she recovered from an illness, but the child was made a Ward of the Victorian State, see Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Forgotten Australians," 60–61.

From then, Priscilla was rarely able to see her mother. They were allowed brief visits when Priscilla was in the institution, but not when she was in foster care.

> …you didn't see mother when you were in foster homes, you weren't allowed to, you were only seeing her when you were in an institution and that was for an hour once every two weeks or a month or something. It wasn't very much.

Priscilla recalled, "this lovely lady would come and visit us and we'd sit in the visitor's room … next to the matron's office," but it was some time before she found out that the "lovely lady" who visited was her mother. An added confusion for the child was that she was compelled to call foster mothers 'Mum'.[15] At the age of nine, Priscilla went from a large institution to a smaller cottage home,[16] which Priscilla preferred, but in the cottage home her mother was not allowed to visit at all.

Priscilla's mother had been dead for many years by the time Priscilla, then in her fifties, gained access to her files and realised the effort her mother had made to regain custody of her daughters and maintain contact with them. She had written letters to the girls, only to have the letters returned unopened. When she was refused visits to Priscilla in the cottage home—where Priscilla lived for six years—she wrote to the state Attorney General, which did have the happy outcome of the woman being allowed a week's holiday with Priscilla, the only holiday Priscilla had with her mother. "I had the time of my life," she said.

[15] "Priscilla". Access visits were often not organised or not encouraged, they were not seen as a right, see Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Forgotten Australians," 134. Also see Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home Report," 84, 130.

[16] What Priscilla refers to as cottage homes were also known as family group homes. They were an attempt by government agencies from the late 1950s to place children in the care of the state in a situation where they could receive more individual attention. They are akin to today's group or residential care homes in that a small number of children were placed together in a 'family' like setting, and they allowed for siblings to be placed together. Instead of staff on shift work being rotated in the home, however, a couple were employed as cottage home parents. See Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Forgotten Australians," 22. Also see Amanda Gargula's description of living in a cottage home, "Cloudy Wishes," in *Recipes for Survival*, ed. Deidre Michell and Priscilla Taylor (Elizabeth, SA: People's Voice Publishing, 2011), 58–60.

> When I read my files I not only grieved for myself I grieved for our mother. It was so disgusting, so subservient how they treated her. She died at the age of fifty and it was a broken heart, I know that.[17]

Indeed, Priscilla grieved for generations of her family, because the fracturing of her relationship with her mother, and the poor substitute for parenting that her life as a state ward had provided, prepared her poorly for raising her own children.

When Priscilla spoke about her own parenting, she did so with a mix of sadness, regret and pride. She had her first two sons as a teenager, but the first was forcibly removed and adopted, although she has an ongoing relationship with him now. She cared for her other two sons, learning from scratch as she went.

> I tried to be the best mother that I could be, I'm not saying that I was a perfect mother or a good mother even, but you know, I did the best that I could, I had no example to bring them up by. I mean I had to learn everything myself but I did learn it, I learnt to cook, I learnt to do everything.[18]

Priscilla's strength, determination and resilience are clear, but so is the fact that her life in foster care, far from "restoring" her to "the conditions of family life,"[19] had left her ill-equipped to thrive as an adult. Priscilla's story is a sad indictment of child welfare provision in Australia, and of foster care in particular, and it raises the question of how her foster care experiences compare to others. To answer this, the remainder of this chapter presents a thematic exploration of oral histories of former foster children collected

[17] "Priscilla".

[18] Ibid. Parenting can be challenging for those like Priscilla who did not have good role models. One Aboriginal woman confessed to being "a rotten mother" because she "didn't have a role model for a start" while another put her own children in Homes. Being physically abused as a child also led to some taking care to not physically beat their children, to not "knock anything [the spirit] out of them that's in them already like I had it all knocked out of me." See Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home: A Guide to the Findings and Recommendations of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families" (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997), 195, 196.

[19] To borrow the words of the Hill sisters quoted at the opening of this chapter.

for this book.[20] There are important publicly available Australian collections of survivor testimony and oral histories which include some material about foster care, but which are not explicitly focused on the topic, and while we have opted to feature the voices of those who participated in this project which was explicitly about foster care, the analysis was developed with consideration of these other collections as well.[21]

Reasons for Foster Care

Priscilla was far from the only Australian child put into state care because of a lack of support for single parents. This was the case for many people testifying to the *Forgotten Australians* senate inquiry in 2004 and, more broadly, the inquiry found that separation and divorce was a significant factor in why children ended up in out of home care in the period up to 1980.[22] Among our interviewees, half of them identified family breakdown as a major contributing factor for them entering foster care. Doug

[20]This chapter features material from fourteen interviews with former foster children, twelve women and two men. The oldest contributor was a woman in her 70s, the youngest a twenty-year-old, meaning that the interviews span most of the second half of the twentieth century. All interviewees had Anglo, Celtic or European cultural heritage. One was born in England during the 1960s and brought to Australia as a toddler by her parents under the 'Ten Pound Pom' scheme, as it was called (an Assisted Passage Migration Scheme to recruit migrants from Britain), and all others were born in Australia. Three of the participants came from economic privilege, most were from financially poor and working-class backgrounds. There were other interviews we conducted with people who consider their out of home care experience to be foster care, but who were actually in placements such as family group homes. Although they shared some of the same experiences as foster children, the nature of the regulation of those placements meant that we came to understand them as something different again—not quite like a foster home, yet certainly not like a large institution. We also conducted interviews with people who provided foster care. These interviews have helped shape our analysis both here and in other chapters, but we have not featured their stories here.

[21]This includes the ninety-five submissions to the Forgotten Australians Senate Inquiry which mention foster care; the National Library of Australia's Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project 206 interviews, 113 publicly available online, 51 identified as relating to foster care), available at https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/4707359, last accessed 29 January 2018; and National Library of Australia's Bringing Them Home oral history project (338 interviews, 187 publicly available online, 36 identified as relating to foster care), available at https://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn833081, last accessed 29 January 2018.

[22]Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Forgotten Australians," 101–4.

(b. 1968), like Priscilla, was too young when he entered state care to recall much about his mother, or the circumstances of his admission. It was not until he accessed his welfare file as an adult that he learned more. "Basically, she couldn't afford me and she was going through a hard time, divorced and whatnot at the same time. Put me up for adoption."[23]

In contrast Kylie's mother was independently wealthy. Kylie (b. 1958), whose father had died shortly before her birth, remembers her mother struggling to cope even though she could afford to keep her daughter and send her to a private school.

> Mum had a lot of mental health issues, totally undiagnosed…a lot of anxiety, a lot of depression, spent a lot of time in bed. I'd get myself up for school in the morning, it got to the point where mum got bronchitis and pneumonia…that's when I went into care.[24]

Without further information, it is not possible to determine the reasons for Kylie's mother's mental health challenges. There are several possible factors: social isolation as a recent migrant to Australia with no family support; grief at the loss of her husband; being an older first-time mother in her forties; and conservative values about the role of women in post-war Australian society. Phyllis Chesler, a significant American second-wave feminist psychologist, argued along with Betty Friedan that women who led limiting lives revolving around family often suffered psychically and had trauma-like symptoms, including depression. Was there an underlying trauma? Kylie's mother did serve in the British forces during World War Two but it took until the 1990s, and the work of psychologists like Judith Herman, for attention to be drawn to the debilitating impact of trauma resulting from experiencing and witnessing horrific events. Compounding the problem for Kylie's mother would have been the stigma of being a single parent and, since women who sought help from a male-dominated mental health profession were frequently assessed as failures as women, it is no wonder that she needed to be physically unwell before doing so.[25]

[23] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Doug," 2014.

[24] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Kylie," 2015.

[25] Phyllis Chesler, *Woman and Madness* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1972), 25. See, for example, Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1997). According to Herman, "protracted depression is the most common finding in virtually all clinical studies of chronically traumatized people" (94). On the stigmatization of single mothers, see Swain and Howe, *Single Mothers and Their Children*, 2–3, 5–6, 16–17.

Families with two providers could struggle too. Tom's parents made a joint decision to give up two of their three children because they could not afford to keep them. Born in 1950, when he was seven-years-old Tom was taken to a regional orphanage after an initial short stay in a city one. Tom's parents kept an older stepbrother, but his sister was adopted by family friends and Tom did not see her again for fifteen years. After three years, Tom was chosen for foster care by a couple with whom he stayed for the remainder of his childhood.

Four of our participants were in out of home care because their fathers were unable to care for their children after mothers had left or were unwell. The mid-twentieth century was an era when men were not expected, nor generally seen as able, to manage the care of young children without the help of a female mother figure (not necessarily the children's biological mother). Although men were typically expected to make a financial contribution towards their children's maintenance, there was little social stigma around men handing off the responsibilities of child-rearing in order to prioritise earning a living.[26] Pam (b. 1942) recalled that after her mother "went off with a man, an Aboriginal man…The police or the court, they stepped in I suppose. We was just running a total muck."[27] Her father was struggling to manage his business plus look after nine children, and so some of Pam's siblings were adopted while she and some others went first to institutions and later to foster care.

Grace and Susan, both born in 1958, each had mothers who left, and fathers who turned to the children's grandmothers to help keep the families together. Susan explained:

> So my mother left when I was two and there were no payments…my dad had to go to work, my grandmother looked after me for a while but she… worked two jobs so…I had to go into foster care.[28]

Susan spent a short time in foster care until her father remarried, but Grace and her sister, whose paternal grandparents could only manage to keep her younger brother, remained in care for nine years. For most of this time she was in an orphanage, but she had holiday placements

[26] Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Forgotten Australians," 104.

[27] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Pam," 2014.

[28] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Susan," 2015.

with people she came to think of as her foster parents.[29] Adelle's initial entry into foster care also followed this pattern of young children whose fathers felt unable to sustain them in their mother's absence. Born in 1966, Adelle was first placed in foster care by her father for a short time when she was only two-years-old. Her mother was in hospital with a work-related brain injury and her father did not feel able to care for Adelle in her mother's absence.

When Adelle once again entered foster care, at the age of seventeen, the situation was quite different. This time, her story was one of rejection by extended family. Adelle's parents had separated, and after years of living with her mother the home environment had become violent and abusive. At age thirteen, a friend's mother arranged for Adelle to move interstate to join her father, but her stepmother became increasingly nasty. In Year 9, Adelle was kicked out and spent six months with a school friend's family and then returned to her father's house. Adelle's stepmother eventually announced, when Adelle was in Year 11, that she would have to leave by the end of the week. Another of Adelle's friend's parents said she could move in with them. After six months she was invited to stay on for Year 12, but she felt she had put them out for long enough, so she moved into state care.[30]

Pamela (b. 1958) was much younger than Adelle when she experienced rejection by her extended family. At around three years of age, she was sent to live with her grandfather after her parents separated, and for roughly the next three years her grandfather and her aunt cared for her. She was six when her grandfather arranged an informal (non-statutory) foster home for her. Pamela did not know of any illness or family crisis that could explain her grandfather's decision. "It was quite an affluent household so there was absolutely no reason why, at the end of the day, why I was put into foster care."[31]

[29] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Grace," 2016. Holiday placements such as Grace enjoyed were often marred by bad matching of child to carers, Senate Community Affairs Committee, "Forgotten Australians." It was also often the beginning of "a permanent separation of Aboriginal children from their family and community", see Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home: A Guide," 91.

[30] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Adelle," 2014.

[31] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Pamela," 2014. Informal arrangements such as that made by Pamela's grandfather have meant that people have not known how or why they were placed with foster carers, nor anything about their background which can cause considerable distress, see Senate Community Affairs References Committee,

As these examples show, family breakdown and deterioration of relationships could happen at any age, but this scenario was more common as children reached adolescence. Jane (b. 1972) was the eldest daughter in her family. Her father died when she was three, and her mother later formed a volatile relationship with another man, Jane's stepfather. Although Jane adored her stepfather, her relationship with her mother, a pharmacist, became incredibly difficult as she got older.

> [When] I was about ten-ish, it became very, very bad between she and I, she would kind of ship me off with friends or anyone that would take me, she'd get rid of me, and I say get rid of me because her constant threat was to put me in an institution.[32]

Jane's mother followed through on her threat after Jane's younger sister wandered off one Saturday while Jane was babysitting. Although Jane's mother had euphemistically threatened, "I'm going to put you in an institution," Jane ended up in foster care.[33]

"Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge" (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2005), 91. However, the same was often true for children formally removed, see, for example, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home Report," 11, 38.

[32] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Jane," 2015. Threatening children with a reformatory was not uncommon, it happened to Germaine Greer too, perhaps because her father was raised in informal foster care with a woman, Emma Greeney, who made her living taking in Tasmanian State wards, see Germaine Greer, *Dadd, We Hardly Knew You* (London: Penguin, 1999). Threatening children with removal from their foster care home, "in disgrace for being naughty", was standard practice from the earliest days of foster according to Catherine Helen Spence, a key proponent for formalising foster care in the nineteenth century, see Catherine Helen Spence, *State Children in Australia: A History of Boarding out and Its Developments* (Adelaide: Vardon, 1907), 40.

[33] Adolescence is often a difficult time for families, a "transition point" and time of increased conflict between parents and children, no matter how the family has been formed, see, for example, Elly Robinson, "Young People and Their Parents: Supporting Families through Changes That Occur in Adolescence" (Online: Australian Institute of Family Studies, Australian Government, 2006); Christine Harkin and Stan Houston, "Reviewing the Literature on the Breakdown of Foster Care Placements for Young People: Complexity and the Social Work Task," *Child Care in Practice* 22, no. 2 (2016); and A. Butlinski et al., "The Adoption of Children from Out-of-Home Care," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 72 (2017).

Several of the people we spoke with had family who tried to arrange foster placements for their children, some seeing informal foster placement as preferable to their children being made wards of the state. Yet as the stories of Grace (b. 1958), Susan (b. 1958) and Pamela (b. 1958) have shown, this did not always lead to stable or long-lasting placements. For Stacey, born three decades after these women (1987), the problem was similar. Stacey's single mother was well supported by her family after a car accident left her unable to care for the two-year-old Stacey. She recalls that her mother became "dependent on opiate based medications and sedative drugs" and so her extended family made an informal arrangement to care for Stacey. From Stacey's point of view, this informal arrangement, which she saw as foster care, was highly unsatisfactory as she spent the remainder of her childhood being shuffled back and forth between four families, which also meant going to different schools.[34]

> I had to stay with whoever was free but everyone was busy, they had their own families, their own lives and they couldn't really keep me permanently so I would just go to one to the other for a couple of weeks, maybe a couple of months…my family did try to keep me in that [one] school as much as they could but when I was with families that were too far away it was more convenient for them to put me in schools closer to them.[35]

While Stacey's extended family had intervened because they were concerned that if she had "gone through a formal foster care situation" she "would never have seen her [mother] again," her childhood was marked by the same instability as the many children in non-kin foster care who faced regular movements between foster homes.

We also spoke with four people whose placement in foster care resulted from abuse in the family home. Mary was born in 1948 into a family which had been adversely affected by World War Two. At almost seventy years of age, Mary looked back sympathetically on the position her parents had been in.

> [My father] had really bad war problems, war neurosis and [my mother] somehow became an alcoholic, poor little love…Anyway [they] weren't real good together 'cause [my mother] come from…a family of seven

[34] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Stacey," 2014.

[35] Ibid.

> and [my father's] mother died when he was about ten…his uncle sort of brought the boys up and he was a bit of an alcoholic…you can imagine going overseas, [my father] had really bad problems when he came back.[36]

While Mary can now understand her parents' plight, her home environment was abusive, and at six Mary was placed into foster care after a brief time in a state-run Children's Home.

Jannelle, born in 1981, first experienced short-term foster care placements provided as a respite for Jannelle's mother, who had a mental illness and was caring for a child with a disability. Jannelle was raped at the age of seven by the convicted paedophile her mother lived with on divorcing Jannelle's father, and the child was suddenly removed from her mother with guardianship transferred to the state until she was eighteen.

> …the welfare removed us from school in the middle of the day in front of everyone…they came out with detectives…they were plain-clothed police, so me using my seven-year-old logic had never seen a plain-clothed police officer, I bit them, both of them, kicked them and ran off because mum had told me don't get into a car with a stranger. They were complete strangers…[37]

For Jannelle, as for many others, trauma was layered upon trauma. There is no doubt she was removed from an abusive situation, but the removal itself was incredibly distressing, and as a vulnerable child she experienced multiple foster care placements and suffered sexual abuse in more than a third of them.

Our youngest participant was Nicole, who was born in 1995 and twenty-years-old at the time of the interview. Nicole's parents divorced when she was three and she recalls being happy enough living with her father, despite describing him as addicted to drugs and alcohol, and herself as "feral." Nicole's father remarried when Nicole was around ten, and initially, this marked a positive turn in Nicole's life. My stepmother "thought she couldn't have kids so she took me in as her own" but "when she did have her own kid, she just pushed me to the side."[38] Her stepmother had three sons with Nicole's father, and she became increasingly abusive to Nicole, locking her in her bedroom and not feeding her properly.

[36] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Mary," 2016.

[37] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Jannelle," 2015.

[38] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Nicole," 2014.

> I used to eat out of the bin…my brothers didn't eat all their food…and I used to ask, "Can I have the leftovers?" and nope they'd throw it in the bin.[39]

Nicole's father tried to stop the abuse by removing Nicole from the scene. He first attempted to get her into the state system, then sent her to live with her mother who worked as a drug dealer, and finally put her into boarding school.

Nicole only found stability and happiness when she, effectively, arranged a foster home for herself. At home for Christmas, and finding her step-mother's behaviour intolerable, the sixteen-year-old contacted a school friend whose parents agreed to take Nicole in.

> I was shocked that they took me in and they didn't really know me properly…I was so much happier, I felt love, like I'd never had [my step-mother] hug me, ever, not once so to be able to get hugs, I can't even explain the feeling.[40]

In our sample, then, the reasons for going into foster care reflect an era when support for single parents—women and men—was largely absent, and in which families experiencing crisis often turned to separating from their children as a survival strategy. But children also found themselves in foster care because they were abused and rejected by family members. Not all were as fortunate as Nicole in finding love there.

Surviving Foster Care

Removing children from their families was, and is, supposed to protect them from harmful situations, yet, we know that for more than a century foster children have been vulnerable to abuse. The cases of John Wood Pledger (d. 1896) and Luke Borusiewicz (d. 2009), studied in Chapter 2 of this book, show that sometimes children paid with their lives for the failure of systems to properly protect them.[41] Priscilla's story, told earlier in this chapter, reminds us that even survivors of foster care can bear lifelong scars. Priscilla's story, while particularly distressing, was far from the only one shared with us about abuse in foster care; half of the fourteen

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Chapter 2: Did Anybody Care? The Death of John Wood Pledger.

former foster children presented in this chapter were mistreated.[42] Nevertheless, many of our participants also conveyed that aspects of their foster care experiences were positive.

Jane (b. 1972), who now lives in North America, was one of only two participants who had unequivocally positive memories of foster care. She continues to be in contact with the foster parents she lived with for a year, and she thinks of them as her parents.

> They stood by me no matter what…they were just so normal and kind and…so happy to see me, they're not together anymore either…he's been to visit me…he came over for my graduation I mean, the guy treats me like his kid and it's wonderful…I see [my foster mother] whenever I go home…in fact I usually stay with her.[43]

Nicole (b. 1995), who found her own foster home at sixteen and remained there for two years, also emphasised how much it meant to find people who made her feel as though she was family.

> I never understood how I could have met such a good family to take in someone they didn't even know and [now they] love me for who I am…I could never get over it, very lucky, some people never have that kind of luck…"Blood doesn't define family" is something [my foster father] said to me on the first day of moving in and he used to say it every time when I was upset about my family.[44]

For Kylie (b. 1958) though, the question of becoming 'family' was more vexed. She spent four years with a middle-upper-class family. Her "foster mum was absolutely lovely" and her foster dad would go walking and do things she would never have done with her mother. But she missed not being in her own family and in adulthood recalls the discomfort of being compelled as a child to call her foster parents 'Mum' and 'Dad'.[45]

[42] Patterns of abuse of children in foster care is similar to those found in forms of residential care, for example orphanages and children's homes, which have recently attracted attention as environments where, historically, risk of abuse has been very high. See: Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge," 95.

[43] "Jane".

[44] "Nicole".

[45] "Kylie".

Grace (b. 1958) cherished the memories of her foster family, but her foster care experience was also punctuated by reminders that she was not exactly like the other children in the family, that she never quite belonged even if she was a part of the family. Grace adored the holiday foster parents who took her in three times a year from the age of five until she returned to live with her mother at the age of twelve. She has happy memories of being bought a new outfit every summer, often clothing identical to her foster parents' natural daughter. She remembers going camping, and eagerly awaiting lolly bags comprised exactly of the same mix of lollies that her foster father brought home each pay day. But there is sadness, too, in her memories of this time. Grace remembers how hurt she felt when "Santa bought [the other children] a new bike and I didn't get one…and I didn't understand that because to me it was Santa's job."[46] There are echoes of this bittersweet sentiment in Grace's reflection of the role her foster parents have played in her later life. She reconnected with her foster parents when she was twenty-one, after not seeing them for nine years, an absence initiated and sustained by Grace's mother.

> I am just so incredibly grateful to have had [my foster parents] in my life, and I really want to emphasise that…As an adult I have really appreciated their support in times of need and I am so happy they have been part of my boys' lives. I always felt so happy when phone conversations with [my foster parents] would frequently end with him saying they loved us and often thought about us…yet when we are not in direct contact I can't help but think it is a case of 'out of sight out of mind'…I only learned of [my foster mother's] illness a couple of days before she passed away. I was truly heartbroken when she died, but to this day I don't think the family have any idea just how much her death affected me, or that I would have given anything to have had the chance to say goodbye.[47]

Adelle (b. 1966) experienced foster care both as a small child and as a teenager. As a small child, foster care itself was not a problem, in fact she continues to maintain contact with her second foster mother from this period. However, she hated the weekly disruption of being collected by her father. Each weekend her father would take her to stay with friends where the woman of the house would do the childcare. Adelle would have preferred to remain with her foster family, and on her return would

[46] "Grace".

[47] Ibid.

often cry and cry until she was "spent," but then she would "be as good as gold" for the rest of the week. Adelle was back in foster care during her final two years of school, and by this time she was far more conscious of being an outsider in the foster home. The family she stayed with as an informal foster placement for the second half of Year 11 were happy to have her, but she worried about imposing on them and was always trying to be on her best behaviour.

When Adelle entered state care, at the same time as she commenced Year 12, she spent some time in a half-way house with three or four women who had just come out of prison before the social worker could locate a foster care placement. In this foster home, she was never allowed to be at home when the foster carer went out, and would literally find herself waiting on the doorstep for her foster carer to return. By then Adelle was working part-time at Kmart and the woman would take half her pay. Overall, foster care—whether informal or formal—was hard for Adelle as a teenager, and this foster carer's constant reinforcement that this was not really her home, only added to the sense of being an intruder.

> It was so hard to be in other people's homes when I was a teenager. My perception of always needing to be on [my] best behaviour due to the fear of being asked to leave. I did everything asked of me without question e.g. dishes or chores (where the other children in the house had the freedom that comes with it being their home e.g. not doing things when asked or not doing them properly). They were also bleak times emotionally, I spent many many hours crying into my stuffed toy frog at night (which I still have) simply because no one wanted me.[48]

Despite all these difficulties, Adelle nearly managed to complete Year 12, and currently works in the public service.

Very few people's experiences of foster care can be understood as exclusively positive or negative, and in opening this section by considering some of the more positive memories that our participants shared, our intention is not to suggest that this is how we should characterise foster care in general. Rather, we recognise the need to make space for these memories for at least two reasons. First, the narratives of pain, suffering and neglect which played a crucial role in gaining public attention for

[48] "Adelle".

the past mistreatment of children in out of home care have painted such a bleak picture, and exposed the suffering of so many, that people who had positive experiences can feel cautious, even guilty, in telling happier stories. Second, especially where these positive memories are parts of life stories with other more harrowing aspects, they provide a tool for people to explain how they survived.

The abuse in foster care described by our participants included sexual abuse. The *Bringing Them Home* report, which addressed the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, found that while girls were slightly more likely than boys to be victims of sexual assault overall, the risk for girls was far greater in foster care than in any other kind of placement, and subsequent reports which considered all children in out of home care also found that foster care provided easy opportunities for sexual predators to access vulnerable and isolated children.[49] Amongst our participants, all of the people who told us about being sexually abused in foster care were women.

As Priscilla's story highlighted, reporting sexual abuse could be extremely difficult—especially since foster mothers could be complicit in the abuse perpetrated by men within the household, as highlighted in the 2004 Senate Inquiry.[50] Pam (b. 1942) had around nine foster placements, and in one she was sexually abused by the man of the house. She received no help when she reported the abuse to her foster mother:

> …there was one woman, her husband used to come into my bedroom and yes and anyhow I decided to tell her that what he's doing and then she turned around and she just said, "Oh good, is that why he's leaving me alone."[51]

Pamela (b. 1958) was regularly sexually assaulted during the six years she was in foster care, and she also had a foster mother who would not intervene. Pamela described her foster mother as "quite nice," and said

[49] Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home Report," 141; Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge," 141; and Nell Musgrove, "Locating Foster Care: Place and Space in Care Leavers' Childhood Memories," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 8, no. 1 (2015): 106–22.

[50] See Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge," 97.

[51] "Pam".

that she would read to Pamela, spend time with her, and be nurturing and caring; but she also got Pamela to give her son-in-law daily back massages that "ended up with him raping [her] quite a few times."[52] Pamela's foster mother knew what was happening, because she caught him in the act, but all the foster mother did was yell at the man. She continued to get Pamela to conduct the daily massages even though "she used to have to clean up the blood and that sort of stuff after."[53]

Jannelle, who was born in 1981 with a genetic disorder which affects her heart, lungs and eyes, went through multiple placements,[54] or 'movements', and recalls being sexually abused both in respite foster care and after entering state care long term. Indeed, in a third of forty-nine placements, Jannelle was sexually abused. She was angered, on reading her welfare file as an adult, that she and her sister were placed in a foster home despite their social worker's written notes expressing concern about the risk of sexual abuse in that particular home. Jannelle's life was turbulent—foster home to foster home without explanation, sometimes in the hospital for treatment, sometimes visiting with her mother. On one occasion twelve-year-old Jannelle was left by the state government agency in an extended unsupervised access visit with her mother where she was raped by her stepfather.

> My stepfather raped me and about six weeks later I went in for a routine appendectomy and they discovered I was six weeks pregnant…I woke up and Child Protection Services were there demanding to do a full examination and the police came and interviewed me about who was the father and treated me appallingly like I was this drop kick slut. The cop actually said to me, "this is what happens when little girls decide they want to become women."

According to Jannelle, her step-father was charged with the rape, but "he got off on a technicality because I lost the baby."[55]

[52] "Pamela".

[53] Ibid.

[54] Multiple placements were not a feature of all stories told by interviewees but they feature in the Senate Inquiry where placements up to 80 were not unusual, see Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge," 99.

[55] "Jannelle".

Pam (b. 1942), the oldest in our group, found that many of her foster placements were generally abusive environments. Her experience that sexual abuse, physical abuse, verbal and emotional abuse, and exploitation of her labour often co-existed, one sometimes blending into another, was typical. The recent Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse made this observation, and it is an issue which can be traced back to the earliest days of formal foster care.[56] In one of her foster homes, Pam liked 'Uncle Bill' and adored the family's three-year-old child, John, but felt constantly criticised by her foster mother. She could not understand how "a person could…criticise someone so much and so many times"[57] but still want her around. She decided the reason she was kept was because she was "a good packhorse." Daily Pam was

> …doing the ironing and the washing and you know all inside, the dishes. I mean I went from early in the morning 'til late at night and then I had to go out and help Uncle Bill which I liked 'cause I loved it outside and I loved the animals and all that stuff.[58]

Many other foster children have reported that they worked in slave-like conditions, and the long-term mental and physical impacts of this is one of the issues raised by the Care Leavers Australasia Network's (CLAN) petition to the United Nations Committee Against Torture.[59]

In the same foster home, Pam experienced physical abuse. She was fond of Uncle Bill, even though he could be violent. On one occasion, she had let a calf out of its paddock and, enraged, Uncle Bill flogged her with a large piece of wood until the fourteen-year-old could hardly walk. In Pam's view, he knew he had crossed a line, and panicked when he discovered "the welfare" were coming the following week. He encouraged

[56] Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Forgotten Australians," 142. Also see Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse, "Final Report," 2017, available at https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/final-report, last accessed 21 March 2017; Andrew Guy Peake, "State Children: With Particular Reference to Foster Care" (South Australian Institute of Technology, 1977).

[57] "Pam".

[58] Ibid.

[59] Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN), *Submission to the United Nations Committee Against Torture*, 2012, available at http://www.clan.org.au/perch/resources/doc310316-31032016101615.pdf, last accessed 5 February 2018.

Pam to ride a horse bareback; she fell off and was in hospital for eighteen months. She firmly believes that insisting she ride the horse was Bill's ruse to hide the provenance of multiple bruises on her body.[60] In response to abusive foster homes, Pam often ran away, but the institutions where she was placed between foster homes could be even worse. In one such place, which she called "the girls' jail," she was terrified of the other girls who would "give the staff hell and anybody else they gave hell to [if] you looked at them the wrong way."[61]

The other participants in our group who were physically violated in foster care were beaten by women. Mary (b. 1948) lived for eight years with a woman who made her feel very unhappy and confused about what was happening. The foster mother would "lose the plot a bit,"[62] give Mary a "hiding" and tell the child she was retarded.[63] Tom (b. 1950) had a foster mother who was subject to fits of rage, and who would yell and scream and beat him. Tom was devoted to his foster father who would take him to his foster grandmother and aunt's place, and as he got older, Tom would take himself there because "they knew what she was like" and would reassure him it was not his fault. Tom understands now that his foster mother took out her rage and grief on him; she had lost a baby at birth and really wanted a little girl to adopt, but his foster dad had wanted Tom.[64]

Doug (b. 1958) suffered violence at the hands of his foster (later adoptive) mother, but his foster father was not as protective as Tom's. Doug's foster mother would beat him with a stick relentlessly when he had been caught out doing something wrong, and sometimes even when he was not the culprit. The little boy would strategise about whether to cry or not, not wanting to give his mother the satisfaction of making him cry, but on other occasions hoping that crying immediately would circumvent some of the violence. In the end he concluded that he would "still get the same amount anyway, so it didn't work either." Doug did

[60] "Pam".

[61] Ibid.

[62] Jennifer, whose testimony is in *The Bringing Home Report*, says of her foster mother that she was "quite mad" as not only did she make the child "cook, clean, attend to her customers' laundry," she would also belt her when Jennifer was naked and without reason, see Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home: A Guide".

[63] "Mary".

[64] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Tom," 2015.

stress, however, that it "wasn't all bad" because his parents encouraged him in sport, he never went hungry, was given a "good education," and he was taught to cook and clean. However, being beaten caused Doug to feel confused when he was told by his foster parents that they loved him so much they wanted to adopt him.[65] This kind of emotional ambivalence was a theme among many of the stories we heard. Even in good foster homes, small gestures could remind children that they were not quite like the family's biological children, and even in good foster homes, children might miss their own families. Perhaps more surprisingly, even in overtly abusive foster homes, children could have some happy experiences and some warm connections with their foster families, although such situations typically led children to feel they were not loved and that they were to blame for what happened to them.

Education

As we discuss further in Chapter 9, Australian citizens who have been in out of home care are recognised as one of the "most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society."[66] Compared to other young people contemporary care leavers are likely to experience difficulties in accessing suitable housing and in finding employment. There are many layers to this disadvantage, and many contributing factors, but we begin with the topic of education because its profound influence on the life trajectories of the people we spoke with was clear. Education levels for care leavers, as a group, are below their age peers and they are underrepresented at university, the level of education that yields, over the long term, the most social and economic benefits.[67] There are people who defy the statistics, and the group of people we spoke with about foster care are unusually highly educated; six of the fourteen have university degrees. Credit,

[65] "Doug".

[66] Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge," 120; Chapter 9: Are We Getting Better at This?

[67] See, for example, Philip Mendes, Dee Michell, and Jacqueline Z. Wilson, "Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Care and Access to Higher Education: A Critical Review of the Literature," *Children Australia* 39, no. 4 (2014); Andrew Harvey, Lisa Andrewartha, and Patricia McNamara, "A Forgotten Cohort? Including People

however, does not go to the state foster care systems they grew up in, and in only one instance can it be attributed to the positive influence of an informal foster care placement.

As Priscilla told us, the frequency of her 'movements' between foster homes severely disrupted her education, and other people found the same thing. Jannelle (b. 1981), who has a learning disability, is emphatic that the disability would not have been so profound had her education been stable. She lost count of the number of schools she went to and regrets the restricted opportunities which have resulted from that limited education. Living in kinship care did not provide a more positive, stable education experience for twenty-eight-year-old Stacey (b. 1987). She was parcelled around between four families and consequently her education was disrupted too. When she was with her mother she went to one school where she was bullied badly, and when she was at other schools where she was treated better, she missed her mother.

Even Kylie (b. 1959), who had the best educational opportunity of all our participants, found it difficult to thrive educationally when her home life was so turbulent. Her mother had significant mental health difficulties, but was financially well-off and she paid for a prestigious private school education for Kylie. Indeed, Kylie's foster parents were sourced from this private school so that there was no disruption to her education.

> I remember being in an assembly [at school] and they said…I was needing a home to live in for a while because my mother had been hospitalised…I ended up living with [my foster parents] for four years.

Despite the continuity in her education, Kylie did have what she calls:

> a lot of behavioural problems at school, a lot of acting out which affected my education all the way through school…not going to school or late or just running amuck at school.[68]

from Out of Home Care in Australian Higher Education Policy," *Australian Journal of Education* 59, no. 2 (2015); Andrew Harvey et al., *Out of Care, into University: Raising Higher Education Access and Achievement of Care Leavers* (LaTrobe, VIC: LaTrobe University, 2015); and Elizabeth Fernandez et al., "No Child Should Grow up Like This: Identifying Long Term Outcomes of Forgotten Australians, Child Migrants and the Stolen Generations" (Kensington: University of New South Wales, 2016).

[68] "Kylie".

Consequently, Kylie failed Year 11 and repeated at a public school. Kylie in her twenties went on to university to successfully complete studies in the humanities.

Like Priscilla, other participants wanted to get out of their foster care placements as quickly as possible and become independent. This clearly affected their schooling, but it was also the policy of various child protection agencies over the years for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians who were in state care.[69] In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, leaving school at fourteen or fifteen did not necessarily place state children at an educational disadvantage as compared to their typical working-class peers, but by the mid-twentieth century this had changed. Not only were more and more children in the wider Australian society staying on longer at school, many of the low paid, low skill jobs, for which state children were once seen as ideal were in shorter supply—a trend which continues to the present day.[70]

Mary (b. 1948) had a relatively good educational level for a state ward of her generation. She completed Year 10, but then chose independence over further education. She was assisted by child protection authorities to commence nursing in a regional hospital and continues to work part-time in aged care, keeping up with professional development where and when she can. However, the more common scenario among our participants was that the authorities that were supposed to be caring for them simply allowed them to drift away as they reached minimum school leaving age. This could have lifelong consequences. Doug (b. 1958), for example, had "always had decent grades at school" but there was nobody who encouraged him to stay on, and so he left school at fifteen without completing Year 10. He quickly got a job in a French restaurant through a family friend, but left twelve months later and has never had a job for longer than six months since.

> I just sort of travelled, here, there and everywhere in between…I was forever moving, lot of time I just chose to be homeless, it was cheaper, I didn't have responsibilities.[71]

[69] Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Forgotten Australians," 148. Also see Dee Michell, "A Suddenly Desirable Demographic? Care Leavers in Higher Education," *Developing Practice* 33 (Spring 2012): 44–58.

[70] Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge," 158.

[71] "Doug".

Work therefore has been "just general labouring…as a garbo…process work…picking fruit, tobacco, never for any great length of time." At forty-eight Doug is now at his most settled, with public housing and connections to post-care services and the wider care-leaver community, and considering his options for the future.[72]

Jannelle (b. 1981) was just fifteen when her foster care placement broke down and she left school to make her own way in the world. Her self-belief had been deeply wounded by the compound effects of abuse, a learning disability for which she received little support, and the death of a sister she believes died in state care because she was not appropriately treated for cystic fibrosis. For three years, Jannelle lived on the streets, quickly working out ways to get a bed for the night.

> If you want a bed for the night and breakfast in the morning you'll either have to overdose or go and get wasted on drugs or alcohol. If you get overdosed, you go to [hospital]. If you get wasted you go to detox…and again it's a bed for the night, someone's paid to give a shit about you.[73]

It has been suggested to Jannelle many times that she go to university and become a social worker, but Jannelle fears she is "not smart enough." "Besides," she says, "I can't afford a HECS [Higher Education Contribution Scheme] debt, I'm trying to break the poverty cycle, not fall back into that."[74] When we last spoke with Jannelle she had just commenced a university bridging course but was feeling disadvantaged because of a lack of support compared to other students, and because memories and emotions of being bullied at school have been triggered.

[72]The Federal Government funds post-care services in each state for those who were in out of home care as minors. Services usually include counselling, advocacy and hosting social events.

[73]"Jannelle". People being returned to abusive parents is a known problem in the Australian foster care system, see Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge," 119.

[74]"Jannelle". In Australia eligible students can opt to participate in a loan scheme whereby the Federal Government lends students the money to pay their contribution toward university fees on the condition it will be paid back through the tax system when students are employed full time.

Pam (b. 1942), had a typical educational experience for foster children of her generation. At fourteen her education ended because she was sent to a new placement where she was expected to work for a living. In the 1950s (Pam turned fourteen in 1956), it was not uncommon for working-class families to end their children's schooling between fourteen and sixteen years of age, and the post-war economy did offer employment opportunities for those school-leavers. However, children in foster care had few advocates for their education, and stood a far worse chance of being chosen to stay on at school than children living with their own families. By the mid-1980s societal attitudes towards education had changed. The impact of decades' of incentives to make Year 12 and university education accessible to parts of the population who had not traditionally been able to afford it was revealing itself, and the average end-point of school was shifting from Year 9 or 10, to Year 12.[75] Yet Jane (b. 1972) received a letter from the child protection authorities once she turned sixteen (in 1988) which she recalls as "saying 'okay our obligation to you is done', [and] I was kicked out, middle of Year 11."[76]

For Pam (b. 1942) and Grace (b. 1958), it was a return to their biological families which precipitated their exit from schooling. Pam's primary school education was disrupted when she went into foster care, but overall school was a positive experience. However, by the time she was fifteen she was living back with her father and his new wife and had been transferred into a Dominican school where she experienced the nuns as cruel and violent.

> Pretty much school went by the by, I went to Year 9 but I didn't finish it, just had no motivation whatsoever, hated myself, hated everything, hated everyone so I actually just left and got a job.[77]

Grace returned to live with her mother during her secondary school years, and said, "I missed so much school because [my mother] wouldn't allow me to go…it would either be she had something on that day or decided that she needed one of us home or it might be as simple as she had a really

[75] Michael Long, Peter Carpenter, and Martin Hayden, *Participation in Education and Training 1980–1994* (Camberwell, VIC: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd, 1999).

[76] "Jane".

[77] "Pamela".

big night."[78] Scholarships helped Grace get through to the final year of high school, but before the end of that year, Grace's mother said, "If you want to continue to live here you have to start paying board now," and so Grace had to stay on in a job she had obtained to help out during the September holiday. "I wasn't able to go back to school," she said, "and I never completed and it was literally weeks out from the final exams."[79]

The value of education for people who grew up in foster care is not only the pragmatic consideration of employability; it can also be one way of recovering from traumatic childhood experiences.[80] For one former foster child giving testimony to the Senate Inquiry, "education and counselling have been the two tools" to transform their life and provide for their son.[81] Although many of the people we spoke with had disrupted educations, some have been able to return to study at a university level. They spoke of this as a thing which provided them with pride, dignity, and healing. For Stacey (b. 1987), it also provided an opportunity for some repair of her relationship with her mother. Stacey left school during Year 10 to become an apprentice hairdresser, but at the time of our interview, was at university completing a degree in psychology. Her mother helps by paying for her university books, which Stacey thinks is recompense for not being able to parent her well; mum is now doing "what she was never able to do for me as a child."[82]

Others in our group have completed university degrees. Encouraged by her eldest daughter, Pamela (b. 1958) commenced a Bachelor of Social Sciences degree when in her late forties, and has since also completed Honours. Grace (b. 1958), who had been devastated at leaving school so close to her final exams, eventually went on to complete a Bachelor of Education as a mature age student. She currently tutors in a university and has almost completed a Ph.D. Kylie (b. 1958) left home at sixteen, and after ten years' of travelling and running her own business she went to university in her twenties and completed a humanities degree. After receiving her 'exit letter' Jane (b. 1972) began her

[78] "Grace".

[79] Ibid.

[80] Joanna Penglase, *Orphans of the Living: Growing up in Care in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Fremantle, WA: Curtin University Books/Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2005).

[81] Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge," 62.

[82] "Stacey".

working life with a variety of low skill, low paid work. She found it unsatisfying and this eventually impelled her to go university, which she did in the United States. She now has a Bachelor and a Master of Electrical Engineering, and currently works in the information technology industry in California.

Nicole, the youngest of our group, has also commenced university study, and for her, it was her foster parents who encouraged and enabled her to continue her education. Living at home with her father and abusive stepmother meant not being allowed to do her homework, sleeping on the floor, being permitted only one school uniform, a dressing gown and no deodorant, only being allowed to wash the one dress fortnightly, not being given money for the bus to school, and being expected to leave the house every morning before her stepmother got up. She was then sent to boarding school—her father's solution to keeping household peace—and there she made friends with the girl whose family ended up taking her in for two years.

Nicole was part way through a teaching degree when we talked with her, and thrilled with the opportunity she had been given.

> I didn't even know what university was until I met [my foster parents], I'd never heard of university, I'm the first one in my family to go to university and haven't had a kid before seventeen so, I'm pretty happy.[83]

Nicole is the only one in our group who went to university directly from school. Given she is the youngest, she may have benefited—in addition to the support from her foster family—from the 2009 Federal Labor Government push to increase the numbers of young Australians who go to university.[84] The older women were all mature age students and part of a larger movement of increasing numbers of women and mature-age students in higher education since the 1970s.[85] All of them have overcome significant hurdles in their educations.

[83] "Nicole".

[84] Andrew Harvey, "Translating Academic Research to Higher Education Policy Reform: The Case of Enabling Programs," *International Studies in Widening Participation* 4, no. 1 (2017): 8.

[85] For a discussion on Australia's widening participation program in universities, see Michele Jarldorn et al., "Planting a Seed: Encouraging Service Users Towards Educational Goals," *Social Work Education. The International Journal* 34, no. 8 (2015): 923–25.

Legacies of Growing Up in Foster Care

Priscilla powerfully articulated the lifelong impact of her foster care experience when she said that she "would always be a ward of the state." She is quite settled now, but there is ongoing sadness about missed opportunities and broken relationships, particularly with her birth family. Indeed, a lingering sadness is a feature for the other people we spoke with too. Some spoke of ongoing mental health issues. Pam (b. 1942) was seeing a counsellor at the time of our interview because she is "still scared of people, I'm still scared of crowds and stuff so it's really made it pretty bad for me."[86] Kylie (b. 1958) also explained that she suffers a great deal of anxiety related to her childhood which she thinks has held her back from higher level positions in the workplace.

> I have a fair bit of anxiety myself and I've been learning to manage that better in recent years and I guess a bit of depression with it…I think it's around not being able to take on more responsibilities in work places, when I really want to do it, but I get a lot of anxiety and self-doubt and I think that's really held me back.[87]

Anxiety and depression are frequently reported by care leavers, and these kinds of mental health problems can be directly attributed to being removed from their families, in addition to abuse in care.[88]

Jannelle (b. 1981) has ongoing mental health issues caused by her experiences in childhood. She has panic attacks and struggles with cutting herself, something she began doing as a twelve-year-old after the rape, pregnancy and miscarriage. She explained that cutting was a way she found she could "deal with [her] feelings." In and out of "psych wards" as a teenager, Jannelle now feels as though she can manage her situation.

> I think I have post-traumatic stress disorder but I'm learning how to manage it and I've done really well, I had an admission into a psych ward mid last year but it was only for ten days and I hadn't been in a psych ward before then, for ten years, so it was a short ten-day sabbatical I guess you'd call it, a bit of respite.

[86] "Pam".

[87] "Kylie".

[88] Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home Report," 166, 419; Fernandez et al., "No Child Should Grow up Like This: Identifying Long Term Outcomes of Forgotten Australians, Child Migrants and the Stolen Generations," 13–14.

Jannelle, who at the time of our interview was living with her father (who has since died), was a beneficiary of social housing. One of the positives to come out of the government inquiries was that they recommended care leavers be recognised as priority applicants across a range of social welfare services. However, these services are limited, and the only place available for Jannelle and her father was next door to her mother. Therefore Jannelle, already battling to recover her own mental health, felt responsible for the wellbeing of people around her. The "ten days in the psych ward," she said "was a relief and it gave me a chance to not worry about anybody else but myself and to just sort of ground myself again, then I left and haven't been back."[89]

Bringing Them Home also provided startling evidence about the mental health implications of removing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their cultures—something which was almost universal among Australian Indigenous children in out of home care prior to the 1970s. The overt goal of separating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families in order to achieve cultural destruction via assimilation has been abandoned, but Australian Indigenous children remain heavily over-represented in out of home care. Not all can be placed with Indigenous foster families, but welfare authorities devise cultural plans for Indigenous children in care and seek the support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support services. However, advocates continue to remind us that if we fail to unpack the complex web of factors leading to the over-representation of Indigenous children in out of home care, we are heading for another Stolen Generation.[90]

All children who grew up in out of home care experienced fractured family connections, and for our participants, this had a range of consequences after leaving foster care. For some, learning to make their way in the world without a supportive family network had its costs. Adelle

[89] "Jannelle".

[90] Stolen Generations describes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children separated from their families, particularly during the period from 1910 to 1970 when the national commitment to assimilation of Australian Indigenous peoples meant that many children were removed from, and/or denied return to, their families on the basis of race or culture (these two terms were poorly distinguished and often conflated, but the *Bringing them home* report made clear that the damage was to culture, community and kinship), see Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home Report," 11–13, 131–214.

(b. 1966) had to be independent and self-reliant at an early age, taking herself to the doctor from the age of fourteen and negotiating leases when she was seventeen. She was sad that she had not been in a family which wanted her and looked after her.

> After foster care and living out in the world whilst still a child, without any backup, left me vulnerable to some unwise decisions and predatory men.[91]

It was only as an adult that Adelle came to understand how deeply abusive her family life had been, and reconciling this has been its own challenge. Regardless, the absence of people who cared enough to help her negotiate her transition into the adult world—whether this might be a biological family or a foster family—was something she felt keenly.

Jane (b. 1972) also spoke about the impact of ongoing rejection by her mother, who she has not seen for seventeen years.

> It kind of set the tone for how the rest of my life has been where I kind of expect that ultimate outcome from every relationship and I mean relationships all the way to the one I have with my partner now or just relationships that aren't very important to me, I expect them ultimately to just fall apart…I always have an exit strategy.[92]

Tom (b. 1950) also experienced rejection from his birth mother who was not interested in reconnecting when, at the age of twenty-two, he sought her out. His birth father has tried to make up for what happened and has been good to Tom's children, but does not want to talk much about what happened when Tom was little. For Tom, the relationship does not feel like one between father and a son; it feels more like they are mates even though they look alike.

Grace (b. 1958) chose not to keep in contact with her mother. After seven years of living with abuse and neglect she left home at nineteen and, following an argument three years later, refused to see the older woman at all any more. Nor did Grace have any contact with her father beyond one brief visit, also when she was twenty-two. She described her attempt to establish a relationship with the man who was her father.

[91] "Adelle".

[92] "Jane".

> It was disappointing to me that we went there that day and his mother was there and he had pretty clearly had a bit to drink. I don't know whether he was nervous about it or what, so you know he wasn't very coherent and his mother did all the talking and she's a very dominating woman…and I was very disappointed in him and I thought, "You know what, I've got my life sorted out, I don't think I need this," and I just didn't pursue it any further.[93]

Grace has more recently reconnected with extended family, but the people she has maintained the strongest bonds with are her sister and foster family, and it is her foster parents who have acted as grandparents to her sons.

Not all of our participants have strong relationships with either their birth families or their foster families. Doug (b. 1958) sees himself as "permanently scarred" because of his childhood experiences. Until recently, he has been quite isolated, cringing away from people because of having been "belted" as a child and drinking alcohol for confidence. But his life has changed in recent years, a testament to the benefits to survivors of post-care services put in place by the Federal Government in the wake of the apology to Former Child Migrants and Forgotten Australians in 2009. Doug is meeting other care leavers and is provided with an opportunity to "vent" and be listened to. He has discovered that some care leavers had even worse experiences than his, and those who have been sexually abused are the ones he feels particularly sad for. Indeed, Doug has decided he is "one of the lucky ones" because "all [he] did was cop a hiding every now and again."[94]

Some of the people we spoke with expressed pride in their ability to break the cycle of dysfunction and become successful parents themselves. Tom (b. 1950) was pleased that he had managed to establish a relationship between his children and his biological father, but it was from the women in our group that the most prominent discussions of parenting emerged.[95] Important for Grace (b. 1958) was being shown a different way of parenting. Having the contrast between her mother, the orphanage, and her foster parents, she wanted to give her own family the same sense of family she had witnessed and experienced in her foster family.

[94] "Doug".

[93] "Grace".

[95] We note the distinct over-representation of women amongst our participants, and so are cautious about drawing strong conclusions based on our findings. Further, while care leavers discussing parenting in the other collections of testimonies and oral histories we examined were also majority women, we are still reluctant to conclude that parenting was

> Their life was what I wanted for my family…I'm proud to say that I have…a couple of absolutely gorgeous sons who are both very lovely young men and we're all close…none of that chaos, they had a happy upbringing.[96]

Kylie (b. 1958) also feels that she has been able to give her daughters the nurturing they needed, but she attributes that to her mother being "good enough" in the early days of Kylie's life.[97] Stacey (b. 1987) has a young son, and is delighted she was able to stay at home without working for fifteen months after the birth. She describes this time as giving her a sense of happiness and security, in part because her son loved her unconditionally, "that was the biggest thing," she said, and something Stacey had not experienced during her childhood.[98]

Parenting can be challenging for those who have been in out of home care, often because of the lack of satisfactory role models, the impact of ongoing trauma and, as Chapter 3 of this book demonstrates, the policies of child welfare departments themselves.[99] For many care leavers, the fear of losing a child to the system is profound. There are poignant examples of this in *Bringing Them Home* in which Aboriginal women and men who had been removed as children, express their fear that in turn their own children would be removed.[100] CLAN has conducted research with care leavers to track intergenerational patterns of out of home care, and found that roughly 16% of their 577 respondents knew that previous generations of their families had also been in care—many more had insufficient knowledge about their family histories to answer the question. The sentiment amongst people who replied to this survey was that they were adamant that their children would not be placed in out of home care, some even stating that they chose not to have

fundamentally *more important* in the post-care lives of women. For much of the twentieth century women were more likely to be the ones responsible for raising children—both in daily terms within households and in cases where couples separated—and so women may have been more likely to have opportunities to actively parent, and for this to form a large part of their young-adult lives. Gender norms also clearly structure life narratives.

[96] "Grace".

[97] "Kylie".

[98] "Stacey".

[99] Fernandez et al., "No Child Should Grow up Like This: Identifying Long Term Outcomes of Forgotten Australians, Child Migrants and the Stolen Generations," 13. See also Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Families.

[100] See Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home Report," 161, 166, 528.

children because the fear of separation in this way was so profound. Despite this determination to break the cycle, 13% of respondents said that their children or grandchildren were, or had been, in out of home care.[101]

Like Priscilla, Jannelle (b. 1972) had a child forcibly removed, but this was a temporary removal lasting only twelve months. Jannelle felt betrayed, because the crisis which precipitated the removal was post-traumatic distress as a result of revisiting her time in out of home care for a state government inquiry. She had been promised ongoing support if she presented at the inquiry, but the ultimate result was the loss of her son. The child's father had died, but Jannelle "fought like hell and eventually got him back."[102] Now in her thirties, Jannelle lives on a disability pension, is settled into a social housing property and cares for her son who goes to a private school.

Pam (b. 1942) kept her children together, but at seventy was not in contact with them and was puzzled about what had happened.

> I had three children, three beautiful children, I thought I did, I've got three beautiful children but somehow they've all gone wrong, they've gone wrong.[103]

Mary (b. 1948) was also confused about what had happened with her own children and about the possible impact on them of her upbringing. She is pleased that her son, who has schizophrenia, is being well supported in his present accommodation and that her daughter, who lives interstate, is living a happy and successful life with a supportive partner, children, and a well-paid prestigious job. Mary, though, has found life hard: in recent years, she has suffered a variety of significant health problems, and feels that she is very much on her own. On a senior's pension, Mary continues to work part-time so that she can help her son out financially and provide gifts for her grandchildren.[104]

[101] CLAN, "Struggling to Keep It Together: A National Survey About Older Care Leavers Who Were in Australia's Orphanages, Children's Homes, Foster Care and Other Institutions," 2011, available at https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/fcdc/inquiries/57th/Child_Abuse_Inquiry/Submissions/CLAN_Appendix_1.pdf, last accessed 7 February 2018.

[102] "Jannelle".

[103] "Pam".

[104] "Mary".

When Susan (b. 1958) gave birth to her first son she could not feel anything for him, and the lack of feeling caused her considerable distress.

> I really wanted him, it's not that I didn't want him but when he was born I felt so blank and I felt so bad and I couldn't tell anybody, back then in 1971 you couldn't tell anybody. I did all the things you do, changed him and fed him and all that but I was completely numb, had no feelings…and then I started getting very depressed.[105]

Susan was eventually referred to a psychiatrist who explained her lack of affection for her son as stemming from her own early years of being abandoned by her mother and left in foster care by her father. Over time the situation did improve, and completely turned around on the birth of her second son six and half years later. Despite struggling with the experience of parenting, both Susan and Pam later became foster parents to try to provide better experiences of foster care for children in the system today.

Pamela (b. 1958) is sanguine about her childhood and family experiences now, saying that she probably would not have had her eldest daughter but for the "sort of childhood that [she] had and the neglect and all the rest of it." She therefore feels "torn between the negative and, believe it or not, the positive of it all."[106] Her words echo the sentiments of all our research participants who have each made a point of taking something positive from their childhood experiences. But this was accompanied by a keen awareness of just how hard life had been for them too, and of how the difficulties have impacted over the longer term. Members of a stigmatised and marginalised population—as we discuss in more detail in Chapter 6—these survivors of childhood abandonment, rejection, abuse and neglect deserve to be recognised and admired for their resilience and courage.[107]

[105] "Susan".

[106] "Pamela".

[107] Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

References

Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse, "Final Report," 2017. https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/final-report.

Butlinski, A., Heather Rowe, Christopher Goddard, and Nicholas Freezer. "The Adoption of Children from Out-of-Home Care." *Child Abuse and Neglect* 72 (2017): 120–30.

Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN). "Struggling to Keep It Together: A National Survey About Older Care Leavers Who Were in Australia's Orphanages, Children's Homes, Foster Care and Other Institutions", 2011. https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/fcdc/inquiries/57th/Child_Abuse_Inquiry/Submissions/CLAN_Appendix_1.pdf.

Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN). "Submission to the United Nations Committee Against Torture", 2012. http://www.clan.org.au/perch/resources/doc310316-31032016101615.pdf.

Chesler, Phyllis. *Woman and Madness*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1972.

Fernandez, Elizabeth, Jung-Sook Lee, Hazel Blunden, Patricia McNamara, Szilvia Kovacs, and Paul-Auguste Cornefert. "No Child Should Grow up Like This: Identifying Long Term Outcomes of Forgotten Australians, Child Migrants and the Stolen Generations." Kensington: University of New South Wales, 2016.

Gargula, Amanda. "Cloudy Wishes." In *Recipes for Survival*, edited by Deidre Michell and Priscilla Taylor, 55–64. Elizabeth, SA: People's Voice Publishing, 2011.

Greer, Germaine. *Dadd, We Hardly Knew You*. London: Penguin, 1999.

Harkin, Christine, and Stan Houston. "Reviewing the Literature on the Breakdown of Foster Care Placements for Young People: Complexity and the Social Work Task." *Child Care in Practice* 22, no. 2 (2016): 98–112.

Harvey, Andrew. "Translating Academic Research to Higher Education Policy Reform: The Case of Enabling Programs." *International Studies in Widening Participation* 4, no. 1 (2017): 7–17.

Harvey, Andrew, Lisa Andrewartha, and Patricia McNamara. "A Forgotten Cohort? Including People from Out of Home Care in Australian Higher Education Policy." *Australian Journal of Education* 59, no. 2 (2015): 182–95.

Harvey, Andrew, Patricia McNamara, Lisa Andrewartha, and Michale Luckman. *Out of Care, into University: Raising Higher Education Access and Achievement of Care Leavers*. LaTrobe, VIC: LaTrobe University, 2015.

Herman, Judith. *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic Books, 1997.

Hill, Rosamond, and Florence Hill. *What We Saw in Australia*. Digitsed by the Internet Archive in 2007 with Funding from Microsoft Corporation. http://www.archive.org/details/whatwesawinaustr00hilliala, 1875.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity. "Bringing Them Home: A Guide to the Findings and Recommendations of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families." Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity. "Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families." Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997.

Jarldorn, Michele, Liz Beddoe, Heather Fraser, and Dee Michell. "Planting a Seed: Encouraging Service Users Towards Educational Goals." *Social Work Education. The International Journal* 34, no. 8 (2015): 921–35.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Adelle," 2014.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Doug," 2014.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Grace," 2016.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Jane," 2015.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Janelle," 2015.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Kylie," 2015.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Mary," 2016.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Nicole," 2014.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Pam," 2014.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Pamela," 2014.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Priscilla," 2014.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Stacey," 2014.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Susan," 2015.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Tom," 2015.

Long, Michael, Peter Carpenter, and Martin Hayden. *Participation in Education and Training 1980–1994*. Camberwell, VIC: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd, 1999.

Mendes, Philip, Dee Michell, and Jacqueline Z. Wilson. "Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Care and Access to Higher Education: A Critical Review of the Literature." *Children Australia* 39, no. 4 (2014): 1–10.

Michell, Dee. "A Suddenly Desirable Demographic? Care Leavers in Higher Education." *Developing Practice* 33 (Spring 2012): 44–58.

Musgrove, Nell. "Locating Foster Care: Place and Space in Care Leavers' Childhood Memories." *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 8, no. 1 (2015): 106–22.

National Library of Australia. "Bringing Them Home Oral History Project." https://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn833081.

National Library of Australia. "Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants Oral History Project." https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/4707359.

Parliament of Australia. "Submissions to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care," 2004. https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/2004-07/inst_care/submissions/sublist.

Peake, Andrew Guy. "State Children: With Particular Reference to Foster Care." South Australian Institute of Technology, 1977.

Penglase, Joanna. *Orphans of the Living: Growing up in Care in Twentieth-Century Australia*. Fremantle, WA: Curtin University Books/Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2005.

Read, Peter. "You Have to Let Out the Scream: Curated Exhibitions of Violence inside and Outside the Site of Infamy." *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (2013): 215–35.

Robinson, Elly. "Young People and Their Parents: Supporting Families Through Changes That Occur in Adolescence." Online: Australian Institute of Family Studies, Australian Government, 2006.

Senate Community Affairs References Committee. "Forgotten Australians: A Report on Australians Who Experienced Institutional or Out-of-Home Care as Children." Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2004.

Senate Community Affairs References Committee. "Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge." Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2005.

Spence, Catherine Helen. *State Children in Australia: A History of Boarding Out and Its Developments*. Adelaide: Vardon, 1907.

Swain, Shurlee, and Renate Howe. *Single Mothers and Their Children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Check for updates

CHAPTER 5

They're Just Doing It for the Money

Oral histories conducted with current and former foster carers reveal that most are motivated by a desire to do good for children and society, and that most do so at a significant personal and financial cost. Yet calls for increasing foster care payments are almost always greeted with suspicion—shouldn't we be wary of people who want to 'sell' their parenting? This is no new phenomenon. Nineteenth-century foster care systems often accepted that working-class women—who were the typical foster mothers—should rightly make a modest profit out of providing their services. The pressure to spend as little as possible on foster care payments began to pinch government departments in the 1890s, but it was not until after World War One that public sentiment increasingly questioned the motivations of foster parents who were not 'simply doing it for love'. This chapter reveals how these debates have played out over a long period of time, locating them within changing ideas about children's work and education. It also reminds us that while the current global interest in care leaver survivor testimony has forced us to confront the very unhappy foster homes that many children experienced, there have also always been people who wanted to foster for very good reasons, and many of them have made positive contributions to the lives of their foster children. As the voices of foster carers in the final section of this chapter

© The Author(s) 2018

N. Musgrove and D. Michell, *The Slow Evolution of Foster Care in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in the History of Childhood,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93900-1_5

reveal, being a good foster parent is no easy task—indeed, many of them question whether they have always succeeded.[1] They note the rewards, but also admit that their work as foster carers takes emotional and financial tolls; yet they continue to do the day-to-day heavy lifting of government-auspiced foster care systems across the nation.

Remunerating Foster Carers

As we return to discuss in Chapter 6, there was serious ideological debate in the 1870s about the ill-effects of implementing foster care schemes which paid foster parents too much for their services.[2] In practical terms, too, government departments sought to minimise the total cost of their foster care systems by keeping payments down, yet they also wanted to attract the 'right' kinds of foster homes. In their efforts to strike the right balance, nineteenth-century child welfare authorities openly accepted that working-class households—who they expected to form the vast majority of foster homes—should be able to make a modest profit through fostering. There was an element of pragmatism in this, but it also fit with popular opinion which conceded that there was an inherent justice in working-class foster families improving their financial stability by performing a service to the community.[3] As this section will explore, the calculations about the point at which fostering became financially attractive to potential foster parents took into account not only the direct payments, but also the value of children's labour within the home.

The popular view that a small financial gain was a fair outcome of providing the service of foster care did not completely reduce it to a financial transaction—women were supposed to bond with their foster children and keep them on out of affection rather than purely for profit. As the Victorian department quickly discovered, not all foster mothers shared this view. The first official boarding-out payment schedule in

[1] We accept that it is likely our sample of foster carers was skewed; it is unlikely that foster carers motivated by anything other than concern for the well-being of children and young people in out of home care, or those who treated the children and young people badly, would have come forward to be interviewed.

[2] Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

[3] Caroline Evans, "Excellent Women and Troublesome Children: State Foster Care in Tasmania, 1896–1918," *Labour History*, no. 83 (2002): 131–48.

Victoria had three tiers: 12/- for children under one year (or any child placed with wet-nursing foster mothers), 7/- for children aged three to five and 5/- for children aged six to fourteen, and in the very early years it was not uncommon for women to return children to the department when they aged out of the higher rates of pay. The department's first response was to cancel the middle rate, in order to remove the financial incentive of returning children when they turned six. While this was effective in removing the attraction of returning six-year-old children, the phenomenon of wet nurses returning infants when they were weaned remained.

At first, wet nurses were in such short supply that the department was reluctant to challenge the terms on which they provided their services. Prior to the introduction of boarding out, the Victorian department had relied on wet nurses prepared to live within the government's industrial schools. Large numbers of very young children flooded the system from the time it opened its doors, in 1864, and so a significant number of wet nurses were required to keep these infants alive. Regular advertisements like the following appeared in the colony's newspapers:

> Wanted, Wet Nurse. Apply Industrial Schools, Victoria Barracks, St. Kilda road, at 1 pm this day.[4]

While advertisements for cooks at the schools emphasised that applicants should be "without encumbrance," the advertisements for wet nurses made no such requirement.[5] The reality was that the vast majority of women prepared to take live-in work as wet-nurses in the industrial schools were single mothers who nursed their own infant along with one other.[6] But when the department moved to board infants out with wet nurses, they called for "Married Women, lately confined, who have lost their own children, to take and wet-nurse, at their own homes, the neglected infants at the Industrial Schools, Melbourne."[7]

[4] "Advertising," *Argus* (Melbourne), 30 December 1870, 1. This text from 1870 was identical with advertisements from the 1860s, save for the changing location of the schools and appointment times.

[5] For example see, "Advertising," *Argus* (Melbourne), 3 March 1866, 1.

[6] Nell Musgrove, "'Every Time I Think of Baby I Cry': Dislocation and Survival in Victoria's Child Welfare System," *Australian Historical Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 218.

[7] "Advertising," *Argus* (Melbourne), 13 March 1873, 1.

The department needed a significant number of wet-nursing foster mothers quickly. In response to both infant mortality in the industrial schools, and public criticism of so many single mothers living alongside the children (especially the older girls), the department sent the first infants out to board with wet nurses in 1872, even though the legislation which made this technically permissible was not passed until 1874.[8] For the first few years applicants were in short supply, and so the Ladies Visiting Association urged for the rate to be raised to 15/- per week to help attract more "suitable persons" to the work.[9] But by the end of the decade, local Ladies Committees had established steady supplies of wet nurses, and they began to question the wisdom of paying too high a rate for wet-nursing.[10] In 1881 the Ladies Visiting Association argued that the rate for wet-nursing should be reduced from 12/- to 10/-, while the rate for weaned children should rise form 5/- to 7/-.[11] They stated that wet nurses were paid too generously for a short period of time, and that they consequently returned children when they were weaned in order to obtain another infant for wet nursing. Thus, they contended, if the rate for wet nursing was reduced and the rate for weaned children increased, there would be greater incentive for women interested in establishing long-term homes for the children.[12]

The Chief Medical Officer, however, took a different view. While he did not challenge the notion that it might be desirable for wet-nursing foster mothers to keep children on after they were weaned, he argued that this rarely happened "owing to a variety of circumstances" and warned that since the work was difficult, a reduction in pay might lead back to the department's original problem of scrambling to find

[8]On the pressures placed on the department which led to the termination of single mothers working as wet nurses in the schools see: Musgrove, "'Every Time I Think of Baby I Cry'," 218. On the stigmatisation of single mothers more broadly see: Shurlee Swain and Renate Howe, *Single Mothers and Their Children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995). On the department commencing boarding out infants in 1872 see: Industrial and Reformatory Schools Office, Victoria. *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department: Reports of the Inspector*, 1872.

[9]VPRS 3991, Unit 740, 74/76324.

[10]They were not all the bereaved married mother imagined in the advertisement quoted above, but they evidently met the expectations of respectability sufficiently to appease the ladies.

[11]VPRS 3992, Unit 1231, 81/7473.

[12]VPRS 3992, Unit 1231, 81/7473.

sufficient wet nurses. "Many of the infants given out," he wrote, "are miserable sickly children requiring much attention in regard to cleanliness and the nurse's sleep is disturbed at night, and the responsibility is considerable."[13] The doctor's understanding of wet-nursing was the one which prevailed in practice. There were some scattered examples of wet nurses bonding with the infants and adopting them, but this was not the norm.[14] In part, this was because bonding with the infants could be heartbreaking—in 1875, 16 of 37 babies placed with wet nurses died, and mortality rates remained high throughout the nineteenth century.[15] Furthermore, women who could continue wet-nursing often preferred to keep earning the higher rate of pay by obtaining a new infant, and until the early twentieth century, when other feeding alternatives became more viable, the department was in no position to argue—it needed considerable numbers of wet nurses to keep babies alive. Ultimately, the department left rates as they were, although this seems to have been more due to the Inspector's calculation of the overall cost to the department than the acceptance of one philosophical position over the other.[16]

The debate around payment of wet nurses was not the first time the Ladies Visiting Association had advised for a change in the rates of pay. In 1879 they argued for a return to the original three-tiered system, to reinstitute a higher rate for children between one and five years since, they felt, they required so much more work on the part of the foster mothers. The Inspector replied: "while it is quite true that the younger children require more attention they cost less to feed and clothe than the elder ones."[17] So in part, the rates of pay were based on how much time and money foster mothers had to 'put in' to each child, but a conflict over school attendance revealed that the department understood that the value of foster children's labour was also part of the calculation.

The *Education Act 1872* introduced free, compulsory and secular education for all children in the colony of Victoria between the ages of

[13]VPRS 3992, Unit 1231, 81/7473.

[14]For example see VPRS 3991, Unit 1328, 82/6719. There was no legal adoption in this era, but the term was used by the Victorian department to describe foster children kept on without payment.

[15]Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department, Victoria. *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department: Reports of the Inspector*, 1875.

[16]VPRS 3992, Unit 1231, 81/7473.

[17]VPRS 3992, Unit 1326, 82/5277.

six and fifteen.[18] Exemptions could be made for children who achieved the required certificate before the age of fifteen, but given the limited educational background of most children placed under government control, very few of them met this standard even by age fifteen. This posed two problems for the department. First, children were typically sent out to work placements at fourteen, and employers were unlikely to pay for the services of children who needed to be absent throughout the week for school. Second, although the schools within the colony's children's institutions were recognised, and came under the inspection of the Education Department, after the age of ten, children in the industrial schools typically split their time between the school room and industrial training, and labour provided by these children through their 'training' was essential for the operation of the institution.[19]

The initial compromise was that children in the industrial schools over the age of ten could attend a half day of schooling and then return for evening classes after their afternoon's work was done. When boarding out commenced, this was rolled into a practice by the department of allowing foster children (usually those over twelve rather than over ten) to attend school half-time. The boarding-out regulations fell short of explicitly stating that the Inspector of Industrial Schools would determine which children were required to attend school and which were not, but this was hinted at in the clause which stated that in the "event of a child being permitted by the inspector to cease attending school, either partially or altogether, such deduction from the pay may be made as shall, in the opinion of the inspector, be equitable."[20] Boarding-out payments ceased at fourteen, and the children were sent to work placements unless the foster mothers were willing to keep them without pay.

The Department of Industrial and Reformatory Schools was not complying with the Education Act, but for more than five years this seems to have gone either unnoticed, or ignored. In 1878 a representative of the Education Department wrote to the Inspector of Industrial and

[18]Marjorie Theobald and Shurlee Swain, "Education, Primary," in *eMelbourne: City Past & Present* (Melbourne: School of Philosophical and Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, 2008), available at http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00506b.htm, last accessed 25 March 2018.

[19]Industrial and Reformatory Schools Office, Victoria. *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department: Reports of the Inspector*, 1866.

[20]VPRS 3992, Unit 1231, 81/7437.

Reformatory Schools because it had come to the Minster's attention that children over fourteen in the industrial schools were not always attending evening classes required to meet the requirements of the Act. He wrote:

> [I draw] your attention to the arrangements for the instruction of the boys above 14 years of age in whose case the requirements of the Education Act are not complied with…as prosecutions are frequently instituted against private individuals for similar breaches of the Act, he (the Minister) is placed in a difficult position if a different course be taken in the case of a Government Department.[21]

Henry French Neal, the Acting Inspector, responded by writing to his staff:

> Officers in Charge of Industrial and Reformatory Schools will be good enough to make arrangements for all children not in the 4th class attending school the number of hours, daily, requisite to comply with the directions of the Education Act. They will also direct teachers to make special arrangements either by holding evening classes or otherwise to instruct the 4th class children up to the standard required by the Act.[22]

Yet he continued to allow children aged fourteen to be sent to work placements and exempted from school attendance. The following year, this fact came to the attention of the Education Department, who threatened to prosecute the Inspector under the Education Act unless he gave his assurance that these exemptions for children licensed out would cease.

Shortly thereafter Neal left the position of Inspector, and apparently his successor, George Guillaume, was not informed of the tussle between the two departments. Guillaume issued an order that all boarded out children over the age of twelve would only need to attend school half-time. First, the Ladies Visiting Association protested that while they felt it was acceptable for children to stay home for half a day—say on washing day—to help with chores, most days boarded out children ought to

[21]VPRS 3992, Unit 1326, 82/5277.

[22]VPRS 3992, Unit 1326, 82/5277.

attend two sessions of school.[23] Then the Education Department protested vociferously, and the Inspector was forced to recall the order. The correspondence which eventually led to this recall made it clear that the Inspector knew older children were only attractive as foster children if their labour could be a useful resource to the household. Older children cost more to clothe and feed, but their ability to help with younger foster children, and to do household chores (which could be quite heavy work in nineteenth-century homes) made it a viable prospect.

Guillaume may have feared the impact of enforcing full-time school attendance on the supply of foster homes, but he also needed the support of the Education Department. For one thing, Guillaume's vision was to increase the number of country foster homes, believing that country areas were fundamentally more beneficial environments for the children.[24] To do so meant moving beyond the areas with existing Ladies Committees, and the only way this was considered acceptable was to restrict the practice to boys over ten, and for their local schools to furnish reports on the boys in place of inspections by a member of a Ladies Committee. Despite Guillaume's fears, the requirement of full-time school attendance did not result in the return of children to the department *en masse*, and even without any rise in the rates of pay, the supply of foster homes remained plentiful until the 1890s. Foster children were still expected to work within the household, and no doubt some worked very hard, but a clear direction had been set in terms of prioritising the economic value of the child as compared to the child's right to education.[25]

It is important to emphasise that despite the nineteenth-century willingness to openly discuss the financial attractiveness of foster care to potential foster mothers, the people running foster care schemes never accepted that it was purely a financial transaction. Already, in 1874, the Victorian child welfare department was talking about how far payments could be reduced, and the ladies who worked in the local boarding-out

[23]VPRS 3992, Unit 1326, 82/5277.

[24]Department of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, Victoria. *Department of Industrial and Reformatory Schools: Reports of the Secretary*, 1882.

[25]The mandatory school leaving age was lowered to thirteen in 1889, and not raised to fourteen until 1910, see Edward Sweetman, Charles Long, and John Smyth, *A History of State Education in Victoria* (Melbourne, VIC: Education Department of Victoria, 1922), 85.

districts stated that they doubted if foster children would be kept on if payments dropped to the point that families had to "maintain them at a pecuniary loss to themselves."[26] They believed genuine affection developed between foster mothers and foster children, but that the working-class families who provided "humble home lives" which transformed "children of the State" into "useful members of the community" appeared to have "just enough to live on and no more."[27]

For almost two decades the Victorian foster care system had a relatively plentiful supply of foster homes which, at least from the perspective of the Ladies Committees, were providing good homes for the colony's foster children. Of course, even in foster homes where foster mothers had the intention of providing care and affection for foster children, children may have been unhappy. There were also, undoubtedly, foster homes where Ladies Committees missed the fact that children were poorly treated. Ladies Committees periodically argued that it would be easier for them to recruit foster mothers if rates of pay were higher, but it was not until the economic depression of the 1890s that the department's resistance to increasing payments led to an actual shortage of foster homes. This shortage did not move the department to raise payments (at least in part because this was not feasible in the midst of a depression) and the result was that some children were placed in homes that would not have been considered desirable in earlier years.[28] Once the depression lifted, the supply of foster homes improved, and the department retained the weekly payment of 5/- per week—set in the 1870s—until 1916.

There were some economic factors which contributed to the department increasing payments. Rapid inflation in the early twentieth century led to considerable increases in the cost of living, and although the department's finances were tight, it saw the need to increase the standard payment to 6/- per week in 1916, and again to 8/- per week in 1920. These raises had not kept up with costs of living, and this placed some pressure on the number of people willing to provide foster homes. From

[26] Industrial and Reformatory Schools Office, Victoria. *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department: Reports of the Inspector*, 1874, 6.

[27] Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department, Victoria. *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department: Reports of the Inspector*, 1875, 6.

[28] For further illustration of this point, see the case of John Wood Pledger explored in Chapter 2: Did Anybody Care? The death of John Wood Pledger.

1929 the Great Depression placed further pressure on the system as more children were made wards of the state through poverty, and fewer households were in a position to provide foster care. With no capacity to increase foster payments, the department shifted more children into voluntary-run institutions that would provide for wards of the state supported by a payment from the government for each child.[29]

There were also wider shifts in public opinions and social norms during this period which mitigated against the notion of fully covering the expenses of foster parents, let alone the idea that they should be paid enough to benefit financially in any way. From the early twentieth century, suspicion arose around people who 'sold' their parenting. Increasingly, foster parents were expected to see the benefit of fostering in emotional, rather than financial or practical, terms. This had significant implications for the terms on which claims about the need to increase payments could be made, and also fundamentally challenged the notion that foster children should be contributing to the household economy through their labour. However, as we have also explored in Chapter 4, this rendered children's work within foster homes less visible, and less acknowledged, rather than transforming the expectation placed on many foster children.[30]

Long after the middle-class child had been imagined into existence as an innocent being whose value was sentimental rather than economic, working-class children were still performing a great deal of labour within the family home and entering the workforce at an early age. However, over the first half of the twentieth century, even working-class children in Western societies were freed from the expectation that their labour would have productive value. This shift, which Hugh Cunningham describes as "probably the most important to have occurred in the history of childhood" impacted upon the lives of fostered children late.[31] Harry Ferguson argues that, historically, children in care were seen as tainted and therefore "treated as the moral dirt of a social order determined to prove its purity" and we extend this argument in Chapter 6 of this book to further explore the extent to which the stigma attached

[29] Nell Musgrove, *The Scars Remain: A Long History of Forgotten Australians and Children's Institutions* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013).

[30] Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

[31] Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500*, 2nd ed. (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 185.

to wards of the state caused people to see them as entitled to different standards than other children.[32] Throughout the twentieth century, some foster parents continued to expect children to do hard physical labour that would have been completely atypical of children in most Australian families, and welfare workers were often only concerned about foster children's work when it was seen to have an impact on their health or school attendance.[33] We know from our interviews with former foster children that there were mid twentieth-century foster homes which tried to give children 'normal' family lives, but certainly others in which foster children 'earned their keep' (and more) through labour.[34] Having explored the ways in which the people responsible for delivering foster care have understood their workforce of foster carers, the remainder of this chapter asks who these people have been, and how they have expressed their motivations.

Who Are Australian Foster Carers?

Even in 1874, in a system which had regulations stipulating that children would only be fostered to women under the age for forty-five, Ladies Committees remarked on the diversity of the foster homes they supervised: "Great differences exist in families, but they are all respectable."[35] Over time, the range of people considered suitable foster parents has expanded considerably, largely reflecting shifts in societal attitudes towards parenting, family formation and childhood. During the nineteenth century, debates contested whether the age of foster mothers mattered, whether single women should be allowed to foster, and whether foster homes should ideally be in the country or the city. During the twentieth century some space opened up for married men to be recognised as foster parents in conjunction with their wives, but it was only in very recent years that single men have become seen as a valuable source of potential foster

[32] Harry Ferguson, "Abused and Looked After Children as "Moral Dirt": Child Abuse and Institutional Care in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Social Policy* 36, no. 1 (2007): 123. See also: Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

[33] Musgrove, *The Scars Remain*, 134–57.

[34] See Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

[35] Industrial and Reformatory Schools Office, Victoria. *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department: Reports of the Inspector* 1874, 6.

carers.[36] Similarly, in the twenty-first century, same-sex couples have come to play a significant role in providing foster care in Australia. Existing research into the experiences of same-sex foster couples often emphasises the positive aspects of their experiences in order to reinforce the important contributions they have made to children's lives. However, this same research also argues that despite care agencies increasingly recruiting same-sex foster couples, application processes still often implicitly ask these couples to demonstrate that they can provide a 'normal' family environment.[37]

The diversity of Australian foster carers has meant that it has always been difficult to define who they are, and this challenge has only increased over time as the range of people fostering has expanded. Until the 1960s, little Australian academic research considered this question, or the related one of what motivated people to become foster carers. But from the 1960s Australian child welfare systems began to return to foster care as an alternative to institutional care, the latter having come under widespread condemnation. This required rapid recruitment, especially following the closure of large congregate institutions from the 1970s, and in turn inspired scholarly research into effective means of attracting people to becoming foster carers.[38] Some of the research was critical of the advertising campaigns, going so far as to suggest false advertising. For example, Mary McLelland, writing in 1963, contrasted the reality foster parents may have to face—temporary placements, meagre financial recompense, a child with disabilities—with advertisements which suggested foster parents "will obtain their chief gratification from a positive response from the foster child."[39] In other

[36]Nell Musgrove, "Imagining Foster Families," *Journal of Australian Studies* 38, no. 2 (2014): 175–89.

[37]Damien Riggs, "Australian Lesbian and Gay Foster Carers Negotiationg the Child Protection System: Strengths and Challenges," *Sex Research and Social Policy* 8 (2011): 216–26; Damien Riggs and Martha Augoustinos, "Institutional Stressors and Individual Strengths: Policy and Practice Direction for Working with Australian Gay Foster Carers," *Practice: Social Work in Action* 21, no. 2 (2009): 77–90; Stephen Hicks, "Maternal Men—Perverts and Deviants? Making Sense of Gay Men as Foster Carers and Adopters," *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* 2, no. 1 (2006): 93–114.

[38]See, for example, W. B. Evans and Leonard Tierney, "Making Foster Care Possible," *Children Australia* 20, no. 2 (1995).

[39]Mary McLelland, "The Motivations of Foster Parents," *Australian Journal of Social Work* 16, no. 2 (1963): 45.

words, she says, foster children are likely to need more than "warm and loving care."[40]

Most research, however, is evaluative, reporting on recruitment campaigns to assess, and increase, their effectiveness. Some of these campaigns are for specific groups of children, those with disabilities for example.[41] More usually, the evaluations are of state-specific campaigns, namely, Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, and researchers drill down into the data, to draw associations, for example, between type of advertising and motivations.[42] For instance, Kraus found that during a 1973–1974 campaign, prospective foster parents who were drawn to fostering via radio or television advertising were more likely to want a playmate for their child/children compared to those who sourced information via their church and who stated a more "altruistic general interest in the welfare of children."[43]

A common feature of these studies is the gap between inquiries generated via recruitment campaigns and the eventual number of foster carers recruited,[44] a consistent finding across time and place.[45] Ruth Lawrence, assessing a New South Wales agency campaign during 1988 to 1989, found that the campaign resulted in increased community awareness of foster care's often invisible work,[46] but few recruits.[47] Similarly, in South Australia ten years later, the government agency campaign was regarded as successful because it resulted in many more inquiries than anticipated and from a wide cross section of the community (forty-five percent of inquiries came from tertiary educated people—evenly split between

[40] Ibid.

[41] P. K. Jordan and C. Bywater, "Fostering the Handicapped Child—An Experiment," *Australian Journal of Mental Retardation* 2 (1973).

[42] Evans and Tierney, "Making Foster Care Possible," 8.

[43] J. Kraus, "Selective Campaigning for Foster Homes: An Empirical View," *Australian Social Work* 28, no. 1 (1975): 61.

[44] Ruth Lawrence, "Recruiting Carers for Children in Substitute Care: The Challenge of Program Revision," ibid. 47 (1994): 40.

[45] Louise Keogh and Ulla Svensson, "Why Don't They Become Foster Carers?" *Children Australia* 24, no. 2 (1999): 16.

[46] Martin Mowbray and Lois Bryson, "Women Really Care," *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 19, no. 4 (1984).

[47] Lawrence, "Recruiting Carers for Children in Substitute Care: The Challenge of Program Revision," 40.

university and TAFE[48] qualified—and thirty-five percent had not gone past age fifteen at school). Again, however, it was difficult to convert interest into an application to become a foster carer.[49] While delays in agency responses to enquiries can be off-putting, the conclusion is that people who want to undertake foster care actually know little about it, and use recruitment campaigns as an opportunity to make initial investigations—often not finding what they had expected or hoped.

Similar conclusions emerge from Judy Sebba's 2012 survey of the international literature about who is drawn to the work of providing foster care, and what motivates them. Of the thirty-two pieces of research examined by Sebba, fourteen are from Australia, with the United States following with ten articles, Canada six, and Sweden and Norway one each. Sebba's review was motivated by the international decline in available foster carers relative to the number of children coming into care, and the findings—which bring together her thirty-two identified pieces of research with a 2012 UK survey of foster carers in England—are that knowing other foster carers is usually what motivates people to take on the role themselves; that public awareness campaigns could address "myths" about fostering; and that a lack of appropriate support for foster carers is a major source of disgruntlement amongst them.[50]

From all of these studies we gain a picture of foster parents during the second half of the twentieth century. They were primarily Australian born, often but not always working-class or lower-middle-class, financially stable and motivated principally by a desire to have children at home—because biological children had grown up or they could not have biological children; because they were wanting to share resources; or because they identified with deprived children.[51] Fay Gale's 1968 research suggests, however, that when it comes to Aboriginal children, recent migrants made up a substantial proportion of the foster parents,

[48]TAFE (Technical and Further Education) is a government-run system providing vocational tertiary education, for example, in childcare and plumbing.

[49]Paul Delfabbro et al., "The Effectiveness of Public Foster Carer Recruitment Campaigns," *Children Australia* 33, no. 3 (2008): 31.

[50]Judy Sebba, "Why Do People Become Foster Carers? An International Literature Review on the Motivation to Foster" (Oxford: Rees Centre, University of Oxford, 2012), 7.

[51]Dawn M. Juratowitch and Norman J. Smith, "Quality Foster Care: Who Decides?" *Children Australia* 21, no. 1 (1996): 10.

at least in South Australia. Dawn Juratowitch and Norman Smith concluded that migrant families found it easier to foster Aboriginal children because they were less likely to have friends and relatives in South Australia who made racist comments about "those children," although this tells us little about whether Aboriginal children themselves felt these homes were more effective in supporting them through exposure to racism.[52]

The *Bringing Them Home* report found that many Australian-born non-Indigenous people had become foster parents for Aboriginal children too, and while foster parents often thought they were 'saving' the children, in later years many have come to realise that despite loving their Aboriginal foster children they were complicit in a national policy which systematically separated Indigenous children from their families.[53] Since the 1970s a range of organisations and policies have been established to place as many Indigenous foster children as possible in Indigenous foster homes, although this is not always possible, and the over-representation of Indigenous children in out of home care remains a pressing issue for Australian welfare systems today.[54]

Although much of the research has come to understand the demographics and motivations of foster carers through studies related to recruitment campaigns, none of the foster carers we interviewed for this book—who included people commencing foster care from the 1970s through to 2009—were attracted to the work via recruitment campaigns. All were Australian born, and the mix of family situations reflects the increasing acceptance of single-parent families since the 1970s.[55] We noted themes of people commencing because they knew people already involved in foster care, the most common motivation internationally

[52] Fay Gale, "Foster Homes for Aboriginal Children," *Australian Journal of Social Work* 21, no. 1 (1968): 13.

[53] Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families" (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997).

[54] For details on the history of establishing bodies and policies for implementing Indigenous child placement principles in the period since the 1970s see: Bruce Valentine and Mel Gray, "Keeping Them Home: Aboriginal Out-of-Home Care in Australia," *Families in Society* 87, no. 4 (2006): 537–45.

[55] Lixia Qu and Ruth Weston, "Australian Households and Families," in *Australian Family Trends*, https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/aft4.pdf (Australian Institute of Family Studies, Australian Government, 2013).

according to the Sebba review, and most common amongst the older women in our sample. For others, it was the fulfilment of a dream of fostering and building a larger family, a motivation which foster carers in Australia and elsewhere have articulated for a long time.[56] Importantly, many expressed a clear social justice intent, that is, wanting to share resources with those who have little. Only one person we interviewed, Pam from Chapter 4, began fostering because she knew directly of children in need of care.[57] Despite their varied personal circumstances, some clear commonalities emerged from their reflections on what fostering meant to them.

Matthew

Matthew, a law student, and his partner, a social work student, have been foster carers for eight years.[58] The couple, in their thirties, began accidentally and informally fostering in 2004 when a friend asked if a young person in need could "crash" at their place for a couple of nights. The fifteen-year-old boy, who was suffering from depression, "self-harming with razor blades" and suicidal, stayed "nearly nine months," only leaving when Matthew and Samantha went overseas to teach English for several years. Matthew reflected in amazement that a couple of twenty-year-olds took in a fifteen-year-old who was in such a bad place he needed hospitalisation on several occasions. He also said with immense pleasure and pride that the young man is now a practicing solicitor; Matthew and Samantha contributed to that positive outcome by encouraging the teenager to follow his dreams and by enrolling him in a private school.

> Mark our first one, he's very, he's very happy and he's very, I guess appreciative of us keeping him alive when he was at his real, real darkest time. It was just a matter of keeping him alive and keeping him safe and talking to him about his interests and, you know, so he appreciates that.

[56] Musgrove, "Imagining Foster Families," 175–89.

[57] Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

[58] All references to and quotations from Matthew and Samantha throughout this section are from: Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Matthew," 2015.

When Matthew and Samantha returned from overseas in 2009 they decided to foster formally.

> We thought, we've done this before, we might as well again, we've got two bedrooms free, there's nothing anyone can throw at us that we haven't seen before so let's do that.

Matthew feels well supported with the particular agency they foster through, and stressed they would not foster without the support. Support includes clinical supervision which they can access as frequently as they need, but which is mandated every three months. Clinical supervision allows the couple to "actually get to talk to a clinician and get stuff off our chest." They also have "placement supervision with a foster care support worker from the agency" and respite care "one weekend a month…so we feel like a grown up house for a couple of hours." The demands of being a foster carer are still high, and Matthew thought combining fostering with having a young family would be hard. Matthew and Samantha do not have their own children, but if they did, they would "step away from fostering" until their own children were older, perhaps "concentrate more on respite or emergency placements." When it comes to financial compensation, Matthew talked about the sliding scale of allowances depending on the age of a young person and their assessed needs, but stressed that "it's not a wage or salary" but that carers can also "if they're eligible claim family tax benefit A and B from Centrelink."[59] The concern for Matthew is that it is "very difficult to sustain full time employment" and therefore they both work part-time "which is just one wage altogether." However, Matthew did not feel "hard done by" because they are "not in it for the money."

Usually, Matthew and Samantha take in teenage boys for, on average, twelve months. In that time, the couple tries to foster interests although they are not always as successful as they were with Mark. One sixteen-year-old, for example, was "on a lot of psychotropic medication" and

[59]Family Tax Benefit (FTB) is a Federal Government means tested payment that assists families with the cost of raising children. There are two components, FTB A is an amount paid per children while FTB is an amount paid per family. See: "Families and Children: Family Tax Benefit," Department of Social Services, Australian Government, https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children/benefits-payments/family-tax-benefit, last accessed 24 April 2018.

"had no goals or aspirations…and so it was just about really guiding him to stay on the right side of the law." Matthew keeps in touch with this young man's family, they "check in" and therefore know "he's been in and out of gaol several times just related to petty crime and drugs." Lows such as this cause Matthew to wonder "where did we go wrong?" Highs such as Mark and another academically gifted teenager who is now a qualified electrician keep Matthew and Samantha enthusiastic about the work they do—that, and the learning that occurs for him and Samantha through foster care. For example, learning about "managing our own emotions and our own behaviour" so as not to "escalate a young person's emotional issues" and to ensure that "interactions are primarily positive with the young person" in their care.

Although the couple usually foster teenagers, at the time we spoke with Matthew he was grieving the loss of a nine-year-old to the child's grandmother and fearing for the child's future. Matthew is fundamentally in favour of reunification, he sees "it's a positive thing absolutely" but in this instance he has reservations about whether the boy will receive the attention and nurturing he needs because he will be living back in a family where the birth mother, step-father and younger brother all have a range of psychological challenges to contend with. While Matthew would "love to be proven wrong" he is concerned that "all the work we've done over the last nine months is just gradually going to be eroded…and we're going to be back to square one."

Matthew and Samantha have not expressed their reservations to the foster agency, however, because, Matthew thought, that would make them vulnerable to being "unauthorized." Rather than carers' views being considered during case reviews, Matthew said, "we're treated a bit more as a hotel." Matthew's other concern has been the children and young people they foster not being listened to, respected and advocated for by case workers. He cited an example of his foster child wanting to go to a case review meeting but not being allowed to because he was not a teenager.

Matthew's story as both an informal and formal foster carer contains themes we take up in the remainder of this chapter, namely motivations for foster caring; financial compensation and other support for the work they do; the contact they have with birth parents; and intangible benefits they receive. In the section which follows we are using interviews conducted with foster carers across the country. Four foster carers, like Matthew and Samantha, are relatively new to the system,

another one did foster care for four years early in the twenty-first century, whereas another six—all women—commenced foster caring during the late 1960s and 1970s. Of those last six, two discontinued the work after fifteen years or so, while four are still foster carers. Pam and Susan (who were introduced in Chapter 4) were the only foster carers to speak of having been in foster care themselves; Susan's story we take up in the section on kinship care in Chapter 9, rather than here, because she is formally recognised as a foster carer while caring for her granddaughter.[60]

Motivations for Foster Care

Some of the people we spoke with told us that they had been inspired by others to become foster carers. Jeanine and Karen are both in their sixties and began fostering as young married women during the late 1960s. Jeanine and her husband were not yet ready to have children of their own and liked the idea of "sponsoring" children when introduced to that by people they knew doing the same. Sponsoring meant to take children out on the weekend, or take them home for the weekend and for holidays, as did Grace's foster parents.[61] From the perspective of the 2000s, Jeanine thought she was too young to have taken on that work, but she continued it for more than fifteen years, taking in children for emergency, short-term and long-term foster care, and estimates she would have looked after sixty-five children in that time. In the end Jeanine gave up foster care when she became a social worker as she felt that would be a conflict of interest.[62]

Karen took up foster care on the recommendation of her sister who was fostering (or sponsoring) children on weekends only. At the time Karen had been married for several years but there were no children on the way, and her "ten years was up in a bank" and it was "fairly easy to apply." Karen had initially wanted to be a kindergarten teacher but "failed a couple of subjects in Year 11." She had a job by the time she sat supplementary exams for Teacher's College and decided she preferred paid work to further study. Even after Karen and her husband adopted their two boys, they continued fostering, "mainly teenage girls" and

[60] Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care; Chapter 9: Are We Getting Better at This?

[61] See Grace's story in Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

[62] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Jeanine," 2014.

Karen ran a family day-care centre from her home. Karen ceased the foster care of teenage girls when her eldest son was thirteen. By then she wanted her son "to be the eldest and just to have a bit of space…for him." However, she continues with the family day care and for more than thirty years has had "hundreds and hundreds of kids" often for only a "few days, a week, two weeks."[63]

Like Jeanine and Karen, Helena and Janet became foster carers as young women when they were introduced to the work through a network of other women. When Janet started fostering during the 1980s she already had three of her four biological children, the youngest of whom was two. Over thirty years of fostering Janet has kept five foster children who were not going home and for whom it was in their best interests to stay with Janet and her family. Because she was a single mother living on a pension which "did not stretch very far," Janet often worked part-time at night stacking supermarket shelves, returning home in time to get the children off to school.[64]

Helena began fostering during the 1990s as a twenty-five year old, at which time she had one of her four biological children, a baby. Helena has never worked in the paid workforce but sees caring for children as her life's work, she has "never known anything else," she has "always been at home looking after kids." She continues to foster because "there is always the possibility one day it will be alright" meaning that there will be positive outcomes. In her twenty years as a foster carer she remembers only two situations where she is confident that the children will be alright, because the two fathers did "everything…parenting courses etc." to get their children back.[65]

Debbie began fostering after her own children had grown up and left home. She was introduced to the idea by a woman she knew at a foster care agency and over four years took in around twenty children for primarily emergency and respite care. "Children used to come at the drop of a hat…they could come during the night or any time," Debbie's partner Russell told us. By the time Debbie took up foster care she had already worked in childcare for more than twenty years; foster care was an extension of that, as working in childcare was an extension of her

[63] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Karen," 2014.

[64] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Janet," 2014.

[65] "Jeanine".

caring for her younger siblings from the age of seven and working in a children's home as housemother and cleaner in her early twenties.[66]

Other people we spoke with had long-dreamed of fostering as a way of building a larger family. Like the other older women and long-term foster carers amongst our research participants, Ellen began fostering as a young woman in her twenties, during the 1970s. Ellen's motivation, however, was that she had always wanted a larger family than the four biological children she had when her marriage broke up. Ellen began fostering when her youngest was in kindergarten, primarily very young children and newborns, most of whom were then adopted. Even so, Ellen's attitude was that "you treat the children the same as your own" while knowing the children are not yours.[67]

Jason was another interviewee who deliberately fostered in order to have a family, and he and his wife have fostered in recent years and because the couple "weren't able to have kids." They had two miscarriages, tried IVF and then looked "at fostering as a different option." Jason's wife, Sharon, went along to an information evening held by a church-based agency and the couple took in their infant daughter as a short-term placement. After the child was placed under guardianship orders until she is eighteen, Jason and Sharon made a long-term commitment to her. Sharon took twelve months' maternity leave because the couple was able to negotiate with their employer to include foster care in their maternity leave package. Sharon now works four days a week; the little girl is in childcare for three days and each fortnight Jason takes a day off to care of her. At the time of the interview the couple had no intentions of fostering more children.[68]

Two of the foster parents we interviewed who became foster parents in recent years had a long-term desire to become foster parents but could not locate the source of that desire. Caroline said she had "sort of always known from a very early age" that she would like to foster but cannot remember anything from her life that would have triggered it. Caroline was at work one day when she spontaneously began googling foster care, came across an NGO (non-government organisation) website she knew by reputation and left an enquiry message with them.

[66] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Debbie," 2014.

[67] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Ellen," 2014.

[68] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Jason," 2015.

That evening she checked in with her husband to see if he was supportive of the idea and "he was on board and away we went. It was quite impulsive in some ways." By then Caroline and her partner had a four-year-old son and wanted more children. Caroline's husband took over at home as the primary caregiver when their biological son was three and has continued in that role since the couple have taken in their foster son and later a daughter. For now Caroline's family feels complete, but she says that in the future, when their sons are "much older" they might take in more foster children.[69]

Chrissy is the mother of four children, the youngest of whom was fourteen when her family began fostering. The four children were a compromise between the five she wanted and the three her husband wanted. For Chrissy, "fostering was something that's always been underlying" for her and she had some experience from "way, way, way back" when she was a young woman of twenty. Then she fostered teenage girls on emergency short-term placements while she was working full-time, which she sees as having "dipped my toes in it at that point." After Chrissy got married, she and her husband began investigating foster care but Chrissy's first pregnancy "put it all on hold." Stepping into fostering from 2012, Chrissy said, was initiated by her children. The family were talking about foster care one day and the next one of her children picked up a brochure at the library and said "'Here, we should do this' and pushed us to call and kind of set it in motion."[70]

Donna and Jo were both motivated by childhood experiences and a desire to share their resources. Donna is a long-term foster carer beginning in the 1980s. Her parents had taken in "respite kids" and as a teenager she belonged to a youth group connected to an orphanage and the youth group would take "the kids down the beach." The youngest of Donna's children was less than two years of age when she started fostering because Donna thought it important that her children grew up sharing everything—their parents, their home, their toys. In fact, all four of Donna's children have become foster parents in turn. Donna is still

[69] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Caroline," 2015.

[70] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Chrissy," 2015. It is not unusual for foster families to be family oriented and to make decisions that consider the impact on the family as a whole, see Evans and Tierney, "Making Foster Care Possible," 7.

fostering and plans to continue to do so until she is no longer fit, able and enjoying it.[71]

Jo and her partner Robert began foster caring in 2013. For Jo, this was a logical extension of how she had been raised, "in a family that's very socially conscious" where there was an emphasis on caring for those "with less privilege than ourselves." Jo's mother is a medical doctor who set up family planning clinics in Africa and her father was a diplomat who used connections in Australia to establish schools in Africa and Asia. The family also took in children; "my parents always had sort of unofficial foster children" said Jo, and her parents adopted a girl from Thailand. Jo's experience of living in Africa and Asia while growing up, where she saw firsthand the impact on families which had been decimated by AIDS and poverty, and where there were many "children without any parents at all," also influenced Jo to offer foster care rather than have children of her own.[72]

Both Jo and Robert are highly educated, she has a doctorate and Robert was completing a Masters degree when we spoke. The combination of education credentials, "good backgrounds" and no biological children, Jo considers, gives them an advantage as foster carers because they can be "good role models." Like the other men in our sample, Robert is deeply engaged with fostering even though Jo initially drove the project. At the time we spoke, the couple had two children they fostered in long-term placements and other children they took in on short-term ones. Since then, they have left foster care because, like Matthew, they found their engagement with welfare authorities difficult and unsupportive. They still live with a daughter, who began her life with them through foster care.

Pam (introduced in Chapter 4), was a foster carer during the 1980s for around seven years, but for her this came about through knowing children in need.[73] Pam and her children had recently moved into a small country town and one of her neighbour's sons "just moved in" with them. Pam was concerned for the boy's welfare as at home he would often "wake up with a knife at this throat" and his mother instructing him to collect money from men she had sex with. Pam made inquiries

[71] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Donna," 2014.

[72] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Jo," 2014.

[73] Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

about formalising the arrangement and over time Pam took in two other boys from the same family as well. She wonders now, however, if she spent too much time with those children and not enough with her own.[74]

In terms of motivation, then, our group of foster carers were similar to others in Australian studies conducted since the 1970s. Noticeable, though, were demographic changes in that those taking up foster care in recent years, or at least those speaking with us, were more likely to be university educated,[75] combining full-time paid work with foster care, and included men as active participants in caring for foster children. Again, this reflects shifts in Australian society, and Western societies more broadly, where more of the population are likely to be university educated than in previous generations, women's participation in the paid workforce has increased, and men are more actively engaged in childcare.

It's Not About the Money

All of the foster carers we interviewed were, like Matthew, unequivocal that they are "not in it for the money." Jeanine, who began fostering in the 1970s, was taking in children for three years before she received any financial support, an amount of six dollars a week, "which helped." "Nobody commented about money then, nobody complained," Jeanine said, "It wasn't about the money." Pam received some funding once she formalised a foster care arrangement for her neighbour's sons but this only covered the boys' clothes, Pam "was supplying everything else," "It didn't matter" she says, because they "made do."[76]

Contemporary carers Jo and Robert said they usually spent more than they received for looking after the children, particularly when they took children on outings to the zoo and other places. For the two children they had on long-term placements they were also "paying for uniforms and laptops at school" and they got "some of it back, but not all of it." They were grateful for Jo's salary from fulltime work but say they were "still living pay to pay" and hoped things would improve when Robert

[74] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Pam," 2014.

[75] This finding accords with the Delfabbro et al. one in their evaluation of a South Australian Government recruitment campaign which ran from 2004 to 2006, see Delfabbro et al., "The Effectiveness of Public Foster Carer Recruitment Campaigns," 31.

[76] "Matthew"; "Jeanine"; "Pam".

returned to full-time employment. For Jo and Robert, the question of payment is a catch-22. On the one hand, they think the lack of funding for foster carers will "discourage people who otherwise would want to do it," while offering money, and having people think they are "going to get so much cash out of this" does not seem right either.[77]

The idea that "large monetary payments are thought to be improper and greedy" seems as pertinent today as it was in the 1990s when trials were underway in a New South Wales agency to pay foster mothers for their work. The idea was to treat the foster mothers as employees rather than as volunteers, as part of a "caring team,"[78] so as to both recognise the contribution of foster carers and to offset the temptation for some foster and birth mothers—often cast in the polarising roles of "good" and "bad" mothers[79]—to see themselves as rivals for child/children's affections, in a way that a childcare worker or teacher would not.[80]

Recent carers Jason and Chrissy were happy to have no contact with birth parents, but they are unusual in our sample. All of the other foster carers endorsed access visits and reunification where appropriate. One of Donna's early foster children was the child of a teenager who decided to have her baby adopted. Donna invited the young mother to stay for the weekend so the girl could experience caring for a baby after which the mother cancelled the adoption plans. Ellen had access visits at her home or at a local park, often twice a week, and frequently she kept in touch with birth parents after children had been returned to them. Helen said she preferred it when foster parents were expected to do more, to do the dental and medical visits, organise and travel to access, whereas now that work has been picked up by social workers. Jeanine went so far as to say she was concerned about the impact on birth families when children are removed, saying the best option was usually to keep the child in the family. She acknowledged the barriers to that, that "money is needed for mentors, people who could even live in with the family, there

[77] "Jo".

[78] Lynda Campbell, "The Wider Caring Network," *Children Australia* 24, no. 4 (1999): 5.

[79] Jan Mason, "Foster Care and Permanency an Analysis of the Context for Practice," *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 26, no. 4 (1991).

[80] For more on this experiment see Brenda Smith and Tina Smith, "For Love and Money: Women as Foster Mothers," *Affilia* 5, no. 1 (1990); Brenda Smith, "Australian Women and Foster Care: A Feminist Perspective," *Child Welfare* LXX, no. 2 (1991).

wasn't enough counselling" during the 1980s and 1990s. Debbie would agree from her time fostering in the twenty-first century: "What lots of the parents need, is another parent so more like a mentor type situation," she said, reflecting on one birth mother who was "in her thirties and it was just lack of support, you know, she didn't have no family, no nothing."[81]

Only Matthew talked about mandated clinical supervision on a regular basis but all foster carers mentioned the need to have support from government departments and foster care agencies. When support was lacking they felt diminished. Karen, for example, was delighted with the support she received during the 1970s. The organisation she went through, a combined church-business one funded by the state government, Karen thought "were well ahead of their time with support and training." Support included "individual social workers for the families and the children and they had twenty-four hour support" and "lots of social activities for the families." Jeanine, however, fostering at the same time as Karen, found she was not listened to or respected as a foster carer; "social workers thought they knew what was best."[82] During the thirty years, Janet has been fostering she has noticed the number of voluntary placements of children in care decline sharply as the system has shifted to a protection rather than a welfare model. With that change has come another one; where workers in the past knew her well now they are not around for long enough; during the first fifteen years she had only three case workers compared to fifteen in the last fifteen years.

Where there is little financial compensation, even lack of support and respect, often there are other, more intangible rewards which keep foster carers engaged in their work. "It's a great feeling" Donna says "when you do something that makes the kids feel good." Karen recalled fondly a house full of teenagers sitting around the kitchen table and "the interesting conversations you'd get going on."[83] Chrissy did not deny the enormous challenges involved in bringing small strangers to her home, which she did initially "with a sense of thinking that there are children out there that need us." Now she says:

[81] "Jeanine"; "Debbie".

[82] "Karen"; "Jeanine".

[83] "Donna"; "Karen".

> but I think as a family we've needed these girls as well because I think you don't bring two little people into your family without that affecting everything.[84]

Like Matthew, Chrissy says she has learned a lot about herself and believes that fostering has made her children more compassionate towards those "children who haven't had such a good start." They have become less judgemental of other children "behaving really badly" because they realise they do not know the full story of what has happened for the person in the past.[85]

With more than thirty years fostering experience behind her, Ellen admits that what she really gains from the work is feeling needed and loved.

References

"Advertising." *Argus* (Melbourne), 3 March 1866, 1.
"Advertising." *Argus* (Melbourne), 30 December 1870, 1.
"Advertising." *Argus* (Melbourne), 13 March 1873, 1.
Campbell, Lynda. "The Wider Caring Network." *Children Australia* 24, no. 4 (1999): 43–47.
Cunningham, Hugh. 2005. *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500*. 2nd ed. London: Pearson Education Limited.
Delfabbro, Paul, John Taplin, and Yvonne Bentham. "Is It Worthwhile? Motivational Factors and Perceived Difficulties of Foster Caring in South Australia." *Adoption & Fostering* 26, no. 2 (2002): 28–37.
Delfabbro, Paul, Mignon Borgas, Robyn Vast, and Alexandra Osborn. "The Effectiveness of Public Foster Carer Recruitment Campaigns." *Children Australia* 33, no. 3 (2008): 29–36.
Department of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, Victoria. *Department of Industrial and Reformatory Schools: Reports of the Secretary*, 1882.
Evans, Caroline. "Excellent Women and Troublesome Children: State Foster Care in Tasmania, 1896–1918." *Labour History*, no. 83 (2002): 131–48.
Evans, W. B., and Leonard Tierney. "Making Foster Care Possible." *Children Australia* 20, no. 2 (1995).
"Families and Children: Family Tax Benefit." Department of Social Services, Australian Government. https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children/benefits-payments/family-tax-benefit.

[84] "Chrissy".
[85] Ibid.

Ferguson, Harry. "Abused and Looked After Children as "Moral Dirt": Child Abuse and Institutional Care in Historical Perspective." *Journal of Social Policy* 36, no. 1 (2007): 123–39.

Gale, Fay. "Foster Homes for Aboriginal Children." *Australian Journal of Social Work* 21, no. 1 (1968): 8–14.

Hicks, Stephen. "Maternal Men—Perverts and Deviants? Making Sense of Gay Men as Foster Carers and Adopters." *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* 2, no. 1 (2006): 93–114.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. *Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997.

Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department, Victoria. *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department: Reports of the Inspector*, 1875.

Industrial and Reformatory Schools Office, Victoria. *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department: Reports of the Inspector*, 1866, 1872 & 1874.

Jordan, P. K., and C. Bywater. "Fostering the Handicapped Child—An Experiment." *Australian Journal of Mental Retardation* 2 (1973): 185–88.

Juratowitch, Dawn M., and Norman J. Smith. "Quality Foster Care: Who Decides?" *Children Australia* 21, no. 1 (1996): 9–12.

Keogh, Louise, and Ulla Svensson. "Why Don't They Become Foster Carers?" *Children Australia* 24, no. 2 (1999): 13–19.

Kraus, J. "Selective Campaigning for Foster Homes: An Empirical View." *Australian Social Work* 28, no. 1 (1975): 59–65.

Lawrence, Ruth. "Recruiting Carers for Children in Substitute Care: The Challenge of Program Revision." *Australian Social Work* 47, no. 1 (1994): 37–42.

Mason, Jan. "Foster Care and Permanency an Analysis of the Context for Practice." *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 26, no. 4 (1991): 242–56.

McLelland, Mary. "The Motivations of Foster Parents." *Australian Journal of social Work* 16, no. 2 (1963): 43–47.

Mowbray, Martin, and Lois Bryson. "Women Really Care." *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 19, no. 4 (1984): 261–72.

Musgrove, Nell. "'Every Time I Think of Baby I Cry': Dislocation and Survival in Victoria's Child Welfare System." *Australian Historical Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 213–28.

Musgrove, Nell. *The Scars Remain: A Long History of Forgotten Australians and Children's Institutions*. Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013.

Musgrove, Nell. "Imagining Foster Families." *Journal of Australian Studies* 38, no. 2 (2014): 175–89.

Public Record Office Victoria, VA 475 Chief Secretary's Department, Chief Secretary's Inward Registered Correspondence II & III, VPRS 3991 & 3992.

Qu, Lixia, and Ruth Weston. "Australian Households and Families." In *Australian Family Trends*. https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/aft4.pdf. Australian Institute of Family Studies, Australian Government, 2013.

Riggs, Damien. "Australian Lesbian and Gay Foster Carers Negotiationg the Child Protection System: Strengths and Challenges." *Sex Research and Social Policy* 8 (2011): 216–26.

Riggs, Damien, and Martha Augoustinos. "Institutional Stressors and Individual Strengths: Policy and Practice Direction for Working with Australian Gay Foster Carers." *Practice: Social Work in Action* 21, no. 2 (2009): 77–90.

Sebba, Judy. *Why Do People Become Foster Carers? An International Literature Review on the Motivation to Foster*. Oxford: Rees Centre, University of Oxford, 2012.

Smith, Brenda. "Australian Women and Foster Care: A Feminist Perspective." *Child Welfare* LXX, no. 2 (1991): 175–84.

Smith, Brenda, and Tina Smith. "For Love and Money: Women as Foster Mothers." *Affilia* 5, no. 1 (1990): 66–80.

Swain, Shurlee, and Renate Howe. *Single Mothers and Their Children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Sweetman, Edward, Charles Long, and John Smyth. 1922. *A History of State Education in Victoria*. Melbourne, VIC: Education Department of Victoria.

Theobald, Marjorie, and Shurlee Swain. "Education, Primary". In *eMelbourne: City Past & Present*. Melbourne: School of Philosophical and Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, 2008.

Valentine, Bruce, and Mel Gray. "Keeping Them Home: Aboriginal Out-of-Home Care in Australia." *Families in Society* 87, no. 4 (2006): 537–45.

PART II

Shaping the Lives of the Invisible Children of the State

CHAPTER 6

Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices

Since its introduction to Australian government child welfare systems in the latter half of the nineteenth century, foster care has been understood in a variety of competing and conflicting ways. The same must be said for the perception of foster children and their families. This chapter places philosophies, practices and conceptions of foster care in their historical contexts in an attempt to illustrate the persistence of issues in the present day which have their origins in historical debates which, for most Australians, are long forgotten. We begin the chapter by reviewing the 1870s debates about boarding out, or foster care, as an alternative to institutionalising children which increasingly came to be seen as poor preparation for their future lives. Children who had grown up in institutions, it was argued—with echoes in the twenty-first century about the poor outcomes for children in residential care—were more likely to become impoverished or nefarious adults, and therefore continue to be a burden on society. Boarding out children to 'respectable' working class families who would train the children to become 'respectable' working class citizens was the preferred solution for many, particularly middle-class social reformers. The reformers also found a place for middle-class women in the scheme, as unpaid supervisors of foster mothers, a role through which women with upwardly-mobile ambitions could carve out a relatively influential space for themselves in the public sphere.

In the second part of the chapter, we explore how child welfare departments made decisions about which families to help and which

© The Author(s) 2018

N. Musgrove and D. Michell, *The Slow Evolution of Foster Care in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in the History of Childhood,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93900-1_6

families to separate. These decisions were based on nineteenth-century moral judgements about a person's 'character', judgements largely determined by the degree of conformity with prevailing social norms, and ideas about poverty being caused by 'fecklessness' rather than social problems such as unemployment and lack of social welfare provisions. Members of the 'respectable' working classes who were temporarily down on their luck—perhaps through the death of a spouse, or the loss of a job—were 'deserving' of state assistance, but the 'undeserving' poor, the equivalent of today's 'bad parents', were separated from their children. For those 'left' in the system, the consequences and stigma could have negative and lifelong consequences, as we demonstrate in the final part of the chapter.

Implementing Foster Care

Across Australia, the use of boarding out schemes within government welfare systems expanded rapidly from the 1870s and, by the 1890s, government departments commonly used it to accommodate as many wards of the state under working age as possible.[1] There were competing motivations and justifications for turning to foster care. Some commentators expressed philosophical preferences for foster care over institutions (and vice versa), and in other discussions the practical or economic advantages of foster care were at the centre of discussions. As we suggest in the introduction to this book, arguments made by advocates in favour of foster care were influential in implementing foster care for state wards in South Australia, while in Victoria at almost the same time the transition to foster care was driven by the government's desire to escape the expense and public scrutiny associated with the colony's children's institutions. Yet depicting South Australia as the colony of principle and Victoria as the colony of pragmatism is painting with broad strokes, because wherever discussions of introducing foster care took place during this period, both ideological and practical arguments held some sway—even in South

[1] Margaret Barbalet, *Far from a Low Gutter Girl: The Forgotten World of State Wards: South Australia 1887–1940* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983); Nell Musgrove, *The Scars Remain: A Long History of Forgotten Australians and Children's Institutions* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013); and Naomi Parry, "'Such a Longing': Black and White Children in Welfare in New South Wales and Tasmania, 1880–1940" (PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales, 2007).

Australia the financial viability of boarding children out was key to gaining government support.[2]

In understanding the 1870s debates about foster care, it is important to place them in a transnational context since people in the Australian colonies who purported to have expertise in the area of child welfare were engaged in conversations that flowed around the British Empire.[3] An 1870 article from the Melbourne *Argus* told readers that it was "an ascertained fact in England that children who graduate in the workhouse schools—and these, be it remembered, correspond as nearly as possible to our industrial institutions—do not turn out well." The author argued that institutional life pauperised young children since from their "first moment of recollection they have been the objects of charity" and that the industrial training provided to older children was "by no means comparable to what they would receive at private hands." Foster care, which the author told readers "has been in successful operation for twenty years in Scotland, and is now being adopted in many parts of England," was presented as the solution.[4] Sweeping statements like these about current British thought or practice were effective rhetorical devices used to remind Australian audiences not to 'fall behind', but they represented opinion rather than fact. Many children who grew up in English institutions no doubt led difficult lives in adulthood, but others flourished—iconic English actor and filmmaker, Charlie Chaplin, spent several years at a workhouse school—Hanwell School for Orphans and Destitute Children—from 1896.[5] Furthermore, despite the suggestion

[2] Freda Briggs and Susan Hunt, "Foster Care from a Historical Perspective," *Children Australia* 40, no. 4 (2015): 316–26.

[3] Shurlee Swain and Margot Hillel, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Resuce Discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850–1915* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Elizabeth Harvey, "'Layered Networks': Imperial Philanthropy in Birmingha, and Sydney, 1860–1914," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwelath History* 41, no. 1 (2013): 120–42.

[4] "Untitled," *Argus* (Melbourne), 14 June 1870, 4.

[5] Chaplin wrote about his time in Hanwell in *My Autobiography*, published in 1964. He describes his time there as a "forlorn existence" and writes in detail about the brutal military style punishment meted out to boys when they committed "offences". Chaplin says he survived the experience by making himself invulnerable, daydreaming about becoming a great actor, and developing enormous confidence in himself. Far from an endorsement of such institutions as good models of care, Chaplin's case is presented to highlight the importance of reading reformers' claims critically. See: Charles Chaplin, *My Autobiography* (London:

that Australian colonies needed to embrace foster care to keep up with best practice 'back home', the reality was that boarding out was adopted far more extensively in Australia than it was in England.

Australian advocates of foster care cited the success of Scotland, where boarding out was the primary means of placing children in many parishes from the 1860s.[6] However, the comparison with England—on almost any topic—was the more powerful one in the Australian anxiety around cultural inferiority. In 1909 Catherine Helen Spence, early advocate of foster care in South Australia, boldly informed the first Inter-state Congress of Workers Among Dependent Children that founding figure, Caroline Clark,[7] and her allies in South Australia had been inspired by the example of boarding out in Scotland, "but," she proclaimed, "they had improved on Scotland." Spence explained how during the 1860s and 1870s Clark had been stirred to action by the work of English social reformers on workhouses and boarding out, including Frances Power Cobbe, Jane Nassau Senior and Florence Davenport Hill. "But now," Spence continued, "English reformers had to point to Australia," informing her audience that while the majority of Australian state children were at that time placed in foster homes, she believed the same could be said for less than 9000 of the 66,000 comparable children in England. In case there were any doubt about what her listeners should make of these figures, Spence stated that the "smaller the proportion [of state children] in institutions the greater was the reformers' success."[8] Given what we now know about the experiences of children growing up in foster care, we might question Spence's confidence about its universal benefit, but her observation about its more extensive adoption in Australia than in England was correct.

As Shurlee Swain argues, some English reformers had been 'pointing to Australia' for some time before Spence's 1909 speech. Florence

The Bodley Head, 1964), 22–23. Biographer Peter Ackroyd says that the invulnerability Chaplin cultivated as a small child later became part of his well-loved Little Tramp character. See: Peter Ackroyd, *Charlie Chaplin* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2014), 11.

[6] Lynn Abrams, *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1998), 37.

[7] See the introduction to this book for further detail on Clark's role in establishing foster care in South Australia.

[8] "Making Good Citizens: Rival Systems, the Inter-state Congress," *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 20 May 1909, 9.

and Rosamond Davenport Hill had a significant influence on Australian discussions about introducing foster care, and spoke in the colonies as English experts. Yet on their return home, they pointed to Australian foster schemes as evidence for the desirability of expanding the practice in England.[9] In part, the Hills' influence in Australia related to good timing. They arrived in Australia in 1873 just as the colonies of Tasmania, South Australia and Victoria were all in the process of establishing boarding out schemes within their government systems.[10] They also had an important connection: their cousin, Caroline Clark. Therefore, they found numerous opportunities to speak as expert commentators into current and topical debates, including to some official government inquiries.[11] The gravity with which their opinions were received was deeply influenced by who they were: not only English, but also the daughters of renowned social reformer Matthew Davenport Hill. However, the authoritative tone they adopted was more informed by their social theory than the experience of implementing their ideas at home in England.[12]

The Hill sisters had already written about one strand of the debate taking place in the Australian colonies: whether foster care would be an improvement on the training of older children approaching working age.[13] Views on this matter were, to some extent, split along gender lines. Both English and Australian observers were particularly concerned about the impact of institutional life on girls. Girls, they feared, would quickly learn 'vice' from those around them if they were held together

[9]Shurlee Swain, "Florence and Rosamond Davenport Hill and the Development of Boarding Out in England and Australia: A Study in Cultural Transmission," *Women's History Review* 23, no. 5 (2014): 744–59.

[10]New South Wales and Queensland also made moves to incorporate boarding out to their government provisions during the 1870s.

[11]Rosamond Hill and Florence Hill, *What We Saw in Australia* (Digitsed by the Internet Archive in 2007 with Funding from Microsoft Corporation: http://www.archive.org/details/whatwesawinaustr00hilliala, 1875).

[12]Swain, "Florence and Rosamond Davenport Hill and the Development of Boarding out in England and Australia," 744–59.

[13]This is taken up by Florence Hill in: *Children of the State: The Training of Juvenile Paupers* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1868); and again by the sisters in *What We Saw in Australia*.

in institutions.[14] Besides which, the Hill sisters believed, foster care could provide girls with a better training for their future assumed roles as domestic servants than was possible in an institution. Following a visit to the Randwick Asylum for Destitute Children in Sydney they observed that institutional efficiency had taken priority over good training. Much to the astonishment of the sisters, two men were employed to run the kitchen, and this made it improper for any girls to be sent to train there. In any case, they doubted whether the "steam apparatus" which had been installed to cook for the institution's eight hundred children would give the girls skills they could use in the private homes where they would probably find their future employment. They acknowledged that institutions needed to "economise labour" but viewed the industrial cooking system as "worse than valueless as regards the object of the charity, which is to fit the children for their after-career in life."[15]

Whereas the idea of congregating older girls together in institutions raised concerns about 'moral contamination', the Hill sisters had few qualms about industrial schools for 'troublesome' boys, where they could be put under the training of a good male role model.[16] In principle, many Australians agreed, but the spectacular and public failure of the industrial training provided within the Victorian schools caused some to question whether the government was capable of providing "a real, instead of a sham, industrial training, together with a knowledge of reading, writing and the primary operations of arithmetic."[17] With respect to both boys and girls, the discussions about these older children were typically framed around their potential for becoming gainfully employed, because without equipping them to make an 'honest living' commentators worried that they would either become reliant on 'handouts' or enter a life of 'vice and crime'. There is a certain logic to these fears

[14]For discussion of fears about moral contamination of girls in institutions and the perceived value of boarding out in Australia see: Musgrove, *The Scars Remain*, 33–34. For discussions of concerns regarding the moral contamination of children in workhouses and about lifelong pauperisation of children in Poor law institutions see: George Behlmer, *Friends of the Family: The English Home and Its Guardians, 1850–1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 285; Alan Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 42–44.

[15]Hill and Hill, *What We Saw in Australia*, 307–8.

[16]Ibid., 88–90.

[17]"Untitled," *Argus* (Melbourne), 14 June 1870, 4.

but their omnipresence, and the ways in which they were articulated, reflected the assumption of middle-class social reformers that they were entitled—even morally bound—to intervene in the lives of the poor for what they perceived as the greater good of society.

Younger children, unsurprisingly, were typically viewed as deserving of sympathetic treatment, and by the 1870s foster care was usually seen as a kinder way of placing young children than institutions. An 1876 letter to the editor of the *Argus*, responding to an article in the same newspaper which had promoted foster care as a model for the pre-training of older children, urged for younger children to be given priority in the allocation of foster homes:

> The boarding-out system is intended to provide more 'personal kindness,' 'sympathy,' and care of a home-like character than can be obtained for each individual child in a very large asylum. Would it not, then, be beginning at the wrong end to select elder children, 'strong and healthy,' as described in your article, for these special advantages, in preference to younger and more delicate ones? A foster-mother and home-like care are more needed for an infant in arms, or for a child of two or three years, than for a strong boy or girl of 12.[18]

Others argued that young children were most suited to foster care since they saw the very purpose of boarding out as "to secure permanent homes for the children, where they may make friends among their own class, and where they will continue to find a welcome after they have gone out into the world."[19] This was important, the author explained, because it meant the children would "cease to be mere waifs and strays, and feel that they have an anchor in the community," reminding readers, without needing to directly articulate the idea, that intervening in the lives of destitute children was preventative work against future 'careers of vice and crime' that the children might otherwise follow.[20]

[18] "Boarding-Out of Orphans," *Argus* (Melbourne), 28 July 1876, 7.

[19] "The Boarding-Out System in Victoria," *South Australian Register* (Adelaide), 4 February 1873, 4.

[20] This notion is omnipresent in Australian colonial sources, and George Behlmer has notes similar observations about foster care in nineteenth-century England. See: Behlmer, *Friends of the Family*, 286. Quotation is from: "The Boarding-Out System in Victoria," *South Australian Register* (Adelaide), 4 February 1873, 4.

The view that some provision for 'waifs and strays' was an investment in the future strength of society was not new, but by the 1870s arguments about what that provision should be, had shifted. In 1855, at the laying of the Melbourne Orphan Asylum's foundation stone, Governor Charles Hotham painted the orphanage children as potential pickpockets and prostitutes, and then urged the crowd to support the asylum, asking, "do you not think that you are bound by every means in your power to take care that this evil does not fall upon society?"[21] Twenty-one years later, as the Melbourne Orphan Asylum proposed boarding out some of its children in foster homes, Chief Justice William Stawell announced, "I care not how you run your institution…from the very necessities of the case, how are the children brought up in it?"[22] He urged for the expansion of boarding out because he believed that institutional life inevitably pauperised children and set them on a path to lifelong dependency on either 'handouts' or crime.

British parliamentarian and economist, Henry Fawcett, was concerned with the potential of foster care to pauperise not the children themselves, but their parents and also the families who acted as foster parents. It was, he wrote in 1871, a return to "some of the worst evils of the old Poor Law."[23] He viewed the conditions that foster homes were required to provide as too attractive, and expected that poor parents would abandon their children to secure 'better lives' for them in foster care. Furthermore, according to Fawcett's calculations, "a man would receive quite as much for the support of two pauper children as he is able to earn by hard toil," and he contended this would encourage professional pauperism.[24] Florence Hill believed the remedy to this was ensuring that children were "boarded with cottagers, farm servants, or tradespeople, and not with persons who [made] the care of them their only task."[25] Indeed, Florence Hill claimed that Fawcett eventually revoked his opposition to foster care. She wrote, "Not long before his

[21] "The Orphan Asylum," *Argus* (Melbourne), 7 September 1855, 5.

[22] Edwin Exon, "The Boarding Out of the Orphans," *Argus* (Melbourne), 31 August 1876, 6.

[23] Henry Fawcett, *Pauperism: Its Causes and Remedies* (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1871), 79.

[24] Ibid., 81–84.

[25] Hill, *Children of the State*, 160.

death in conversation on the subject he told me with the noble frankness characteristic of him that the practical working of the plan had removed his objection, and that he heartily approved it when carefully administered."[26]

Both Fawcett and Hill imagined the typical foster home as a working-class home. As Hill wrote, "among the same population which supplies us with hundreds of thousands of respectable domestic servants, a safe and happy refuge for these forlorn children may be found."[27] The same was assumed true in Australia.[28] As we explore further in Chapter 5, early colonial foster care schemes in Australia frankly calculated the point at which payments could be set so as to cost the government as little as possible, yet still make the work attractive to working-class women seeking to modestly improve the financial position of their household. This involved not only the money directly paid to foster mothers—and it was specifically foster mothers rather than a gender-neutral concept of who could foster children—but also calculations of the value of children's labour, and the time which foster children could be required to attend school.[29] Silent in these discussions was that the financial viability of the entire foster care system depended on the voluntary work of middle-class women who located and supervised foster homes.

Few records remain of the day to day voluntary work performed by the women of the Ladies Committees, however correspondence with the departments they worked for provides some insight. They had a large degree of autonomy over their work, and at times their advice could influence decisions made by the men working in government departments who held the purse strings. The ladies frequently offered advice to the department on matters particular to their work—such as rates of pay, locations of foster homes, and inspections of children. As we show in Chapter 5, their advice was taken seriously, but not always followed.[30] Thus, while they worked within an environment where they did not have total control over the regulations they enforced, they came to expect

[26]Florence Hill, "State Children: To the Editor," *Adelaide Observer* (Adelaide), 13 February 1886, 14.

[27]Hill, *Children of the State*, 180.

[28]Musgrove, *The Scars Remain*, 13–15.

[29]For further discussion see Chapter 5: They're Just Doing It for the Money.

[30]Chapter 5: They're Just Doing It for the Money.

to have a seat at the table when decisions pertaining to foster care were being made. In 1882, the Ladies Visiting Association took exception to the fact that the head of the department, the Secretary, proposed reforms to the system without consulting the ladies. The Chief Secretary soundly reminded them of their position: the Secretary had "the sole and individual administration of the department" and "in the discharge of that duty" he should not be hindered "by any interference."[31]

Even fewer sources exist which reveal the work of the Ladies Committees with foster mothers. One interesting example comes from the writing of John Stanley James, a journalist professionally known as The Vagabond. James arrived in Melbourne in 1876, made his career there, and acquired a reputation for undercover exposés.[32] In November 1876, he attended the monthly dispensation of payments to foster mothers of the Richmond District. The foster mothers and their children gathered at the town hall where the Ladies Committee inspected the children, a process from which The Vagabond was initially excluded. He "recognised the fact that where ladies meet each other once a month they have little confidences and conversations to exchange which 'a young man from *The Argus*' should not hear," and even after he was invited inside, he was conscious that, as a man, he should remain on the periphery.[33]

The Vagabond did not challenge the assumption that women were most fit for providing this kind of care for children, and this is hardly surprising. Mothering was frequently portrayed as a woman's 'natural' talent in nineteenth-century literature, and while the authority of a male figure was believed to be important in the formation of masculinity in adolescent boys, it was women who were expected to provide affection to young children.[34] Of the foster mothers, he merely concluded that their work of mothering was being performed effectively because they

[31]VPRS 3991, Unit 1327, 82/5597.

[32]John Barnes, "James, John Stanley (1843–1896)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/james-john-stanley-3848/text6113, accessed 24 March 2010.

[33]A. Vagabond, "Boarding Out in Practice," *Argus* (Melbourne), 25 November 1876, 4.

[34]Shurlee Swain, "'I Am Directed to Remind You of Your Duty to Your Family': Public Surveillance of Mothering in Victoria, Australia, 1920–40," *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 247–59.

were "all well-dressed, comfortable-looking women" and because the "general appearance and looks" of the children "would have done credit to a far higher social position than the foster parents can boast."[35] Of the Ladies Committee he described what he saw as a performance of their feminine skills as they examined the children.

> "Ah! Those are my boys," a lady would say, and after a little laugh at the joke the children would be passed round and inspected…canvassed with all that loving zest and attention to detail which a man only lavishes on a horse…In this way, the maternal instinct strong within them, the ladies crowed and delighted over those orphans[.]

One young girl, he wrote, "was kissed all around, except by 'the young man from *The Argus*' who dare not to presume."[36] The article also describes the control the ladies took over The Vagabond's access to the monthly inspection, and he was either not privy to, or did not report on, some of the more didactic—even disciplinarian—roles that the ladies were required to perform in cases where they had any concerns about the treatment of the children.[37]

The Vagabond was aware that he had been witness, at least to some extent, to a conscious performance by both the foster mothers and the Ladies Committee. Thus, in true Vagabond style, he decided to undertake his own sleuthing around the foster homes of the district, from which he concluded that the members of the Ladies Committee were "very diligent in going around the district" and that any defects in foster homes would be rectified by more frequent visits. He had no question that the Ladies Committee members were the fit and proper people to be conducting this work.[38] From a purely economic perspective, it is difficult to see who else might have been nominated for such a task: the ladies' voluntary work underwrote the entire boarding out system. There were, however, also larger societal trends influencing his view. Eileen Yeo

[35] A. Vagabond, "Boarding Out in Practice," *Argus* (Melbourne), 25 November 1876, 4.

[36] A. Vagabond, "Boarding Out in Practice," *Argus* (Melbourne), 25 November 1876, 4.

[37] For an example which provides some insight into this aspect of the work, see the interactions between the lady correspondent Miss Madden and foster mother Mrs. Rout in Chapter 2: Did Anybody Care? The Death of John Wood Pledger.

[38] A. Vagabond, "Boarding Out in Practice," *Argus* (Melbourne), 25 November 1876, 4.

has argued that middle class women used what were held as their natural feminine attributes to position themselves as "social mothers," doing so as a means of establishing for themselves a space in public life.[39] The women on the Ladies Committee certainly fit this model of feminised public work.

One group completely absent from The Vagabond's account was the children's biological families. In both practice and rhetoric, the department did its best to remove foster children's parents from the picture. Despite the fact that nineteenth-century child welfare essentially operated as a poverty relief mechanism for many of the families whose children were sent into foster care, the department publicly positioned its work as aiding children, not their families. In annual reports, parents only appeared as figures who had failed in various ways to provide for their children. In practice, the department was interacting with children's parents all the time. The department's central office regularly received requests from parents—often for the return of their children, but on a range of other matters as well—and, in turn, the office contacted fathers who they felt were able to pay maintenance for their children. However, the management of contact between children and their families was largely viewed as an inconvenience, and there was never serious consideration of implementing a model of foster care which allowed for, let alone prioritised, visitation.

There were some social reformers who believed that placing children in foster homes near their own families could have benefits. It could, it was argued, help maintain a sense of responsibility for the children on the part of their families, and also sustain children's lifelong relationships with wider family networks which "might lend them a helping hand when they go out into the world to earn their bread."[40] While this view offered a model of foster care which might have made it easier for families to stay in touch, it was still based on the negative assumption that parents would easily forget their attachments and responsibilities to their children were they "out of sight" and "out of mind."[41] A similar

[39] Eileen Janes Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996).

[40] Mary E. Mayo, "A Suggestion with Regard to the Training of Pauper Children," Reprinted from the Guardian 1878, *Our Waifs and Strays*, October 1883, 3.

[41] Ibid.

assumption informed the Australian colonial thinking about foster care versus institutions. Although visitation was limited within institutions, it was permitted, and government authorities believed that parents were too willing to use government-run institutions as a way of paying for the maintenance and education of their children.[42] The plan for foster care was that it would exclude parents from visiting their children in all but the most exceptional circumstances—even communication by mail would be monitored through the department's office—thus discouraging parents from expecting the government to raise their children until they were old enough for their labour to be useful to the family economy. Politician, later Premier, John Douglas made this very point to the Queensland parliament in 1875, and urged for the introduction of foster care in that colony as a means of reducing the number of families using institutions in such a manner.[43]

The Victorian government, who had passed boarding out legislation the previous year, shared the hope that "none but the most hardened parents would yield" to "the absolute separation from their children" imposed by the practice of boarding children in parts of the colony where they had no friends or relatives to help maintain contact. The Inspector of Industrial and Reformatory Schools added that the first wave of boarding out state children "had the effect of inducing parents to apply for the discharge of their children, and to make an effort to maintain them and keep them under control, in preference to being entirely separated from them."[44] The following year, the Inspector argued against the government's decision to send every possible state ward into foster care. There would, he insisted, "always be a proportion of [parents] suitable and willing to be again entrusted with their children, and no difficulty should be thrown in the way of their getting them under their own care."[45] However, it became clear that his real concern

[42]The early Victorian industrial schools, for example, allowed relatives to visit children under the supervision of staff on the first Monday of each month. See: VPRS 3991, Unit 33, 64/10060.

[43]Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 19 August 1875, 1056–57.

[44]Industrial and Reformatory Schools Office, Victoria. *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department: Report of the Inspector*, 1874, 4.

[45]Victoria, Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department. *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department: Report of the Inspector*, 1875, 4.

was not for the affection between parents and their children, but for the smooth administration of the system and the appeasement of potential foster parents who disliked a turnover of foster children because of the "difficulties they have to contend with during the first stage of the new training."[46]

Thus, the introduction of foster care as a major component of Australian colonial child welfare systems was informed by multiple, and at times conflicting, understandings of its purpose. For some, it was an ideal training ground for older children because it gave them the individual supervision and experiences of typical domestic tasks which were missing from institutional training. For others, it was a kindness to small children because it provided a far better substitute home than a large institution. For most, a foster home was a total replacement for a children's original family, and children's parents were completely excluded. It would be more than a hundred years before Australian foster care systems fundamentally reconsidered the value of contact between foster children and their parents on an ongoing basis but, as the following section shows, it was not long at all before those administering foster care systems realised the necessity of making some exceptions to the rules.[47]

'Deserving' and 'Undeserving' Cases

The notion that some people were more deserving of alms than others, and that those seeking charity might be regarded with some suspicion, was not invented in the nineteenth century. However, historians have argued that debates about how the poor should be understood, who was responsible for helping them, and what kinds of relief might be most appropriate for which people, accelerated in that century, and that understandings of the entitlements of the deserving versus the undeserving poor were entrenched in England by the New Poor Law (1834).[48] Although Australian colonists' understandings of poverty were deeply informed by the English experience, they tended to be averse

[46] *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department: Report of the Inspector*, 1875, 4.

[47] For further discussion of the consequences of separating families from each other through foster care, see Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Families.

[48] Lynn Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

to implementing Poor Laws, generally hoping to encourage a voluntary spirit amongst free settlers that would relieve the government of the responsibility of caring for the poor. For a variety of reasons, which differed from colony to colony, philanthropic works could not meet the total need, and governments consequently felt obliged to involve themselves in work with orphaned and impoverished children.[49]

The common experience was that the numbers of children admitted to government institutions both outstripped expectations, and increased consistently over time. Foster care, as shown in the previous section of this chapter, was expected to act as a disincentive to parents because of the total separation it involved and, indeed, there were parents who reclaimed their children from the state rather than have them sent to foster homes. However, there were also many families who had no way of surviving but to have their children made wards of the state, regardless of where the state sent the children. As government departments retreated more and more from institutions as the primary accommodation for state wards, they were left with few alternatives but foster care for the vast majority of children, irrespective of their circumstances. This meant that even when departmental officials felt sympathetic towards families they saw as innocent victims of misfortune—that is, 'deserving' cases—the structure of their systems left them with few mechanisms for helping parents and children to stay in touch. As the example of the O'Reilly family shows, this could cause considerable heartache for the families concerned.

In March 1882, Clara (seven), William (four) and Augustus (eighteen months) O'Reilly were admitted to the Victorian Department of Industrial and Reformatory Schools. Their father had died, and their mother, Rose, was unable to earn a living that would support her family with her young children in her care. Rose O'Reilly must have presented as a sympathetic figure before the magistrate when her children were committed to the department because the children's ward register explicitly noted that the "children [were] not to be separated."[50] As Chapter 3 of this book demonstrates, it was standard practice at this time to keep siblings together in foster care, and so the note emphasising the importance of this reflects

[49]For further detail on the particularities of each colony see: Musgrove, *The Scars Remain*, 1–15.

[50]VPRS 4527, Unit 27, 131–33.

a particular concern to maintain the unity of the siblings even if the system had no provision for placing them in a way which would enable their mother to visit.[51] Furthermore, when Rose applied to have Clara returned to her just before her ninth birthday, as she approached an age where her labour might be useful to her mother, the department did not object—in other less 'deserving' cases, such requests were often opposed.

However, Rose also found herself pushing up against the limits of the foster care system. Her first application to visit her children, made in 1882, was supported by the Mayor of Fitzroy—the inner suburb of Melbourne in which she lived—but it was refused by the department. Rose then sought out the support of a local police magistrate who wrote to the department on her behalf. George Guillaume, Secretary of the department, simply replied: "she is precluded by the Boarding Out Regulations…from having access to them unless in the case of dangerous sickness."[52] The only person with the authority to overrule the regulations, the Chief Secretary of the colony, was informed of the request but did not reverse Guillaume's decision. Roughly a year later, Clara returned to live with her mother, and the two O'Reilly boys moved to a new foster home where they remained until they returned to their mother in 1888. In March 1884, the children's first foster mother, Mrs. Grice, asked the department if she could have the address of the boys' new foster home. This request was also denied, not because Mrs. Grice was perceived as any bad influence on the children but because of the rigidity around protecting foster homes from external influences which might destabilise children.[53]

In the twenty-first century, Australian foster children typically have some kind of access time with their parents or other members of their families, and many foster carers we spoke with during this project said that they struggled with emotional or behavioural challenges following family visits. However, modern foster care adopts the premise that, except in extreme cases, the lifelong benefits of children having contact with their families are more important than the short term disturbances this may cause within foster homes.[54] As Secretary of the Victorian

[51] Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Families.

[52] VPRS 3991, Unit 1327, 82/5806.

[53] VPRS 4527, Unit 27, 131.

[54] For further discussion see Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Families.

department, Guillaume did not quite reach that conclusion, but after a short time in the role—which he commenced late in 1881—he began to see that there were advantages, in some 'deserving' cases, to allowing contact between foster children and their families. In fact, he argued that it could even be beneficial to pay mothers or extended families the foster care allowance in order to maintain their own children.

Even before Guillaume suggested such an approach, he knew that there could be public opposition to the idea of paying mothers or members of children's extended families to provide for their own children. In February 1882, the Chief Secretary sent a 'please explain' memo to Guillaume after an article titled "Industrial School Abuses" appeared in the press. The article first accused the department of allowing employers to exploit older children sent out to work, and then continued:

> A new abuse has, however, been discovered, the invention no doubt, of some wily parent. A mother in great distress seeks the presence of a magistrate…and to them she tells a bitter tale of woe, of a husband's cruelty and of poverty and starvation. The magistrates, in pity, send the woman's children to the Industrial School. The following day a smart-looking woman applies to the school authorities to board the children, and of course, obtains them. This woman afterwards turns out to be the mother, the State actually paying the parent for the support of her own offspring. This abuse, it is stated, is carried on to a very considerable extent.[55]

Guillaume replied that these claims had "no foundation in fact."[56] It was not long, however, before he urged the Chief Secretary to implement the very object of the supposed 'abuse': paying mothers to 'foster' their own children.[57]

Despite public suspicion about people exploiting the boarding out system—sentiments which shared much with the fears about the potentially pauperising effects of the practice discussed in the previous section of this chapter—people with direct experience of the system came to see taking children out of good but impoverished homes, only for them

[55]VPRS 3991, Unit 1319, 82/964.

[56]VPRS3991, Unit 1319, 82/964.

[57]For more on Guillaume's innovation to keep babies alive by placing some young single mothers in foster homes with their own children, see Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Families.

to be placed in foster homes, as cruel for both parents and children. Families had long seen the department as a source of social welfare relief, despite the government's views, and so people—to be more precise women—continued to seek assistance from magistrates in order to have their children admitted to the department. Pressure mounted in 1884, with parents, magistrates, Ladies Committees and, ultimately, Guillaume himself, supporting the idea that in exceptional—read especially 'deserving'—cases, the government should allow children to be boarded out with their own kin.

The first push came from women who could secure the support of officials to advocate for them. For example, in April 1884, Mrs. Cobden presented herself and her two nephews, George and James Smyth, at the Richmond magistrates court. She had been providing for the two boys for three years, and was finally seeking some support from the government.[58] The magistrate recommended that George and James be boarded to her (with payment), but this actually exceeded his authority. The case was sent to Guillaume, and here we have evidence that he had an interest in supporting this kind of claim if it seemed 'worthy'. Guillaume asked for a police report of the Cobden home. The report read:

> Found Mrs Cobden's home 44 Regent Street. She seems a respectable woman, has 3 children of her own, and the two boys…are her brother's children she having had them about 3 years and received nothing from him for their keep (their mother deserted them) he is in regular work in Adelaide and earns about 12/- a day…(the police are making enquiries). Mrs C goes out washing and has children very creditably clad.[59]

That same month, the Castlemaine Ladies Committee recommended that four children be boarded with their mother and Guillaume wrote to the Chief Secretary, without whose support no such arrangement was possible. Guillaume wrote that the "case [was] a rather exceptional one…inasmuch as the mother through the death of her husband has been left destitute with nine children to maintain which she considers she will be able to do providing the four children referred to…are left with

[58]VPRS 3992, Unit 21, 84/4070.

[59]VPRS 3992, Unit 21, 84/4070.

her under the boarding out regulations and she is thereby aided in supporting the other members of the family."[60]

When Guillaume supported applications for boarding children with members of their own families, he forwarded the applications to the Chief Secretary for endorsement. By putting a case before the Chief Secretary, Guillaume was implicitly advocating for its worthiness, but he also seized opportunities for making more proactive arguments when he could talk in the language of government—cost cutting. For example, in the winter of 1884 a woman wrote to the department regarding her younger sister Jane. Jane was paralysed on one side of her body, and had therefore been placed in a foster home at a higher rate of pay (8/- per week). The sister asked to receive only the standard boarding out payment of 5/- per week if Jane could be placed in her home. Guillaume wrote in support of the application:

> As the girl has been costing the state 8/- per week in her foster home the Department will be distinctly benefited by the suspension now asked of rules which provides that relatives shall not have access to children boarded out.[61]

The Chief Secretary, not entirely comfortable with the idea of providing indefinite support of this kind, pushed for further negotiations, and ultimately the sister agreed to take Jane with payment approved for a period of one year.

Later in 1884, the Chief Secretary consented to a trial scheme which would allow Guillaume himself to approve the boarding out of up to 30 children with their families (which ended up being primarily their mothers, but also aunts and grandmothers). The formal scheme was suspended after a couple of years, but the practice continued via the former process of the Chief Secretary approving exemptions. In May 1891, with just thirty-six mothers receiving payments for their own children, an order was issued to the department stating that formal ministerial approval would be required for any new cases of children being boarded with their mothers.[62] Guillaume died on the job in 1892. Under his successor, Thomas Millar, the practice of boarding out to mothers continued cautiously.

[60]VPRS 3992, Unit 17, 84/3212.
[61]VPRS 3992, Unit 28, 84/5496.
[62]VPRS 3992, Unit 531, 94/889.

Millar found himself in a difficult position. In 1893 Victoria was in the depths of a serious economic depression. This meant that while he was receiving increasing numbers of mothers who local Ladies Committees recommended as 'deserving' of having their children boarded out to them, it was very difficult to obtain ministerial support for these cases. There were at least some workarounds. For example in July 1893, Mrs. Ellis applied to have two of her three children boarded out to her since she was widowed and completely without means of support. She and her children were living with her married sister, and the entire household had found it impossible to find sufficient employment in the midst of the depression. A series of people, including the Brunswick Ladies Committee and a local police officer, endorsed the application which described Mrs. Ellis as "of unimpeachable character but in destitute circumstances."[63] Knowing ministerial approval was difficult to obtain, the solution put in place by the department was to board the children out to Mrs. Ellis's married sister, an exemption of the regulations which could be approved at a lower level and which effectively provided the same support to the family since they were already living together. Many other mothers were left with no choice but to withdraw their application for support, or relinquish their children into foster care—across the entire year of 1893 only five new cases were approved for boarding children with their own mothers.[64]

Despite the official retraction of boarding out children with their own mothers, the practice had become known within the community and applications continued to cross Millar's desk, often supported by local Ladies Committees. Boarding children out to grandmothers or aunts in order to avoid having to technically board children with their own mothers remained as a working strategy for some years. In 1895 the Brunswick Ladies Committee proposed another innovative solution. The correspondent for the committee described one mother as "a deserving widow who has a hard struggle for a living" and asked that the department board out two foster children with her in order to help her maintain her own children at home.[65] Millar was not persuaded that the

[63]VPRS 3992, Unit 513, 93/5054.

[64]VPRS 3992, Unit 531, 94/889.

[65]VPRS 3992, Unit 576, 95/2323.

payments would enable proper care of the foster children and also help with the upkeep of the mother's own children, and did not approve the request.

Magistrates responsible for committing children to the department also continued to support applications for boarding children with their own mothers. In 1896, one magistrate wrote in support of a mother of four young children, adding that he considered the case more deserving than others he knew had recently been approved. He sought consent in advance of bringing the children "before the two local JPs on an off morning" so as to keep the proceedings discrete, concluding, "It is a very deserving case but as a magistrate I cannot legally do what I would like done."[66] By 1896, applications of this nature were reaching the department regularly, so much so that when they were endorsed by Millar, they were sent on for higher approval accompanied by the "usual letter."[67]

Unlike the colony of New South Wales, which approved a separate scheme for mothers to 'foster' their own children in 1896, Victoria opted to persist with the practice of approving exceptions to the boarding out regulations to facilitate the same end.[68] As the lingering impact of the depression lifted, the assessment of which cases appeared 'deserving' enough to approve softened. Consequently, the number of children boarded out with their mothers expanded rapidly, and by 1898 Millar was concerned that a practice which he had supported as a compassionate response to need during the depression was now being understood as an entitlement. He wrote that the practice which "was formerly confined to a few special cases and districts, has now become almost general throughout the colony; and so much so, indeed, that out of a total of 2791 children boarded out and paid for at the close of 1898, no fewer than 611 were with their own mothers."[69]

[66]VPRS 3992, Unit 614, 96/5158.

[67]VPRS 3992, Unit 614, 96/5158.

[68]The New South Wales scheme actually paid a slightly lower rate to mothers for their own children than was paid to foster mothers. See: Anne O'Brien, *Poverty's Prison: The Poor in New South Wales 1880–1918* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988).

[69]Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools, Victoria. *Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools: Report of the Secretary and Inspector*, 1898, 4.

Magistrates slipped back into the practice of ordering for children to be boarded with their own mothers without the children being placed in the physical control of the department—usually without obtaining ministerial consent—and in 1913, for the first time, the number of children boarded with their own mothers (3696) was actually larger than the number in foster homes (3090).[70] In 1919, Justice Joseph Henry Hood handed down a decision which determined that since most children boarded to their own mothers did not meet the legal definitions of neglect, it was a misuse of the Act. Magistrates immediately stopped granting such applications, and members of the Labor Party—the major opposition party in Victorian parliament at that time—pointed out the absurdity of the situation.

> Mr Billson [MLA] pointed out that the Court, following a recent decision of Judge Hood, will not commit children unless proof of actual neglect is forthcoming, so that a mother, although poor and in dire need of this help, will be denied it if she brings her children to Court clean and evidently cared for.[71]

This letter also provided a list of mothers who had recently been denied assistance because of the ruling, and urged the Premier to establish an emergency funding scheme to support 'deserving' mothers until the Act could be amended to reinstitute the scheme which so many families had come to rely upon.

The legislative response was the *Children's Maintenance Act 1919* which put in place a mechanism for seeking precisely the support which boarding children with their own mothers had (illegally) previously provided. In many ways, this Act represented a triumph of the maternalist welfare agenda which Marilyn Lake has argued was successful in extending women's entitlements during this period in Australia.[72] However, the

[70] Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools, Victoria. *Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools: Reports of the Secretary and Inspector* 1896–1913.

[71] VPRS 3992, Unit 1484, 19/4648.

[72] Marilyn Lake has developed this argument in numerous publications. For a recent example see: Marilyn Lake, "State Socialism for Australian Mothers: Andrew Fisher's Radical Maternalism in Its International and Local Contexts," *Labour History*, no. 102 (2012): 102–56.

Act included a requirement that applicants be of good character as well as in financial need, so it firmly located the provision in the trajectory of supports for the 'deserving poor' as opposed to a universal welfare entitlement. In its application, maintenance payments were awarded fairly generously. By 1926, the number of children receiving maintenance payments (8532) was more than twice the number in foster homes (4263). This trend continued and in 1931, once again facing the pressures of an economic depression, the department's Secretary, John Henry, reported that 10,178 children were receiving maintenance payments, as compared to 4414 in foster homes. Consequently, he argued that maintenance payments ought to be reduced.[73]

Although the 1919 Act drastically reduced the practice of boarding children out with their own families, it did not completely end it. There remained families who, for a variety of reasons, the department preferred to keep under the closer supervision that a formal boarding out arrangement enabled. The removal of so many 'deserving' cases from those formally supervised as wards of the state also had the effect of deepening suspicion about the worthiness of those who remained. There was a long history of seeing both state wards and their parents as morally tainted, and while Millar had lamented that the widespread boarding out of children to their own mothers had led people to seeing "little or no degradation" in children being committed under the Act, the stigma never really vanished. Indeed, as the following section of this chapter argues, it has remained strong to the present day. The perception of children in out of home care as "moral dirt"—which Harry Ferguson argues was also prevalent in other nations' child welfare—had profound implications for children committed to Australian welfare systems.[74]

Arresting, Criminalising and Stigmatising Children

In May 2016, Victoria became the first jurisdiction in Australia—and possibly the world—to formally apologise to the gay community for criminalising homosexual behaviour. According to Greens Member of

[73] Children's Welfare Department, Victoria, *Children's Welfare Department and Reformatory Schools: Reports of the Secretary and Inspector*, 1925–60.

[74] Harry Ferguson, "Abused and Looked After Children as 'Moral Dirt': Child Abuse and Institutional Care in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Social Policy* 36, no. 1 (2007): 123–39.

Parliament, Nina Springle, another apology is in order: the Parliament needs to apologise for the criminalisation of children in need of 'care and protection'. Children as young as seven-month-old baby Ki Meekins, two-year-old Frank Golding and three-year-old Deidre Michell were arrested, charged and convicted of 'being neglected'. Perhaps even more astounding is that even as legislation moved away from the language of neglect, in recognition of the fact that children had done nothing to earn the stigma associated with that term, the process of charging and convicting children remained. The 1956 Children's Court record of two-year-old Larry Walsh lists his "offence" as being "in need of care and protection." In 1989, thirteen-year-old Nell Butler was charged with being "exposed to moral danger" after she reported being raped to police. "We are taking the steps necessary to fix this serious injustice" the Victorian Attorney-General, Martin Pakula, is reported to have said in response to calls from care leavers to have their records expunged of non-criminal child welfare charges and committals.[75]

The assumption of a connection between poverty and criminality has a very long history, and in Australia, this association was deepened by the convict origins of colonisation. In convict colonies, such as New South Wales and Tasmania, early provisions for destitute people and children entrenched the association between convicts and poverty, both because of an assumption that most of the recipients would be from convict stock, and because some of the actual institutions were linked with the convict system.[76] In the mid-nineteenth century, as most of the colonies introduced industrial and reformatory schools, police emerged as central to the process of identifying and arresting children who should be sent to those institutions. For example, the *Destitute Children Act*, which came into effect in New South Wales in 1866, provided for "vagrant or destitute children" up to the age of sixteen years to be "apprehended by any constable or peace officer or by any other person." The children were then taken before two Justices of the Peace who could "order and direct by warrant…that such child be sent away to" to an industrial

[75] Ki Meekins, *Red Tape Rape: The Story of Ki Meekins* (Adelaide, 2008), 5; Stephanie Anderson, "Children Charged with Needing Protection Call for Apology," *ABC News*, 13 February 2018, 2017; Deidre Michell, "Two Mothers—Twice the Blessing or Was I Cursed?" *Women-Church* 31 (Spring 2002): 11; and Miki Perkins, "Criminal Records That Branded Children and Babies as Criminals to Be Expunged," *The Age*, 2017.

[76] Musgrove, *The Scars Remain*.

school, such as the Vernon nautical training ship which was kitted out as a reform school for boys in 1867, and the Parramatta Girls Industrial School, established in 1887.

This New South Wales legislation set out the definitions of which children could be lawfully arrested. They were those found:

> lodging living residing or wandering about in company with reputed thieves or with persons who have no visible lawful means of support or with common prostitutes…or who shall have no visible lawful means of support…or…no fixed place of abode or who shall be found begging… or…habitually wandering or loitering about the streets…or…sleeping in the open air.[77]

These definitions were almost identical with those set out in the Victorian *Neglected and Criminal Children Act 1864*, which itself borrowed heavily from English legislation. After the *Destitute Children Act* came into force, police began to clear the streets of 'vagrants', and although some police complained that parents were offloading their responsibilities onto them, Gladys Scrivener's findings are that in the main police were coercive; having the children off the streets and in the industrial schools made their job easier. Some desperately poor parents got the police to charge their children as having "no means of support," but Scrivener found that police mostly initatiated the interventions and that other reasons for apprehending children were more freqeuently used than the "no means" clause: girls were often arrested for offences relating to prostitution, even where it was clear they had been abused, and many of the boys arrested were said to be orphans.[78]

The practice of arresting and charging children with offences, rather than (or in some cases as well as) their parents, persisted well into the twentieth century. So too did the criminalisation of 'absconders'. Police and departmental officers had the power to apprehend state wards who ran away from their placements,[79] and as pointed out in the South

[77] *Act for the Relief of Destitute Children 1866*, New South Wales.

[78] Gladys Scrivener, "Parental Imposition or Police Coercion? The Role of Parents and Police in Committals to the Industrial Schools in New South Wales, 1867–1905," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 86, no. 1 (2000): 25–26.

[79] For example, the Western Australian *Child Welfare Act 1947*, which was not repealed until 2006, authorised police and departmental officers to apprehend any child under the control of the department who "runs away from any Departmental facility or other centre or facility, from a foster parent or from any situation in which he has been placed at the requirement of the Director-General."

Australian Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry (2004–2008), also known as the Mullighan Inquiry, children and young people who ran away from their state care placements were rarely asked why they had done so; instead they were treated punitively.[80] This in itself had a long history. For example, the South Australian *State Children Act 1895* authorised the "Punishment of absconding children" by having those "so offending" children held in detention.[81] Further amendments meant that by 1903 children running away could be punished with "imprisonment" in a reform school, and they could be beaten and isolated for forty-eighty hours "on a diet of bread and water."[82] It was not until the 1970s that running away ceased to be an offence but even today the police continue to be called on to locate children and young people missing from placements and to "assist with the control of children" brought into emergency care.[83]

Given the history of arresting, charging and committing children for being neglected, or for who their parents are, it is not surprising that the accounts of former foster children include the pain of feeling stigmatised, nor that the stigmatising of foster children has occurred since the nineteenth century, all through twentieth and continues into the twenty-first. Margaret Barbalet notes that many girls in South Australian state care between 1887 and 1940 were so ashamed of being state girls that they never told anyone, for fear it would impact on the way they were treated or even impede them making a 'good marriage'. Barbalet has recorded the protest from one girl who in 1897 wrote angrily of being spoken to rudely and aggressively by the man of the house where she was working as a servant. She assumes, she wrote, that she is mistreated because she is "a State Girl" but protests that she is "flesh and Blood the same as himself and have got feelings as well as him but people think that we State

[80] E. P. Mullighan, "Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry. Allegations of Sexual Abuse and Death from Criminal Conduct" (Adelaide, SA2008), 460. (Hereafter cited as "Mullighan Inquiry".)

[81] *Act to Amend the Law Relating to State Children, and for Other Purposes 1895*, South Australia.

[82] "Mullighan Inquiry," 460.

[83] See, for example, Margaret Nyland, "The Life They Deserve: Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report" (Adelaide, SA: Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, 2016), 317, 327.

kids as they call us are made of iron or Logs." She goes on to say that she "felt it very much and cried nearly all night."[84]

Even children who were not arrested and charged with their own neglect felt the sting of social disapprobation, for being 'illegitimate' as well as state children, or because they grew up with state children. Reg Greer, father of noted feminist Germaine Greer, never told his family that he had been informally fostered by Emma Greeney who worked as a foster carer in Launceston, Tasmania. When baby Robert Hamilton King (later known as Eric Reginald Greer) was born in 1904 to unmarried domestic servant, nineteen-year-old Rhoda Elizabeth King, Rhoda gave her baby to Emma who never registered baby Robert with the state; no doubt she thought she had adopted him but there was no legal mechanism for formal adoption in Tasmania at that time. In his adult life, Reg Greer went to great lengths to distance himself from his childhood circumstances. The truth was only revealed after his death in 1983 when his daughter Germaine was writing a book about her father's life and their relationship.[85]

Rose Anne Tierney, a 28-year-old unmarried recent migrant to Australia from Ireland, was in a similar situation to that of Rhoda King when her baby, Bernard Smith, was born in 1916. She wanted to keep her child, and paying other women for childcare eventually led Rose Anne to Mary (Tottie) Keen, a foster carer in the Sydney suburb of Burwood. Providing foster care enabled Tottie Keen to give up the precarious work of domestic service, but Rose Anne, in order to make her foster payments, continued in domestic service. After a few years of visiting Bennie, as Smith was known, after work each day, Rose Anne moved to Queensland to improve her situation. A series of adverse events then led to her being unable to pay for Bennie's care and Tottie organised for the child to become a ward of the state in order to continue receiving payments for his care.

Bernard Smith recalls many moments when he smarted from social disdain. On one occasion, it was the "Oh, he's one of those" disparaging response of a door to door salesman when told by Bernard Smith's foster sister that little Bennie was not a member of the family.[86] At

[84] Barbalet, *Far from a Low Gutter Girl*, 159.

[85] Germaine Greer, *Daddy, We Hardly Knew You* (London: Penguin, 1999).

[86] Sheridan Palmer, *Hegel's Owl: The Life of Bernard Smith* (Sydney: Power Publications, 2016), 16.

school, Bennie worked out ways to protect himself against taunts that he was a state kid. He "assumed a wild scraggy appearance" each morning and played all the games as "rough and hard as he could, as if his life depended on it." That way, he found, "they let him alone."[87] Bennie had one friend, Doug, whose parents admired Tottie Keen for fostering children but the neighbouring Mrs. Meares "was not particularly pleased that her son's playmate should be a state boy." While the children played outside, she permitted the friendship but on the day she caught the boys experimenting with their sexuality she was adamant Bennie had to be "sent straight back to the Welfare Department" because he was "a danger to the boys in the street" and should be in an institution.[88]

By the age of about nine or ten, children have usually worked out who fits where in the social order. Walter Jacobsen, born two years after Bernard Smith, writes of knowing by his third year of primary school that he was "at the bottom of the heap" as a foster child and even amongst foster children. Those foster children who were given the foster parents' surname, he says, had a "far better level of acceptance by other children and adults." Mrs. Werner, the woman young Jake, as Jacobsen was called, lived with for eight years, 'disciplined' him with a copper stick and taunted him with attacks on his intelligence, character and potential. As far as Ma Werner was concerned, the boy was "stupid and a guttersnipe" and would end up "sweeping gutters" if he managed to keep himself "out of gaol."[89]

For both Smith and Jacobsen, there were pivotal moments when they decided to transform their lowly status, to correct the social 'blemish' that had blighted their experience thus far.[90] Smith recalled feeling intimidated by a neighbour who requested him to mow her lawn. The memory of her patronising attitude to him, and to his much-loved foster mother, was enough for the child to decide he was never going to be a "server" in a society which had "a class of people that dominated and a class that served." Being good at school gave the young Bennie confidence and

[87] Bernard Smith, *The Boy Adeodatus* (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin, 1984), 132.

[88] Ibid., 134–35.

[89] Walter Jacobsen, *Dussa and the Maiden's Prayer* (Melbourne: The Law Printer, 1994), 14–15, 20–21.

[90] On the concept of social 'blemish' and individual responses to this kind of stigma see: Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1963), 1–2, 9.

formal education became his way up, that and marriage to upper-class Kate Challis, his "civilizing influence."[91] Jacobsen, having run away from his foster mother at the age of fourteen, was sent back to the Royal Park Depot in Melbourne. He describes confronting the knowledge that all state children have been arrested, charged and committed and worrying that therefore the stigma would be with him forever. Jake was fortunate, however, in working for a kind couple who bought him a suit. "The suit did a lot for me," he says, "the stigma was still there, but now it was more private and more bearable." Knowing that he could transform his status by donning a suit, Jake educated himself and at the age of twenty-one managed to secure a staff position at the University of Melbourne which put him "at least on the fringe of a new world."[92]

As Reg Greer—who transformed his status by leaving Tasmania and rising "to the top in the new industry of advertising" on the mainland[93]—Bernard Smith and Walter Jacobsen had the social 'blemish' of being illegitimate, so some foster children were stigmatised for their Aboriginality. Rosalie Fraser, for example, recalls being called by her foster mother a "dirty boong bastard"—an exceptionally offensive racial slur—and her parents were "always presented as uncaring no-hopers."[94] Donna Meehan, a Gamilaroi woman born in Coonamble, New South Wales, in 1954, was fostered for three years from the age of three and then adopted by her middle-aged post-war migrant foster parents. Donna recalls feeling "different" at school as a child because of her skin colour, and the racism she encountered there "totally demoralised" her.[95] As the testimonies reported in *Bringing Them Home* demonstrate, suffering racism could be all the more traumatising when children had no family, and no people who had suffered similar treatment, around to support them.[96]

[91] Palmer, *Hegel's Owl: The Life of Bernard Smith*, 20–21, 75.

[92] Jacobsen, *Dussa and the Maiden's Prayer*, 96–97, 117, 251.

[93] Greer, *Daddy, We Hardly Knew You*, 296.

[94] Rosalie Fraser, *Shadow Child: A Memoir of the Stolen Generation* (Alexandria, NSW: Hale & Iremonger Pty Ltd, 1998), 15–16, 267.

[95] Donna Meehan, *It Is No Secret* (Milsons Point, NSW: Random House, 2000), 49, 54.

[96] Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families" (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997).

Bernard Smith's and Walter Jacobsen's accounts of a keen awareness of their low social standing are echoed in Denise Thompson's story. Denise's mother escaped her violent marriage by abandoning her daughters in 1962 when Denise was only five months old. Denise was in and out of children's homes until she was placed, at the age of five, with a foster family in the country. Used as slave labour and 'disciplined' with a rubber hose by a foster mother who insisted that the foster children she took in "were all thieves," Denise recalls attacks on her character and potential—similar to those Jake had known. "You're hopeless, you're no good!" the woman would yell at Denise, "You're going to grow up to be nothing but a prostitute, just like your mother!" There were also humiliating taunts by strangers in town such as, "How would your mother have been able to put up with you anyway?" and, "Well, no wonder your mother left you!" When Denise was apprehended by a departmental officer at school one day because, grieving the death of her foster father, she had hidden away all weekend in a disused tank stand, she felt "such public humiliation," as if she was "a criminal on the run."[97]

Ki Meekins was born in 1965 and arrested at the age of seven months, as mentioned above. He was placed four years later in one of those suburban homes noted by the 2004 senate inquiry as appearing from the outside to be a good Christian and stable one, yet where on the inside foster children lived in terror.[98] Ki attributes the brutal 'discipline' he received at the hands of his Methodist foster father to his stigmatised status as a ward of the state. He was "labelled as a bad orphanage thief" and whipped "with the thick black and white cord from the porcelain electric kettle." The whipping continued until the four-year-old was unconscious. When he came to, little Ki was then "forced to stand to attention on the top of a small table…for at least one hour." The child, who ran away from the foster home when he was six, was "fed on inferior food" and "thrashed" when he refused to eat "breakfast cereal containing mouse faeces." Meekins' experience goes to the point made by influential psychologist and advocate against child abuse, Alice Miller, that it can

[97] Jan Owen, *Every Childhood Lasts a Lifetime: Personal Stories from the Frontline of Family Breakdown* (Brisbane, QLD: Australian Association of Young People in Care, 1996), 64–65, 68.

[98] Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge" (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2005), 97.

be dangerous for children to express their emotions and challenge adults to treat them better; when Ki said he wanted to go home to his mother, his foster mother refused to allow him any further contact with his birth mother.[99]

Evidence that children in foster care were treated differently because of their low status can also be found in the final decades of the twentieth century. Like Adelle from Chapter 4 of this book, Rebeccah Mango, born around 1975, recalls having to stay outside the house when her foster parents were not at home.[100] The ten-year-old would "get really scared out there" in the granny flat where she slept but was "never allowed to go inside" until the foster parents came back.[101] As Bernard Smith had done more than fifty years before, so Michael Talbot became "the big heavy. The tough kid" at school as his "survival mechanism." Michael had much experience of the education system as he was moved from foster home to foster home, and therefore from school to school, and this experience taught him to expect to be picked on because he was in state care. It also taught him that some teachers conflated foster care and stupidity, a variation on a long-standing association between poverty and a perceived lack of intelligence.[102]

Malcolm Marcus, born in 1975, and Jacob Kenny, born around 1980, both felt they were treated like criminals because they were in foster care. They suffered the sort of educational disruptions that Priscilla and Janelle, from Chapter 4 of this book, talked about because they were in and out of numerous foster care placements over the years.[103] Malcolm had been in state care since he was only seventeen months old when he finally, at age thirteen, had a foster family who offered stability, saying he could stay on until he was sixteen. He found "this social stigma,"

[99] Alice Miller, *The Truth Will Set You Free* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2001), 96; Meekins, *Red Tape Rape: The Story of Ki Meekins*, 29–33.

[100] On Adelle see Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care. On Rebeccah Mango see Owen, *Every Childhood Lasts a Lifetime*. We also return to Mango's story in Chapter 8: Writing to Heal—The Emergence of Foster Care in Australian Literature.

[101] Owen, *Every Childhood Lasts a Lifetime*, 6.

[102] Ibid., 21, 30. For more on the conflation of poverty with low intelligence, see Crystal Brothe, "You Ain't Never Gonna Be Better Than Me," in *Those Winter Sundays: Female Academics and Their Working Class Parents*, ed. K. Welsch (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005).

[103] Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

teachers thought he "was a crim" and he "ended up shoved up the back of the class." Jacob, who was in foster care because of domestic violence, had wanted to finish school but ended up not even completing Year 10. By then he was tired of people assuming "because I'm a care kid I'm a criminal."[104]

Some of our research participants from Chapter 4 also talked about stigma.[105] Jannelle, for example, said that there is no way for children and young people to hide their state care status as some teachers would make a "big deal" of differentiating between the majority of students and "the foster kids," especially when it came to consent forms being signed.

> [The teacher would] get us all to go up [out the front] and say "oh you'll need to get your social worker to sign it" instead of being "just get your parent/caregiver to sign this."

In a small rural or regional town this meant everyone knew who the foster children were—"we were the bad messed up kids"—and those children would be subjected to questions such as "how come you don't live with your parents?" and, worse, "what did you do to be rejected by your parents?"[106]

The additional 'blemish' Jannelle carried was that of having a disability and being schooled in "special education" classes which she felt further marked her as different and vulnerable.

> We're all targets for bullies, easy targets, really easy targets looking back at it now, we were all called the [facility for children with disabilities] squad right through high school and spat on as we walked through the corridors.

Jannelle also knows former foster children who will not take up tertiary education opportunities offered specifically to those who have been in out of home care because "of the shame of having to go and say 'I was in state care'," and then be faced with requests for evidence of having been in out of home care which inevitably results in curious people asking

[104] Owen, *Every Childhood Lasts a Lifetime*, 40, 124.

[105] Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

[106] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Jannelle," 2015.

why the young person ended up there. "And then," said Janelle, "You're treated like a charity case."[107]

The problem of stigma has not abated in the twenty-first century. A study of young women who had recently left foster care reported that they had encountered low expectations from foster parents, teachers and social workers. Consequently, school was not always a 'safe space'. Much like foster children from earlier decades, they feared being treated in a way that was alienating and humiliating. They worried about embarrassment when classroom activities assumed that all children lived in a normative family arrangement or, like Jannelle, they felt exposed when consent and other forms drew attention to the fact that they were living in foster care.[108]

While some former foster children, like Reg Greer, reinvented themselves, removing their history of foster care from the life narrative they told even their families, others have felt they carried the stigma with them for life. Jane, introduced in Chapter 4 of this book, moved to the United States as a young adult.[109] When she first went to study at university in Chicago, she told many friends about her experience. "When I came to California," she told us, "I made the decision not to tell people…I'm afraid there'll be some kind of judgement to go along with that, or expectation of who I should be or am." For others, the consequences of stigma were more concrete. Sixty-four-year-old Larry Walsh, mentioned at the start of this section, and a member of the Stolen Generations, told reporter Miki Perkins, in 2017, that harassment by the police commenced when he was only nine years of age and continued until he was eighteen. In fact, his conviction at the age of two for being "in need of care and protection" was described to him by police as a criminal record and this, combined with his Aboriginality, made him a target of local police.[110] Whether or not they were targeted by police,

[107] Ibid.

[108] Dee Michell and Claudine Scalzi, "I Want to Be Someone, I Want to Make a Difference: Young Care Leavers Preparing for the Future in South Australia," in *Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Car*, ed. Philip Mendes and Pamela Snow (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[109] Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

[110] Woor-Dungin Criminal Record Discrimination Project Interviews, "Uncle Larry Walsh," http://www.woor-dungin.com.au/crdp-interviews-uncle-larry-walsh/, last accessed 19 March 2018.

however, Australian citizens in foster care have felt the sort of social disapproval that has haunted children in state care since the beginning of formal child welfare systems, a disapproval aggravated when they have also been 'illegitimate', Aboriginal or have a disability. As a society, we can muster our sympathy when something, like a death, goes tragically wrong in foster care,[111] but we could do much better at seeing with compassion the humanity of all foster children, past and present.

References

Abrams, Lynn. *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day*. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1998.

Ackroyd, Peter. *Charlie Chaplin*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2014.

Anderson, Stephanie. "Children Charged with Needing Protection Call for Apology." *ABC News*, 13 February 2018, 2017.

Barbalet, Margaret. *Far from a Low Gutter Girl: The Forgotten World of State Wards: South Australia 1887–1940*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Barnes, John. "James, John Stanley (1843–1896)." Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 2010. http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/james-john-stanley-3848/text6113.

Behlmer, George. *Friends of the Family: The English Home and Its Guardians, 1850–1940*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

"Boarding-Out of Orphans." *Argus* (Melbourne), 28 July 1876, 7.

"The Boarding-Out System in Victoria." *South Australian Register* (Adelaide), 4 February 1873, 4.

Briggs, Freda, and Susan Hunt. "Foster Care from a Historical Perspective." *Children Australia* 40, no. 4 (2015): 316–26.

Brothe, Crystal. "You Ain't Never Gonna Be Better Than Me." In *Those Winter Sundays: Female Academics and Their Working Class Parents*, edited by K. Welsch, 11–20. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005.

Chaplin, Charles. *My Autobiography*. London: The Bodley Head, 1964.

Children's Welfare Department, Victoria. *Children's Welfare Department and Reformatory Schools: Reports of the Secretary and Inspector*, 1925–60.

Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools, Victoria. *Department for Neglected Children and Reformatory Schools: Report of the Secretary and Inspector*, 1896–1913.

Exon, Edwin. "The Boarding Out of the Orphans." *Argus* (Melbourne), 31 August 1876, 6.

[111] See the introduction to this book.

Fawcett, Henry. *Pauperism: Its Causes and Remedies*. London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1871.
Ferguson, Harry. "Abused and Looked After Children as 'Moral Dirt': Child Abuse and Institutional Care in Historical Perspective." *Journal of Social Policy* 36, no. 1 (2007): 123–39.
Fraser, Rosalie. *Shadow Child: A Memoir of the Stolen Generation*. Alexandria, NSW: Hale & Iremonger Pty Ltd, 1998.
Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1963.
Greer, Germaine. *Dadd, We Hardly Knew You*. London: Penguin, 1999.
Harvey, Elizabeth. "'Layered Networks': Imperial Philanthropy in Birmingha, and Sydney, 1860–1914." *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwelath History* 41, no. 1 (2013): 120–42.
Hill, Florence. *Children of the State: The Training of Juvenile Paupers*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1868.
Hill, Florence. "State Children: To the Editor." *Adelaide Observer* (Adelaide), 13 February 1886, 14.
Hill, Rosamond, and Florence Hill. *What We Saw in Australia*. Digitsed by the Internet Archive in 2007 with Funding from Microsoft Corporation. http://www.archive.org/details/whatwesawinaustr00hilliala, 1875.
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. "Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families." Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997.
Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department, Victoria. *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department: Reports of the Inspector*, 1875.
Industrial and Reformatory Schools Office, Victoria. *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Department: Reports of the Inspector*, 1874.
Jacobsen, Walter. *Dussa and the Maiden's Prayer*. Melbourne: The Law Printer, 1994.
Kidd, Alan. *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999.
Lake, Marilyn. "State Socialism for Australian Mothers: Andrew Fisher's Radical Maternalism in Its International and Local Contexts." *Labour History*, no. 102 (2012): 102–56.
Lees, Lynn Hollen. *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700–1948*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Jannelle." 2015.
"Making Good Citizens: Rival Systems, the Inter-state Congress." *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 20 May 1909, 9.
Mayo, Mary E. "A Suggestion with Regard to the Training of Pauper Children." Reprinted from the Guardian 1878. *Our Waifs and Strays*, October 1883, 3.

Meehan, Donna. *It Is No Secret*. Milsons Point, NSW: Random House, 2000.
Meekins, Ki. *Red Tape Rape: The Story of Ki Meekins*. Adelaide, 2008.
Michell, Deidre. "Two Mothers—Twice the Blessing or Was I Cursed?" *Women-Church* 31 (Spring 2002): 11–16.
Michell, Dee, and Claudine Scalzi. "I Want to Be Someone, I Want to Make a Difference: Young Care Leavers Preparing for the Future in South Australia." In *Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Car*, edited by Philip Mendes and Pamela Snow. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
Miller, Alice. *The Truth Will Set You Free*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2001.
Mullighan, E. P. "Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry: Allegations of Sexual Abuse and Death from Criminal Conduct." Adelaide, SA, 2008.
Musgrove, Nell. *The Scars Remain: A Long History of Forgotten Australians and Children's Institutions*. Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2013.
New South Wales. *Act for the Relief of Destitute Children 1866*.
Nyland, Margaret. "The Life They Deserve: Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report," 78–149. Adelaide, SA: Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, 2016.
O'Brien, Anne. *Poverty's Prison: The Poor in New South Wales 1880–1918*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988.
"The Orphan Asylum." *Argus* (Melbourne), 7 September 1855, 5.
Owen, Jan. *Every Childhood Lasts a Lifetime: Personal Stories from the Frontline of Family Breakdown*. Brisbane, QLD: Australian Association of Young People in Care, 1996.
Palmer, Sheridan. *Hegel's Owl: The Life of Bernard Smith*. Sydney: Power Publications, 2016.
Parry, Naomi. "'Such a Longing': Black and White Children in Welfare in New South Wales and Tasmania, 1880–1940." PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales, 2007.
Perkins, Miki. "Criminal Records That Branded Children and Babies as Criminals to Be Expunged." *The Age*, 2017.
Public Record Office Victoria, VA 475 Chief Secretary's Department, VPRS 4527/P0 Ward Registers.
Public Record Office Victoria, VA 475 Chief Secretary's Department, Chief Secretary's Inward Registered Correspondence II & III, VPRS 3991 & 3992.
Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 19 August 1875.
Scrivener, Gladys. "Parental Imposition or Police Coercion? The Role of Parents and Police in Committals to the Industrial Schools in New South Wales, 1867–1905." *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 86, no. 1 (2000): 23–38.
Senate Community Affairs References Committee. "Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge." Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2005.

Smith, Bernard. *The Boy Adeodatus*. Ringwood, VIC: Penguin, 1984.
South Australia, *Act to Amend the Law Relating to State Children, and for Other Purposes 1895*.
Swain, Shurlee. "'I Am Directed to Remind You of Your Duty to Your Family': Public Surveillance of Mothering in Victoria, Australia, 1920–40." *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 247–59.
Swain, Shurlee. "Florence and Rosamond Davenport Hill and the Development of Boarding Out in England and Australia: A Study in Cultural Transmission." *Women's History Review* 23, no. 5 (2014): 744–59.
Swain, Shurlee, and Margot Hillel. *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Resuce Discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850–1915*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010.
"Untitled." *Argus* (Melbourne), 14 June 1870, 4.
Vagabond, A. "Boarding Out in Practice." *Argus* (Melbourne), 25 November 1876, 4.
Western Australia. *Child Welfare Act 1947*.
Woor-Dungin Criminal Record Discrimination Project Interviews. "Uncle Larry Walsh." http://www.woor-dungin.com.au/crdp-interviews-uncle-larry-walsh/.
Yeo, Eileen Janes. *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class*. London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996.

Check for updates

CHAPTER 7

Rediscovering Foster Care

One of the most confounding things about foster care is that it directly touches the lives of more people than any other form of out of home care—not only foster families, but also their neighbours, friends, extended families, local schools (the list could go on)—yet, in many ways, it is also rendered invisible. In 2014, three-year-old William Tyrrell, whose story we return to in the concluding chapter of this book, made national headlines when he went missing from a home in the small town of Kendall, New South Wales.[1] It was only three years later that the media could reveal that the home he went missing from was not, in fact, his grandparents' home, but the home of his foster mother's mother. The secrecy about this fact was tied to New South Wales legislative restrictions on identifying children involved in child protection cases, and the New South Wales Supreme Court clarified that one concern in allowing such information to be made public, was that it might expose children in out of home care to stigma.[2] Leonie Sheedy, co-founder and Executive Officer of Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN), however, argued that far from protecting children, such suppression of information was actually "perpetuating a stigma on foster

[1] See the concluding chapter of this book: What Can History Tell Us About the Future of Foster Care?

[2] *Secretary, Department of Family and Community Services V Smith*, Supreme Court NSWCA 206 (2017).

© The Author(s) 2018

N. Musgrove and D. Michell, *The Slow Evolution of Foster Care in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in the History of Childhood,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93900-1_7

care that should not exist."[3] The logic of Sheedy's point is clear: by constructing being in foster care as something unspeakable, we deepen the perception that it is something shameful. As we show in Chapters 6 and 8 of this book, stigma is a tangible concern for children in foster care, and has been for a long time, but pushing it underground, obscuring it from view, is not the answer.[4] Indeed, the reverse has been true for many people whose past experiences in out of home care have become widely known both as individual and collective narratives.

Many care leavers who felt shame, either during or after their time in out of home care (or both), are now able to see themselves as survivors, as people who overcame injustices inflicted upon them. National inquiries into past child welfare practices, as well as formal apologies to the Stolen Generations (2008), and then to Former Child Migrants and Forgotten Australians (2009), by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, played an important role in this. Not only did they give power to survivor testimony by recognising it in a formal setting, through media coverage they brought people's experiences to public attention. In the space of roughly ten years—between about 1995 and 2005—the injustices suffered by people who had spent all or some of their childhood in state care shifted from being almost completely absent from popular understandings of Australia's past, to being a subject of considerable public and political interest. This was a victory yet, as we explore in Chapter 8 of this book, foster care, specifically, has been vastly under-represented, and a sense of an Australian care leaver narrative of foster care is only now beginning to emerge.[5]

Given that we know how powerful the media has been in transforming histories of out of home care into a matter of social justice on the national agenda, this chapter considers media coverage of foster care, specifically the print media, over a much longer period of time—from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. First, it grapples with the task of assessing the relative prominence of foster care within

[3] Leonie Sheedy, quoted in: Sam Buckingham-Jones, "Lobby Group Attacks Push to Ensure Privacy for Kids in Care," *Australian—Online* (Surry Hills, NSW), 5 September, 2017. Sheedy's other key concern was that the responsible department, Family and Community Services, was using the legislation to shield itself from public scrutiny.

[4] Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices; Chapter 8: Writing to Heal—The Emergence of Foster Care in Australian Literature.

[5] Chapter 8: Writing to Heal—The Emergence of Foster Care in Australian Literature.

Australian historical newspapers. It then examines the nature of that coverage, as well as evidence from the records of the Victorian child welfare department about how welfare authorities engaged with the press of the time.

Finding Foster Care in the Historical Press

Newspapers were a highly influential and important source of information for Australians throughout the nineteenth century, and for much of the twentieth. In the twenty-first century we are attuned to the political agendas which shape media coverage, its fallibility ('fake news' notwithstanding), and the danger in assuming that any news outlet fully represents the views of its consumers. All of these issues equally apply to historical newspapers, but in this chapter we read them not to learn what people were thinking, but rather, to see what portrayals of foster care they were circulating—essentially asking what historical print media was putting out into the *zeitgeist* about foster care.[6]

Historians have long used newspapers as valuable primary sources, but the possibilities for newspaper research have been radically transformed over the past decade with the expansion of large text-searchable digital newspaper collections. Australia's most extensive example of this sits within the National Library of Australia's Trove online portal, which at the time of writing this book had more than 200 million unique articles and is still growing.[7] The Trove newspaper database includes both metropolitan and regional newspapers, as well as a combination of major

[6] On the validity of reading newspapers in this way see: Yu-wei Lin, "Transdisciplinarity and Digital Humanities: Lessons Learned from Developing Text-Mining Tools for Textual Analysis," in *Understanding Digital Humanities*, ed. David M. Berry (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 320.

[7] The library began a newspaper digitisation project in 2007, and two years later launched the Trove portal which included the digital newspapers database. See: Philippa Martyr, "'The Cleanest Man on Earth': Harcourt Whipple Ellis and the Nla Australian Newspapers," *Health and History* 12, no. 1 (2010): 88–104. For the newspaper access point see: http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper, last accessed 28 March 2018. The data harvests described in this chapter were undertaken twice, once in 2014 and once in 2016. The figures reported here are from the 2016 harvest. While the raw number of articles increased from the 2014 to the 2016 collection, the overall patterns and proportions changed little, suggesting that even with the ongoing additions of new titles to Trove, the existing data allows for a robust study.

daily publications with large circulations and smaller, more niche papers. Its coverage begins with the 1803 *Sydney Gazette*, and is most extensive from that time through to 1954—thus the research design for this project considered the period up to 1954.[8] The Trove newspaper database searches by keywords and phrases within article text which is produced through a combination of Optical Character Recognition (OCR), and crowdsourced amendments—volunteers typically contributing tens of thousands of keyword tags and text corrections each day. The poor quality of some of the original newspaper texts results in OCR errors, but between the crowdsourced corrections and the fact that keywords usually appear multiple times within an article and thus have multiple opportunities to be correctly recognised, the dataset can be searched quite effectively.[9]

The possibility of searching historical newspapers by keywords was in itself an exciting new way for historians to dive into this material; in a few moments, a keyword search can identify a volume and range of articles that would have previously been laborious to produce by scrolling through microfilms and digging through card indexes. And so this research began, as did several others in the early 2010s, by using keyword searches to scour the National Library of Australia's digitised historical newspaper database for articles about foster care, trying to find out how the use of various terminology shifted over time.[10] Through this initial study of foster care in the newspaper database, we built a

[8] Some moves towards extending the coverage of the database past 1954 have commenced, but the coverage for the period after 1954 is still very small—both in terms of the percentage of Trove articles which relate to that period, and also in relation to the proportion of total press coverage for the period that this represents.

[9] On the usefulness of crowdsourcing combined with OCR to produce reliable and robust datasets see: Carolyn Strange and Daniel McNamara, "Mining for the Meanings of a Murder: The Impact of OCR Quality on the Use of Digitized Historical Newspapers," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (2014), http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/8/1/000168/000168.html.

[10] The key search terms which ultimately proved most useful were: foster mother, foster child, foster home, foster family, foster parent, boarding out. For other examples of projects which have taken this starting approach see: Martyr, "'The Cleanest Man on Earth': Harcourt Whipple Ellis and the NLA Australian Newspapers," 88–104; Leonie Rutherford, "Forgotten Histories: Ephemeral Culture for Children and the Digital Archive," *Media International Australia*, no. 150 (2014): 66–71; Shurlee Swain, "Market Forces: Defining the Adoptable Child, 1860–1940," *Social Policy and Society*, no. 11 (2012): 399–414.

library of roughly 1300 articles spanning more than 150 years. This collection helped us develop a nuanced understanding of the range of terminology used to describe foster care in the press, and how this shifted during different periods of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[11] It also allowed us to identify the kinds of concerns which the historical press associated with foster care.

This thousand and some articles seemed an exciting volume of coverage to have to work with, yet it left us with no real sense of the actual scale of the media coverage of foster care. To investigate this, we turned to a script written for harvesting data from Trove, which is freely available online.[12] The script itself does not search the database, rather, it downloads the results produced by Trove's own search engine. We conducted a word search of this data to remove the results which matched on text but not on meaning and sorted the articles according to their unique identifier to remove duplicate entries. At the end of this process, the initial harvest of roughly 24,000 hits had been reduced to just over 21,700 unique newspaper articles. Of these, 107 articles (~0.5%) appeared in the press prior to 1865. The pre-1865 articles appeared sporadically and mentioned foster care in passing rather than as a central concern of the article. These articles were also excluded from the project data list, leaving 21,601 articles covering the years 1865–1954.

Again, this seemed an exciting amount of media coverage to have identified, but what did it really tell us? Considering the raw number of articles in our list for each year, we could see a relatively steady increase from five articles in 1865, to a peak of 613 articles in 1911 (the only other years with more than 500 articles were 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915 and 1917). This was followed by a general, but slower, downward trend in the number of articles until 1952 (dropping to 135 articles) and then larger numbers in the final two years of our study (348 articles in 1953, and 279 articles in 1954). However, raw numbers alone could be deceptive, especially in terms of assessing the relative profile of foster care within the historical media. If we looked at our articles as a percentage of all newspaper

[11] On the value of close reading in the process of developing studies of big data, particularly with respect to understanding language use, see: Hinke Piersma and Kees Ribbens, "Digital Historical Research: Context, Concepts and the Need for Reflection," *BMGN—Low Countries Historical Review* 128, no. 4 (2013): 78–102.

[12] Tim Sherratt, "Mining the Treasures of Trove (Part 1)," http://discontents.com.au/mining-the-treasures-of-trove-part-1/, last accessed 17 April 2018.

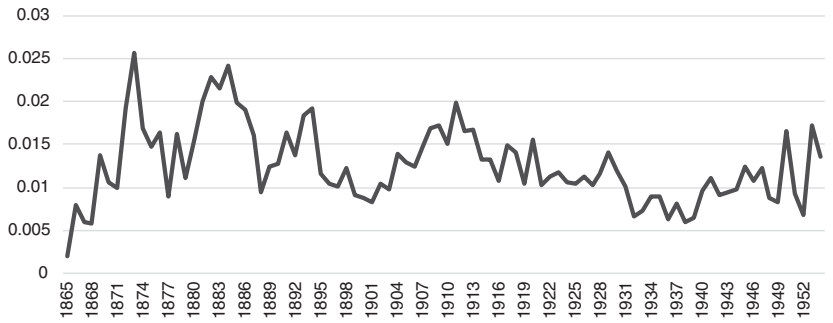

Fig. 7.1 Relevant articles per year 1865–1954—As percentage of all articles on Trove for each year

articles on Trove for that year (e.g., five articles on our list for 1865 versus over 250 thousand articles on Trove for that year) quite a different picture emerged (see Fig. 7.1). Instead of a peak around 1911, we saw an earlier one during the 1870s and 1880s. More significant was that, overall, this way of considering the data provided a far more consistent picture of media coverage on the topic, with the figure sitting between 0.005% and 0.02% for all but five years (below 0.005% in 1865 = 0.002; above 0.02% in 1873 = 0.026, 1882 = 0.023, 1883 = 0.022, 1884 = 0.024).

The timing of the peak and trough in this second analysis of the figures was not surprising. Caroline Clark first used the press in the second half of the 1860s to promote her vision of implementing boarding out as a radical reform to the provisions for impoverished children in South Australia, so there was a flutter of coverage at that time. But serious discussion about any of the colonies implementing foster care within their government-run systems did not emerge until the 1870s.[13] Between 1873 and 1884 foster care was added as a formal element of government welfare across most of the colonies; that its addition and assessments of its immediate impact should receive discussion in the press is to be expected, particularly given the pattern of Australian welfare authorities frequently deploying successes and failures in other colonies to justify planned change within their own local systems. Perhaps more surprising was that as the actual numbers of children in foster care flourished in the half-century following its introduction there was, if anything, a gentle downward trend in its profile within the press.

[13]For more on Caroline Clark and her promotion of boarding out see the introduction to this book.

The real question we were left with was whether this simply represented a broadening of the scope of topics covered within newspapers, or whether we had identified evidence of a genuine lack of attention to foster care within the historical press. We began by comparing coverage of foster care with two other topics which have been persistent features of Australian social welfare debates: unemployment and immigration.[14] The contrast was stark. There were predictably high rates of attention to unemployment during the economic depressions of the 1890s and 1930s (coverage reaching 1.8% in 1892 and 4.0% in 1931). The coverage of immigration was consistently high from 1865 through 1884 (remaining between 3.7% and 2.0%), a period of extended economic prosperity which stimulated high levels of immigration, and reached another moderate peak in 1949 (1.7%). The second peak occurred during a time when social anxieties bubbled up about the impact of the post-World War Two arrival of people from parts of Eastern Europe who had formerly largely been excluded from entry to Australia under the much-criticised *White Australia Policy*.[15] However, outside these periods, newspaper coverage of both immigration and unemployment typically remained between 0.15% and 1.5%, compared with foster care, which in all but five years sat between 0.005% and 0.02%.

We still wondered precisely what this was telling us. Was there simply a general lack of appetite for news about child welfare? To investigate, we repeated our newspaper data study, but this time tracking the coverage of children's institutions.[16] We identified over 313,000 relevant

[14]Both classic and more recent histories of Australia identify these as persistent themes in Australian social history. See: Manning Clark, *Manning Clark's History of Australia Abridged by Michael Cathcart* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne Press, 1993); Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre, eds., *The Cambridge History of Australia* (Port Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[15]Stuart Macintyre and Sean Scalmer, "Colonial States and Civil Society, 1860–90," in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (Port Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 189–217; James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration*, 2nd ed. (Port Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[16]We limited this search to the terms: 'children's home', 'industrial school' and 'orphanage', the first two reflecting shifting usage over time, and the third used fairly consistently across the period. There are additional search terms which could have been added to construct a more complete dataset about press coverage of all institutions for children. However, these three terms alone produced a dataset which was already onerous to clean semi-manually, and as our goal was to put the coverage of foster care into some sense of proportion, rather than attempt to produce a comprehensive study of institutions, we limited the data collection to these three terms.

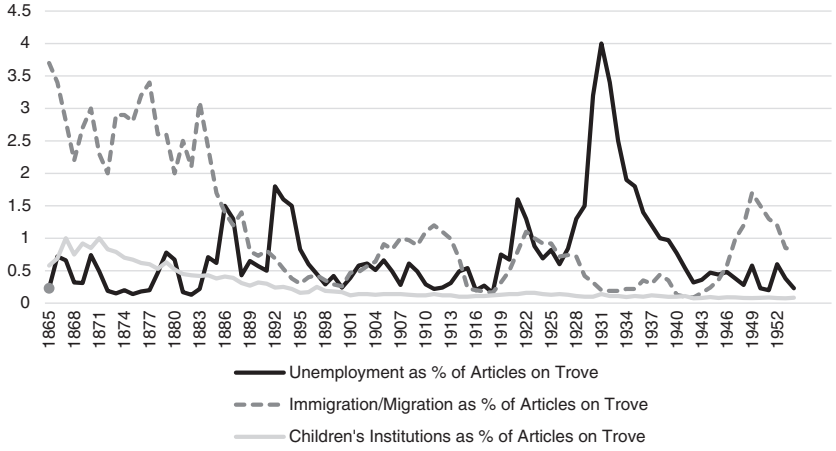

Fig. 7.2 Coverage of children's institutions against unemployment and immigration—As percentage of articles on Trove for each

articles for the period 1865–1954 as compared to the roughly 21,700 we found for foster care. The highest point of this coverage was between 1865 and 1877 when the rate held between 0.580% and 1.003%; this was followed by a steady decline through the 1880s and 1890s, and then rested between 0.095% and 0.194% from 1900 through 1954. Figure 7.2 shows how this maps against the coverage of the key social issues of unemployment and immigration.

From Fig. 7.2 we see that until the mid-1880s, coverage of children's institutions roughly matched or exceeded coverage of unemployment, while the more dominant social concern of the period, immigration, was far higher. Throughout the rest of the period, coverage of institutional care sat fairly consistently below either immigration or unemployment, yet it remained fairly close to at least one of these for most years. Clearly, child welfare was not as prominent a social concern—at least through the lens of the press—as were the 'big issues' of unemployment and immigration, yet it does emerge from this analysis as a significant social issue of its time.

Through the lens of institutions, child welfare received relatively substantial press coverage, but the difference between this and coverage of foster care was remarkable (see Fig. 7.3). In this visualisation, coverage of foster care is dwarfed by that of children's institutions to the

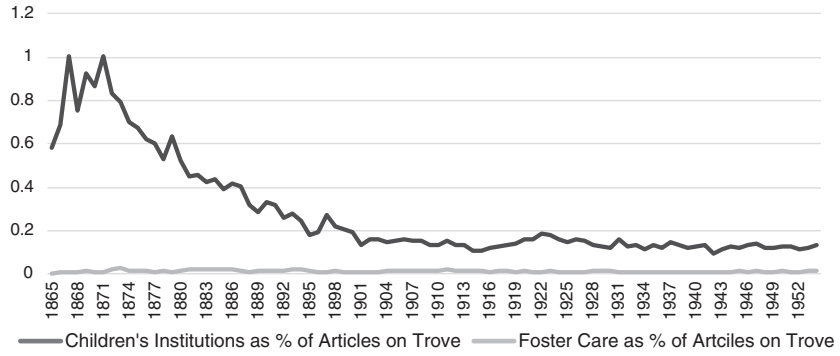

Fig. 7.3 Articles relevant to children's institutions vs. Foster care 1865–1954—As percentage of all articles on Trove for each year

point where changes in rates of foster care coverage are almost entirely obscured. This is a highly significant finding: not only had histories of child welfare in Australia grounded themselves around the stories of institutions and institutional survivors, foster care itself had long been largely obscured from public attention.

Looking More Closely at Foster Care in the Historical Press

The quantitative study of foster care in the Trove historical newspaper database revealed that foster care had certainly taken a back seat to coverage of children's institutions, injecting the work of institutions into the public consciousness to a far greater degree than foster care. However, there was a small but steady flow of articles relating to foster care, and while foster care may have struggled to find a prominent place in the Australian media, its public perception remained important—foster care systems need to recruit foster homes, and public perception plays a role in this. What, then, could our study tell us about the nature of foster care's media coverage? At more than 21,000 articles, the database was too large to permit a detailed reading of each article, and so we used a headline analysis to produce a sample for closer reading. Since our goal was to gain an impression of the image of foster care perpetuated by the

historical press, we included in our sample only those articles with headlines which clearly showed either a negative or positive positioning of foster care, giving us a collection of 1903 articles (8.8% of the project's database).[17] From this sample, we then used the headline plus first five lines to attribute a topic tag to each article so that we could follow the coverage over time through this lens.

In our sample, 1330 articles placed foster care in a negative context, while only 573 placed it in a positive light. Considering the change over time, positive articles sat distinctly below negative articles for most of the period studied, with the trend changing towards more equal representation in the years from World War Two through to 1954 when the study concluded. As Table 7.1 reveals, the most dominant theme by some distance was death of foster children, and of the next four most addressed themes, two were positive (articles promoting the value of foster care, and articles recruiting foster homes) and two were negative (reporting of foster care within court proceedings, and abuse of foster children). The overall dominance of negative articles appears largely attributable to the larger range of negative topics, reflecting a significant number of social anxieties attached to foster care.

There were some discernible shifts in the coverage of these themes over time. In relation to the negative themes, articles describing foster care within reporting of court proceedings was the dominant theme throughout the period 1865 through 1884. In part, this reflects the fashion in newspaper reporting during the nineteenth century to provide detailed reproduction of court proceedings—more column space was devoted to this type of article than in later years, and since the courts handled a number of matters relating to foster care, it appeared in the coverage of the courts. The rise of children's courts as private spaces for

[17]This strategy for constructing a sample to study produced a collection of articles which largely followed the peaks and troughs of our original data set when considered by raw number of articles. On average the number of articles in our sample was 7.83% of the number of articles for each year in our original dataset, with a standard deviation of 4.48. One difficulty in this approach resulted from the relatively low usage of headlines in the nineteenth century as compared with the twentieth, so that the percentage of articles from the whole dataset represented in the sample sat below the average of 7.83% for all but two of the years between 1865 and 1894. Nevertheless, the nineteenth-century sample still included a range of article types typical of newspapers of the period—e.g., letters to the editor, general news, court proceedings—and so was still considered to constitute a meaningful sample.

Table 7.1 Article themes

Article Theme * Negative themes shown in grey, positive themes shown in white	Number of articles in sample
Death in foster care	391
Promotion of the value of foster care to children and society	249
Foster care within court proceedings	223
Abuse of foster children	198
Recruitment of foster homes	152
Disputes between biological parents and foster parents	99
Criticisms of foster care systems	71
Fears about a black-market trade in babies	70
Baby farming and suspected baby farming	69
Association of foster care with social problems e.g. disposal of illegitimate children	55
Announcements of increased funding or improvements to foster care	48
Success story showcasing a strong bond between children and foster families	36
Misbehaviour of foster children	36
Parable-like stories about former foster children overcoming obstacles	32
Poor conditions in foster homes	30
Promotional pieces about WWII child evacuees and other child migrants	26
Breaches of regulations e.g. unlicensed private nurses fostering infants	25
Foster children discovering or receiving unexpected wealth	23
Parental negligence or neglect	20
Abandonment of children	16
Exploitation of child labour within foster homes	16
Complaints about the cost of foster care systems	11
Family reunion stories	7

hearings relating to child welfare cases, from the early twentieth century, also meant that over time cases relating to foster care were less likely to be heard in public courts and thus less likely to be reported in the press. In the period from 1885 through 1894 the most covered theme was baby farming—a colloquialism for women who took infants in for a fee but neglected or murdered the infants instead of spending the money on their care. Baby farming was a much-discussed, though infrequently identified or prosecuted, social ill during these years, and while the archetypal 'baby farmer' was a woman who made private arrangements with parents to nurse their infants, it became blurred, both in language and popular imagination, with the broader topic of foster care.[18]

[18] Shurlee Swain, "Birth and Death in a New Land: Attitudes to Infant Death in Colonial Australia," *The History of the Family* 15, no. 1 (2010): 25–33.

The rates of coverage relating to deaths of foster children is, on the face of it, somewhat surprising. From 1905, death rapidly takes the lead as the most frequently reported negative theme in the sample, a trend which moves in the opposite direction to the actual rates of children dying in foster care. There were, however, a number of factors which influenced the way Australians of the period understood the death of children, and by extension the death of children in foster care. Declining infant mortality rates, which dropped steeply from around 1905, played a significant role in reshaping attitudes towards the death of children. Pat Jalland has argued that increased expectations of infant survival, accompanied by the retraction of death, grieving and loss to the private sphere, had the combined effect of making childhood death more unusual and more shocking.[19] In Australia, as across much of the Western world, the late nineteenth century saw an emotional revaluing of the child, and the influence of child-saving and children's rights movements also shifted popular notions of childhood and the death of children.[20] Consequently, through a combination of factors, as deaths in foster care became less frequent, they also became viewed as more newsworthy.

Positive press coverage of foster care was very limited in the first part of the period we examined. Of the 573 positive articles in our sample, only 57 were from the years 1865 through 1904. Of these 57, 49 were promotional pieces, mostly written by people attached to government departments or charities which ran foster care schemes. In the years from 1905 through 1954, this kind of promotional piece remained the largest component of the press coverage in our sample, constituting 205 out of the 516 positive articles for that period. However, there was also significant growth in the number of articles focused on recruiting new foster homes (of the 152 recruitment

[19] Pat Jalland, *Changing Ways of Death in Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006), 3–8. However, this should not be read as meaning that families in the nineteenth century cared less about the loss of their children. See: Lee Butterworth, "Ignorance or Murder: 'Baby Farming' and Infant Mortality," *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* 20, no. 1 (2007); Swain, "Birth and Death in a New Land," 25–33.

[20] Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500*, 2nd ed. (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2005); Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: England, 1872–1989* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); and Dorothy Scott and Shurlee Swain, *Confronting Cruelty: Historical Perspectives on Child Protection in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002).

articles in our sample, 149 were published from 1905 onward). This trend correlates with an increasing gap between the number of children needing foster homes and the number available, yet this is only a partial explanation. Also significant was the weakening role of district Ladies Committees. These committees' local networks had been the principal source of recruitment following the establishment of government-run boarding out schemes from the 1870s.[21] However, even by the later years of the nineteenth century, government departments had implemented some strategies for placing children, particularly older boys, beyond the boundaries of the Ladies Visiting Districts.[22] Furthermore, the number of women willing to volunteer their time to run the local committees began to falter—some committees remained active well into the interwar years, others were supplemented by paid female inspectors, but in either case the time they could devote to recruitment declined.[23]

There were also indications that publicising the need for foster homes in the press was effective. In 1906 the Premier of Victoria announced that he was investigating the viability of placing more children in country homes rather than the urban and suburban ones which had recently been attracting negative attention. A Mrs. Johnson wrote to the Neglected Children's Department, attaching a clipping from an unidentified newspaper reporting the Premier's plan. She wrote:

> Dear Sir,
> I see by a statement made in the paper that Premier Mr. Bent wishes to obtain respectible [sic] homes on farm places for state children. Me and my husband will take a little girl from 10 to twelve years old we would like a bright intelligent good child one whom we could love and bring up as our own to share with us in life alike.[24]

[21] For more on the role of local Ladies Committees and also the declining need for direct newspaper recruitment of positions such as wet nurses, see Chapter 6: Foster Care—The Emergence of Foster Care in Australian Literature.

[22] For example, see the plan for placing older boys in country areas supervised by the Education Department in Chapter 5: They're Just Doing It for the Money.

[23] For examples see: VPRS 3992, Unit 1111, 09/1152; VPRS 3992, Unit 1488, 19/6672.

[24] VPRS 3992, Unit 1012, 06/1802.

At that point in time, the department could not place young girls beyond the reach of a Ladies Committee, and since the farm was not within such an area, the application could not be approved. However, this correspondence, and others like it, showed the department that the wider public was engaging with its work through the press, and that there was potential to recruit in such a manner. Use of the press for recruitment grew slowly but clearly over the first decades of the twentieth century, and by the period from 1940 to 1954 it was by far the most well-represented theme in our sample, with at least twice the coverage of the two largest negative themes of the period: death and custody disputes. Thus, despite the generally low profile of foster care within Australian newspapers over the period 1865 through 1954, child welfare authorities recognised the power of the press to influence public attitudes; as their traditional recruitment strategies faltered, they more proactively engaged with the popular press to reach potential foster families amongst other portions of the population.

This is not to suggest that the early twentieth century was the first time child welfare authorities realised the power of the press—the extent of promotional work done through newspapers in the nineteenth century, particularly from the 1880s, reflects this. Further evidence of the ways in which welfare authorities used and understood the press comes from the archival records of the Victorian department. From these files, we see that the department was not only aware of the potential of the press to help build the reputation of their work but also to ruin it. Correspondence between the head of the department and the Chief Secretary (who had ultimate control over the department) often attached newspaper reports to their letters, either to draw attention to a problem or as evidence to support their position.[25] As with the use of the press for promotional publications, this is most evident from the 1880s.[26]

[25]As described in the introduction to this book, the research from the Chief Secretary's Correspondence (VPRS 3991 and VPRS 3992) is based on a sample of approximately 1500 records from a very large collection. Thus, actual frequency is difficult to determine precisely, but newspaper clippings were attached to roughly 3.2% of the files examined. Considering the wide range of matters covered by the correspondence between the department head and the Chief Secretary, this represents a significant activity.

[26]Only one record in our sample predated the 1880s, and this was a query from the Chief Secretary, forwarding a promotional piece that had been written about boarding out in South Australia, to see if the Inspector had written an equivalent piece for Victoria.

The vast majority of the newspaper articles in these records flowed from the Chief Secretary to the department, and were asking for action to be taken in response to a potentially embarrassing or damaging report. Typically, the query related to an isolated incident which did not attract sustained attention from the press. In these cases a brief clarification of the facts—as the department head saw them—usually settled the matter. For example, in 1884 the Chief Secretary inquired about a piece published in the *Daily Telegraph* which reported that a boy boarded out by the government near the northern border of the colony had been ejected from this home and sent by train to the goldfields town of Sandhurst (now Bendigo), and then left to make his own way about the colony. George Guillaume, then Secretary of the department, simply explained that the boy had been licensed out to work for a farmer, not fostered, and that with "his services not being further required, that gentleman returned him to [the] Sandhurst School."[27] Guillaume then crafted it into a success story of the boarding out system rather than the failure of control over wards suggested by the paper.

> [The] lad, apparently instead of getting off at [Sandhurst] station seems to have made his way back to his former foster parents at Footscray, when he was arrested by the police and returned to the Royal Park. The incident rather tells in favour of [boarding out] than otherwise. (underline in original)[28]

Despite the fact that the boy claimed he had not received wages while working on the farm, this was the end of the matter—the 'problem' as perceived by officials had been addressed.

In other cases, simmering tensions or problems boiled over in the press, stimulating more extensive correspondence. In 1879, the Acting Inspector of the department, Henry French Neal, encountered fierce opposition when he attempted to move children from the Catholic institution at Abbotsford into the boarding out scheme. While the government had been boarding out Catholic children who could not be accommodated by the Abbotsford school, the Church's preference was for institutional accommodation of Catholic children, where Religious could ensure their 'proper' instruction. Thus, the plan met with fierce

[27]VPRS 3992, Unit 23, 84/4560.

[28]VPRS 3992, Unit 23, 84/4560.

opposition and was largely put to rest until 1884, when it was reconsidered. The position of the Reverend Mother at Abbotsford was clear—Catholic girls should be sent to her institution, even if this meant separating them from brothers whom the school could not accommodate, rather than boarding them out together.[29] Guillaume also made his position clear in discussing the McCarthy children: since the siblings were each other's only family, "with the exception of a disreputable mother" he insisted would not be allowed access to the children, he was not prepared to "effect the entire estrangement of the children from each other" by sending the girl to Abbotsford.[30]

Just a few weeks later, the Catholic weekly paper the *Advocate* launched an attack on the boarding out system, specifically the notion that boarding out children from the Abbotsford school might once again resume.[31] One month after that, Guillaume was instructed to push ahead with arranging boarding out of the children from the Abbotsford school, but to do so with "care and judgement."[32] A flurry of correspondence followed Guillaume's letter to the Matron at Abbotsford asking for her assistance and in mid-May, with the debate still raging, Guillaume received an urgent telegraph: "Chief Secretary wishes to see you at ten tomorrow re boarding-out from Abbotsford—bring any related papers."[33] The Chief Secretary was not prepared to back down from his decree that boarding out children was the "policy of the parliament" and that he could "see no reason for exempting any one denomination from this rule."[34] He did, however, order Guillaume to send the reply he had written for the *Advocate* back in April to all the Melbourne papers, and Guillaume later forwarded clippings to show that his defence of boarding out had been widely published.[35] Later that year, at the request of the Archbishop, Guillaume reminded all Ladies Committees that they were expected to have at least one Catholic member and that

[29]VPRS 3992, Unit 14, 84/2581. For more on the department's attitude towards keeping siblings together see Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Families.

[30]VPRS 3992, Unit 14, 84/2581.

[31]"The Roman Catholic Industrial Schools," *Advocate* (Melbourne, VIC), 29 March 1884, 9.

[32]VPRS 3992, Unit 23, 84/4307.

[33]VPRS 3992, Unit 23, 84/4307.

[34]VPRS 3992, Unit 23, 84/4307.

[35]VPRS 3992, Unit 23, 84/4307.

Catholic children should be placed in Catholic foster homes. While this settled the issue down for a time, tensions around the religious education of Catholic foster children percolated, and periodically emerged in the Catholic press into the second half of the twentieth century.[36]

Whereas the above case provides an example of when the department might proactively engage with the press, there were other cases where quite the opposite was true. For instance, the government's receiving depot at Royal Park had been a source of mounting public scrutiny for more than fifteen years when, in 1936, the Victorian Under-Secretary, Laurie Chapman, faced questioning about it before the Select Committee on Widows' Pensions and Child Endowment. Press investigating and criticising the department's institutions was nothing new, but as the twentieth century progressed, foster homes became harder to secure, and the privately-run institutions that the department turned to for placement of some wards, particularly from the 1930s, were often selective about which children they would accept. The result of this, combined with chronic under-funding, was that the government's receiving depot had unsuitable and dilapidated facilities, insufficient staff, and too many children—many of whom were unable to be placed elsewhere because they were seen as 'difficult' or 'undesirable' in some way. The Select Committee pushed Chapman on two particular points: whether the government planned to alleviate the overcrowding by moving the hundred or so children deemed 'mental defectives' to their own purpose-designed institutions; and what was to be done about the wooden buildings that were "never intended for the use of children" and in which "the washing and sanitary conditions [were] not at all desirable."[37]

Chapman conceded that all of these were very real problems—he had little choice because their periodic discussion for more than a decade in parliament was a matter of public record. However, when pressed on the details of a report he had made for the government on the conditions at Royal Park, he replied, "While I might read [the report] for the benefit of the Committee, there are press representatives here, and I do not think it desirable any portion of that statement should be published in the press." He explained:

[36]VPRS 3992, Unit 45, 84/8979.

[37]VPRS 3992, Unit 2037, 36/7568.

> It is a report which was prepared to press upon the Government the urgency of going on with certain work, and whilst it is quite truthful, you can realise it would make splendid head-lines for the press, and it is not fair to myself or the Government that it should be published.[38]

There was general support for his position, but this did not prevent the *Argus, Age* and *Sun* from printing articles about the deplorable state of Royal Park. Incremental improvements followed, but the institution remained a problem and was again lambasted by the *Herald* in 1955.[39]

A further piece of evidence about the ways in which the department engaged with the press can be found in the ward register volumes. These large bound books record the details of the admissions of children to the department, information about their circumstances and families, and track their movement through various placements during their time as wards of the state. Beginning in 1881, newspaper clippings relating to a particular child or their family were occasionally attached to the ward register page as a way of recording information. The date of this practice's commencement, late 1881, suggests another way in which Guillaume shaped departmental work, including use of the press, but it outlasted him by decades—persisting at least into the interwar years.[40] Clippings appear on the ward registers of a little under 1% of the children admitted to the department during the nineteenth century, and our research uncovered many newspaper articles about wards of the state which were not attached to the registers, so this appears to have been a somewhat sporadic and unsystematised practice.[41]

Newspaper clippings required less space and effort to provide information in the registers than if the same were entered longhand, and so there is an obvious logic to using them to note information the

[38]VPRS 3992, Unit 2037, 36/7568.

[39]VPRS 3992, Unit 2685, 56/7143.

[40]After this, the records are closed and it is not possible to be sure how long this continued.

[41]For example, we know that there was some press coverage of John Wood Pledger's case (see Chapter 2: Did Anybody Care? The Death of John Wood Pledger) but there were no clippings attached to his ward register at all. Similarly, we know there was press coverage of Annie Thomas and her daughter (see Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Families) but again, no clippings on either of their ward register pages.

department might need, like that an incident at a work placement had brought a child before the courts, or that a child's parent had been charged with a crime (which would have impacted the department's decisions about access and reunion). However, more than half of the clippings related to wards after they had left the department—usually in young adulthood—suggesting that this was not just a strategy to help departmental management, but also a way of tracking children after their life within the department. None of these clippings relating to former wards recorded happy events; a few reported deaths, another the scalping of a poor young woman in a factory accident, and one 'Persons Asked For' clipping naming a former ward. The vast majority, however, were reports of former wards before the courts.

There are several factors to consider when reflecting on the profile of these clippings about former wards. To begin with, unlike those which recorded information about people still under the department's charge, the purpose of these clippings is less clear. They provide some evidence that the department had an interest in the future outcomes of its wards, although they do not reflect a systematic approach to tracking this. It is clear from other records that the department felt responsible for helping former wards after their official responsibility had ended; some young men were provided with tools so that they could establish themselves at a trade, and on many occasions the department paid allowances to provide for young women who fell pregnant after their wardship ended but before they were married.[42] It is also true that the department had already been called upon to show that it was not releasing children from the schools only to send them on to lives of 'vice and crime'. In 1878 one newspaper article claimed that two-thirds of the girls sent to service in one year had ended up working as prostitutes—another more moderate estimate put the figure at 15–20%.[43] Neal, acting head of the department, countered that of the 1411 girls sent to service positions since 1867, there were more like 5% who might be described as 'fallen

[42]For examples see VPRS 3991, Unit 1330, 82/8173 and VPRS 3992, Unit 738, 99/235. On provisions for pregnant former wards, also see Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Families.

[43]"Untitled," *Argus* (Melbourne), 21 September 1878, 6; "Industrial School Children," *Age* (Melbourne), 5 December 1878, 3.

women'.[44] He argued, however, that they were not "prostitutes in the ordinary sense of the term" but rather girls who had been "seduced" and that most had "repented of their one lapse from virtue and subsequently led honest lives."[45] Clearly, then, the department already had some process for tracking the after-lives of wards, although how this was managed is not clear from the remaining records.[46] Perhaps adding clippings to the ward registers was a conscious attempt at extending this, although it was only ever a piecemeal initiative.

The negative character of these clippings is also worthy of discussion. Since we know that the department presented 'success stories' in both the press and its annual reports, and our sample of newspaper articles for thematic analysis revealed that almost 12% of the positive articles in our sample (equating to roughly 4% of all articles in our sample overall) were stories about wards going on to lead flourishing and happy lives, why are none of these types of stories attached to pages in the ward registers? It is difficult to give a definitive answer to this question, but it does reinforce the perception of many care leavers who have viewed their child welfare files as adults: that records document and construct 'problems'. The Victorian department had always received requests from former wards for information about their childhoods, yet even by the mid-twentieth century, children's records were still conceived of as operational materials with the primary goal of documenting and managing potential 'issues', rather than as an important location for holding information about children which might otherwise have been passed on to them by their families.[47] The paucity of information in child welfare records, particularly given their importance not only in memory and identity formation but also in practical terms (such as being able to produce medical and educational documentation), is an unresolved issue,

[44] "Industrial School Children," *Age* (Melbourne), 5 December 1878, 3.

[45] VPRS 3991, Unit 1055, 79/934.

[46] A large portion of the department's records no longer exist. For further details on the known history of destruction of government records, including those of the department, see: Charlie Farrugia, "Convicted and Neglected: Researching Victoria's Wards of State Records 1864–1961," *Provenance*, no. 12 (2013), https://www.prov.vic.gov.au/explore-collection/provenance-journal/provenance-2013/convicted-and-neglected.

[47] Cate O'Neill, Vlad Selakovic, and Rachel Tropea, "Access to Records for People Who Were in Out-of-Home Care: Moving Beyond 'Third Dimension' Archival Practice," *Archives and Manuscripts* 40, no. 1 (2012): 29–41.

though one which has gained increasing attention from social work scholars in recent years.[48]

A final reflection on the overwhelmingly negative nature of the clippings attached to the Victorian ward registers returns us to an important overall finding of this chapter's survey of media coverage of foster care—that negative stories dominated by a good margin. In part, we see this is because across the years the press has been attracted to scandals since they make good copy and attract readership. On the whole, foster care has attracted a miniscule portion of Australian press coverage as compared with other topics, including institutional care for children. This, combined with the attraction to scandal, meant that foster care was largely invisible in the historical press, and readers' attention was most likely to be drawn to articles in which either the foster care system itself, or the children within it, were constructed as problems. We argue that we need to take this seriously, and think about the extent to which this has shaped, and continues to shape, public perceptions of foster care. As we have shown in the previous chapter, where we considered the impact of stigma, these popular perceptions have very real consequences for children growing up in foster care. It is likely these negative perceptions of foster care have also contributed to the low profile of foster care in Australian literature, as we discuss in the following chapter.

References

Bashford, Alison, and Stuart Macintyre, eds. *The Cambridge History of Australia*. Port Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Buckingham-Jones, Sam. "Lobby Group Attacks Push to Ensure Privacy for Kids in Care." *Australian—Online* (Surry Hills, NSW), 5 September 2017.

Butterworth, Lee. "Ignorance or Murder: 'Baby Farming' and Infant Mortality." *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* 20, no. 1 (2007): 18–30.

Clark, Manning. *Manning Clark's History of Australia Abridged by Michael Cathcart*. Melbourne: University of Melbourne Press, 1993.

Cunningham, Hugh. *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500*. 2nd ed. London: Pearson Education Limited, 2005.

[48]Cathy Humphreys and Margaret Kertesz, "Making Records Meaningful: Creating an Identity Resource for Young People in Care," *Australian Social Work* 68, no. 4 (2015): 497–514.

Farrugia, Charlie. "Convicted and Neglected: Researching Victoria's Wards of State Records 1864–1961." *Provenance*, no. 12 (2013): Unpaginated. https://www.prov.vic.gov.au/explore-collection/provenance-journal/provenance-2013/convicted-and-neglected.

Hendrick, Harry. *Child Welfare: England, 1872-1989*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

Humphreys, Cathy, and Margaret Kertesz. "Making Records Meaningful: Creating an Identity Resource for Young People in Care." *Australian Social Work* 68, no. 4 (2015): 497–514.

"Industrial School Children." *Age* (Melbourne), 5 December 1878, 3.

Jalland, Pat. *Changing Ways of Death in Australia: War, Medicine and the Funeral Business*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2006.

Jupp, James. *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration*. 2nd ed. Port Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Lin, Yu-wei. "Transdisciplinarity and Digital Humanities: Lessons Learned from Developing Text-Mining Tools for Textual Analysis." In *Understanding Digital Humanities*, edited by David M. Berry, 314–35. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Macintyre, Stuart, and Sean Scalmer. "Colonial States and Civil Society, 1860–90." In *The Cambridge History of Australia*, edited by Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre, 189–217. Port Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Martyr, Philippa. "'The Cleanest Man on Earth': Harcourt Whipple Ellis and the NLA Australian Newspapers." *Health and History* 12, no. 1 (2010): 88–104.

National Library of Australia. "Trove: Digtised Newspapers." https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/.

O'Neill, Cate, Vlad Selakovic, and Rachel Tropea. "Access to Records for People Who Were in Out-of-Home Care: Moving Beyond 'Third Dimension' Archival Practice." *Archives and Manuscripts* 40, no. 1 (2012): 29–41.

Piersma, Hinke, and Kees Ribbens. "Digital Historical Research: Context, Concepts and the Need for Reflection." *BMGN—Low Countries Historical Review* 128, no. 4 (2013): 78–102.

Public Record Office Victoria, VA 475 Chief Secretary's Department, VPRS 4527/P0 Ward Registers.

Public Record Office Victoria, VA 475 Chief Secretary's Department, Chief Secretary's Inward Registered Correspondence II & III, VPRS 3991 & 3992.

Rutherford, Leonie. "Forgotten Histories: Ephemeral Culture for Children and the Digital Archive." *Media International Australia*, no. 150 (2014): 66–71.

Scott, Dorothy, and Shurlee Swain. *Confronting Cruelty: Historical Perspectives on Child Protection in Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002.

Secretary, Department of Family and Community Services V Smith, Supreme Court NSWCA 206 (2017).

Sherratt, Tim. "Mining the Treasures of Trove (Part 1)." http://discontents.com.au/mining-the-treasures-of-trove-part-1/.

Strange, Carolyn, and Daniel McNamara. "Mining for the Meanings of a Murder: The Impact of OCR Quality on the Use of Digitized Historical Newspapers." *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (2014): Unpaginated. http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/8/1/000168/000168.html.

Supreme Court of New South Wales (Coutr of Appeal). *Secretary, Department of Family and Community Services V Smith*, Supreme Court NSWCA 206 (2017).

Swain, Shurlee. "Birth and Death in a New Land: Attitudes to Infant Death in Colonial Australia." *The History of the Family* 15, no. 1 (2010): 25–33.

Swain, Shurlee. "Market Forces: Defining the Adoptable Child, 1860–1940." *Social Policy and Society* 11 (2012): 399-414.

"Untitled." *Argus* (Melbourne), 21 September 1878, 6.

Check for updates

CHAPTER 8

Writing to Heal—The Emergence of Foster Care in Literature

Award-winning Ethiopian-British poet, performer and Chancellor of the University of Manchester, Lemn Sissay, begins his BBC4 Radio Programme, *Lemn Sissay's Origin Stories*, by reciting the names of many popular fictional characters who have been in out of home care: Lisbeth Salander, of *The Girl With The Dragon Tatoo* who was institutionalised; Harry Potter, who was in foster-kinship care; James Bond, who was a foster child, as were Rapunzel, and Angela Carter's Fevvers character in *Nights at the Circus*—these are but a few of the characters he lists. We do not see the connections, Sissay goes on to say, between these fictional characters and "the real foster child" and he wonders if we cannot see the "hidden in plain sight" connections because we do not equate the children in out of home care with "greatness or goodness."[1]

Lemn Sissay, born in 1968, has been writing plays and poetry about his experience in foster care and children's homes for more than thirty years. He has also participated in making documentaries for the BBC—radio and television—to document his past, and in 2012 spoke at the inaugural *TEDxHousesofParliament* in London. His most recent play, *Something Dark*, describes him searching for and locating his mother in Ethiopia and finding out his father, a pilot for Ethiopian Airlines, had died in 1973. A central theme in Sissay's performances is that children

[1] "Lemn Sissay's Origin Stories" (BBC4, 2015).

© The Author(s) 2018

N. Musgrove and D. Michell, *The Slow Evolution of Foster Care in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in the History of Childhood,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93900-1_8

in out of home care "use extraordinary skills to deal with extraordinary situations on a daily basis," but these skills are rarely noticed let alone acknowledged by those who care for the children, or by the wider community.[2]

American academic and former foster child, Dennis Leoutsakas, has a similar interest in orphan narratives, that is, in the mismatch between fictional orphan characters and the "away-from-birth-home experience." Drawing on the stories of Moses, The Ugly Duckling, Cinderella, Heidi, Superman, Tom Sawyer and Harry Potter, Leoutsakas gives five reasons for an impression of sameness about fictional orphan stories: the success of orphaned characters; the way they can accommodate multiple roles as they have dual personalities; an absence of sexuality; an excess of emotion; and their depictions "as white, Euro-centric characters." Leoutsakas goes on to compare the fictional accounts of orphans with stories told by research participants from a broader "orphan" group which includes "the measureless number of foster children living away from birth parents, the multitude of abandoned or 'throw-away kids' who are unwanted or uncared for by parents, and an extensive network of adoptees offered up for adoption by birth parents, all of whom have living parents yet still live as orphans."[3] These, he says, have "far more mundane daily lives and less impact on society," than do fictional orphans, reflecting Sissay's observation that children and young people in foster care are not usually associated with "greatness or goodness."[4]

We do not have the equivalent of Lemn Sissay in Australia, an individual who over a sustained period has been actively lifting the profile of children and young people in foster care by focusing on their potential for 'greatness and goodness', or the 'extraordinary skills' they use, rather than limiting them to their wounds and struggles. Nor do we do have any 'home-grown' literary characters who have been in foster care and who share the sort of status of those listed by Sissay in *Origin Stories* or examined by Leoutsakas. We do not even have Australian websites dedicated to listing people who have gone from foster care to become prominent public figures, such as "Foster to Famous" sponsored by the

[2] TED.com, "Lemn Sissay: A Child of the State," in *TEDTalks* (2012).

[3] Dennis Leoutsakas, "Contemplating Fictional and Nonfictional Orphan Stories," in *29th IBBY World Conference* (Cape Town, South Africa 2004), 3, 4.

[4] Ibid., 5–7, 9.

American FosterClub, or the "Famous Former Foster/Adopted Kids" page hosted by the (also) American *Foster Focus* magazine.[5]

What we do have in Australia is the beginnings of a new tradition of prominent public figures coming forward and telling their stories of foster care. For example, journalist Lania Vasek's 'coming out' story of being in foster care was published in the national newspaper, the *Australian*, in 2010, with a follow-up published in 2016 when she gave birth to triplets. Former Premier of Tasmania, David Bartlett, in 2011 revealed to the nation his status as a former foster child as he stepped down from the top job in that state. Another politician, Steve Irons, who grew up in foster care in Western Australia, proudly proclaims on his website that he is the Federal Parliament's "only former ward of the state." In 2012 Karise Eden, winner of the inaugural reality talent show, *The Voice Australia*, talked on that show about how foster parents had encouraged her singing. Karise, who was mentored on *The Voice Australia* by British singer Seal, also a former foster child, has spoken further on her experience for the long-running national documentary programme, *Australian Story*. Star of the UK version of the reality investment finance programme, *Dragon's Den*, and Chancellor of London South Bank University, Richard Farleigh spoke briefly about his Australian childhood in foster care during an episode of *Dragon's Den*, with a longer version told for Australian audiences in 2013. Australian Rules Football (AFL) star, Josh Jenkins' story of being raised in foster care by Edith Casey is a well-known one among AFL fans. And since 2015 comedian Corey White has reflected on his childhood—including foster care—during award winning stand-up performances described as "seriously funny," and on *Australian Story*.[6]

[5] FosterClub, "Foster to Famous," available at https://www.fosterclub.com/blog/foster-famous, last accessed 23 April 2018; Foster Focus, "Famous Former Foster/Adopted Kids," available at https://www.fosterfocusmag.com/famous-foster-kids, last accessed 23 April 2018.

[6] Lanai Vasek, "The Secret History of Me," *Australian* 24 June 2010. Victoria Hannaford, "From Foster Child to Super Mum: Future Looks Bright for Lanai Scarr's Triple Delight," *Daily Telegraph*, 26 August 2016 (Lania Scarr is Lania Vasek's married name); "Dragon's Den—Richards' Story," available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGdFccdm3wg2010, last accessed 25 Apirl 2018; "There but for Fortune [The Story of Richard Farleigh]," in *Australian Story*, http://www.abc.net.au/austory/there-but-for-fortune/9169936, last accessed 25 April 2018; "Vanishing Act [The Story of Karise Eden]," in *Australian Story*, http://www.abc.net.au/austory/vanishing-act/5808066, last accessed 25 April 2018; "Seriously Funny [The Story of Corey

This new tradition of Australians telling their stories of foster care suggests this marginalised group is gradually coming in from the outskirts to the centre of Australian society. In this chapter we trace some of that journey via fictional and autobiographical stories told about foster care from the end of the nineteenth century through to the early years of the twenty-first. In the process, we show how stories about foster care have changed from imagining foster children as the offspring of the wealthy—just temporarily down on their luck—to acknowledging a shameful part of the nation's past and the ongoing trauma experienced by those who were forcibly removed from parents, abused while in foster care, and discriminated against by the wider Australian community because of their status as current or former foster children.

Nineteenth-Century Heroic Foster Parents

The earliest stories about foster care in Australia were short stories published between 1867 and 1889 in a successful early Australian magazine, the *Australian Journal*.[7] The magazine, based in Melbourne and operative between 1865 and 1956, initially had a policy to print original fiction with local and international settings. That changed in 1871 when editor Marcus Clarke (1846–1881), known for his contribution to the development of short story writing in Australia and famous for his 1874 novel *For the Term of His Natural Life*, rejected any fiction that did not pertain to "Colonial life, or subjects of Colonial interest."[8] One subject of 'colonial interest' between 1867 and 1889 was the legislation of boarding out, or foster care, as the preferred arrangement for managing 'pauper' children in the Australian colonies.

White]," in *Australian Story* (http://www.abc.net.au/austory/seriously-funny/6718852) last accessed 25 April 2018; and "Steve Irons MP: Biography," http://steveirons.com.au/steve-irons/biography/, last accessed 25 April 2018.

[7] *Australian Journal* (Melbourne, VIC: Clarson, Massina & Co., 1865–1955). The journal was also published in Sydney at the same time by Gibbs, Shallard and Co. between 1955 and 1962 it was published in Melbourne by Southend Press.

[8] Bruce Bennett, "The Short Story, 1890s to 1950," in *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, ed. Peter Pierce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 157; Elizabeth Webby, "The Australian Journal Periodical" (2004), https://www-austlit-edu.au.proxy.library.adelaide.edu.au/austlit/page/C498899.

The short stories published in the *Australian Journal* therefore would have appealed to those promoting the formalisation of foster care, and can be read as advertisements for that care, even though none of the stories are set in Australia. Instead, all have European settings, and few of the children are from poor families, the objects of formalised foster care. Some, like Estelle and Ernest in "The Plot for a Life" by American writer, Sylvanus Cobb (1823–1887), and Helen Shaftesbury in "John Falconer's Courtship" (author unknown)—both stories were published in 1875—are from upper-class families. Estelle and Ernest were washed ashore at different times off the coast of France and rescued by lighthouse keeper, Paul Moulin, who becomes the hero even though it is the housekeeper who is the primary carer of the children. In "John Falconer's Courtship," English born Helen Shaftesbury ended up in foster care when, on the death of her mother a week after Helen's birth, Helen's father refused to acknowledge or raise the child. Instead he paid Mrs. Falconer a weekly sum to provide care and a private boarding school education. Trained as a governess so she could make her own way in the world teaching "elite ideology,"[9] the story revolves around Helen's adventures in doing so. Both "The Plot for a Life" and "John Falconer's Courtship" conclude with the three former foster children discovering and claiming their wealthy heritage and preparing to take their place in upper-class society, an unlikely outcome for most foster children in the formal Australian system who were expected to commence their working lives in early adolescence and take their place as domestic servants and labourers.[10]

In other stories, the foster children are invisible. For example, in "The Church of the Glass of Water," the hero is a priest. Set in 1815 in a small rural village in civil war-torn Spain, a priest and his reluctant housekeeper take in and care for the children of a 'bandit', or nationalist guerrilla, and his dead wife. Twelve years later, the now successful bandit returns and

[9]Heather Julien, "School Novels, Women's Work, and Maternal Vocationalism," *NWSA Journal* 19, no. 2 (2007): 122.

[10]Margaret Barbalet, *Far from a Low Gutter Girl: The Forgotten World of State Wards: South Australia 1887–1940* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983), 195. Despite the fact that this was a most unlikely outcome for Australian foster children, it remained a popular trope and the Australian press enthusiastically reported a small number of cases in which former foster children discovered unknown wealth. See Chapter 7: Rediscovering Foster Care.

repays the priest for his kindness and care by having a new home and church built for the priest.

In a rare story featuring a character who is impoverished, and therefore more like the 'pauper' children for whom statutory foster care schemes in Australia were intended, Tessa, a teenager and recent Italian migrant to England, is the protagonist of "Romance of a Miniature." "Romance of a Miniature" (1889) tells the story of Tessa's chance meeting with the middle-class male narrator in a pawnshop. Sympathetic to the plight of the impoverished girl, the narrator takes her in, but he puts her to work as a maid—the usual plight of foster girls—despite her obvious poverty-induced ill health.

As Christine Trimingham-Jack says, "authors of fictional literature take from reality and produce a symbolic image of that reality."[11] Most of the late nineteenth-century stories published in the *Australian Journal* do feature the way in which children are impacted by socio-historical events and attitudes, such as civil war, migration, and intolerance of 'illegitimate' births. They are, therefore, reflective of the reality for many children living in orphanages at the time, for whom foster care advocates wanted to provide better care. But the other messages—that middle-class men who take in foster children are heroes, and that the only heroic foster child characters come from upper-middle-class backgrounds—contrast markedly with the reality of the formal foster care system which was intended to reduce the general level of 'pauperism' in the Australian colony by assimilating 'pauper children' into the respectable working classes, children who became subject to stigma and a silencing of their stories until well into the twentieth century.

Children's Books

The genre of Australian children's literature really came to life during the twentieth century. Before then, many 'Australian' publications for children were actually published in Britain, and were primarily produced

[11] Christine Trimingham-Jack, "'A Dose of Castor Oil': Teachers and Teaching in the Writings of Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce," *History of Education Review* 34, no. 2 (2005): 1–2.

for the larger audience of British children.[12] Indeed, the early twentieth century was a boom time for publications in children's literature globally, and coincident with the emergence of this children's book industry was the transfer of the "perfect hero figure," that "quintessential outcast," the orphan, from folk tales to children's literature.[13] Although male orphans are present in earlier classics by Charles Dickens such as *Oliver Twist* (1837–1839) and *David Copperfield* (1850), female orphans dominated the rising genre of children's literature in both English and North American texts, for example, Anne Shirley in *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) by Canadian, Lucy Maud Montgomery, and Mary Lennox in *The Secret Garden* (1911) by American Frances Hodgson Burnett. Orphan characters, Melanie Kimball says, "symbolize our isolation from one another and from society…They are the eternal Other" and their popularity will endure for as long as we experience "the pain of isolation."[14] This orphan figure—both in terms of how authors construct him or her, and how readers respond to the characters—is important, then, if we want to understand the literary imagery of orphans and foster care absorbed by generations of children, and (often) their parents.

What we find, when we look at Australian children's literature, is that even where authors have taken up this theme, the reception has been less dramatic than the iconic overseas novels. Two of Australia's leading twentieth-century women writers of fiction for older children—Ethel Turner (1873–1958) and Eleanor Spence (1928–2008)—have written stories about orphans in the broader Leoutsakas sense, those children who may have living parents yet still live as orphans, including children in foster care. However, none of the characters have taken hold of the Australian imagination in the way of Anne Shirley, Mary Lennox or even Tracy Beaker, the lead character in a 1991 book by English writer Jacqueline Wilson and star of an eponymous television drama, further books, a play and a video game.

[12]Clare Bradford, "Australian Children's Literature," in *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, ed. Peter Pierce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 283–84.

[13]Melanie Kimball, "From Folktales to Fiction: Orphan Characters in Children's Literature," *Library Trends* 47, no. 3 (1999): 561.

[14]Ibid., 559, 573.

Ethel Turner, widely regarded as "the Louisa Alcott of Australia,"[15] was born in 1872 and migrated nine years later with her family to Australia from England. She published her first and best-known work, *Seven Little Australians*, in 1894, a book in which children are allowed a "good deal of physical freedom"[16] and which catapulted her to fame in the Australian literary scene with international recognition following quickly.[17] Turner married barrister Herbert Curlewis in 1896 and successfully combined raising a family while working as a professional writer, averaging a book every year until 1928,[18] and accomplishing what Brenda Niall calls a "quiet revolution in Australian children's literature" by removing "boomerangs and bushrangers" and shifting the action from the outback to suburbia.[19] Curiously, however, Niall chooses to compare *Seven Little Australians*—the story of a large brood of children in the one 'blended' family—with Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, rather than noting the more striking parallel with Turner's *That Girl*, published in 1908, the same year as *Anne of Green Gables*.

Anne Shirley in Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*—set in 1878 in a Canadian province—is rescued from a life of brutality and overwork in foster care by an elderly couple, Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert. The Cuthberts provide an education and the opportunity for Anne to become a school teacher, a not uncommon way for working-class women of the time to both earn a living and provide "cheap labour for a growing educational system."[20] Allowed ambition, Anne Shirley is enabled to

[15]A. T. Yarwood, "From a Chair in the Sun. The Life of Ethel Turner" (Ringwood, VIC: Viking, 1994), 85. Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888) was an American novelist and author of the highly successful *Little Women*, published in 1868 and set in Concord, Massachusetts. Australia writer Geraldine Brooks drew on *Little Women* for her Pulitzer Prize winning historical novel *March* (2006) which expanded on Alcott's story by foregrounding the father figure.

[16]Trimingham-Jack, "'A Dose of Castor Oil': Teachers and Teaching in the Writings of Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce," 6. For more on the iconic *Seven Little Australians*, see Bradford, "Australian Children's Literature," 287–89.

[17]Yarwood, "From a Chair in the Sun. The Life of Ethel Turner," 87.

[18]Trimingham-Jack, "'A Dose of Castor Oil': Teachers and Teaching in the Writings of Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce," 5.

[19]Brenda Niall, "Writing from Home: The Literary Careers of Ethel Turner and L. M. Montgomery," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1990): 175.

[20]Christine Trimingham-Jack, "Education and Ambition in Anne of Avonlea," *History of Education Review* 38, no. 2 (2009): 112; L. M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables* (North Ryde, NSW: Angus & Roberston Publishers, 1987), originally published 1908.

become socially mobile and Montgomery published another five 'Anne' books charting Anne Shirley's life from school teacher, to writer and respectable wife and mother.

Marie, the subject of *That Girl*, spends much of the story enduring a miserable life with her middle-class or "well-to-do" foster mother, Mrs. Henderson.[21] The fourteen-year-old is placed in the care of Mrs. Henderson after a deal is struck with the child's mother to nurse the Hendersons' sick child during a smallpox epidemic aboard their ship bound for the United States. In exchange, the Henderson's promise to take on the care of Marie should the mother die. Both the Henderson's daughter and Marie's mother die. For the first twelve months of honouring the arrangement, seven-year-old Marie is sent out to work on a flower farm in San Francisco, returning to Sydney with the Hendersons twelve months later to a life of drudgery about the house and a modicum of home schooling by the tetchy Mrs. Henderson. Marie is rescued seven years later by the middle-class Curtis family who provide friendship and an opportunity to escape via a career on the stage. Thus, Marie too is afforded an opportunity to be an economically independent and socially mobile young woman in one of the few occupations, apart from domestic service, open to females in the early 1900s.[22]

Turner drew inspiration for her books from daily life, including her interest in issues of social justice. Therefore, motivation for *That Girl* is likely to have come from her own early ambition for an acting career and from the servants who worked for her mother and later for herself. "The servant problem" was a longstanding one in both households; it was a struggle to find and retain reliable servants but neither Turner nor her mother wanted girls returned to "horrid Reformatories" when they did not work out.[23] *That Girl* was a flop compared to Turner's other work, with disappointing sales from the outset. Even now it is overlooked by scholars of literature keen to examine the work of Ethel Turner and her contemporary Lucy Montgomery.[24]

[21] Trimingham-Jack, "'A Dose of Castor Oil': Teachers and Teaching in the Writings of Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce"; Ethel Turner, *That Girl* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908).

[22] Jeanne Klein, "Without Distinction of Age: The Pivotal Roles of Child Actors and Their Spectators in Nineteenth-Century Theatre," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 36, no. 2 (2012): 129.

[23] Yarwood, "From a Chair in the Sun. The Life of Ethel Turner," 59–60, 136, 191–92.

[24] Ibid., 199, 230.

Award-winning and internationally recognised Australian children's writer, Eleanor Spence (1928–2008), also wrote two novels which centre around a foster care family, *The Switherby Pilgrims* (1967) and *Jamberoo Road* (1969).[25] A writer for older children and youth, Spence was a key figure in the development of Australian children's literature, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, and is noted for her historical fiction—a genre that has been "slow to emerge" among Australian writers for children—and her social realism, creating sympathetic multi-dimensional characters who are social outcasts struggling to overcome disadvantages.[26] Spence's lifelong fascination with orphan children, including creating her own orphanage with dolls as an eleven-year-old, was inspired by American Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs* (1912). She was also encouraged by her mother to read key left-wing progressive Australian women writers such as Kylie Tennant, Dymphna Cusack and Eleanor Dark, all writers with sympathies for the marginalised.[27]

Spence's *The Switherby Pilgrims* (1967) and *Jamberoo Road* (1969) tell the story of thirty-eight-year-old single Englishwoman Arabella Braithwaite who migrates to Australia in 1825 with ten children from five different families. The children's lives have been impacted by a typhus epidemic which decimated their village and Arabella decides to invest a small inheritance in the children's future. By the end of *The Switherby Pilgrims* the children have become a family group and are keen to make "a proper home" on their small parcel of land in the coastal Illawarra region, fifty miles south of Sydney. At the commencement of *Jamberoo Road*, five years from when *The Switherby Pilgrims* concludes, they are self-sufficient and preparing to leave home and make their way in the world. The family has also expanded to include an Aboriginal boy, whose

[25] Eleanor Spence, *The Switherby Pilgrims* (Bathgate, ND: Bethlehem Books, 2005); Eleanor Spence, *Jamberoo Road* (Bathgate, ND: Bethlehem Books, 2007).

[26] H. M. Saxby, *The Proof of the Puddin' Australian Children's Literature 1970–1990* (Sydney, NSW: Ashton Scholastic, 1993), 473.

[27] Eleanor Spence, "Profile of an Author," *Reading Time. New Books for Boys and Girls* 38 (1970): 33–34; Eleanor Spence, "Thirty Years of Writing Fiction for Children" (Melbourne, VIC: Collins Dove, 1988); Eleanor Spence, "Thirty Years of Writing Fiction for Children," *Reading Time. The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia* 100 (1986); and Helen Blenkiron, "Eleanor Spence—A Woman Ahead of Her Time," *Reading Time. The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia* 31, no. 4 (1987): 18.

"skilled hunting and bushcraft" had been a boon during hard times, and a twenty-seven-year-old former convict who works on the farm.[28]

Despite the status of Eleanor Spence, *The Switherby Pilgrims* and *Jamberoo Road* have proved more popular in the United States than in Australia. Today, they are published in the United States by Bethlehem Books, a small business based in North Dakota and linked to the local Bethlehem Community of Benedictine Oblates. The connection between this publisher and Spence's stories is likely to be the Benedictine contemplative monastic community, Jamberoo Abbey, located since 1988 in the small historic town of Jamberoo, in the Illawarra district, New South Wales. The stories are not stridently Christian but there are sufficient Christian elements in them for them appeal to a Christian publisher. As Eve Pownall observes, these stories (as in Spence's others) do not preach and yet are firmly "on the side of honesty, endeavour, courtesy, reliability and other established virtues."[29] The stories also fit well with Bethlehem Books' mandate to publish historical fiction which features children overcoming adverse circumstances.

Stories about Australian foster children are "rarely written about in children's literature" according to eminent Australian scholar, Maurice Saxby.[30] This has been our finding too. From 1969, when *Jamberoo Road* was published, to the end of the twentieth century, only seven stories about foster care families, including Eleanor Spence's *The Left Overs* (1985)—which centres on residential care but includes children who have been in foster care—are included in the key Australian database of Australian literature, Auslit.[31] Of these

[28] Spence, *The Switherby Pilgrims*, 129; Spence, *Jamberoo Road*, 9.

[29] Eve Pownall, "Happy Families—With Extras: A Look at the Writing of Eleanor Spence," *Reading Time. New Books for Boys and Girls* 38 (1970): 37.

[30] Saxby, *The Proof of the Puddin' Australian Children's Literature 1970–1990*, 380.

[31] There are more items in the Auslit Database filed under "orphan" instead of "foster families," the category used for this chapter. In both categories, however, there are errors. For example, Bernard Smith's *The Boy Adeodatus* is listed under "orphans" but Smith was not an orphan and was raised in foster care from when he was a baby. Also omitted from the "foster families" category is Ethel Turner's *That Girl*, yet the story revolves around an informal foster care situation. Sumner Locke Elliott's novel *Careful, He Might Hear You* has been listed under foster families, and yet, strictly speaking, that autobiographical story is about kinship care. For more on this, see Deidre Michell, "From Hagiography to Personal Pain: Stories of Australian Foster Care from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century," *Adoption & Culture* 5 (2017).

seven, two are framed around perspectives other than those of foster children: Lee-Anne Levy's *Jake* (1999) is an account of a boy waiting on a foster child to arrive at his home, and John Bentley's *Heads They Win, Tails We Lose* revolves around children who befriend an Aboriginal girl who gets taken into foster care. Neither of these, nor those whose protagonists are foster children, have captured the Australian imagination in the way of any on Lemn Sissay's list, nor those Dennis Leoutsakas examines. This is despite the eponymous character in *The True Story of Lola MacKellar* (1993), by esteemed Australian-British journalist and writer, James Aldridge (1918–2015), being similar to Anne Shirley in her fierce independence of mind but generous and kind nature (but also similar to characters in the early *Australian Journal* short stories in that Lola eventually finds out her family background includes considerable wealth). David Martin's foster boy in *Clowning Sim* (1988) is another potential candidate for a heroic foster care character, but has not achieved that status even though the book has been adapted for television.[32] Of course, finding a hero is not necessarily the most important step in doing justice to foster children in literature, but heroic figures can help make foster children more relatable to other young readers, and thus contribute to the de-stigmatising of foster care.[33]

The opening decades of the twenty-first century have seen published another small cadre of children's books which feature children in foster care. Examples are Kirsty Murray's *A Prayer for Blue Delaney* (2005) based on the child migration scheme to Australia, Glenda Millard's fantasy *Perry Angel's Suitcase* (2008), the mischievous boy in the eponymous *Tom* by Rolf Heimann (2009) and the Michael Panckridge mystery, *The Boy Who Wasn't There* (2011). To date, none of these foster care characters have achieved the status of those listed by Sissay or Leoutsakas, but they will each contribute to sensitising young readers to the difficulties experienced by children in foster care, and the pluckiness they need to survive.

[32] *Clowning Sim* was initially produced as a feature, *Clowning Around*, and shot in Perth and Paris by Barron Films, but shown as a mini-series on television in 1992. For further details see: Paul D. Barron, "Australasian Cinema," available at http://australiancinema.info/producers/barronpauld.html, last accessed 23 April 2018.

[33] We have discussed the issue of stigma associated with foster care and its harms in Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

Adult Fiction

Foster care does not feature in Australian adult fiction any more than it does in children's literature. However, two of Australia's most distinguished twentieth-century women writers, Kylie Tennant (1912–1988) and Olga Masters (1919–1986), both noted for the investigative research incorporated into their fiction, have written about Australia's child welfare systems, including foster care.

Kylie Tennant is renowned for her social criticism, advocacy of the poor and the meticulous research which informed her fiction. Born into a middle-class family in Manly, New South Wales, Tennant's interest in the material suffering caused by the class system was initially aroused by childhood tours of Sydney slum areas on the way to church with her family.[34] Believing in the educative power of fiction to change public opinion, Tennant later employed ethnographic research to explore the lives of poor and working-class people in order to expose oppressive social structures. A popular writer with those she wrote about, the gritty social realism of her novels meant Tennant's writing was often, but to her displeasure, compared with that of Charles Dickens and John Steinbeck.[35]

Tell Morning This (1967), originally published as *The Joyful Condemned* (1953),[36] examines the lived experience of girls in the care

[34] Kylie Tennant, *The Missing Heir: The Autobiography of Kylie Tennant* (Melbourne, VIC: Macmillan, 1986), 35–36; Deidre Michell, "Divine Horizons: Religion and Social Class in the Lives of Two Leading Australian Women, Betty Archdale and Kylie Tennant," in *Seizing the Initiative: Australian Women Leaders in Politics, Workplaces and Communities*, ed. R. Francis, P. Grimshaw, and A. Standish (Melbourne, VIC: Australian Women's Archives Project, 2012), 185, 190–91.

[35] Jane Grant, *Kylie Tennant: A Life* (Canberra, ACT: National Library of Australia, 2005), 2, 23, 32, 44; Tennant, *The Missing Heir: The Autobiography of Kylie Tennant*, 132. Michell, "Divine Horizons: Religion and Social Class in the Lives of Two Leading Australian Women, Betty Archdale and Kylie Tennant," 191–92.

[36] After completion, *Tell Morning This* was pared back and published in 1953 as the *Joyful Condemned*, partly because of post-war paper shortages. Tennant's "author's note" at the beginning of the 1967 full version says she is re-publishing the story at the behest of friends, perhaps in response to the growing opposition in Australia to conscription and the Vietnam War given that part of the story explores the imprisoning of a conscientious objector to the Second World War. See Kylie Tennant, *Tell Morning This* (Sydney, NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1967). Also see Deidre Michell, "Traces of a Feminist Protest: Kylie Tennant's Novel Tell Morning This," in *Silent System: Forgotten Australians and the Institutionalisation of Women and Children*, ed. P. Ashton and J. Wilson (Melbourne, VIC: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2014).

of the New South Wales state welfare system. Set in the inner suburbs of Sydney in 1943, the story opens with fifteen-year-old Irene McGarty, a homeless fugitive, reflecting on her life-to-date in informal and formal kinship care, foster care and Children's Homes. The story follows the adventures of Irene and her friends—other teenage girls in state care, including seventeen-year-old friend Marie West, who has just given birth and is under pressure to relinquish her tiny daughter for adoption. Eventually Marie is taken in by a socially progressive middle-class family and enabled to keep her baby, while Irene is apprehended and placed in a girls' home, Petworth—based on the notorious Parramatta Girls Home—as punishment for absconding from foster care. Irene also serves time in prison—modelled on Parramatta Gaol where Tennant had organised to be incarcerated for a week—for participating in a riot at Petworth.[37]

For the most part, national and international reviews for both *The Joyful Condemned* and *Tell Morning This* disregarded the problems Tennant highlighted about the New South Wales child welfare system, such as the sexual assault, exploitation and imprisonment of teenage girls. Instead reviewers focused on the character of Irene—who was ingenious but 'criminal' in what she needed to do to survive with little material or emotional support.[38] Academic commentary on the works has often taken a similar approach. For example *Tell Morning This* is included in Lisa Featherstone's study of novels constructing women's sexual freedom during war-time and *The Joyful Condemned* forms part of William Hatherell's explorations of Australian 'home front' novels.[39] But neither of these contemporary critiques observe the plight of state girls and how Tennant's story, ahead of its time in terms of its insight on this topic in many ways, resonates with histories such as Margaret

[37]Tennant, *The Missing Heir: The Autobiography of Kylie Tennant*, 132; Grant, *Kylie Tennant: A Life*, 44; and Michell, "Traces of a Feminist Protest: Kylie Tennant's Novel Tell Morning This," 193–208.

[38]See for example Geoffrey Hutton's review "A Pungent Kettle of Misfits" in the Melbourne *Argus* (25 April 1953) which opens with a description of *The Joyful Condemned* as a rollick in the gutter, and the one in the Adelaide *Advertiser* of 18 April 1953, entitled "Sordid Life of Mean Streets."

[39]Lisa Featherstone, "Sexy Mamas? Women, Sexuality and Reproduction in Australia in the 1940s," *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 126 (2005). William Hatherell, "The Australian Home-Front Novel of the Second World War: Genre, Gender and Region," *Australian Literary Studies* 23, no. 1 (2007).

Barbalet's *Far from a Low Gutter* and the more recent reports of federal senate inquiries *Forgotten Australians* (2004) and *Protecting Vulnerable Children* (2005). Thus, an important aspect of Tennant's social commentary has been very much under-examined.

Indeed, the only public figure who appears to have seriously interrogated Tennant's position on the child welfare system is Western Australian psychologist and ABC broadcaster, Erica Underwood, who, on 19 November 1955, sent Tennant a copy of the script she had prepared for the 'Women's Session' programme. The script juxtaposes *The Joyful Condemned* with John Bowlby's *Child Care and the Growth of Love*, also published in 1953. Bowlby's report was the outcome of commissioned research in 1949 by the World Health Organization (WHO) to investigate the mental health of homeless children in post-war Europe. Based on Bowlby's analysis of the harmful effect of early childhood neglect on the mental health of adolescents, Underwood connects Irene's, and by extension other state girls', 'criminality' and recalcitrance to environment, not character.[40]

Former journalist Olga Masters was also known to write fictional stories based on her lived experience of growing up in poverty and her knowledge of life in a series of small country towns she lived in as an adult. Born into an impoverished working-class family in country New South Wales during 1919, Masters began work as a journalist when she was fifteen, and continued in that career while she raised her family with husband Charles Masters, a teacher. Although she had long wanted to write fiction, Masters did not take up novel and short story writing as a career until she was fifty-eight. Despite the late start, she is one of Australia's "most recognised and awarded female writers."[41]

The Home Girls was Masters' first published collection of short stories. The book won second prize in the 1983 National Book Council awards and contains an opening eponymous story about two nameless little foster girls, the "fat one" and the "thin one," who have their bags packed and are waiting to be collected by a social worker. In protest the girls use the foster mother's makeup to scrawl lewd images and rude words on the

[40] Michell, "Traces of a Feminist Protest: Kylie Tennant's Novel Tell Morning This."

[41] "Olga Masters Short Story Award," http://www.olgamastersshortstoryaward.com.au/wp/. Also see "Masters, Olga Meredith (1919–1986)," National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/masters-olga-meredith-14948; Olga Masters, *Home Girls* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982).

bathroom mirror, an act that provides confirmation for the foster mother that she is right to be rejecting them. According to Julie Lewis, Masters wrote *The Home Girls* out of concern that the director of a Children's Home she had met was insensitive to the plight of girls in his care.[42] Because Masters was aware from an early age that girls are often sexually abused,[43] the mirror drawings can also be read as Masters considering this as a likely experience of girls in state care, as has been borne out in numerous state and federal inquiries since the 1990s. At the time of publication, however, *The Home Girls* elicited no widespread concern for the situation of girls in state care.

Despite the status of both Kylie Tennant and Olga Masters, then, their accounts of foster care—based on research and lived experience—were largely met with indifference. Public indifference towards child welfare in Western countries during the early part of the twentieth century was noted by John Bowlby in 1952, and in 2008 leading advocate for change in Victoria, John Fogarty, argued that the same was true in Australia for most of the twentieth century.[44] Admittedly, there have been periodic spikes of interest—typically around scandals as we argue in the introductory chapter to this book and also in our Chapter 7 examination of foster care in the historical media—but it is not a social issue which has captured the minds of twentieth-century Australian readers in a way comparable to Charles Dickens drawing attention to the human perils of the industrial revolution.[45] Indifference was the general reaction to other twentieth-century stories about foster care, for example, the 1940 publication by M. Williams in the *Australian Journal* of "State Kid," which more accurately than the nineteenth-century foster care stories in that journal—or indeed others published about informal foster care such as Alexander Vindex Vennard's *The Foster Fathers* (1934), the Walter G. Henderson story "Tom Hope" (serialised in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1930 and

[42] Julie Lewis, *Olga Masters: A Lot of Living* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1991), 122.

[43] Ibid., 22.

[44] John Bowlby, *Maternal Care and Mental Health: A Report Prepared on Behalf of the World Health Organization as a Contribution to the United Nations Programme for the Welfare of Homeless Children*, in Mongraph Series (Geneva: World Health Organization, 1952); John Fogarty, "Some Aspects of the Early History of Child Protection in Australia," *Family Matters*, no. 78 (2008): 52–59.

[45] Chapter 7: Rediscovering Foster Care.

then republished as a novel, *Nelligang*, in 1945) and the sinister *Harry's Child* (1964)—reflects the experience of many boys in state care who were expected to take up labouring work as soon as they reached the mandatory school leaving age.[46]

The few short fictional stories published from the 1970s were attempts by writers to reflect a variety of experiences which were beginning to permeate the public consciousness. This included stories of children living in Children's Homes who have foster parents during holidays, as did Grace in Chapter 4 of this book,[47] and as Muriel Duckworth does in "A Girl for Meg" (1978); the Stolen Generations experience, picked up in "Getting Across" (1988) by Dorothy Simmons; Jodie Kewley's "Romana" (1992) is narrated by the biological daughter of a foster care family; and Rey de Los Reyes in "The Blood Jumps" (1995) has fifteen-year-old Ron hanging out at Kings Cross in Sydney, searching for his 'real' parents.

Among the few twenty-first century stories about foster care by Australian writers are two which have achieved international success, although neither are set in Australia. Hannah Kent's *Burial Rites* (2013) is adult historical fiction based on the story of Agnes Magnusdottir, the last woman executed in Iceland for her role in murder and arson. Agnes had been in multiple foster care placements from the age of six. Kent was reportedly awarded one million dollars for a two-book deal with Picador and since publication, *Burial Rites* has been translated into thirty languages, won multiple awards and been widely recognised as an important contribution to valuing the "female voice perspective in patriarchal societies."[48] Also in 2013, Markus Zusak's already highly successful *The Book Thief* (2005)—set in Nazi Germany, narrated by Death and featuring a girl in foster care for five years—further hit the big time when the

[46] "Tom Hope" and *Nelligang* read as much orphan literature, that is, as a way to open a story and/or drive the story forward, see Leoutsakas, "Contemplating Fictional and Nonfictional Orphan Stories," 8.

[47] Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

[48] "Hannah Kent," https://hannah-kent-author.squarespace.com/burial-rites-reviews, last accessed 26 April 2018. Also see Stephen Romei, "Hannah Kent's Debut Novel Burial Rites Is Written in Cold Blood," *The Australian* 2013; Paramita Ayuningtyas, "Deconstructing the Stereotypes of Women through a Female Voice in Burial Rites (2013) by Hannah Kent," *Lingua Cultura* 9, no. 2 (2015): 80.

film based on the novel was released. The film received Academy Award, Golden Globe and BAFTA nominations.[49]

As successful as *Burial Rites* and *The Book Thief* are, because of their international settings they will not produce Australian foster care's iconic characters. What they are likely to do, however, is sensitise Australian and international audiences to the difficulties faced by children and young people in foster care. Liesel Meminger in *The Book Thief* may also prompt readers and viewers to see the courage and ingenuity of foster children, and the ways they are called on to 'use extraordinary skills' to survive—and sometimes even to flourish—in often traumatic situations unfamiliar to the majority of the population.[50]

Autobiographical Accounts of Foster Care

Until recently people have not spoken of their childhood experiences in care in case that knowledge damages their current standing in the community, or because they feel ashamed, the reason given by Sydney lawyer, Peter Kelso, as to why he kept his time in foster care secret for most of his adult life.[51] Acknowledgement of, and attempts to challenge, the long-term stigma and discrimination against those with state care experience—what Andrew Harvey and colleagues call the "omnipresent soft bigotry of low expectations"—is a recent phenomenon, and it is an ongoing process.[52] As recently as 2013, CREATE Foundation, a national

[49] By mid-2010 the novel had sales of one and a half million copies across various formats. See: Shannon Maughan, "It's a Wonderful (Sales) Life: The Staying Power of 'the Book Thief'," *Publishers Weekly* 257, no. 34 (2010).

[50] TED.com, "Lemn Sissay: A Child of the State."

[51] Peter Kelso, "Peter Kelso: Lawyer Peter Kelso Shares His Memories About Growing Up in State Care," Kelso Lawyers.

[52] Andrew Harvey et al., *Out of Care, into University: Raising Higher Education Access and Achievement of Care Leavers*" (LaTrobe: LaTrobe University, 2015), 6. Also see Andrew Harvey, Lisa Andrewartha, and Patricia McNamara, "A Forgotten Cohort? Including People from out of Home Care in Australian Higher Education Policy," *Australian Journal of Education* 59, no. 2 (2015). For a discussion about the long-standing problem of stigma and its effect on those raised in foster care, see Dee Michell, "Foster Care, Stigma and the Sturdy, Unkillable Children of the Very Poor," *Continuum. Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 29, no. 4 (2015); Deidre Michell and Pamela Petrilli, "Similarities in Difficulties: Australians Raised in Out-of-Home-Care," in *Challenges to Living Together. Transculturalism, Migration, Exploitation*, ed. Susan Petrilli (Italy: Mimesis

support and advocacy group for children and young people in out of home care, saw the need for its *Power Within Portrait Exhibition* project. The project aimed to "reduce the stigma experienced by children and young people with a care experience" by connecting young people currently in care with twenty-one successful adult care leavers around the country, for example, former chair of the nation's public broadcaster, David Hill, and World Championship surfer, Layne Beachley.[53] The stories and photographs of each young person and older care leaver were then collated into a booklet and curated for exhibition. Two years later CREATE began the *#snapthatstigma* campaign, this time using social media to tell positive stories about young care leavers to influence Australians who do not necessarily treat them "with the same respect as their peers in the general community" and who have not done so over many years.[54]

Prior to the late 1990s and early twenty-first-century spate of state and federal government inquiries, only a few isolated Australians had publicly recounted their stories of being in foster care as children. One of the earliest is Monica Clare's semi-fictionalised autobiographical account of foster and residential care, *Karobran* (1978). *Karobran* is also one of the earliest books published by an Aboriginal Australian woman and a protest against the Aboriginal child removal policies which resulted in what is now widely known as the Stolen Generations.[55]

International, 2017). For a discussion about how stigma continues to effects young people who have recently exited Out of Home Care, see Dee Michell and Claudine Scalzi, "I Want to Be Someone, I Want to Make a Difference: Young Care Leavers Preparing for the Future in South Australia," in *Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Car*, ed. Philip Mendes and Pamela Snow (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[53]CREATE Foundation, "The Power Within Portrait Exhibibition Launch," (Online 2013); CREATE Foundation, "Issue: Stigma in Out-of-Home Care," (Online 2015).

[54]CREATE Foundation, "Help Change Preconceived Views of Young People in Care #Snapthatstigma," https://create.org.au/resources/snap-that-stigma/, last accessed 26 April 2018; Michell, "Foster Care, Stigma and the Sturdy, Unkillable Children of the Very Poor."

[55]According to Daniel Heath Justice, the earliest book by an Aboriginal woman was From *Old Maloga: The Memoirs of an Aboriginal Woman* by Theresa Clements, written in the 1930s but not published until 1954, see Richard Pascal, "Audible in the Silence: Douglas Lockwood, Waipuldanya, and the Postwar Aboriginal Life Narrative," *Life Writing* 3, no. 2 (2006): 76. However, Monica Clare is usually positioned with Margaret Tucker (1904–1996) and Oodgeroo Nunuccal (Kath Walker) (1920–1993) as the three earliest Aboriginal women writers. Tucker's book *If Everyone Cared: Autobiography of Margaret*

Monica Clare was born Mona Matilda Clare in 1924 in Queensland, the daughter of a white woman, Beatrice Scott, and an Aboriginal man, Daniel Herbert McGowan. Beatrice died in childbirth when Monica was seven and she and her brother Dan were placed in state care shortly after. Initially sent to a Children's Home, both children were then fostered to siblings Stella and Bill Woodbury who treated them kindly and lovingly. In 1935 the children were removed by the state and permanently separated: Dan was sent to train as a farm labourer, and Monica as a domestic servant at the Halloween Children's Home in Strathfield, New South Wales. After working in service at low pay and under strict conditions for numerous Sydney households, like many other former foster girls, Monica took up factory jobs which offered more freedom. She studied shorthand and typing in the evening. Clare was also an activist for women's and Aboriginal rights.[56]

Clare died in 1973 before *Karobran* was finished.[57] The editorial work done by friends—playwright Mona Brand (1915–2007) and fellow activist Jack Horner (b. 1922)—to bring the slender manuscript to publication, formed the basis of the few reviews of *Karobran* and obscured its political message. Published by a small press (typical of early Indigenous writings prior to the 1980s), *Karobran* was an assigned text in only two university courses until 1988, and only fifty copies of the

Tucker (1977) has not been included in this discussion because, upon forcible removal from her parents at the age of 12, she was sent to the infamous Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls and then sent to work as a domestic servant at the age of 13. Oodgeroo Nunuccal grew up in the care of her family, but also went out to work as a domestic servant when she was 13, see Sue Abbey, "Noonuccal, Oodgeroo (1920–1993)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Century of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/noonuccal-oodgeroo-18057, last accessed 26 April 2018.

[56]Jennifer Jones, "Reading Karobran by Monica Clare: An Aboriginal Engagement with Socialist Realism," *Overland*, no. 161 (Summer 2000). Jennifer Jones, "Yesterday's Words: The Editing of Monica Clare's Karobran," *Journal of Australian Studies* 24, no. 64 (2000). Also see Jack Horner, "Clare, Mona Matilda (Monica) (1924–1973)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/clare-mona-matilda-monica-9750, last accessed 26 April 2018; Naomi Parry, "Halloween Children's Home (C. 1925–C. 1938)," Find & Connect, https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE01120b.htm, last accessed 26 Apirl 2018; and Barbalet, *Far from a Low Gutter Girl*, 153.

[57]Monica Clare, *Karobran: The Story of an Aboriginal Girl* (Chippendale, NSW: Alternative Publishing, 1978).

book were sold between 1990 and 1998.[58] Thus an important Australian text, with valuable insights into a number of significant social issues, including foster care, was largely overlooked for many years.

More successful—in part because of his status as "Australia's great art historian"—has been Bernard Smith's memoirs, *The Boy Adeoatus: The Portrait of a Lucky Young Bastard* (1984) and *A Pavane for Another Time* (2002).[59] Intensely interested in origins from a young age, Smith did not write his own origin story, or speak of it to colleagues, until he had retired as an academic, was sixty-eight years of age, and past the point of the knowledge negatively impacting his life and career.[60] Distancing himself, Smith (1916–2011) wrote in the third person and describes his childhood as an 'illegitimate' ward of the state, living with Mary (Tottie) Keen and her family, which included many state wards, as Tottie Keen contributed to her family's income by fostering state children.[61] Adored by his foster mother, encouraged to keep in contact with his birth mother, and never expected to leave school in order to take on labouring work, Smith's experience in foster care was a largely positive one—indeed he was aware that he was better off than other foster children in the Keens' home, and this in itself was a source of shame. He was also keenly and painfully aware of his low status, both at school and in his home life. A hurtful reminder of this was that he was excluded from Tottie Keen's funeral in 1931. The young Bennie, as Smith was called, understood that his position within his foster family was precarious, and that he needed to behave according to social norms or he would be rejected, as his foster brother had been. As we discussed in Chapter 6, he also came to resent his lowly status, and steeled himself to improve his position in life, persisting with his education despite being taunted at school.[62]

[58] Jones, "Reading Karobran by Monica Clare: An Aboriginal Engagement with Socialist Realism."; Jones, "Yesterday's Words: The Editing of Monica Clare's Karobran."

[59] Sheridan Palmer, *Hegel's Owl. The Life of Bernard Smith* (Sydney: Power Publications, 2016), 1; Bernard Smith, *The Boy Adeodatus* (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin, 1984); and Bernard Smith, *A Pavane for Another Time* (South Yarra, VIC: Macmillan Art, 2002).

[60] Sheridan Palmer, Email correspondence with Deidre Michell, 2013.

[61] For more on the circumstances leading to Smith's placement with Tottie Keen, and his experiences of stigma in foster care, see Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

[62] For more on the role of education in Smith's life, and the significance he attributed to his wife's knowledge of social etiquette among the upper classes, see Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

Also appearing prior to the reports of the key government inquiries which dramatically altered the terrain of care leaver survivor narratives, Walter Jacobsen's memoir can be seen as part of a larger global trend beginning in the 1990s in which "personal storytelling" exposing childhoods riven with violence, discrimination and poverty acquired both readership and publisher interest.[63] *Dussa and the Maiden's Prayer* was published in 1994 at which time Jacobsen, born in 1918, was seventy six years of age, and like Smith, past the age of harm to reputation and career. Jacobsen knew nothing of his parents or their reasons for leaving him as a baby with his maternal grandparents in South Melbourne. After three years his grandmother took him to the Children's Court where he "was committed as a neglected child…and became a ward of the state."[64] Jacobsen has fond memories of the Royal Park Depot in suburban Parkville where children lived until boarding out (foster care) placements could be found, but, reminiscent of Priscilla's story in Chapter 4, his experiences in foster care were difficult. In Chapter 6 we discussed the abuse and stigmatisation suffered by Jacobsen in his foster home, as well as his determination, much like Smith's, to make a better life for himself.[65] Jacobsen's account of how he worked hard, and took advantage of the support of kind people where he found them, forms an important component of his memoir which concludes with him taking up a staff position at the University of Melbourne as a technical assistant in the Chemistry Department.[66]

The memoirs by Bernard Smith and Walter Jacobsen are what Rosamund Dalziell calls "shameful" ones. That is, like the testimonies published in *Bringing Them Home*, the later *Lost Innocents* and *Forgotten Australians*, and the autobiographies discussed below, these autobiographies are forms "of testimony to suffering and injustice,"[67] specifically the

[63] Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith, *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 3, 15. Kate Douglas, *Contesting Childhood: Autobiography, Trauma and Memory* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 1.

[64] Walter Jacobsen, *Dussa and the Maiden's Prayer* (Melbourne: The Law Printer, 1994), 2.

[65] Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

[66] James Waghorne, Email correspondence with Deidre Michell, 2014.

[67] Rosamund Dalziell, *Shameful Autbiographies. Shame in Contemporary Australian Autobiographies and Culture* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1999), 11.

suffering and injustice of being at the bottom of the social heap because of illegitimacy and wardship, and the additional burden of abuse in foster care experienced by Walter Jacobsen. Such autobiographies offer the potential for healing in several ways: for the writers to re-evaluate their childhoods in the light of new social histories, and to experience a sense of wellbeing; for readers to companion with those who have been shamed and perhaps confront the legacy of their own isolation and shame; and for societies to wash clean suppurating wounds and become more tolerant.[68]

Contributing to drawing the nation's attention to the inadequacies and abuses of child welfare systems in advance of recent significant inquiries was Jan Owen, a youth worker. Owen, founder in 1993 of the Australian Association of Young People in Care (AAYPC), which later became the CREATE Foundation, was prompted to write *Every Childhood Lasts A Lifetime* because of her concerns about young people in state care, particularly their lack of voice. Even in research, and not only in Australia, children and young people were rarely asked to give their perspective on state care prior to the 1990s. Jill Chaifetz went so far as to suggest that the failure of the foster care system in the United States resulted directly from the refusal of authorities to listen to the views of children and young people.[69]

Owen, now a noted social entrepreneur, interviewed young people and then recorded their stories in *Every Childhood* along with poetry and self-narratives by former foster children. These accounts in many ways resemble those in later state and federal government inquiries. That is,

[68] Ibid. For more on the emotional and psychological benefits of writing about trauma, see Louise DeSalvo, *Writing as a Way of Healing* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1999); James W. Pennebaker and Joshua M. Smyth, *Opening Up by Writing It Down, Third Edition: How Expressive Writing Improves Health and Eases Emotional Pain*, 3rd ed. (New York: The Guilford Press, 2016).

[69] Jan Owen, *Every Childhood Lasts a Lifetime. Personal Stories from the Frontline of Family Breakdown* (Brisbane, QLD: Australian Association of Young People in Care, 1996), 215. About the lack of voice in research of children and young people in state care, see Cas O'Neill, "'I Remember the First Time I Went into Foster Care—It's a Long Story …': Children, Permanent Parents, and Other Supportive Adults Talk About the Experience of Moving from One Family to Another," *Journal of Family Studies* 10, no. 2 (2004); Alexandra Osborn and Leah Bromfield, "Participation of Children and Young People in Care in Decisions Affecting Their Lives," in *National Child Protection Clearinghouse Research Brief* (Online: Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2007); and Jill Chaifetz, "Listening to Foster Children in Accordance with the Law: The Failure to Serve Children in State Care," *Review of Law and Social Change* 25, no. 1 (1999).

the stories give young people an opportunity to speak about their experience in state care, and most of those experiences were harmful. One of the people featured in Owen's book, Rebeccah Mango, was born in Papua New Guinea and informally adopted by a white Australian aunt and Papua New Guinean uncle at age three. She ended up in the Australian state care system because the family migrated to Australia shortly after taking Rebeccah in, but treated her like slave labour (like Pam in Chapter 4). One day Rebeccah refused to return home from school. Sadly, Rebeccah says she felt like slave labour in all subsequent foster care placements too, as did Denise Thompson, also in Owen's book, when fostered with a family in the country. Another section features Michael Talbot who was sexually, emotionally and physically abused in his first foster care placement when he was three, and his education severely disrupted thereafter by multiple placements, or 'movements' as Priscilla in Chapter 4 referred to them. Jacob Kenny and Malcolm Marcus also experienced disrupted education through multiple placements and both talked about an association at school between their being in foster care and feeling treated as criminals. Jeannie Dee spoke of a primarily positive foster care experience, but at thirteen she began eavesdropping on evening conversations. Hearing disparaging comments about her birth family, she ran away and refused to return home.[70]

Most of the participants in Owen's book were born in the 1970s and therefore young adults at the time of the interviews when their childhood experiences were still raw. Jeannie Dee, however, was forty-one, and writes of a long working life as a nurse at the Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide. She began work there at nineteen and the suffering she witnessed, "beyond anything [she] could ever have imagined as a child…helps put [her] own pain into perspective."[71] Leoutsakas might

[70]For more on the long term alienation of children in state care from their birth parents, see Deidre Michell, "Systemic Familial Alienation and the Australian Foster Care System," in *Challenges to Living Together. Transculturalism, Migration, Exploitation*, ed. Susan Petrilli (Italy: Mimesis International, 2017). For specific Aboriginal examples see Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home: A Guide to the Findings and Recommendations of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families" (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997), 135, 136, 204–6, 209.

[71]Jeannie Dee, "The Healing Is in the Writing," in *Every Childhood Lasts a Lifetime*, ed. Jan Owen (Brisbane, QLD: Australian Association of Young People in Care, 1996), 188.

well regard Dee's life as a mundane one, and certainly she was not the high flyer that Bernard Smith was, but she had a far more successful life than is usually expected of former foster children. Indeed, this is possibly one of the most useful contributions of recent autobiographies of foster care. True, the heroic foster child who triumphs to reach pinnacles in her or his chosen field has its appeal and uses, but such a story is fable-like and if left in isolation may actually generate contempt for those who do not climb to such heights. The rich tapestry of foster care experiences which we are only recently beginning to see reveal the many ways that people survive foster care, and the many different ways that a life well lived might manifest itself.

In 1997 the Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, *Bringing Them Home*, was released. For more than a decade, activists had been arguing that non-Indigenous Australians could not understand the position of present day Indigenous Australians without understanding the history and legacies of systematic child removal over many generations. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission used a "testimonial-based inquiry" and case study approach, inaugurated in Australia by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1989–1996), to give central authority to oral testimony and the lived experiences of survivors.[72] *Bringing Them Home*, which "tells the stories of lives felt and lived…rather than reporting on lives counted and measured,"[73] had a remarkable impact on the Australian public, giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians much needed legitimacy and space in the national story which they had not previously been able to occupy.[74] In 1998 Australians signed 'sorry books' and inaugurated a National Sorry Day—the first held on 26 May 1998 on the first anniversary of the tabling of *Bringing Them Home* in parliament—to express

[72]Shurlee Swain, "History of Australian Inquiries Reviewing Institutions Providing Care for Children" (Sydney, NSW, 2014), 10.

[73]Anne Surma, "Stolen Stories Returned: Bringing Them Home," in *Telling Stories. Australian Life and Literature 1935–2012*, ed. Tanya Dalziell and Paul Genoni (Clayton, VIC: Monash University Press, 2013), 494.

[74]David McCooey, "Autobiography," in *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, ed. Peter Pierce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 341; Schaffer and Smith, *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition*, 106; Kay Schaffer, "Stolen Generation Narratives in Local and Global Contexts," *Antipodes* 16, no. 1 (2002): 6.

their regret about the racist fragmentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. This politics of reconciliation, which many argue has now stalled—particularly in the light of Prime Minister Turnbull's rejection of the "Uluru Statement from the Heart" that called for constitutional recognition of a First Nations' voice—helped inject the history of Indigenous child removal into the minds of the Australian general public, and enshrined the term Stolen Generations as part of the national parlance.

Bringing Them Home also led to more testimonies, for example via interviews recorded for the National Library of Australia's Bringing Them Home Oral History Project, which includes accounts of foster care.[75] Vince Wenberg (b. 1932), for instance, was briefly in foster care in Pipers Flat, New South Wales, as was Sylvia Neary (b. 1940) in South Australia, and Christine Ohrin (b. 1956) in Cessnock, New South Wales. Those who had longer periods in foster care, some positive and others a mix of abuse and positive elements include Jackie Frail (b. 1960) in Parramatta, New South Wales and Sandra Hill in Perth. There were former foster children who were in multiple placements too, for example, Debra Chandler (b. 1959) in Hobart and Dale Stewart (b. 1967) in Wellington, New South Wales, and there were some, like Daniel Power (b. 1960) in Victoria, who was fostered initially and later adopted. Autobiographies, including edited collections such as Mary Ann Bin-Sallik's *Aboriginal Women by Degrees* (2000)—which contains Miriam Stead Raymond's (b. 1948) positive account of foster care with a white family—have other political aims, such as to demonstrate and document some of the history of Aboriginal women at university, and to encourage

[75] McCooey, "Autobiography," 341. The Bringing Them Home Oral History Project ran from 1998 to 2002, conducting oral history interviews with Indigenous Australians in order to preserve their stories, along with those of white Australians, for example, police, missionaries and administrators of the forcible removal policies and practices. Further funding by the Federal Government in 2009 has enabled access to many of the interviews online, and follow up interviews were also conducted with some of those citizens whose testimony formed *Bringing Them Home*, see National Library of Australia, "Bringing Them Home Oral History Project," https://www.nla.gov.au/oral-history/bringing-them-home-oral-history-project, last accessed 24 April 2018. Our focus in this chapter is life story/autobiography, but there are other examples of Indigenous experiences in foster care, such as singer-song writer Archie Roach's transmission of story via song. See Gerry Turcotte, "Australian Gothic," in *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*, ed. Mulvey Roberts (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); "Archie Roach," http://www.archieroach.com/, last accessed 23 April 2018.

other Aboriginal people into tertiary education, yet in the process they reveal something about foster care. There are now also many websites which tell both the larger story of the Stolen Generations and host individual accounts of lived experience.[76]

Rosalie Fraser's experience of foster care, *Shadow Child: A Memoir of the Stolen Generation*, was published in 1998 and adapted for a docudrama, *Rosie*, by Artemis Media—producers of the popular *Who Do You Think You Are* series—in 2004. It is a story of overcoming adversity with the political intent of adding to the Stolen Generations testimonies. Two-year-old Rosalie was removed, along with two sisters, from her parents in 1961 and made a ward of the state. The siblings were placed with a white family, the Kellys, in suburban Perth, Western Australia where Mrs. Kelly, the foster mother, subjected Rosalie to a terrifying regime of ongoing verbal, physical and sexual violence. At age ten, Rosalie was running away, at one time staying at the Mount Lawley Reception Home which, like Priscilla in Chapter 4 and Walter Jacobsen above, she found to be a considerable improvement on foster care; at least there she was "one of a majority" not only because she was "without parents" but also because she was not "the only kid who was Aboriginal."[77] Rosalie was returned to the Kellys, however, and kept on running away.

Beset by an alcohol addiction, and troubled by her childhood experiences, Fraser says she sat down one evening and began to write her story, and it was the writing that brought a measure of healing. Rosalie's education had been significantly disrupted by abuse at home, homelessness as a teenager and early motherhood, but motivated by the desire to improve her writing skills, at the age of thirty-four Fraser took Adult Education Classes and in 1996 enrolled at Edith Cowan University in the Aboriginal Orientation Course, a preparatory course for mainstream university classes.[78]

[76] For example: http://www.stolengenerationstestimonies.com/, last accessed 23 April 2018.

[77] Rosalie Fraser, *Shadow Child: A Memoir of the Stolen Generation* (Alexandria, NSW: Hale & Iremonger, 1998), 62. As noted in Bringing Them Home, foster care for Aboriginal children was commonplace by the 1970s throughout the country; it was considered better than congregate care. Unfortunately, however, Aboriginal children were often more isolated in foster care, see Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Bringing Them Home: A Guide," 126.

[78] Hannah Forsyth, *A History of the Modern Australian University* (Sydney, NSW: New South, 2014).

Donna Meehan's *It Is No Secret. The Story of a Stolen Child* (2000) was also published in the wake of *Bringing Them Home*. Meehan, a Gamilaroi woman, was born in 1954 in the small regional town of Coonamble in New South Wales. At the age of six she was removed from her parents and separated from all six siblings. Taken by train to Newcastle, she was fostered by middle-aged post-war migrants to Australia who, after three years, then adopted Donna. While her home life was a positive one—she felt loved and cared for "both emotionally and materially"—Donna's education was disrupted by family moves and demoralising racism at school. Like Rosalie Fraser, and as is a feature of many Indigenous and non-Indigenous foster care stories, Donna searched, and found, her birth family, doing so with the full support of her adoptive parents. In her early thirties Donna was encouraged by fellow workers at the City Mission to undertake further education and she, again like Rosalie Fraser, took up the opportunity presented by Aboriginal education programmes to enter university. She subsequently published her memoir, also published in French in 2003, and has a number of tertiary qualifications, including a Bachelor of Community Services from Macquarie University in Sydney. Donna continues to live in Newcastle and is involved in her local community as a broadcaster and mentor. She considers she has been on a twenty-five year long healing journey.[79]

Two other Federal Government Inquiries, *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record—Report on Child Migration* (2001) and *Forgotten Australians: A Report on Australians Who Experienced Institutional or Out-of-Home Care as Children* (2004), have precipitated a small but steady stream of autobiographical accounts from non-Indigenous Australians about their childhood experiences in out of home care. Many of these stories were told for the first time to the federal government inquiries and significant state government ones, such as 1998–1999 *Forde Inquiry* (Queensland), the 2003 *Listen to the Review of Claims of Abuse from Adults in State Care as Children* (Tasmania), and the 2004–2008 *The Children in State*

[79] Donna Meehan, *It Is No Secret* (Milsons Point, NSW: Random House, 2000), 49, 54. Also see: Donna Meehan, "Donnameehan.Com.Au," http://donnameehan.com.au/. "Meet the Mob: Donna Meehan," in *1233 ABC Newcastle* (Online: ABC). Donna Meehan, "Donna Meehan Interviewed by Rob Willis in the Bringing Them Home After the Apology Oral History Project" in *Bringing Them Home After the Apology Oral History Project*, ed. Rob Willis (Canberra, ACT: National Library of Australia, 2010).

Care Commission of Inquiry (South Australia). CLAN, founded in 2000 by care leavers Leonie Sheedy and Joanna Penglase, have also, through their regular newsletter, provided an avenue for individual stories of childhoods spent in out of home care, primarily in children's homes and orphanages. Soon after the release of *Lost Innocents*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press published *Feathers of the Snow Angel. Memories of a Child in Exile* (2002)—which includes a reference to a brief time in foster care—by former child migrant, Lionel Pearce (1920–2001). The small independent press in Western Australia might have hoped for another significant success, as happened when they published Albert Fahey's memoir of his impoverished childhood, *A Fortunate Life* (1981), or Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987) which has been claimed to have "opened up the country for Indigenous people," and made its way onto school curricula,[80] but that was not to be.

In Queensland, the Micah Project, a state government funded community support service, ran writing workshops after the Forde Inquiry and published *Lives of Uncommon Children* in 2009. Among the ten stories of childhoods in Children's Homes and orphanages are two about foster care at different times: Gloria Lovely, born in the 1940s, and Tina in the 1970s—neither are happy ones. As with *Bringing Them Home*, the National Library of Australia's joint *Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants Oral History Project*, which commenced in 2009 and concluded in 2012, contains stories primarily from those who were in Children's Homes and orphanages, with fewer than half making any mention about the experience of foster care at all. Other organisations, such as the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA), have produced resources to educate the wider Australian community about Former Child Migrants and Forgotten Australians, including a video, *Forgotten Australians: Life Stories* containing five accounts of life in Children's Homes and Tony's; Tony had five foster care placements as well as four in Children's Homes.

Recent trends in self-publishing have also enabled former foster children to put out their own stories. For example, Ki Meekins, an activist in South Australia who successfully sued the state government for

[80]Ruby Langord Ginibi, cited by Schaffer, "Stolen Generation Narratives in Local and Global Contexts," 6. Also see Per Henningsgaard, "Our Cup Runneth Over: Life-Stories from Fremantle Go National," in *Telling Stories: Australian Life and Literature 1935–2012*, ed. Tanya Dalziell and Paul Genoni (Clayton, VIC: Monash University Press, 2014), 436. About the critical and popular success of these books.

negligence, published *Red Tape Rape*—his story of extensive physical and sexual abuse in foster and residential care—in 2008. Sharyn Killens' *The Inconvenient Child* came out in 2009 and tells the story of an 'illegitimate' child of a white Australian woman and an African American man who was placed into foster care rather than bring shame on her family. A second informal foster care placement Killens remembers with warmth and fondness, but her mother subsequently placed her into a convent where she felt mistreated, and in the infamous Parramatta Girls Home. *The Inconvenient Child* received some attention in the United States when Killens met the family of the American soldier who fathered her in 1948. Debbie Bell in *Someone Else's Child* (2012) tells of being in a successful foster care placement as a child, and in turn, becoming a foster parent while desperately trying to conceive her own child. Christina Riley, co-founder of Parragirls, a support group for former residents of Parramatta Girls Home, self-published *The Life of Riley* in 2014, her narrative of abuse in multiple foster homes and residential care facilities.

In none of these accounts are storytellers required to be what Kate Douglas calls "good subjects," people who have succeeded "against the odds" or who have demonstrated resilience and recovery from trauma.[81] Instead the inquiries and other avenues for story telling have changed what it means to be a subject of autobiography; they have opened a new socio-cultural space for 'ordinary' Australian citizens to explore and revaluate their lives in the light of a social identity previously missing, even as they continue the long trend in Australian autobiography of situating their stories within larger socio-historical contexts.[82]

We began this chapter looking for the heroic literary figures of foster care in Australia to equate with those Lemn Sissay cites in his performances or those Dennis Leoutsakas compares to interviews with 'real life' orphans. And while we found a failure of such figures to

[81] Douglas, *Contesting Childhood: Autobiography, Trauma and Memory*, 109.

[82] McCooey, "Autobiography," 8. Also see Douglas, *Contesting Childhood: Autobiography, Trauma and Memory*, 107.

gain traction within fiction, we mapped the slow emergence of autobiographical stories about foster care in Australia, principally stimulated by testimonial case-study based state and federal government inquiries. These, we argue, have already played a profound healing role—not only for those who write to heal, but for those who read and grapple with their meanings. We have also demonstrated that not all those 'orphaned' according to Denis Leoutsakas' broad definition have led mundane lives; many have indeed had a significant impact on Australian society, but it is only recently that the connection between that impact and their lowly stigmatised origins has been, or is being, made.

Now that foster care stories have made it into the mainstream there are likely to be more in the future. Some stories may continue to emerge through history programmes such *Who Do You Think You Are* which has revealed the foster care status of the parents of Australian celebrities, for example, the grandmother and father of actor Jackie Weaver and the mother of AFL star Adam Goodes. A new tradition may also emerge in which writers explore the foster care experience of family members, as high-profile feminist and writer, Germaine Greer has done in *Daddy, We Hardly Knew You* (1999) with her father's time in informal foster care,[83] and as acclaimed writer Kate Grenville has done with her mother's experience of informal foster care in *One Life: My Mother's Story* (2015). Popular journalist, Caroline Baum, has also included what she knows of her parents' foster care experiences—both her mother and father were in foster care—in her memoir *Only: A Singular Memoir* (2017).

However the stories arrive, all will contribute to a lessening of stigma and should encourage policymakers, carers, social workers and others to expect "greatness and goodness" from children and young people in foster care, and to see the "extraordinary skills [they use] to deal with extraordinary situations on a daily basis."[84]

[83]For further discussion of Germain Greer and her father's foster care experience see Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

[84]TED.com, "Lemn Sissay: A Child of the State."

References

Abbey, Sue. "Noonuccal, Oodgeroo (1920–1993)." Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Century of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/noonuccal-oodgeroo-18057.

"Archie Roach." http://www.archieroach.com/.

Australian Journal. Melbourne, VIC: Clarson, Massina & Co., 1865–1955.

Ayuningtyas, Paramita. "Deconstructing the Stereotypes of Women Through a Female Voice in Burial Rites (2013) by Hannah Kent." *Lingua Cultura* 9, no. 2 (2015): 5–41.

Barbalet, Margaret. *Far from a Low Gutter Girl: The Forgotten World of State Wards: South Australia 1887–1940*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Barron, Paul D. "Australasian Cinema." http://australiancinema.info/producers/barronpauld.html.

Bennett, Bruce. "The Short Story, 1890s to 1950." In *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, edited by Peter Pierce, 156–79. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Blenkiron, Helen. "Eleanor Spence—A Woman Ahead of Her Time." *Reading Time. The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia* 31, no. 4 (1987): 17–23.

Bowlby, John. *Maternal Care and Mental Health: A Report Prepared on Behalf of the World Health Organization as a Contribution to the United Nations Programme for the Welfare of Homeless Children*. Mongraph Series. Geneva: World Health Organization, 1952.

Bradford, Clare. "Australian Children's Literature." In *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, edited by Peter Pierce, 282–302. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Chaifetz, Jill. "Listening to Foster Children in Accordance with the Law: The Failure to Serve Children in State Care." *Review of Law and Social Change* 25, no. 1 (1999): 1–28.

Clare, Monica. *Karobran: The Story of an Aboriginal Girl*. Chippendale, NSW: Alternative Publishing, 1978.

CREATE Foundation. "Help Change Preconceived Views of Young People in Care #Snapthatstigma." https://create.org.au/resources/snap-that-stigma/.

CREATE Foundation. "The Power Within Portrait Exhibibition Launch." Online, 2013.

CREATE Foundation. "Issue: Stigma in Out-of-Home Care." Online, 2015.

Dalziell, Rosamund. *Shameful Autbiographies. Shame in Contemporary Australian Autobiographies and Culture*. Melbourne, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 1999.

Dee, Jeannie. "The Healing Is in the Writing." In *Every Childhood Lasts a Lifetime*, edited by Jan Owen. Brisbane, QLD: Australian Association of Young People in Care, 1996.

DeSalvo, Louise. *Writing as a Way of Healing*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1999.
Douglas, Kate. *Contesting Childhood: Autobiography, Trauma and Memory*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010.
"Dragon's Den—Richards' Story." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGd-Fccdm3wg, 2010.
Featherstone, Lisa. "Sexy Mamas? Women, Sexuality and Reproduction in Australia in the 1940s." *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 126 (2005): 234–52.
Fogarty, John. "Some Aspects of the Early History of Child Protection in Australia." *Family Matters*, no. 78 (2008): 52–59.
Forsyth, Hannah. *A History of the Modern Australian University*. Sydney: New South, 2014.
Foster Focus. "Famous Former Foster/Adopted Kids." https://www.fosterfocusmag.com/famous-foster-kids.
FosterClub. "Foster to Famous." https://www.fosterclub.com/blog/foster-famous.
Fraser, Rosalie. *Shadow Child. A Memoir of the Stolen Generation*. Alexandria, NSW: Hale & Iremonger, 1998.
Grant, Jane. *Kylie Tennant: A Life*. Canberra, ACT: National Library of Australia, 2005.
Hannaford, Victoria. "From Foster Child to Super Mum: Future Looks Bright for Lanai Scarr's Triple Delight." *Daily Telegraph*, 26 August 2016.
"Hannah Kent." https://hannah-kent-author.squarespace.com/burial-rites-reviews.
Harvey, Andrew, Lisa Andrewartha, and Patricia McNamara. "A Forgotten Cohort? Including People from Out of Home Care in Australian Higher Education Policy." *Australian Journal of Education* 59, no. 2 (2015): 182–95.
Harvey, Andrew, Patricia McNamara, Lisa Andrewartha, and Michale Luckman. *Out of Care, into University: Raising Higher Education Access and Achievement of Care Leavers*. LaTrobe: LaTrobe University, 2015.
Hatherell, William. "The Australian Home-Front Novel of the Second World War: Genre, Gender and Region." *Australian Literary Studies* 23, no. 1 (2007): 79.
Henningsgaard, Per. "Our Cup Runneth Over: Life-Stories from Fremantle Go National." In *Telling Stories: Australian Life and Literature 1935–2012*, edited by Tanya Dalziell and Paul Genoni, 289–93. Clayton, VIC: Monash University Press, 2014.
Horner, Jack. "Clare, Mona Matilda (Monica) (1924–1973)." Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University. http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/clare-mona-matilda-monica-9750.
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity. *Bringing Them Home: A Guide to the Findings and Recommendations of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997.

Hutton, Geoffrey. "A Pungent Kettle of Misfits." *Argus* (Melbourne), 25 April 1953, 8.
Jacobsen, Walter. *Dussa and the Maiden's Prayer*. Melbourne: The Law Printer, 1994.
Jones, Jennifer. "Reading Karobran by Monica Clare: An Aboriginal Engagement with Socialist Realism." *Overland*, no. 161 (Summer 2000): 67–71.
Jones, Jennifer. "Yesterday's Words: The Editing of Monica Clare's Karobran." *Journal of Australian Studies* 24, no. 64 (2000): 128–34.
Julien, Heather. "School Novels, Women's Work, and Maternal Vocationalism." *NWSA Journal* 19, no. 2 (2007): 118–37.
Kelso, Peter. "Peter Kelso: Lawyer Peter Kelso Shares His Memories About Growing Up in State Care." Kelso Lawyers.
Kimball, Melanie. "From Folktales to Fiction: Orphan Characters in Children's Literature." *Library Trends* 47, no. 3 (1999): 558–78.
Klein, Jeanne. "Without Distinction of Age: The Pivotal Roles of Child Actors and Their Spectators in Nineteenth-Century Theatre." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 36, no. 2 (2012): 117–35.
"Lemn Sissay's Origin Stories." BBC4, 2015.
Leoutsakas, Dennis. "Contemplating Fictional and Nonfictional Orphan Stories." In *29th IBBY World Conference*. Cape Town, South Africa, 2004.
Lewis, Julie. *Olga Masters: A Lot of Living*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1991.
Masters, Olga. *Home Girls*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982.
"Masters, Olga Meredith (1919–1986)." National Centrer of Biography, Australian National University. http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/masters-olga-meredith-14948.
Maughan, Shannon. "It's a Wonderful (Sales) Life: The Staying Power of 'the Book Thief'." *Publishers Weekly* 257, no. 34 (2010): 16.
McCooey, David. "Autobiography." In *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, edited by Peter Pierce, 323–43. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
Meehan, Donna. *It Is No Secret*. Milsons Point, NSW: Random House, 2000.
Meehan, Donna. "Donna Meehan Interviewed by Rob Willis in the Bringing Them Home After the Apology Oral History Project." In *Bringing Them Home After the Apology Oral History Project*, edited by Rob Willis. Canberra, ACT: National Library of Australia, 2010.
Meehan, Donna. "Donnameehan.Com.Au." http://donnameehan.com.au/.
"Meet the Mob: Donna Meehan." In *1233 ABC Newcastle*. Online: ABC.
Michell, Dee. "Foster Care, Stigma and the Sturdy, Unkillable Children of the Very Poor." *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 29, no. 4 (2015): 663–76.

Michell, Dee, and Claudine Scalzi. "I Want to Be Someone, I Want to Make a Difference: Young Care Leavers Preparing for the Future in South Australia." In *Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Car*, edited by Philip Mendes and Pamela Snow. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Michell, Deidre. "Divine Horizons: Religion and Social Class in the Lives of Two Leading Australian Women, Betty Archdale and Kylie Tennant." In *Seizing the Initiative: Australian Women Leaders in Politics, Workplaces and Communities*, edited by R. Francis, P. Grimshaw, and A. Standish, 185–97. Melbourne, VIC: Australian Women's Archives Project, 2012.

Michell, Deidre. "Traces of a Feminist Protest: Kylie Tennant's Novel Tell Morning This." In *Silent System: Forgotten Australians and the Institutionalisation of Women and Children*, edited by P. Ashton and J. Wilson, 193–208. Melbourne, VIC: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2014.

Michell, Deidre. "From Hagiography to Personal Pain: Stories of Australian Foster Care from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century." *Adoption & Culture* 5 (2017): 89–105.

Michell, Deidre. "Systemic Familial Alienation and the Australian Foster Care System." In *Challenges to Living Together. Transculturalism, Migration, Exploitation*, edited by Susan Petrilli. Italy: Mimesis International, 2017.

Michell, Deidre, and Pamela Petrilli. "Similarities in Difficulties: Australians Raised in Out-of-Home-Care." In *Challenges to Living Together. Transculturalism, Migration, Exploitation*, edited by Susan Petrilli. Italy: Mimesis International, 2017.

Montgomery, L. M. *Anne of Green Gables.* North Ryde, NSW: Angus & Roberston Publishers, 1987.

National Library of Australia. "Bringing Them Home Oral History Project." https://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn833081.

Niall, Brenda. "Writing from Home: The Literary Careers of Ethel Turner and L.M. Montgomery." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1990): 175–80.

"Olga Masters Short Story Award." http://www.olgamastersshortstoryaward.com.au/wp/.

O'Neill, Cas. "'I Remember the First Time I Went into Foster Care—It's a Long Story …': Children, Permanent Parents, and Other Supportive Adults Talk About the Experience of Moving from One Family to Another.". *Journal of Family Studies* 10, no. 2 (2004): 205–19.

Osborn, Alexandra, and Leah Bromfield. "Participation of Children and Young People in Care in Decisions Affecting Their Lives." In *National Child Protection Clearinghouse Research Brief.* Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2007.

Owen, Jan. *Every Childhood Lasts a Lifetime. Personal Stories from the Frontline of Family Breakdown*. Brisbane, QLD: Australian Association of Young People in Care, 1996.

Palmer, Sheridan. Email Correspondence with Deidre Michell, 2013.

Palmer, Sheridan. *Hegel's Owl: The Life of Bernard Smith*. Sydney: Power Publications, 2016.

Parry, Naomi. "Halloween Children's Home (C. 1925–C. 1938)." Find & Connect. https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE01120b.htm.

Pascal, Richard. "Audible in the Silence: Douglas Lockwood, Waipuldanya, and the Postwar Aboriginal Life Narrative." *Life Writing* 3, no. 2 (2006): 53–77.

Pennebaker, James W., and Joshua M. Smyth. *Opening Up by Writing It Down, Third Edition: How Expressive Writing Improves Health and Eases Emotional Pain*. 3 ed. New York: The Guilford Press, 2016.

Pownall, Eve. "Happy Families—With Extras: A Look at the Writing of Eleanor Spence." *Reading Time. New Books for Boys and Girls* 38 (1970): 34–37.

Romei, Stephen. "Hannah Kent's Debut Novel Burial Rites Is Written in Cold Blood." *The Australian*, 2013.

Saxby, H. M. *The Proof of the Puddin' Australian Children's Literature 1970–1990*. Sydney, NSW: Ashton Scholastic, 1993.

Schaffer, Kay. "Stolen Generation Narratives in Local and Global Contexts." *Antipodes* 16, no. 1 (2002): 5–10.

Schaffer, Kay, and Sidonie Smith. *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

"Seriously Funny [The Story of Corey White]." In *Australian Story*. http://www.abc.net.au/austory/seriously-funny/6718852, 24 August 2015. Last accessed 25 April 2018.

Smith, Bernard. *The Boy Adeodatus*. Ringwood, VIC: Penguin, 1984.

Smith, Bernard. *A Pavane for Another Time*. South Yarra, VIC: Macmillan Art, 2002.

"Sordid Life of Mean Streets." *Advertiser* (Adelaide). 18 April 1953, 7.

Spence, Eleanor. *Jamberoo Road*. Bathgate, ND: Bethlehem Books, 2007 [1969].

Spence, Eleanor. "Profile of an Author." *Reading Time. New Books for Boys and Girls* 38 (1970): 33–34.

Spence, Eleanor. *The Switherby Pilgrims*. Bathgate, ND: Bethlehem Books, 2005 [1967].

Spence, Eleanor. "Thirty Years of Writing Fiction for Children." *Reading Time. The Journal of the Children's Book Council of Australia* 100 (1986): 42–96.

Spence, Eleanor. "Thirty Years of Writing Fiction for Children." Melbourne, VIC: Collins Dove, 1988.

"Steve Irons MP: Biography." http://steveirons.com.au/steve-irons/biography/. Last accessed 25 April 2018.

"Stolen Generations' Testimonies." http://www.stolengenerationstestimonies.com/.

Surma, Anne. "Stolen Stories Returned. Bringing Them Home." In *Telling Stories. Australian Life and Literature 1935–2012*, edited by Tanya Dalziell and Paul Genoni, 491–97. Clayton, VIC: Monash University Press, 2013.

Swain, Shurlee. "History of Australian Inquiries Reviewing Institutions Providing Care for Children." Sydney, NSW, 2014.

TED.com. "Lemn Sissay: A Child of the State." In *TEDTalks*, 2012.

Tennant, Kylie. *The Missing Heir: The Autobiography of Kylie Tennant*. Melbourne, VIC: Macmillan, 1986.

Tennant, Kylie. *Tell Morning This*. Sydney, NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1967.

"There but for Fortune [The Story of Richard Farleigh]." In *Australian Story*. http://www.abc.net.au/austory/there-but-for-fortune/9169936.

Trimingham-Jack, Christine. "'A Dose of Castor Oil': Teachers and Teaching in the Writings of Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce." *History of Education Review* 34, no. 2 (2005): 1–12.

Trimingham-Jack, Christine. "Education and Ambition in Anne of Avonlea." *History of Education Review* 38, no. 2 (2009): 109–20.

Turcotte, Gerry. "Australian Gothic." In *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*, edited by Mulvey Roberts, 10–19. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998.

Turner, Ethel. *That Girl*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908.

"Vanishing Act [The Story of Karise Eden]." In *Australian Story*. http://www.abc.net.au/austory/vanishing-act/5808066.

Vasek, Lanai. "The Secret History of Me." *Australian*, 24 June 2010.

Waghorne, James. Email Correspondence with Deidre Michell 2014.

Webby, Elizabeth. "The Australian Journal Periodical." 2004. https://www-austlit-edu-au.proxy.library.adelaide.edu.au/austlit/page/C498899.

Yarwood, A. T. *From a Chair in the Sun: The Life of Ethel Turner*. Ringwood, VIC: Viking, 1994.

Check for updates

CHAPTER 9

Are We Getting Better at This?

On 17 June 2008, the then Premier of South Australia, Mike Rann, made an historic apology to "Those Harmed in State Care in South Australia during their Childhood." Held at Parliament House, attendees outnumbered seats in the gallery and the overflow was accommodated in what is known as Old Parliament House, with proceedings transmitted from the current House of Assembly. The apology included commitments by the South Australian Government to "expand the screening processes in respect of people involved in child-related work and strengthen our child safe environments" and was endorsed by the Opposition Leader, Martin Hamilton-Smith. In his response, the Honourable Jay Weatherill, then Minister for Families and Communities, restated the Government's commitment to change.[1] Because the apology was a "Shared Government and Church" one, five (male) church leaders joined the three politicians in the chamber of Old Parliament House for a brief question and answer session followed by morning tea.

The apology—in an age of public apologies which has stretched from the end of the twentieth century into the opening decades of the twenty-first—was preceded and precipitated by the four years in which former Supreme Court Judge Ted Mullighan presided over the Children in State

[1] "Children in State Care Apology," House of Assembly (Adelaide: Hansard, Parliament of South Australia, 2008).

© The Author(s) 2018

N. Musgrove and D. Michell, *The Slow Evolution of Foster Care in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in the History of Childhood,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93900-1_9

Care Commission of Inquiry.[2] The commission's mandate was to investigate allegations of sexual abuse of children while in state care, and criminal conduct leading to the death of a child in state care. "I had no understanding of the widespread prevalence of the sexual abuse of children in South Australia and its frequent devastating and often lifelong consequences for many of them" wrote Commissioner Mullighan in the preface to his final report. Of the 792 people who said they had been victims of child sexual abuse, 242 were within the remit of the Inquiry. The 242 comprised 118 girls and 124 boys and the majority of the perpetrators (85%) were male: foster fathers (in foster care, the typical perpetrator of sexual abuse was the foster father), foster brothers, the sons of foster parents, stepfathers, step-brothers, grandfathers and fathers of foster parents, workers in residential care facilities, other boys in residential care facilities, volunteers, teachers, psychologists, doctors, priests and other clergymen, male partners and de facto husbands of mothers, relatives, neighbours, casual acquaintances, police officers, friends of the family, strangers. According to the commission's 2008 report, children under state 'care' had been abused in every form of out of home care provided since at least the 1940s.[3]

Just six years later, and with Jay Weatherill as Premier for almost three of them, on 10 June 2014, images of seven children—six of them in state care—were seized by South Australian Police at the home of Shannon McCoole. McCoole, an employee of the state child protection agency, Families SA, was discovered by police to have been running the largest online child pornography website in the world from his modest suburban home; it was in the context of an international investigation and resultant seizure of property that the images of the children were found. In August 2015, McCoole was sentenced to 35 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 28 years.[4]

The arrest of McCoole was shocking enough, but it was soon revealed that he had been the subject of an internal investigation at Families SA

[2] On the notion of an 'age of apologies' see Jeffrey K. Olick, *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Melissa Nobles, *The Politics of Official Apologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[3] Deidre Michell, "Apology Excepted: A Response to the Sa Government's Apology to Former Kids in 'Care'," in *Surviving Care: Achieving Justice and Healing for the Forgotten Australians*, ed. Richard Hil and Liz Branigan (Salisbury, QLD: Bond University Press, 2010); E. P. Mullighan, "Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry. Allegations of Sexual Abuse and Death from Criminal Conduct" (Adelaide, SA, 2008).

[4] Margaret Nyland, "The Life They Deserve. Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report" (Adelaide, SA: Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, 2016), 78 (Hereafter cited as Nyland Report).

in 2013. This new finding was denied twice by the relevant Minister, Jennifer Rankine, before the public servant responsible for Families SA, David Waterford, admitted he had briefed Ms Rankine incorrectly. Waterford resigned on 29 July 2014, after he reviewed files and found that McCoole had indeed been suspended by Families SA in June of 2013 while an investigation into allegations of the sexual assault of a six-year-old girl was carried out. Formal investigations ultimately concluded that McCoole had commenced sexually abusing children in state care shortly after his employment in 2011 with nannySA, a commercial agency providing Families SA with staff for emergency and residential care; and that the abhorrent and illegal behaviour continued when he was contracted—despite psychological tests at recruitment warning he was "High Risk"—as a youth support worker by Families SA in May 2012. While employed with Families SA, McCoole continued working with nannySA and in June 2013, a worker there made allegations of misconduct. McCoole was suspended but returned to work on 13 September 2013. Restrictions were put in place: McCoole could not work on his own while caring for young children and could not work in the residential facility from which the concern had originated. In January 2014, McCoole was promoted to a supervisory position.[5]

McCoole's arrest in June 2014 occurred less than two months prior to the commencement of the much-publicised coronial inquest into the death of four-year-old Chloe Valentine which ran from 14 August 2014 to 9 April 2015. Chloe died on 20 January 2012 from internal injuries sustained when she was forced to ride a mini-bike by her mother, Ashlee Polkinghorne (who claimed she was "a better mother to Chloe" when using methamphetamines), and her then partner, Benjamin McPartland.[6] The child kept falling off and the adults kept insisting she get back on. In the few years prior to her death, Families SA had received more than twenty notifications by people concerned for Chloe's safety in an environment of drug taking, domestic violence and neglect. The Coroner, Mark Johns, found that had Families SA acted with "intelligent application of the legislative tools" available to them, Chloe's mother would either have "changed her ways and become a more responsible parent"

[5] Ibid., 78–114.

[6] Mark Johns, "Inquest into the Death of Chloe Lee Valentine" (Adelaide, SA: Courts Administration Authority of South Australia, 2015), 148.

or Chloe would have been removed from her mother and placed into state care.[7] Of the Coroner's twenty-one recommendations, eleven pertained directly to Families SA.

On 15 August 2014, one day into the coronial inquest into the death of Chloe Valentine, the South Australian Government gazetted their intention to convene a Child Protection Systems Royal Commission. Former Supreme Court Judge, Margaret Nyland, was appointed as Commissioner and the commission began calling for submissions on 1 November 2014. While the sexual abuse of children in state care by Shannon McCoole provoked the inquiry, and occupied some months, Chloe Valentine's death was also a precipitating factor. As Nyland says in the opening remarks for the 856-page report she submitted to the Governor of South Australia on 5 August 2016, "substantial community disquiet and adverse publicity had surrounded Families SA, and the child protection system generally, for some time before McCoole's arrest."[8] On an interim recommendation by Margaret Nyland—not one of the 260 final recommendations—that Families SA needed a "fresh start,"[9] on 21 June 2016 the South Australian government announced that Families SA was to become the Department of Child Protection, the tenth "fresh start" since the State Children's Department was formed in 1886.[10]

South Australia is far from the only jurisdiction reeling from scandals and intense media scrutiny of child protection in recent years—a phenomenon which, as we showed in Chapter 7, has a long history.[11] But in this chapter we have chosen South Australia as the location from which to explore the current situation of formal foster care nationally since South Australia was a pioneer of foster care, and was often held up as a model for the other colonies (later states). Do the scandals or 'crises' mean that

[7] Ibid., 150.

[8] Nyland Report, 8.

[9] Ibid., 7.

[10] The State Children's Department took responsibility for children in state care after new legislation that year, the Destitute Persons Act Amendment Act 1886. The Act separated responsibility for children in state care from that of adults cared for by the Destitute Poor Department. In 1927 the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department replaced the State Children's Department. For a more comprehensive history from 1887 see Margaret Barbalet, *Far from a Low Gutter Girl: The Forgotten World of State Wards: South Australia 1887–1940* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983), 187–229.

[11] Chapter 7: Rediscovering Foster Care.

foster care has failed and, if so, what other models of out of home care are being used? What are the educational and long-term outcomes of children in foster care? Has foster care fulfilled the promises made by nineteenth-century advocates to be an improvement on institutional care?

The Decline of Foster Care and the Rise of Kinship Care

In 2001, eminent social work scholar James Barber predicted that foster care was on the way out. There had been a thirty percent rise in foster care across the country between 1983 and 1997 when it peaked at eighty-eight percent of all out of home care placements. This, Barber argued, could not be sustained. Barber demonstrated the widening gap between supply and demand for foster carers from 1995 in South Australia, the result of social changes such as the increase of women participating in the paid workforce and what Barber saw as the unquestioned "decimation of residential care that had been occurring across Australia, and particularly in South Australia" since the late 1970s.[12] Barber saw three options for the state government: provide better support and more money to attract foster carers; increase the use of residential care; or take fewer children and young people into care.[13]

Barber was correct to predict the "slow demise of foster care" in South Australia. In 2005–2006, the proportion of children and young people in foster care was down to sixty-seven percent, and in 2007 had dropped further to fifty-four percent of all placements. Ten years later it had fallen to thirty-eight percent. This is a national trend; foster care is in decline across the country and South Australia has the third lowest rate of foster care. The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) is at thirty-five percent, and Victorian numbers are even lower at just under sixteen percent because of that state's use of a model of permanent care, third-party parental care, which we discuss below.[14]

[12] James Barber, "The Slow Demise of Foster Care in South Australia," *Journal of Social Policy* 30, no. 1 (2001): 7.

[13] Ibid., 14. Also see Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, "Our Homeless Children: Report of the National Inquiry into Homeless Children" (Canberra, 1989).

[14] AIFS, "Children in Care. CFCA Resource Sheet," Australian Institute of Families Studies, https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/children-care, last accessed 26 April 2018.

While the use of foster care has decreased, there has been an upsurge in the numbers of children taken into state care. In the decade from 1998, there was an increase of almost 115%, taking the number of Australian children in out of home care from 14,500 to 31,166.[15] Since 2007 the number of children in South Australian state care has almost doubled, from 1791 to 3296 at 30 June 2017. This equates with less than nine per thousand children across the state being in out of home care in the period from 2007 to 2010, rising to a high of twelve per thousand children in 2015–2016, following the death of Chloe Valentine, and dipping to just under ten per thousand children in the 2016–2017 financial year. During the same period the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children has steadily increased to almost thirty-five percent of the children in South Australian out of home care, an alarming over-representation given that Australian Indigenous people make up roughly two percent of the overall South Australian population.[16]

What Barber did not anticipate was the growing antipathy towards residential care—an antipathy that would make nineteenth-century advocates for formal foster care feel vindicated—and the increased emphasis on kinship or relative care, another national trend. Between 2006 and 2016 in South Australia the use of residential care increased from a low base of three percent in 2006 to almost eleven percent in 2017. But this is not regarded positively: South Australia now has the highest rate of the least favoured—by young people as well as child protection authorities—and most expensive form of out of home care in the country.[17] The per annum cost of accommodating a child in residential care ($275,903) is

[15] AIHW, "AIHW Media Release," Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Australian Government, https://www.aihw.gov.au/news-media/media-releases/2009/jan/number-of-children-in-care-continues-to-increase, last accessed 26 April 2018. For population statistics see Australian Bureau of Statistics, "2011 Census Counts—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples," available at http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2075.0main+features32011, last accessed 27 March 2018.

[16] "Statistics About Children in Care—June 2017," Guardian for Children and Young People. For more about the disproportionality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care, see "Chapter 16 Child Protection Services—Report on Government Services 2017" (Canberra, ACT: Productivity Commission, Australian Government, 2018), 16.7–16.9.

[17] "Statistics About Children in Care—June 2017".

considerably higher than in foster or kinship care ($48,736).[18] Also since 2006, the use of kinship care in South Australia—forty-one percent of which is provided by grandparents—has risen from just under a quarter of home-based care to forty-five percent.

The majority of South Australian citizens in out of home care, then, are still in what is called home-based care, and this form of care is the one most used across Australia. But there are ongoing challenges as the number of people willing to do such "extreme volunteering" are decreasing; there are wide variances in rates of payment to carers; little support for carers taking in children with complex issues arising from traumatic experiences; and both foster and kinship carers feel dismissed and disparaged.[19] Many foster carers also fear speaking out about the behaviour of agency workers in case a foster child is removed from their care; others learn how to "play the system," that is, threaten to return a child if a desired action is not taken by the agency.[20] For foster carers who have children over the long-term, not having their family recognised as a family in its "own right," or having the biological family privileged over theirs, can be a source of pain.[21]

[18]AIFS, "Children in Care"; Nyland Report, 272, 274, 328. Also for the unexpectedness of the increase of kinship care see Penny Mackieson, Aron Shlonsky, and Marie Connolly, "Permanency Planning and Ideology in Western Child Welfare Systems: Implications for Victoria," *Communities, Children and Families Australia* 11, no. 1 (2017): 3–16. As we go to press the Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People in South Australia has produced a report showing that expenditure on residential care is even higher during the period 2013–2014 to 2016–2017, at over $600,000, but we have been unable to verify that figure or establish why the discrepancy, or why the sudden increase, see "South Australian Child Protection Expenditure from the Report on Government Services 2018" (Adelaide, SA, 2018), 17.

[19]Nyland Report, 271 & xx. Protecting Children Is Everyone's Business (Online: Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), 25. We also address this point in Chapter 5: They're Just Doing It for the Money.

[20]Mclean, "The Challenging Behaviour of Children in the South Australian Out-of-Home Care Sector" (University of Adelaide, 2009), 62, 129. Also see Chapter 5: They're Just Doing It for the Money.

[21]Damien W. Riggs, Paul Delfabbro, and Martha Augoustinos, "Negotiating Foster-Families: Identification and Desire," *British Journal of Social Work* 39, no. 5 (2009): 789–806. For a discussion on the recognition of foster carers, see Damien W. Riggs, Martha Augoustinos, and Paul Delfabbro, "'Basically It's a Recognition Issue': Validating Foster Parent Identities," *Family Matters*, no. 76 (2007): 64–69.

Recruitment of new foster and kinship carers, and *valuing* those already doing the work were both recommended by the Nyland Commission. Sadly, these are similar to recommendations made in some of the earliest home-grown research on foster care in Australia. Among the seven articles which appeared in a special issue of the *Australian Journal of Social Work* in 1963, one by Hazel Smith identified an array of deficiencies in the Australian model of foster care, including a shortage of foster homes; the need for status and recognition of foster parents; inadequate preparation of children for placement; and insufficient compensation for foster carers.[22]

At the same time as the Nyland Royal Commission wanted kinship carers valued more, along with foster carers, the commission saw problems with the rise of kinship care in South Australia, ones that will be applicable in other jurisdictions. For example, compared to foster care, kinship care is largely unregulated. Kinship carers do go through a suitability assessment process, but the commission found thirty-four percent of South Australian children had been with kinship carers for longer than three months without a full assessment of those carers having been conducted. There are also valid concerns about children being placed in situations where intergenerational abuse and trauma has resulted in the need for out of home care in the first place. Does this mean another generation of children and young people are being placed by the state in a situation where they will be at risk of abuse?[23] Is the use of grandparents who have been abusive and neglectful in their own parenting like pouring acid into the wounds of birth parents?

The terminology of kinship care is recent, but the practice within Australian foster care stretches back into the nineteenth century. As we discussed in Chapter 6 of this book, child welfare departments could suspend regulations in order to make foster care payments to relatives—usually aunts or grandmothers—to help them maintain children who would otherwise have been sent to a foster home.[24] This was seen as a kindness to the children and their wider family, but also reduced the

[22] Hazel Smith, "The Need for Revaluation and Assessment of Australian Foster Care Programmes," *Australian Journal of Social Work* 16, no. 2 (1963): 25–29.

[23] Nyland Report, 283–85; Smith, "The Need for Revaluation and Assessment of Australian Foster Care Programmes," 25–29.

[24] Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

number of foster homes that the department needed to recruit. Kin-care was also used as a means of discharging children who could not be returned to their parents.[25] As the welfare state grew, over the first half of the twentieth century, and other sources of support became available, kin-carers increasingly turned to that other support to help them provide for children—a practice which welfare departments encouraged to keep their own costs down, and which subjected kin-carers to far less ongoing surveillance. The families who remained under foster care provisions, but who were actually kin-carers, were typically those who were seen as needing ongoing supervision (for a range of different reasons).

As kinship care emerged as a preferred means of placing children in the late twentieth century, a long-standing sentiment that kin should accept some responsibility for children and provide for them with less support from the state than non-kin carers, clearly shaped the practice. This was a double-edged sword—it opened up a space for kinship care to exist outside the stigma so often attached to foster care (as the head of the Victorian department had observed was the effect of boarding children out to their own mothers and kin in the late nineteenth century),[26] but also reduced the formal surveillance and supports for kinship care. Thus, kinship carers came to be conceived of as something distinct from other foster carers, but we spoke with people who see this as a disadvantage and who prefer to be identified as foster carers rather than kinship carers.

Susan, for example, is technically a kinship carer; she has been caring for her twelve-year-old granddaughter since Danielle was nine. Susan, however, insists that she is a foster carer, and she fought long and hard—including going to the Ombudsman—for this status because otherwise she would have received little to no financial support. Even then she found a significant discrepancy between states in terms of financial support; when guardianship for Danielle was transferred to South Australia, where Susan now lives, that state paid less for Susan to care for Danielle.

> We are foster carers because that's what we—we're not going to go down the road of no support for all of her costs. So the payment is, well in [the other state] they paid a lot more, they paid for all of her medical, they paid for clothing allowance three times a year, pocket money for Danielle,

[25] The Victorian archive shows this as a long-term practice throughout the period investigated (1864–1965).

[26] See Chapter 6: Foster Care—Philosophies, Rhetoric and Practices.

> anything that I did, her skin, the creams and they paid for all of that. Here they won't pay for any of it, the regular payment is, I don't know it must be about hundred dollars less…

The base rate for a carer's allowance in South Australia—which is meant to cover the cost of having the child, not to be a payment for the work of caring, and which increases with the age of a child—is the lowest in the country.[27] However, there are loadings added, so that children who have higher needs, as Danielle does, receive—or should—a higher allowance.[28]

> [Danielle] needs such a lot of psychiatric treatment, she's under a specialist, [extra] education because she's so far behind, there's a lot of money involved.[29]

Had Susan been recruited through one of the agencies which pay higher allowances because they only take on children and young people with higher needs, she may not have felt disadvantaged. Instead she was struggling to get the South Australian agency to cover costs for Danielle.

Susan was adamant that the financial care of her grandchild needed to be provided by the state, particularly as child protection agencies in both states where Danielle had lived had been culpable in her neglect and abuse. But at the time of our conversation she was still in negotiations with the agency which is refusing to pay for additional tutoring for Danielle, who is a long way behind in her schooling. Nor does the state agency want to continue for a trauma specialist to visit with the family and assist Susan and her partner with managing Danielle's difficult behaviours.

> …it's a family thing, she teaches us how to cope, how to handle it because that's not my field, I have learnt so much about all of this, when you're living it 24/7. Danielle has no friends, nobody at school likes her, nobody… We did all these role plays…we do this acting to try and get her thinking.

[27] Nyland Report, 289–90. Nyland thought the base rate was too low and recommended it be increased, while simultaneously reducing discrepancies in payments between carers.

[28] Loadings can be reduced too; if a carer is particularly effective at reducing psychological distress, then their allowance will be cut.

[29] Long History of Foster Care Project, "Susan," 2015.

Susan's story highlights some of the benefits and difficulties with foster and kinship care.[30] Susan and her partner can provide a stable placement and are dedicated to improving Danielle's life chances. But like many other kinship carers Susan was expected to provide for Danielle with less financial support from the state, and like many other foster carers, she has not felt adequately supported in caring for Danielle. Luckily for Danielle, Susan has been a passionate advocate on her own behalf otherwise the placement may well have broken down.[31]

Support for Foster Carers

South Australia has the highest level of placement instability in the country. The 'elasticity' in the system of which Catherine Helen Spence was once so proud is ongoing cause for alarm: during the 2014–2015 financial year, thirteen percent of children in out of home care had more than eleven different placements. Where foster carers are not adequately supported, or prepared for placements, placements are at risk of 'breaking down' which means that children and young people are rejected and ejected, and then left in limbo until a new home is found for them.[32] Priscilla (introduced in Chapter 4) thought foster parents during the 1950s were ill-prepared for, and therefore rejecting of, her because of difficult behaviours arising from sexual abuse.[33] Almost seventy years later, contemporary foster parents can also feel ill-prepared, not only for caring for a child, but even in making an "informed decision about whether or not to accept a placement."[34] For foster carers, the challenging behaviours of those in their care is a significant stressor,

[30]The rise in kinship care in Australia mirrors that in the United States where in the fifteen years between 1990 and 2005, the use of this model had risen by fifty-five percent, see David Rubin et al., "The Impact of Kinship Care on Behavioral Well-Being for Children in Out-of-Home Care," *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 162, no. 6 (2008): 550–56.

[31]Rubin et al., "The Impact of Kinship Care on Behavioral Well-Being for Children in Out-of-Home Care," 550–56.

[32]Nyland Report, xi, xix, xxxviii, 293.

[33]Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

[34]Nyland Report, xx.

reducing their levels of satisfaction in the role and increasing the possibility that they will not continue and/or not recommend fostering to others.[35]

Chrissy, Caroline and Mel all had experience of children in the South Australian system who had been through multiple placements, the consequences of which are devastating to witness.[36] Chrissy explained that the first child she had in foster care, a six-year-old, was only in her care for two weeks because Chrissy and her family were overwhelmed by the child's behaviour.

> Her level of violence escalated. This was her first placement, she'd been in a residential home for over a year, no one had really dealt with the traumatic events that saw her removal from her home…We knew very minimal [about her background]…her violence just escalated and escalated and she started to have flashbacks…she…was almost a bit psychotic at times, she was quite disturbed and really for us it pushed our family beyond where we had capabilities to help her…[37]

For Chrissy and her family, it was "pretty traumatic dealing with breaking down."

> We'd gone into it with, we were very realistic with what we were going into, we weren't sort of expecting Pollyanna on the door but we, we were kind of pretty shattered after that, it took a long time. So we did some respite, did some various bits and pieces…[38]

Chrissy is now fostering two girls in a long-term placement, a placement that has not been easier than the first as the "two combined make up the one we had before." Again, they were given little information to help with preparation.

[35] Mclean, "The Challenging Behaviour of Children in the South Australian Out-of-Home Care Sector," 54, 59, 96, 152.

[36] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Caroline," 2015; Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Chrissy," 2015. We introduced Chrissy and Caroline in Chapter 5: They're Just Doing It for the Money. Here we are including their experiences of foster care as they pertain to the particularities of South Australia.

[37] "Chrissy".

[38] Ibid.

> We basically were told that we wouldn't have any trouble with [the five and six old girls], that they were absolutely gorgeous and sweet, that really the placement had broken down where they were because the carer had lots of problems. What's unfolded is like they were anything but sweet, like literally have been through our house like a tornado…screaming, tantrums, like I'm talking *screaming*…Really angry, really angry little girls.[39]

Chrissy told us that over time the little girls have disclosed abuse "sexual, physical…mental, yeah emotional, everything…there's been neglect," including in foster care and when the girls were returned to their mother between placements.

One thing that has made the difference for Chrissy this second time is more support has been available to her—although not all of it is provided by the state.

> …we've had a good team of people wrapped around the girls…We've had a psychologist basically from the beginning, we've had a psychologist on board, a Families SA psychologist and I had email contact with her. I could sit down at the end of the day and go, "This has happened, what on earth is going on?"

In addition to the state agency employed psychologist who responded quickly to phone calls and emails, Chrissy also engaged a psychologist privately—an attachment specialist. And she has the support of her family.

Chrissy stressed that fostering was a "family decision" and that if there had been any negative impact on her four children, the youngest of whom was fourteen when they first began fostering, they would have ceased. While it has been challenging, especially for the youngest, Chrissy believes her children have become more compassionate people and says they have supported her when she was doubtful of continuing.

> …I'd just gotten the girls to bed and…and I said, "I'm done I can't do this anymore, this is ridiculous,"…and [my youngest son, by then sixteen] just got up and didn't say a word…he's got up and come over and hugged me and held me and I just cried then and he didn't say anything…There was another day…I was at my wits end and I thought, "I really, I can't do

[39] Ibid.

> this," and [my daughter overseas] sent me this link to a Youtube clip that she'd found and I opened it and I just sat and cried and cried and cried on the lounge and…there's this short doco someone's made called *Removed* and it was the first part of that…and I just sat there and went, "We might not be able to do this but we have to do this 'cause that gave me such a glimpse of what it's like for these kids."[40]

As the foster carers whose experiences we discussed in Chapter 5 also highlighted, fostering can take a significant emotional toll.[41] This has always been true, and finding ways to adequately support this aspect of carers' work remains a huge challenge for foster care systems in the twenty-first century.

Chrissy's motivation for being a foster carer was clearly not financial, but she was well aware she was being paid less than other carers and does not believe that the financial support she receives for the girls is adequate.

> …when the girls first came they were classified as basic…basic foster children…no special needs or nothing. We then fought pretty quickly for some loading on them just because they were so intensive…[but] their loading is very minimal…It's enough to cover…their food and the extra electricity…[previously] we were with an agency that paid 850 dollars a week as opposed to now I think the girls are about…170 each [per week].

Chrissy did not see why the allowance she receives for her high needs daughters was significantly less than what other carers receive—in fact she knows carers who are able to make sizable incomes from foster care.

We also spoke with Mel, a university student in her early twenties, who told us about the potential pitfalls of making foster care too attractive financially.[42] Mel's parents had taken in foster children from the time Mel was seven; foster care was their primary form of income. Mel told us

[40] Ibid. *ReMoved* are two short films created by Natanael Matanick, a filmmaker based in south California who was inspired to make them through going through the process, with his wife, of becoming a foster parent. Because the project was crowdsourced, there is information on the Kickstarter website, see "Removed. Part Two," Kickstarter, https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/heschle/removed-part-two, last accessed 26 April 2018.

[41] Chapter 5: They're Just Doing It for the Money.

[42] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Mel," 2015.

that by taking in high needs children, over fifty of them, her parents were able to afford private schooling for Mel and her sister.[43]

> We were quite poor back then but foster caring, they got paid more money for the more difficult children…so sometimes that was a decision that they made, to keep the difficult children so that they could afford to send me and my sister to private schools.

At one point Mel felt as if she was trapped in a horror movie because of the behaviour of two foster girls, one of whom would "get into these big rages."

> Mum would just shut her outside in the backyard because she would actually destroy anything that was inside…She'd be out there screaming and crying and banging on things and just, she'd do this constant banging on the window and…with her head just like 'revenge, revenge, revenge' it would drive you absolutely mental…

Mel felt such hatred for the girls she wanted them to leave.

> I said, "Come on please, can we just get rid of them," and Mum said, "No we actually can't because we're getting a lot of money from them and we can't keep you in school, at the school that you're at. If they go, you'll end up going to [public school] as opposed to [private school] which is not good for your future." I didn't really want to go to [public school]…I was sort of like to Mum, "We have to do something, I can't have them anymore, I don't know what to do."

The picture that Mel paints is a difficult one to confront. At the same time as we argue for the adequate payment of foster carers for their work, we can see the cost to both foster children and the foster family in situations like Mel's.

According to Mel, her mother did talk to Families SA about the problem, and the result was more money, which was used to buy first cars for Mel and her sister.

[43] Internationally there is little research on the children of foster parents. For an excellent review of this see S. Serbinski and Aron Shlonsky, "Is It That We Are Afraid to Ask? A Scoping Review About Sons and Daughters of Foster Parents," *Children and Youth Services Review* 36 (2014): 101–14.

> …in the end what happened was they kind of bribed us and I was told not to ever tell anyone…Basically they gave my parents enough money to buy me and my sister our first cars in exchange for keeping [the two girls]… Like only a few grand, my car's only like one-thousand and nine-hundred dollars or something…and my sister got something similar…My parents wouldn't have been able to afford to buy us a car for us to learn how to drive in if that hadn't had happened. In exchange for keeping them for another year at least. I couldn't say no to that I guess.

It appears that the widely known wild variances in allowances to foster carers—which Chrissy saw as inequitable and which the Nyland Commission recommended reducing—include discretionary payments to foster parents who know how to 'play the system'. While adequate payment of carers who provide homes for children with high needs should, on the whole, be seen as a positive aspect of the system, payments need to be applied consistently and transparently in order for all foster carers to feel that their work is being valued.

Irrespective of the financial benefits to Mel's family, which to some extent flowed on to Mel, she felt that the contribution she made to foster care in her family went unrecognised and unacknowledged.

> The one thing I noticed [was] that there was all these foster carer lunches and foster carer's outings and stress relief massage days for foster carers and…There was never anything for me…they run this Siblings Day to help kids with siblings with disabilities because often they don't get paid attention as much and so it's a day to make them feel special and we got to go along to them a few times. There should be this thing for foster siblings as well.

Not only did Mel make the point that foster siblings play an important role in the success of fostering, they also carry a burden when things are difficult. She spoke of her own grief when children left, and the disruption and other challenges Mel faced when children acted out, and said that the impact of all this on her was never really recognised.

Mel also acknowledged many positive aspects of having foster children at home while she was growing up, and she was distressed at the thought of children being bounced around the system because there were insufficient foster carers. She told us that children would be taken from her home where they were settled and content and placed back with birth parents "because there were other kids worse off and the system was too full so they had to send some kids back and put the ones that needed it more in." In reconnecting with some of those children via Facebook over the years,

Mel was adamant they would have been better off staying with her family. There were also times her parents took in children they would return to the agency after only four days because the children were "swearing and picking up things and smashing them, punching things and really angry."

On reflection, Mel has concluded that she would have preferred poverty to the experience she had growing up in a family that fostered.

> I would never, ever recommend [foster care] to anyone…especially someone with kids, I would say "No, think of your children." Sometimes I think I would have rather been like so poor than have had that kind of upbringing…I even asked both my parents and they said they never would [recommend fostering] either. My sister I know never would and obviously that shows that it's not a fun time so how are they going to get more foster carers?…I don't know if it's really a thing that anyone would really want to do, if they really knew what it was all about.

Foster care placements are tough for all parties. When the South Australian Guardian for Children and Young People conducted their 2013 inquiry into the impact and experience of moving while in care, the young people they spoke with stressed the importance of them having support too. Not only did the young people need practical assistance to pack and unpack, but many also wanted emotional support, by which they meant someone to feel connected with so they did not feel abandoned, and an adult to listen to and acknowledge their feelings which are likely to include anxiety and grief as well as, perhaps, excitement.[44]

International evidence suggests that when foster carers are provided with adequate support and are willing to make a long-term commitment to the child/ren in their care, foster parents can be role models for positive behaviour and foster families sites of nurturing and belonging which can offset some of the wounding the children have experienced.[45] This was certainly the experience of Chrissy and another foster carer we spoke

[44] "Inquiry Report: The Impact and Experience of Moving While in Care" (Online: Guardian for Children and Young People, Government of South Australia 2013), 59–68.

[45] See for example in the UK context, Gillian Schofield, "The Significance of a Secure Base: A Psychosocial Model of Long-Term Foster Care," *Child & Family Social Work* 7, no. 4 (2002): 259–72. In the Australian setting, but without the voices of those who been in foster care as children, see Damien W. Riggs, Martha Augoustinos, and Paul Delfabbro, "Role of Foster Family Belonging in Recovery from Child Maltreatment," *Australian Psychologist* 44, no. 3 (2009): 166–73.

with, Caroline. Chrissy told us how, over time, the disclosures about trauma her eldest foster daughter made diminished.[46]

> …[the eldest girl] gradually had let her story out…over the course of a few months and then there was this one night… [and] she was telling me more of her story and then she just says to me, "That's all there is," and I said, "What do you mean?" and she says, "Well that's it, that's where the story ends."… since that day she hasn't talked any more about her trauma and… one day…she said to the therapist, "Yep, when I moved in with mum my story was this big…But little by little bit I let mum have my story and now my story is like this big."

Through this exchange, Chrissy realised the therapeutic role she had played as a foster carer. She remembered thinking, "Oh my goodness in her head she's essentially dealt with her trauma," that through sharing her story her daughter had reached a point of resolution, feeling: "Okay I got all that out, I've told you the story, I've told you the horrible stuff, excellent, let's move on with life now."

Caroline's foster son was taken into state care as a baby but Caroline thought he would have been better left with his birth mother and support provided to her. The child had been in many short-term placements and been abused in some of those. Unsurprisingly there were behavioural difficulties at the beginning.

> At three [he had] some really horrible patterns around food, he would gag until the point that he would vomit because he just didn't have the ability to notice if he was full. Quite non-verbal. Didn't do well at kindy, kind of wouldn't know how to interact with anyone. Was very insular. When we met him, he'd come with a brief of never having pushed any boundaries, behaviourally superb but actually he was just really withdrawn…He'd come into the house and kind of stand in the corner.[47]

Caroline's subsequent understanding of the traumatic past which led to this behaviour was part of what upset her so much. She reflected, "I guess for a three-and-a-half-year-old to know the term 'social worker'

[46] Both Chrissy and Caroline refer to the foster children in their care as their children, not their foster children.

[47] "Caroline".

just breaks your heart." According to Caroline, her foster son's relationship with her biological son has been particularly beneficial; her foster son opens up about past abuse and her biological son listens without judgement and is reassuring.

Mel also recalled, as a young girl, listening to foster children when they came to stay, even though she did not necessarily understand what they were saying.

> …they would tell me more than they would tell their parents, most of the foster kids…even first nights when foster kids came in they would be crying and stuff, because we'd often be sharing a room, I'd be the one sitting there comforting them while my parents were asleep. They would tell me all these awful stories that I didn't really know how to process, I suppose.

Many of the children did not remain with the family long, but Mel remembered one who benefited from her stay. The girl was about five years of age and had cerebral palsy but with the aid of casts on her legs had begun walking. An unsupervised access visit with her birth mother resulted in the child disappearing for six months; she was found abandoned on a beach, starving, badly sunburnt and crawling. Four years back with Mel's family and there was significant improvement. Mel said, "The girl kept going to the doctors and stuff and she got better and better with her disability. She was able to run a race in sports day in school and I remember it."

Not only do foster carers need access to adequate information about children they are taking in, and sufficient therapeutic support to allow them to manage challenging behaviours that result from neglect and abuse, both before and during care, they also need acknowledgement of, and recognition for, the therapeutic work they provide with listening, nurturing and commitment, as do children of foster carers. Part of this recognition could be payment for the work they do.

Permanency Planning

Seven months after Coroner Mark Johns handed down his findings from the inquest into the death of Chloe Valentine, he spoke at the Adelaide launch of Jeremy Sammut's book, *The Madness of Australian Child Protection: Why Adoptees Will Rescue Australia's Underclass Children*. Adoption advocates who support adoption from care—historically not

much used in Australia—as the answer to crises in child protection are few in Adelaide, and the launch was ill-attended.[48] Adoption in Australia has been in decline since the 1970s. Numbers plummeted from 9798 in 1971–1972 to 668 twenty-three years later in 1994–1995, and with the lowest number, 278, recorded in 2015–2016. Reasons for the decline include changing social attitudes to single parents, the increased availability of contraception for those who do not want children and IVF for those who do, and responses to the history of forced adoptions and other concerns raised by *Bringing Them Home*, *Lost Innocent*s and *Forgotten Australians.*[49]

From that lowest point of 278 adoptions, a thirteen percent increase in adoptions was recorded in the following financial year 2016–2017. Of those 315 adoptions, sixty-five percent are 'known' adoptions, that is, the child was already known to the adoptive parents and the majority of those (seventy percent) were adoptions by existing carers of the child, such as foster carers. These figures reflect policy change in New South Wales where amendments to the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* state that adoption is the preferred option when children cannot be reunited with their biological parents within six months (child under two) or twelve months (child over two). So-called 'Streamlined processes' are now being introduced to enable more non-government agencies to include adoption in their offerings.[50]

The New South Wales adoption reforms were being urged on all state child protection agencies by the end of 2015 by the newly installed Federal Minister for Social Services, Christian Porter, provoking a mixed

[48] Mackieson, Shlonsky, and Connolly, "Permanency Planning and Ideology in Western Child Welfare Systems: Implications for Victoria," 11.

[49] On the historical factors influencing the rates and approaches to adoption in Australia see Marian Quartly, Shurlee Swain, and Denise Cuthbert, *The Market in Babies: Stories of Australian Adoption* (Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing, 2013).

[50] ABS, "Family Formation: Adoptions," Australian Bureau of Statistics, http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/2f762f95845417aeca25706c00834efa/c14cbc586a02bfd7ca2570ec001909fc!OpenDocument, last accessed 26 April 2018; AIHW, "Adoptions Australia 2016–2017," ed. Commonwealth of Australia, Child Welfare Series (Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017); "Fostering, Guardianship and Adoption," NSW Department of Family & Community Services, http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/parents,-carers-and-families/fostering,-guardianship-and-adoption, last accessed 26 April 2018; "Fostering NSW," http://www.fosteringnsw.com.au/, last accessed 26 April 2018; Nyland Report.

reaction in the community. Former ward of the state and journalist Bryan Seymour, for example, argued vehemently for the state to safeguard children without severing ties with their biological parents citing the "Stolen Generation, Forgotten Australians and the Victims of Forced Adoption" as sufficient reason to enable children to be reunited with their biological families rather than adopted.[51]

As we showed in Chapters 3 and 4, it can be painful when birth family connections are severed and challenging to reinstate them.[52] Some people choose not to locate birth family members; respected academic Rob Watts being one. Born in 1948, Rob was given up for adoption at birth, lived for twelve months in the Parkville Babies Home in Victoria, and was then fostered by Dot and Bill Watts. Rob was thirty-six before he found out, accidentally, that the Watts had adopted him in 1952. He decided he "had no need or desire to meet [his] birth mother" beyond "track[ing] her down using the electoral rolls."[53] For Doug, introduced in Chapter 4, finding his birth mother has been crucial. Until he did he believed he was unwanted.[54] Not that making the initial contact was easy: it took Doug three weeks to write a letter, concerned as he was that his mother would be disappointed in him because he is an alcoholic and "scarred up from fighting all the time…haven't got a trade, haven't done anything, don't own anything." Receiving a warm welcome from his now seventy-year-old mother has made Doug feel "whole" for the first time in his forty-eight years. He is happy whenever his mother texts to say she loves him.

By February 2016 attention had shifted from adoption to Victoria's model of permanent care.[55] On 7 August 2014, three months ahead of the state election, then Minister for Community Services, Mary Wooldridge, introduced into the Legislative Assembly—without community

[51] Bryan Seymour, "Adoption: Who Says You Can Safeguard a Life by Imposing a New Identity?" *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 January 2016. Also see Mackieson, Shlonsky, and Connolly, "Permanency Planning and Ideology in Western Child Welfare Systems: Implications for Victoria," 12.

[52] Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Families; Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

[53] Rob Watts, "Stumbling Forwards—Understand Backwards," in *Bread and Roses*, ed. Dee Michell, Jacqueline Z. Wilson, and Verity Archer (Rotterdam: Sense, 2015), 22.

[54] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Doug," 2014. See also Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

[55] Seymour, "Adoption".

consultation—the *Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Permanent Care and Other Matters) Bill 2014*. This amendment is, according to Judith Bessant and Rob Watts, "designed to speed up the process to grant permanent care."[56] Where birth parents are not able to overcome the problems which caused children to be removed from them in the first place—for example domestic violence, substance abuse and illness—the Children's Court is now compelled to consent to the child/children being permanently removed. Bessant and Watts suggest the timing is suspicious: "the former Napthine [state] government needed to 'do something' to address the badly broken child protection system before it went to the polls on 29 November 2014."[57] At issue was wide dissatisfaction with the child protection system culminating in the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry, held during 2011 and reported on in January 2012. The report highlighted the ineffectiveness of previous reviews and resulted in the Vulnerable Children and Families Strategy designed to implement "wide-ranging reforms and increased investment." The *Children, Youth and Families Amendment* forms part of this strategy and Permanent Care Orders increased eighty-two percent in the 2015–2016 financial year.[58]

Victoria first passed the Permanent Care Order more than twenty years ago, but there is little evaluative or long-term research about outcomes, including from the child's perspective.[59] The legislation allows for the transfer of guardianship and custody—or parental responsibility—to an accredited third party until the child turns eighteen. Legal responsibility for the child remains with the state. Under this model, care of the child is regarded as permanent, whereas foster care is seen as "a temporary arrangement that aims to reunite child with their birth parents."[60] In the 2015–2016 financial year, twenty percent of Victorian citizens in out of home care were in third-party permanent care.

[56] Judith Bessant and Rob Watts, "Continuing Subversion of the Children's Court," *Alternative Law Journal* 40, no. 2 (2015): 107.

[57] Ibid., 105.

[58] Mackieson, Shlonsky, and Connolly, "Permanency Planning and Ideology in Western Child Welfare Systems: Implications for Victoria," 13–14.

[59] Ibid., 15; Elizabeth Fernandez, *Accomplishing Permancency: Reunification Pathways and Outcomes for Foster Children* (New York: Springer, 2013), 123.

[60] "Families & Children—Permanent Care," Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria State Government, https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/permanent-care, last accessed 26 April 2018. Permanency planning is outsourced to various agencies, for example Anglicare Victoria, see Senate Community Affairs References Committee, "Forgotten

Unsurprisingly, given its unpopularity in Adelaide, Justice Nyland has not recommended adoption from care as a solution to the problem of insufficient foster care and kinship care places and the need for children to have stability in care.[61] Her reasoning is that adults wanting to form families through adoption is "irrelevant to the question of a child's best interests" and usually it is in the child's best interests to maintain connections with "family, culture and community," particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.[62] Maintenance of birth family connections is a significant change from the early days of the formal foster care system when the proselytising nineteenth-century women wanted the 'pauper children' permanently separated from their birth families and we have discussed the evolution of this change, and the human cost when connections are not maintained, in Chapter 3.[63] Justice Nyland has recommended, however, that regular contact, called access visits, with birth families be replaced by a "knowledge link," that is, helping a child to know about their parents, while reducing contact so that connection with new permanent carers is prioritised.[64]

South Australia has used Other Person Guardianship (OPG), a model of permanent care, less than all other states. According to Justice Nyland it could be employed more to increase the "stability, certainty and normalcy to a child's life."[65] With OPG parental responsibilities—including financial support—and decision making are shifted from the state to the carers, although permanent carers are required to "help the child keep a connection with their extended family, community and culture," and they "will be responsible for arranging, coordinating and supervising contact" as required.[66]

Australians: A Report on Australians Who Experienced Institutional or Out-of-Home Care as Children" (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2004).

[61] See for example Jeremy Sammut, *The Madness of Australian Child Protection: Why Adoptees Will Rescue Australia's Underclass Children* (Ballarat, VIC: Connor Court Publishing, 2015). Mark Johns spoke at the Adelaide book launch of Sammut's book and quoted from Sammut in the opening to his findings on the death of Chloe Valentine, see Johns, "Inquest into the Death of Chloe Lee Valentine."

[62] Nyland Report, 366–70.

[63] Chapter 3: Making and Breaking Families.

[64] Nyland Report, 273.

[65] Ibid., 366.

[66] "Foster Care. Other Person Guardianship," South Australian Government. Department of Premier & Cabinet, https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/care-and-support/foster-care/other-person-guardianship, last accessed 26 April 2018.

The last point, that the OPGs would need to arrange their own contact with birth family, was a barrier for Jason. Jason and his wife are long-term foster carers for a toddler and happily arrange for their daughter to maintain relationships with her three siblings at a play café convenient to all parties.

> …my wife is now very close friends with our daughter's brothers' foster parents. She got in touch with Families SA to see if she could connect with us. It is mandated that the siblings get to catch up every six months, we'd much rather do it as friends than go into a Families SA building and do it so we actually keep in regular touch…[67]

When it comes to making arrangements with birth parents, however, Jason does not want that responsibility. He explained, "We've got highly unpredictable meth addicts [as birth parents], I don't particularly want to be dealing with them directly."[68]

In addition, moving to OPG would mean losing childcare funding and his daughter is in childcare three days a week. Jason would, however, cheerfully adopt his daughter.

> Absolutely, if we had the opportunity to adopt her we would give up any small benefit for her to have our last name and have absolutely nothing to do with any agency, in a heartbeat. The option's not there, it doesn't exist…We would absolutely keep her connected to her brothers and sisters, that's a given but just for her identity to be a part of our family, not have this vague connection to people that brought her into the world. If they were good solid people we would have never met her because she'd be in their care, they're not solid people so…[69]

When Susan took over the care of Danielle, she was expected to become an OPG, not by the South Australian authorities, but by the originating state where Danielle was living. Susan refused for the financial reasons we have discussed above, that she would assume "all the responsibility" and have "no rights" to financial support.

Caroline, on the other hand, was going through the OPG accreditation process when we spoke with her. She is pleased to fulfil the

[67] Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project, "Jason," 2015.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

requirements of connection with birth family and already arranges access visits for her foster son.

> Well we were considered the supervisors [for access visits], my husband and I and so we would just negotiate with his mum about where she'd like to meet and often it was a playground or a café and we would actually take our whole family along so our biological son would come as well and it would just be like meeting extended family for a couple of hours…we have been a bit fluid and sort of invited mum along to violin concerts and birthday dinners and that sort of thing.[70]

Caroline was not concerned about losing out financially.

> I guess [money is] up for negotiation; we're not fussed either way so we haven't particularly negotiated anything. We do know people that have said, you know we'd like to keep our regular payment. I guess all we've negotiated is that he still has access to services that a normal foster child in adolescence does if some related trauma comes up, that's all I'm interested in…I guess from our perspective you take on a child to parent them so the financial thing doesn't bother us so much.[71]

The conclusion we draw from speaking to this small group of foster and kinship carers is that there needs to be flexibility in the child protection system so that those who want to become Other Parent Guardians can do so, and those who want to remain as long-term foster carers are afforded that option too. However, there also needs to be research into the long-term outcomes of both models, from the perspective of the child, to ensure that these are the best options for *them*.

Outcomes

We opened this chapter with the story of Mike Rann's historic apology to "Those Harmed in State Care in South Australia during their Childhood."[72] Not only have there been no South Australian-specific

[70] Caroline. At present Caroline is not permitted by the state agency to have any contact with her daughter's mother but she is hoping that will change in the future.

[71] Ibid.

[72] This was an apology that Sarah Ahmed might call "bad" in that it closed off further investigations into past abuse of children in state care by extending the "terms of

inquiries into historic abuse beyond sexual abuse, but now the only instances of abuse in care that appear to be of concern are sexual ones. For example, the Guardian for Children and Young People has a mandate which includes acting as an advocate for any child in state care "who has suffered, or is alleged to have suffered, sexual abuse." The Office of the Guardian, therefore, only receives notifications about allegations of sexual abuse which, in the 2016–2017 period, numbered eleven in kinship care, six in foster care, five in residential care, and four in commercial care.[73] Earlier figures they passed onto the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission—based on information given to them by the state agency, which the commission thought inaccurate—showed that in the six years between November 2008 and October 2014, there were 236 notifications of "serious sexual abuse" of children and young people in state care. Those 236 notifications—95 of which of were sexual abuse by a child or young person—affected 422 children and young people, the majority of whom (196) were in residential or commercial care.[74] Yet as others have noted, where there is child sexual abuse there are usually other forms of abuse, such as physical and psychological abuse. In the recently released Productivity Commission's overview of substantiated instances of abuse in out of home care—"sexual abuse, physical abuse,

reference" for the apology beyond that of the Mullighan Inquiry. Whereas the Mullighan Inquiry was confined to "sexual abuse" (and "criminal conduct which resulted in the death" of a child in state care, the apology covered all historic abuse and thus closed off the possibility of further inquiries, and therefore accountability, into physical, emotional, verbal and spiritual abuse. See Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 119. Also see Mullighan, "Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry", ix.

[73]Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People, South Australia. *Annual Report 2016–2017*, 2, 16. Commercial care is outsourced residential care, that is, the staff on rotation are sourced from non-government organisations funded by the state government, see "Reporting and Statistics," Department for Child Protection, Government of South Australia, https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/department/reporting-and-statistics, last accessed 26 April 2018. According to the Nyland Report, what is referred to as "commercial care" is actually emergency care, and children placed in emergency care "are looked after by staff who have minimal training and are employed through commercial [for profit] agencies". Nyland believed children in emergency care are often left there beyond what might constitute a period of emergency. See Nyland Report, 22.

[74]Ibid., 294.

emotional abuse or neglect"—there are no figures for South Australia.[75] The opening to the Nyland Report does acknowledge, however, that many children in the South Australian state care system "have been abused and neglected, not only by their families but by the system that was supposed to protect them."[76]

Stability and safety in out of home care are known as factors that will enhance educational outcomes, and conversely abuse—pre- and in-care—and multiple placements are hindering factors.[77] As we have already discussed, South Australia has the highest level of placement instability in the country but it is difficult to compare rates of abuse because of the lack of data. What we do know is that during their primary school years, South Australian children in out of home care enrolled in public schools are more likely than their at home care peers to be suspended from school, and they are less likely to participate in the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing that occurs each year at levels three, five, seven and nine.[78] As was reflected in the accounts of the former foster children we introduced in Chapter 4, the school experience can be both positive and negative for children in out of home care today.[79] Some children feel well supported by their school community and enjoy the sociality, while others

[75] Mel Irenyi, "Child Maltreatment in Organisations: Risk Factors and Strategies for Prevention," *Child Abuse Prevention* Spring, no. 25 (2006): 2. "Chapter 16 Child Protection Services—Report on Government Services 2017," 16.14.

[76] Nyland Report, 4, xiv.

[77] For a detailed international discussion of helping and hindering factors for young people in out of home care when it comes to education, see Philip Mendes, Dee Michell, and Jacqueline Z. Wilson, "Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Care and Access to Higher Education: A Critical Review of the Literature," *Children Australia* 39, no. 4 (2014): 1–10.

[78] "Children and Young People in State Care in South Australian Government Schools 2008–2016" (Online: Guardian for Children and Young People, Government of South Australia, 2017). The Guardian report did not have information on lack of participation in NAPLAN testing. One reason could be formal exemption, which are granted when children have disabilities. Exempt students are regarded as below national minimum standards, see AIHW, "Educational Outcomes for Children in Care" (Online: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015), 7. The Nyland Commission also commented on the high rate of exclusions for children in care, see Nyland Report, 258.

[79] Chapter 4: Remembering and Forgetting Foster Care.

find it awkward explaining—or choosing not to—their complex family situations. There is also evidence that some public schools decline or are reluctant to enrol "GOM kids" as children under the Guardianship of the Minister are known colloquially.[80]

Across the country, children in out of home care are recognised as an "academically disadvantaged group." This disadvantage often begins with lower educational levels before children go into the care system, but at present there is no clear evidence that educational outcomes improve when children are in care. There does appear to be a correlation, however, between the model of care and education levels, with children in kinship care performing better than those in foster care, and children in residential care having the worst outcomes.[81] Because young people are leaving care with lower educational qualifications than their peers—as few as thirty-five percent complete secondary school as compared to seventy-four of their peers—they have higher rates of unemployment and are more likely to experience homelessness. In this, Australian care leavers are not unusual, such poor outcomes are an international phenomenon.[82]

The Nyland Commission was critical of the state agency's lack of support for young people ageing out of the system. Over the past five years only a third of young people have formal transition plans in place and "very few young people received any support from the Agency after they turned eighteen."[83] Where young people can stay on with foster or kinship carers, those carers receive no further financial support from the state. These criticisms are not new and not confined to South Australia: in 2003 the International Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood from Care (INTRAC)—which includes Australian academic and long-term advocate for improving the transition from care, Philip Mendes—was established to map provision for young people leaving care across sixteen countries. Findings are that governments

[80] Dee Michell and Claudine Scalzi, "I Want to Be Someone, I Want to Make a Difference: Young Care Leavers Preparing for the Future in South Australia," in *Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Car*, ed. Philip Mendes and Pamela Snow (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 127–28; Nyland Report, 256.

[81] AIHW, "Educational Outcomes for Children in Care," 10.

[82] Nyland Report, 384–97.

[83] Ibid., xxiv.

globally are reluctant to resource these young people to ensure "their access to core social, community and economic opportunities and connections."[84]

A more recent conversation on the Australian front is about encouraging care leavers into universities, with three care leavers prominent in the conversation: Reeny Jurczyszyn, Deidre Michell, and Jacqueline Z. Wilson.[85] Perhaps unsurprisingly given the poor educational outcomes for children and young people in out of home care, the expectation that they venture into higher education is low and Australia is lagging behind other jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom and the United States where policies to support more care leavers at university have been successfully implemented.[86] Jacqueline Z. Wilson (Federation University) and Andrew Harvey (La Trobe University), have been successful champions for care leavers in recent years, with four universities (out of a possible forty-three, and none of them in South Australia) now offering bursaries, scholarships and tailored support. In a recent study, Andrew Harvey and colleagues showed

[84] Philip Mendes and Pamela Snow, "Preface," in *Young People Transition from Out-of-Home Care*, ed. Philip Mendes and Pamela Snow (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016): x.

[85] See, for example, Dee Michell, "An Interrupted Pathway," *Australian Universities' Review* 53, no. 1 (2011); Dee Michell, "A Suddenly Desirable Demographic? Care Leavers in Higher Education," *Developing Practice* 33, no. Spring (2012); Deidre Michell, "Up from the Lowest Rung," in *Against the Odds. Care Leavers at University*, ed. Deidre Michell, David Jackson, and Casey Tonkin (Elizabeth, SA: People's Voice Publishing, 2015); Reeny Jurczyszyn, "Higher and Further Education for Care Leavers: A Road Less Travelled," *Developing Practice* Spring, no. 33 (2012); Reeny Jurczyszyn, "Going to University from Care: An Endurance Event?" *Developing Practice* December, no. 46 (2016); Reeny Jurczyszyn, "Care to University," in *Against the Odds. Care Leavers at University*, ed. Deidre Michell, David Jackson, and Casey Tonkin (Elizabeth, SA: People's Voice Publishing, 2015); Jacqueline Z. Wilson, "Pedagogies for the Future," in *Pedagogies for the Future*, ed. R. Brandenburg and Jacqueline Z. Wilson (Rotterdam: Sense, 2013); and Jacqueline Z. Wilson, "Muddling Upwards: The Unexpected, Unpredictable and Strange on the Path from 'Care' to High Achievement in Victoria," in *Young People Transitioning from Care*, ed. Philip Mendes and Pamela Snow (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[86] For an excellent overview of both international and Australian research into the subject of care leavers at university, see Philip Mendes, Dee Michell, and Jacqueline Z. Wilson, "Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Care and Access to Higher Education: A Critical Review of the Literature," *Children Australia*, 39, no. 4 (2014): 1–10.

that once at university care leavers demonstrated "relatively high achievement" and some of those interviewed were encouraged and supported by foster carers.[87] That there is a nascent national conversation about care leavers at university is a hopeful sign that even if we are not 'there' yet with out of home care in Australia, change is afoot. But will it last?

In this chapter we have discussed a range of long-standing problems with foster care in South Australia: children abused while in care; the ever-widening gap between numbers of children needing foster care and those wanting to care for them; the lack of support for foster carers taking in children who have complex needs resulting from trauma; and the multiple placements some children go through and which further traumatise them. As we write, the Department of Child Protection is a little over twelve months into its 'fresh start'. As has happened with other child protection agencies around the country, they are promising phased reform, with the first phase to include improvements to the assessment process for kinship carers, more supportive relationships with foster and kinship carers, and an increase in the number of Other Person Guardians. They say they are "on track" with each of these reforms and that they have commenced "to expand services to children who have left state care."[88]

It is too early to tell what benefit the 'fresh start' will have for children in out of home. What is clear, however, is that foster care has not, nor ever been, 'the solution' early child protection reformers hoped it would be.

[87] Andrew Harvey, Lisa Andrewartha, and Patricia McNamara, "A Forgotten Cohort? Including People from Out of Home Care in Australian Higher Education Policy," *Australian Journal of Education* 59, no. 2 (2015): 182–95; Andrew Harvey et al., "Out of Care, into University: Raising Higher Education Access and Achievement of Care Leavers" (La Trobe, VIC: La Trobe University, 2015); and Andrew Harvey et al., "Recuriting and Supporting Care Leavers in Australian Higher Education" (La Trobe, VIC: Centre for Higher Education Equity and Diversity Research, La Trobe University, 2017).

[88] "Child Protection. A Fresh Start" (Online: Department for Child Protection, Government of South Australia, 2017), 2.

References

Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. "2011 Census Counts—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples." http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2075.0main+features32011.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. "Family Formation: Adoptions." http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/2f762f95845417aeca25706c00834efa/c14cbc586a02bfd7ca2570ec001909fc!OpenDocument.

Australian Institute of Family Studies. "Children in Care. CFAC Resource Sheet." https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/children-care.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. "Adoptions Australia 2016–2017." Edited by Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT: 2017.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. "AIHW Media Release." https://www.aihw.gov.au/news-media/media-releases/2009/jan/number-of-children-in-care-continues-to-increase.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. "Educational Outcomes for Children in Care." Online: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015.

Barbalet, Margaret. *Far from a Low Gutter Girl: The Forgotten World of State Wards: South Australia 1887–1940*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Barber, James. "The Slow Demise of Foster Care in South Australia." *Journal of Social Policy* 30, no. 1 (2001): 1–15.

Bessant, Judith, and Rob Watts. "Continuing Subversion of the Children's Court." *Alternative Law Journal* 40, no. 2 (2015): 105–8.

"Chapter 16 Child Protection Services—Report on Government Services 2017." Canberra, ACT: Productivity Commission, Australian Government, 2018.

"Child Protection. A Fresh Start." Online: Department for Child Protection, Government of South Australia, 2017.

"Children and Young People in State Care in South Australian Government Schools 2008–2016." Online: Guardian for Children and Young People, Government of South Australia, 2017.

"Children in State Care Apology. House of Assembly, 3703-07. Adelaide: Hansard, Parliament of South Australia, 2008.

"Families & Children—Permanent Care." Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria State Government, https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/permanent-care.

Fernandez, Elizabeth. *Accomplishing Permancency: Reunification Pathways and Outcomes for Foster Children*. New York: Springer, 2013.

"Foster Care. Other Person Guardianship." South Australian Government. Department of Premier & Cabinet. https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/care-and-support/foster-care/other-person-guardianship.

"Fostering, Guardianship and Adoption." NSW Department of Family & Community Services. http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/parents,-carers-and-families/fostering,-guardianship-and-adoption.

"Fostering NSW." http://www.fosteringnsw.com.au/.

Harvey, Andrew, Lisa Andrewartha, and Patricia McNamara. "A Forgotten Cohort? Including People from Out of Home Care in Australian Higher Education Policy." *Australian Journal of Education* 59, no. 2 (2015): 182–95.

Harvey, Andrew, Patricia McNamara, Lisa Andrewartha, and Michale Luckman. "Out of Care, into University: Raising Higher Education Access and Achievement of Care Leavers." La Trobe, VIC: La Trobe University, 2015.

Harvey, Andrew, Perri Campbell, Lisa Andrewartha, Jacqueline Z. Wilson, and Pearl Goodwin-Burns. "Recuriting and Supporting Care Leavers in Australian Higher Education." La Trobe, VIC: Centre for Higher Education Equity and Diversity Research, La Trobe University, 2017.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. "Our Homeless Children: Report of the National Inquiry into Homeless Children." Canberra, 1989.

"Inquiry Report: The Impact and Experience of Moving While in Care." Online: Guardian for Children and Young People, Government of South Australia, 2013.

Irenyi, Mel. "Child Maltreatment in Organisations: Risk Factors and Strategies for Prevention." *Child Abuse Prevention* Spring, no. 25 (2006): 1–9.

Johns, Mark. "Inquest into the Death of Chloe Lee Valentine." 1–167. Adelaide, SA: Courts Administration Authority of South Australia, 2015.

Jurczyszyn, Reeny. "Care to University." In *Against the Odds. Care Leavers at University*, edited by Deidre Michell, David Jackson, and Casey Tonkin. Elizabeth, SA: People's Voice Publishing, 2015.

Jurczyszyn, Reeny. "Going to University from Care: An Endurance Event?" *Developing Practice* December, no. 46 (2016): 29–41.

Jurczyszyn, Reeny. "Higher and Further Education for Care Leavers: A Road Less Travelled." *Developing Practice* Spring, no. 33 (2012): 10–22.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Caroline," 2015.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Chrissy," 2015.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Doug," 2014.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Jason," 2015.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Mel," 2015.

Long History of Foster Care Oral History Project. "Susan," 2015.

Mackieson, Penny, Aron Shlonsky, and Marie Connolly. "Permanency Planning and Ideology in Western Child Welfare Systems: Implications for Victoria." *Communities, Children and Families Australia* 11, no. 1 (2017): 3–16.

Mclean. "The Challenging Behaviour of Children in the South Australian Out-of-Home Care Sector." University of Adelaide, 2009.

Mendes, Philip, and Pamela Snow. "Preface." In *Young People Transition from Out-of-Home Care*, edited by Philip Mendes and Pamela Snow, ix–x. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Mendes, Philip, Dee Michell, and Jacqueline Z. Wilson. "Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Care and Access to Higher Education: A Critical Review of the Literature." *Children Australia* 39, no. 4 (2014): 1–10.

Michell, Dee. "An Interrupted Pathway." *Australian Universities' Review* 53, no. 1 (2011): 89–93.

Michell, Dee. "A Suddenly Desirable Demographic? Care Leavers in Higher Education." *Developing Practice* 33, no. Spring (2012): 44–58.

Michell, Dee, and Claudine Scalzi. "I Want to Be Someone, I Want to Make a Difference: Young Care Leavers Preparing for the Future in South Australia." In *Young People Transitioning from Out-of-Home Car*, edited by Philip Mendes and Pamela Snow. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Michell, Deidre. "Apology Excepted: A Response to the SA Government's Apology to Former Kids in 'Care'." In *Surviving Care: Achieving Justice and Healing for the Forgotten Australians*, edited by Richard Hil and Liz Branigan. Salisbury, QLD: Bond University Press, 2010.

Michell, Deidre. "Up from the Lowest Rung." In *Against the Odds. Care Leavers at University*, edited by Deidre Michell, David Jackson, and Casey Tonkin, 55–64. Elizabeth, SA: People's Voice Publishing, 2015.

Mullighan, E. P. "Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry. Allegations of Sexual Abuse and Death from Criminal Conduct." Adelaide, SA, 2008.

Nobles, Melissa. *The Politics of Official Apologies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Nyland, Margaret. "The Life They Deserve. Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report." 78–149. Adelaide, SA: Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, 2016.

Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People, South Australia. *Annual Report* 2016–2017.

Olick, Jeffrey K. *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Protecting Children Is Everyone's Business. Online: Commonwealth of Australia, 2009.

Quartly, Marian, Shurlee Swain, and Denise Cuthbert. *The Market in Babies: Stories of Australian Adoption*. Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing, 2013.

"Removed. Part Two." Kickstarter. https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/heschle/removed-part-two.

"Reporting and Statistics." Department for Child Protection, Government of South Australia. https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/department/reporting-and-statistics.

Riggs, Damien W., Martha Augoustinos, and Paul Delfabbro. "'Basically It's a Recognition Issue': Validating Foster Parent Identities." *Family Matters*, no. 76 (2007): 64–69.

Riggs, Damien W., Martha Augoustinos, and Paul Delfabbro. "Role of Foster Family Belonging in Recovery from Child Maltreatment." *Australian Psychologist* 44, no. 3 (2009): 166–73.

Riggs, Damien W., Paul Delfabbro, and Martha Augoustinos. "Negotiating Foster-Families: Identification and Desire." *British Journal of Social Work* 39, no. 5 (2009): 789–806.

Rubin, David, Kevin Downes, Amanda O'Reilly, Robin Maekonnen, Xianqun Luan, and Russell Locallio. "The Impact of Kinship Care on Behavioral Well-Being for Children in Out-of-Home Care." *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 162, no. 6 (2008): 550–56.

Sammut, Jeremy. *The Madness of Australian Child Protection: Why Adoptees Will Rescue Australia's Underclass Children*. Ballarat, VIC: Connor Court Publishing, 2015.

Schofield, Gillian. "The Significance of a Secure Base: A Psychosocial Model of Long-Term Foster Care." *Child & Family Social Work* 7, no. 4 (2002): 259–72.

Senate Community Affairs References Committee. "Forgotten Australians: A Report on Australians Who Experienced Institutional or Out-of-Home Care as Children." Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2004.

Serbinski, S., and Aron Shlonsky. "Is It That We Are Afraid to Ask? A Scoping Review About Sons and Daughters of Foster Parents." *Children and Youth Services Review* 36 (2014): 101–14.

Seymour, Bryan. "Adoption: Who Says You Can Safeguard a Life by Imposing a New Identity?" *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 9 January 2016.

Smith, Hazel. "The Need for Revaluation and Assessment of Australian Foster Care Programmes." *Australian Journal of Social Work* 16, no. 2 (1963): 25–29.

"South Australian Child Protection Expenditure from the Report on Government Services 2018." Adelaide, SA, 2018.

"Statistics About Children in Care—June 2017." Guardian for Children and Young People.

Watts, Rob. "Stumbling Forwards—Understand Backwards." In *Bread and Roses*, edited by Dee Michell, Jacqueline Z. Wilson, and Verity Archer, 19–27. Rotterdam: Sense, 2015.

Wilson, Jacqueline Z. "Muddling Upwards: The Unexpected, Unpredictable and Strange on the Path from 'Care' to High Achievement in Victoria." In *Young People Transitiong from Care*, edited by Philip Mendes and Pamela Snow. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Wilson, Jacqueline Z. "Pedagogies for the Future." In *Pedagogies for the Future*, edited by R. Brandenburg and Jacqueline Z. Wilson. Rotterdam: Sense, 2013.

Check for updates

CHAPTER 10

Conclusion—What Can History Tell Us About the Future of Foster Care?

We opened the first part of this book with the parallel stories of young children who died in their foster homes: John Wood Pledger died in 1895 and Luke Anthony Borusiewicz died in 2009, 114 years later. Too many disturbing cases like these continue to plague Australian foster care today. As we write, the continuing story of twelve-year-old Brisbane girl Tiahleigh Palmer has been making headlines: her foster father, Rick Thorburn, announced his intention to plead guilty to her murder on 19 March 2018, and was sentenced to life in prison a little more than two months later. Earlier in 2018, on 19 January, it was reported that her foster brother, Trent Thorburn, had been released from prison after being in custody for sixteen-months, twenty months shy of his original four-year sentence for incest, perjury and attempting to pervert the course of justice. Trent Thorburn pleaded guilty on 14 September 2017, to having sex with his foster sister, which in Queensland brings a charge of incest. Tiahleigh's foster mother, Julene Thorburn, is currently serving a prison sentence for lying to police, and Tiahleigh's other foster brother, Joshua Thorburn, has completed his term in prison on the same charge.[1]

[1] Kristian Silva, "Tiahleigh Palmer: Foster Father Rick Thorburn's Guilty Plea to Be the Final Chapter of 'Horrific' Case," *ABC News*, 20 March 2018; Kristian Silva and Donna Field, "Tiahleigh Palmer's Foster Brother Trent Thorburn Jailed Over Incest, Perjury," *ABC News*, 14 September 2017; 7 News Brisbane, "Trent Thorborn Released from Jail," 27 March 2018; Kristian Silva, "Murdered Schoolgirl Tiahleigh Palmer's Foster Mother Sentenced to 18 Months in Jail," *ABC News*, 3 November 2017; and Lexy

© The Author(s) 2018

N. Musgrove and D. Michell, *The Slow Evolution of Foster Care in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in the History of Childhood,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93900-1_10

Tiahleigh Palmer's body was found six days after she was reported missing on 30 October 2015. According to news reports at the time of her disappearance, Tiahleigh was taken to school in the morning by her foster father but did not turn up to class. On 5 November 2015, police issued a public alert that the girl was missing and late the same day, fishermen found her decomposing body on the banks of the Pimpama River just thirty kilometres south-east of Marsden State High School. Three evenings later a candle-light vigil attended by approximately 300 people was held for Tiahleigh at a park close to where the girl was last seen, and on 14 November a funeral service was held at the Brisbane Anglican Maori Mission in Cornubia. Over the eleven-month search for the culprit, which included interviews with more than seventy students from Marsden State High School, surveillance devices were installed in the foster family's home and the family were heard discussing their plan to deceive authorities about her murder.[2]

Less than a month after Tiahleigh's disappearance, on 10 November 2015, the Queensland Government—under pressure from media reports of community outrage that it took so long for the police to alert the public—ordered a review of government systems to ensure that "everything possible was done when concerns were first raised about Tiahleigh's recent disappearance."[3] The review was conducted by the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) and the resultant report, *When a Child is Missing: Tiahleigh's Story*, was released more than six months later, on 27 June 2016. Principal Commissioner of the QFCC, Cheryl Vardon, opened the report by expressing the wish that the review would "honour Tiahleigh and her family through a reflection on the responsiveness of the systems in place when she went missing, the changes which occurred after Tiahleigh's death and the work which remains to be done."[4] Two weeks later, on 11 July 2016, the

Hamilton-Smith, "Tiahleigh Palmer's Foster Brother Joshua Thorburn Jailed for Lying to Police," *ABC News*, 27 July 2017.

[2] "Timeline: The Discovery of Tiahleigh Palmer's Body and Investigation into Her Suspected Murder," *ABC News*, 24 March 2016.

[3] Queensland Family and Child Commission, "When a Child Is Missing—Remembering Tiahleigh—A Report into Queensland's Children Missing from Out of Home Care," 2016, 12.

[4] Ibid., 3–4; "Police Defend Six-Day Delay in Alerting About Missing Girl Later Found Dead," *The Guardian*, 2015.

Queensland government approved new protocols for reporting the disappearance of a child in state care. Schools now have responsibility for alerting caregivers immediately should a child in care not turn up to school, and police no longer have to seek permission from child protection authorities before issuing media alerts—including a photograph—to raise awareness and enlist public support for finding the child.[5]

At the time of the review and introduction of new protocols, the investigation into the murder of Tiahleigh Palmer was ongoing. The QFCC review might 'make a difference' in future cases of missing children in out of home care, but the subsequent arrest and sentencing of Tiahleigh's entire foster care family begs the question of how the new protocols would have made any difference to Tiahleigh at all? By the time her school could have reported her missing, Tiahleigh was dead, and the person responsible for her death was one of her *carers*—the very people the protocols provide to be alerted immediately once schools become aware that children in out of home care are absent without notice. Furthermore, the people responsible for delaying the police investigation by covering up the murder were her two *carers*. Knowing the circumstances of her death now makes Cheryl Vardon's opening paragraph in the QFCC report—in which she includes these carers in her acknowledgement of the "grief and sadness" related to Tiahleigh's death—appear premature and inappropriate, and the government's calling for the review a kneejerk reaction to get the public off its back—something we argue is no isolated phenomenon.[6] The Queensland Government has been quiet on the matter of the foster carer who killed the little girl in its care.

The murder of Tiahleigh Palmer and government response—or lack thereof—raises serious questions about the Australian foster care system, questions we have been asking since we began this project: Did anybody care? Did anybody care that Tiahleigh was in a foster care situation where she was sexually abused for more than nine months? Did anybody care that Tiahleigh was likely signalling her distress by running away frequently? Did anybody care about what it was like for Tiahleigh to be

[5] "Tiahleigh Palmer's Death Prompts New Protocol for Missing Children in Care," *ABC News*, 11 July 2016. "Queensland Government Protocol for Joint Agency Response When a Child in Care Is Missing," Child Safety Practice Manual, 2016.

[6] See Chapter 1: There Is No Typical Story of Foster Care.

living in a family situation where clearly there were substantive differences in the treatment of the children in that family—Tiahleigh was murdered by her foster father because of her foster brother's abuse of her, and Tiahleigh's foster mother attempted to protect her biological family by lying for them rather than protecting her foster daughter from male violence. As we asked in our opening study of John Wood Pledger and Luke Anthony Borusiewicz: "Why do children die under the care of state welfare systems which are supposed to protect them from that very end?"[7]

Sadly, Tiahleigh's death is not an isolated incident, not in the past and not in the present. A coroner's report into the death by accidental drowning, on 13 September 2014, of twenty-two month-old Braxton Slager has been released as we write too. The toddler had been in foster care for a little more than three weeks and "his father was working towards regaining the care of his son in the near future."[8] The coroner, Magistrate Harriet Grahame, found that Braxton drowned in an unregistered pool at the site of foster carers who had been registered to care for foster children since 2006 by national agency, Life Without Barriers. Fencing that should have prevented Braxton from getting into the pool did not comply with Australian Standards, and nor did the pool—the water of which was "filthy and green"—which had been installed two years previously for another foster child.[9]

Moreover, a sad irony is that traces of an unprescribed drug "not recommended for use in children under the age of two," cyproheptadine, were found in Braxton's blood during the autopsy performed in the wake of his death. Cyproheptadine is an antihistamine marketed as Periactin. According to the coroner's report, Braxton's father—from whom the child was removed because of his drug abuse—had noticed something untoward about Braxton's behaviour during a supervised access visit on 1 September 2014, and he had raised a concern with a caseworker the following day. The caseworker, in turn, had raised the matter with the foster carer, Ms. Talinton, "who denied that any medication had been given." The coroner was unable to establish how the drug—used by several members of the foster family—had come to be in Braxton's blood,

[7] Chapter 2: Did Anybody Care? The Death of John Wood Pledger.

[8] Coroners Court of New South Wales, "Inquest into the Death of Braxton Slager," 2018, 1.

[9] Ibid., 17.

but concluded that "there are a number of possibilities, all of which are disturbing." The possibilities are that the foster carers or other members of the household gave the drug to the child, or that Braxton "took some of the drug himself" since he had access to the kitchen—where drugs were kept—and was an assiduous climber. In either case, and as the coroner says, there was clearly a "serious lack of supervision" of Braxton, and the foster carers. The coroner did not believe, however, that there was a causal link between this and the child's death.[10]

In summing up, the coroner found that Braxton did not receive the service he needed to ensure he was kept safe; it was "disjointed and superficial at best." Furthermore, "a child who went into care to improve his chance of living in a safe environment, found himself in a situation of enormous risk. His death appears to have been a preventable accident, which occurred against a background of inadequate care."[11]

Seven months prior to the release of the cornoner's report, on 29 August 2017, and in response to the publication of an internal report which detailed the systemic failings leading to Braxton's death, the New South Wales agency Family & Community Services (FACS)—which had sought media suppression of that internal report—said it was investing ninety million dollars in new programmes to reduce the number of children coming into care. Somewhat cynically, a 'success' story resulting from these new programmes was released two days before the coroner's report into Braxton Slager's death.[12] As we argue in Chapters 7 and 8, positive stories about foster children are important, both to counteract the stigma so often associated with being in foster care, and to move beyond the problem-driven way in which records about foster children are so often constructed—but they should not be deployed as 'cover' or propaganda.[13]

[10] Ibid., 18–19, 21.

[11] Ibid., 10, 23.

[12] Nicole Chettle, "Braxton Slager: FACS Misused Power to Place Toddler in Overcrowded Foster Care, Report Finds," *ABC News*, 28 August 2017; Esther Han, "Sydney's Most Vulnerable Mothers Keep Their Newborns Thanks to Program," *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 25 March 2018; Nicole Chettle, "Toddler Braxton Slager's Drowning Death 'Preventable Accident', Coroner Finds," *ABC News*, 27 March 2018; and Family and Community Services NSW, "Statement Regarding Coronial Inquest into the Death of Braxton Slager," 2017.

[13] Chapter 7: Rediscovering Foster Care; Chapter 8: Writing to Heal—The Emergence of Foster Care in Australian Literature.

Braxton's birth mother, Vanessa Naumovksa, has pointed out in her petition to the New South Wales Parliament for a Royal Commission into the failings of FACS, that only three years earlier, on 19 April 2011, twenty-one-month-old Aboriginal foster child Lachlan Leslie drowned in similar circumstances. This was also noted by Coroner Grahame who reported that the FACS representative in Braxton's inquest, Ms., Morgan-Thomas, was unable initially "to inform the court as to any action taken following the death of Lachlan Leslie or even after the subsequent death of Braxton Slager," although later, Ms. Morgan-Thomas did outline steps FACS have recently taken "in relation to swimming pool death as they relate to out of home care." As the Coroner Grahame says, however, it is "extremely depressing" that changes were not made after the death of Lachlan Leslie back in 2011, or even after the coroner's report was published in 2013.[14] We said in the introduction to this book that historically systemic change has been unlikely to occur after the public outcry and formal investigation of individual cases. Sadly, this holds as true in the twenty-first century as it did in the nineteenth and twentieth.

A third tragedy at the time of writing involving an Australian foster child is the unresolved disappearance of William Tyrrell who, if he is still alive, would be almost seven years of age. As we noted in Chapter 7, three-year-old William disappeared from the northern New South Wales home of his foster mother's mother when visiting there with his foster mother and elder biological sister on 12 September 2014.[15] According to news reports, William ran around the back of the house in a game of hide-and-seek with his sister, who is still in foster care with William's foster carers. When William did not return from his hiding place, the foster mother went searching, calling on neighbours within fifteen minutes to help find the boy. Police were called fifteen minutes after that.

William was apparently in foster care because his birth parents were in a domestic violence relationship; when the couple violated an order to not associate with each other, FACS took out an order for the eight-month-old child to be removed from the couple's care. Because Karlie Tyrrell and Brendan Collins, William's birth parents, hid the child from authorities for six weeks, Karlie Tyrrell was one of the first people police

[14]Coroner's Court of New South Wales, "Inquest into the Death of Braxton Slager," 22–23.

[15]Chapter 7: Rediscovering Foster Care.

spoke to in their widespread investigation. However, she is no longer under suspicion and nor are William's birth father or foster carers.

It was three and a half years after William's disappearance before Karlie spoke out in public, partly because FACS had ordered a press embargo on details of William's family, their argument being that William needed to be protected from possible stigma.[16] Therefore, initial stories about William's disappearance cited him as being missing from his grandmother's house and his foster parents were identified as his parents, including on national current affairs program, *60 Minutes*, and in a poem published in his honour for Christmas, 2015.[17] The embargo was overruled by the NSW Supreme Court in August 2017 after child protection activist, Allanna Smith, co-leader of the Facebook group W4W Walking Warriors Australia, took FACS to court. Smith explained that she was motivated by sympathy for Karlie Tyrrell, even though she has never met either Karlie or William. "I feel her loss, that primal loss, through no fault of her own," Smith is reported to have said, "The only thing she did wrong was being young, with no support of her own." W4W Walking Warriors Australia has been campaigning for a coronial inquest into the disappearance of William Tyrrell for some time, stating that the 'gag' orders on his birth family have hampered the case, as others also believe. When Karlie Tyrrell did appear in public, on 4 March 2018, she said she did not want to blame the carers, but "they were responsible for looking after him and they failed. She went inside and made a cup of tea, and okay, that's an accident and that's unfortunate, but…"[18]

[16] See Chapter 7: Rediscovering Foster Care.

[17] "William Tyrrell: Timelines of Boy's Disappearance in September 2014," *ABC News*, 12 September 2016. Also see *Where Is William: 60 Minutes Part 2 of 3*, 6 September 2015, (Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0H5fhsGSVOM), last accessed 25 April 2018; Stephanie Boulet and Lucy Marks, "William Tyrrell: Missing Boy's Parents Release Christmas Poem to Son," *ABC News*, 25 December 2015.

[18] Megan Gorrey, "William Tyrrell's Mother Says Foster Parents 'Should Feel Guilty'," *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 4 March 2018; Candace Sutton, "Stunning New Revelations About the Day William Tyrrell Disappeared," *News.com.au* (online), http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/parenting/stunning-new-revelations-about-the-day-william-tyrrell-disappeared/news-story/1a73063218a15527c703ad7d2136710e, 19 January 2018, last accessed 25 April 2018; "'I Felt Like the Worst Mum in the World': William Tyrrell's Mother Breaks Her Silence," *7 News Online*, https://au.news.yahoo.com/a/39325947/william-tyrrell-mother-karlie-tyrrell-breaks-her-silence/, 26 February 2018, last accessed 25 April 2018; Candace Sutton, "How William Tyrrell Was Hidden More Than Two Years

We tell these tragic stories here because, as we have demonstrated throughout this book, for almost one hundred and fifty years statutory foster care in Australia has been blighted by the same issues: systemic failings which have resulted in the deaths of children in foster care; agencies over-extending the capacities of existing foster carers through short supply; inadequate support for, and supervision of, foster carers; foster children at risk from abuse by biological children in a foster family; sexual, physical, emotional and verbal abuse of children in foster care; the social undervaluing of children in foster care and resultant stigmatisation of them; variable payments to foster carers and the economic undervaluing of the work they do; children enduring multiple foster care placements; long-term separation of children from birth families; unacknowledged grief and loss felt by foster children when separated from birth families; insufficient support for birth families to keep themselves together; low education levels of children in foster care; and the long-term wounding of Australian citizens by a system that was ostensibly designed to provide for them, and to keep them safe from harm.

If there is any hope that the future will be better it has to come from the wider Australian community valuing all children, including those in out of home care, refusing to accept systemic failings as 'one offs' and insisting that respective governments seriously evaluate systems rather than relying on mounting inquiries which appear to 'take action' but which have the primary purpose of quieting public criticism. There are, no doubt, many people working within child protection systems today—as indeed there have always been—who work tirelessly to provide good outcomes for children and young people in out of home care. However, this book has also shown that these people often find themselves fighting against the momentum of systems which have significant limitations. The best way to ensure that child protection systems are held accountable for delivering the outcomes they promise, is for their work to be subjected

Before His Disappearance," *News.com.au* (online), http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/how-william-tyrrell-was-hidden-more-than-two-years-before-his-disappearance/news-story/bce866bd1bd09f319f5e6bfc71905df6, 2 March 2018, last accessed 25 April 2018; Christopher Harris, "Shock New Revelation in William Tyrrell Case," *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 25 August 2017; Daniel Piotrowski, "Exclusive: 'I Felt Her Loss': Child Protection Activist Who Lifted Veil of Secrecy Over Missing Boy," *Daily Mail Australia*, 26 August 2017; and Christopher Harris, "Wiliam Tyrrell Court Bombshell," *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 25 August 2017.

to public scrutiny. Therefore, it is heartening to witness the rise of activist groups in the twenty-first-century protesting and organising on behalf of both birth families and foster children.

W4W Walking Warriors Australia is one of several new grassroots groups joining the longstanding CREATE Foundation in demanding changes to the child protection systems across Australia, and one which exemplifies the reach that social media can provide for such causes. W4W Walking Warriors Australia have nearly fifteen thousand members on their Facebook page, and daily remind followers that William Tyrrell is still missing while also circulating material about other missing children and child protection matters, including the recently reported right of "paedophiles, rapists and sex offenders" to work with children in Victoria.[19] Luke Borusiewicz's father, Michael Borusiewicz, from his home in Cairns, Queensland, established *LukesArmy*, comprising a website, blogspot and Facebook page, as a memorial to his son. "Take a walk in Lukey's shoes, and then tell me your child protection system is working," he writes, "You are desecrating families, children's lives, parents, making them give their whole life earnings, their children's inheritiance [sic] to solicitors, in your sick game where you get unlimited legal funding, fake psych reports, and you make any false allegations you choose without and [sic] proof needed."[20] Michael Borusiewicz also circulates child protection stories, such as the 26 March 2018, report of a New South Wales foster carer charged with the sexual abuse of his foster child, and the 4 April 2018, report that a foster mother accused of killing a twenty-year-old foster child had been denied bail in the New South Wales Supreme Court. This kind of work takes energy, not least because social media can be a volatile environment and both W4W Walking Warriors Australia and LukesArmy are attempting to raise emotive issues which can attract heated criticism and debate.[21]

Other activist groups have pooled knowledge and resources to provide services for children and families drawn into child protection systems. Family Inclusion Network (FIN) is an Australia wide network of birth parents, non-government organisations and academics, in

[19] Danny Tran, "Working with Children Checks Granted to Sex Offenders and Criminals through VCAT Challenges," *ABC News*, 3 April 2018.

[20] Michael Borusiewicz, "Luke's Story by Luke's Dad," 2016, https://www.facebook.com/LukesArmy/, last accessed 26 April 2018.

[21] For details of these stories, see "Foster Mum Denied Bail Over Baby's Death," *Examiner* (Launceston, TAS), 4 April 2018; Hamish Broome, "11 Charges for Man Accused of Sexually Abusing Foster Child," *Northern Star* (NSW), 26 March 2018.

operation since 2004, to provide an advocacy, support and information service for parents navigating the statutory system. FIN Victoria, for example, use volunteers to help families prepare for mandated meetings and provide an information sheet entitled "Dealing with Child Protection" which advises birth parents to, among other things, record all details of interactions, ask questions and seek emotional support.[22]

In the country New South Wales town of Gunnedah, a group of Aboriginal women, Gomeroi grandmothers, have united to form Grandmothers Against Removals (GMAR) and protest the over-representation of Aboriginal children in out of home care, and the placement of many in non-Indigenous foster families rather than with Aboriginal extended family or kin. GMAR organised a national day of action on National Sorry Day, 26 May 2014, and have since collaborated with a FACS District Office and the New South Wales Ombudsman to produce the "Guiding Principles for Strengthening the Participation of Local Aboriginal Community in Child Protection Decision-making." The position document currently features on the FACS website. It is intended to strengthen the relationship between FACS and the Aboriginal community, ensure more Indigenous children are placed with "extended family or kinship, or else within their community, or in Indigenous foster care," and, ultimately, to reduce the number of Aboriginal children removed from their families. GMAR continue to meet with FACS workers, in addition to "magistrates and solicitors, as they're enablers" said GMAR member, Debra, in a recent interview. GMAR have sparked a national movement and featured in a 2017 documentary, *After the Apology*, directed by prominent Aboriginal academic Larissa Behrendt.[23]

In the recent 2018 South Australian state election, child protection has finally featured as an issue for voters. Prior to the election, a community panel—which included representatives from the South Australian Council of Social Services and the Aboriginal Family Support Services as well as citizens who have been in out of home care—was convened by Democracy Co, an organisation specialising in deliberative democracy. The panel met to discuss ongoing concerns about the state's

[22] "FIN Victoria Inc," http://www.finvic.org.au/, last accessed 26 April 2018.

[23] Sydney Criminal Lawyers, "The Ongoing Stolen Generations: An Interview with Grandmothers Against Removal," https://www.sydneycriminallawyers.com.au/blog/the-ongoing-stolen-generations-an-interview-with-grandmothers-against-removals/, last accessed 26 April 2018.

child protection system, particularly in the wake of the Nyland Royal Commission (discussed in Chapter 9) and produced an overall recommendation that resourcing is needed to prevent children being removed from their families.[24] A new political party, the Child Protection Party, founded in 2015 by prominent local social worker Tony Tonkin—and which includes in its membership many parents who have had their children removed by the state agency—contested a Legislative Council seat.[25] The media also took an interest in what the party policies and candidates in the House of Assembly had to say about child protection.[26] In her first interview as the newly installed Minister for Child Protection, Rachel Sanderson has committed to examining the reasons why so many foster carers have left the system, and to providing services to families so that fewer children are removed from them.[27] Actually achieving this will not be easy, but seeing investment in child welfare placed high on the political agenda is certainly a positive step.

In many ways, we recognise that this book tells a disturbing story about the past and present of foster care. It is a story about social stratification, and about interventions into the lives of the families who find themselves at the bottom of the heap. It is a story about stigma, and the low expectations people so often have of the abilities of children and young people in foster care. It is a story in which the daily struggle to survive—sometimes literally, but often financially—can lead individuals and governments to defer action on the harder issues, like how to improve educational outcomes for children in foster care, what to do about the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care, how to achieve

[24] Emma Rebellato and Sarah Hancock, "SA Child Protection Recommendations Offered by Democracy Co Community Panel," *ABC News*, 30 January 2018; Deomocracy Co, "People's Policy on Children's Wellbing," 2018, http://www.democracyco.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PPCW_Report_CLIENT.pdf, last accessed 26 April 2018. On the Nyland Commission see: Chapter 9: Are We Getting Better at This?

[25] Georgie Moore, "Social Workers Heads Child Protection Party," *Echo Daily* (NSW), 23 October 2015; Tom Richardson, "Child Protection Party Wants Preventative Services for Abusive Men," *InDaily*, 23 October 2015.

[26] Leah MacLennan, "SA Election: What Have the Major Parties Been Promising Ahead of the March 17 Vote?" *ABC News*, 2 March 2018.

[27] Rachel Sanderson, "New Child Protection Minister Rachel Sanderson," *ABC Radio Adelaide*, 22 March 2018.

more (and more successful) birth-family reunions, how to ensure an adequate supply of suitable foster homes, and how to properly support foster carers in their work. The persistence of these issues over time tells us that while there are no easy answers, ignoring them will not make them go away.

We feel the need to draw attention to the many ways in which foster care has failed us over many years, but we do so with the genuine hope that this might help us do it better in the future. One point of tension which we address many times throughout the work is money. We heartily endorse appropriate financial resourcing of foster care in Australia, particularly so that foster carers are paid for the significant caring work they do, and so that families receive the services they need to avoid being torn apart. Insufficient funding, and a reluctance to increase government investments in out of home care, have long restricted what has been possible within foster care. This is still true today. But we fear that a focus *only* on money will not fundamentally change child protection systems across the nation. As a society, we need to really *care* about the children and young people in out of home care. As we have demonstrated throughout this book, despite spikes in public concern when foster care goes horribly wrong, on a day-to-day basis children and young people in out of home care tend to be viewed through a rather pessimistic lens. We may have largely removed the word 'class' from our vocabulary, but notions of the 'dangerous' and 'feckless' poor of the nineteenth century continue to inform the ways we talk about children in out of home care and their families. Similarly, we need to ask what positive work we, as a society, have done to empower the socially, culturally and economically marginalised people who make up so many of the families drawn into child protection systems. There is going to need to be a change in the collective attitude, perhaps via the sorts of activism we have described above, in combination with continuing media pressure, for sustained (and sustainable) improvement in the provision of foster care in Australia.

Our final word is one of thanks, to all the people—past and present—whose experiences of foster care have filled the pages of this book. We know there are many more stories to tell, but we hope that this book will start a critical conversation about why we have allowed foster care to operate at such a human cost for so long, and how we can do things better in the future.

References

7 News, Brisbane. "Trent Thorborn Released from Jail." 27 March 2018.
7 News, Online. "'I Felt Like the Worst Mum in the World': William Tyrrell's Mother Breaks Her Silence." https://au.news.yahoo.com/a/39325947/william-tyrrell-mother-karlie-tyrrell-breaks-her-silence/, 26 February 2018.
Borusiewicz, Michael. "Luke's Story by Luke's Dad." 2016. https://www.facebook.com/LukesArmy/.
Boulet, Stephanie, and Lucy Marks. "William Tyrrell: Missing Boy's Parents Release Christmas Poem to Son." *ABC News*, 25 December 2015.
Broome, Hamish. "11 Charges for Man Accused of Sexually Abusing Foster Child." *Northern Star* (Goonellabah, NSW), 26 March 2018.
Chettle, Nicole. "Braxton Slager: Facs Misused Power to Place Toddler in Overcrowded Foster Care, Report Finds." *ABC News*, 28 August 2017.
Chettle, Nicole. "Toddler Braxton Slager's Drowning Death 'Preventable Accident', Coroner Finds." *ABC News*, 27 March 2018.
Coroner's Court of New South Wales. "Inquest into the Death of Braxton Slager." 2018.
Democracy Co. "People's Policy on Children's Wellbing." 2018. http://www.democracyco.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/PPCW_Report_CLIENT.pdf.
Family & Community Services. "Statement Regarding Coronial Inquest into the Death of Braxton Slager." Online, NSW Government, 2017.
"FIN Victoria Inc." http://www.finvic.org.au/.
"Foster Mum Denied Bail Over Baby's Death." *Examiner* (Launceston, TAS), 4 April 2018.
Gorrey, Megan. "William Tyrrell's Mother Says Foster Parents 'Should Feel Guilty'." *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 4 March 2018.
Hamilton-Smith, Lexy. "Tiahleigh Palmer's Foster Brother Joshua Thorburn Jailed for Lying to Police." *ABC News*, 27 July 2017.
Han, Esther. "Sydney's Most Vulnerable Mothers Keep Their Newborns Thanks to Program." *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 25 March 2018.
Harris, Christopher. "Shock New Revelation in William Tyrrell Case." *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 25 August 2017.
Harris, Christopher. "Wiliam Tyrrell Court Bombshell." *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 25 August 2017.
MacLennan, Leah. "SA Election: What Have the Major Parties Been Promising Ahead of the March 17 Vote?" *ABC News*, 2 March 2018.
Moore, Georgie. "Social Workers Heads Child Protection Party." *Echo Daily* (NSW), 23 October 2015.
Piotrowski, Daniel. "Exclusive: 'I Felt Her Loss': Child Protection Activist Who Lifted Veil of Secrecy Over Missing Boy." *Daily Mail Australia* (Online), 26 August 2017.

"Police Defend Six-Day Delay in Alerting About Missing Girl Later Found Dead." *The Guardian* (Online), 7 November 2015.

Queensland Family and Child Commission. "When a Child Is Missing—Remembering Tiahleigh—A Report into Queensland's Children Missing from Out of Home Care, 2016.

"Queensland Government Protocol for Joint Agency Response When a Child in Care Is Missing." Child Safety Practice Manual, Queensland, 2016.

Rebellato, Emma, and Sarah Hancock. "SA Child Protection Recommendations Offered by Democracy Co Community Panel." *ABC News*, 30 January 2018.

Richardson, Tom. "Child Protection Party Wants Preventative Services for Abusive Men." *InDaily*, 23 October 2015.

Sanderson, Rachel. "New Child Protection Minister Rachel Sanderson," *ABC Radio Adelaide*, 22 March 2018.

Silva, Kristian. "Murdered Schoolgirl Tiahleigh Palmer's Foster Mother Sentenced to 18 Months in Jail." *ABC News*, 3 November 2017.

Silva, Kristian. "Tiahleigh Palmer: Foster Father Rick Thorburn's Guilty Plea to Be the Final Chapter of 'Horrific' Case." *ABC News*, 20 March 2018.

Silva, Kristian, and Donna Field. "Tiahleigh Palmer's Foster Brother Trent Thorburn Jailed Over Incest, Perjury." *ABC News*, 14 September 2017.

Sutton, Candace. "How William Tyrrell Was Hidden More Than Two Years before His Disappearance." *News.com.au* (Online), 2 March 2018. http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/how-william-tyrrell-was-hidden-more-than-two-years-before-his-disappearance/news-story/bce866bd1bd09f319f5e6bfc71905df6.

Sutton, Candace. "Stunning New Revelations About the Day William Tyrrell Disappeared." *News.com.au* (Online), 19 January 2018. http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/parenting/stunning-new-revelations-about-the-day-william-tyrrell-disappeared/news-story/1a73063218a15527c703ad7d2136710e.

Sydney Criminal Lawyers, "The Ongoing Stolen Generations: An Interview with Grandmothers Against Removal." https://www.sydneycriminallawyers.com.au/blog/the-ongoing-stolen-generations-an-interview-with-grandmothers-against-removals/.

"Tiahleigh Palmer's Death Prompts New Protocol for Missing Children in Care." *ABC News*, 11 July 2016.

"Timeline: The Discovery of Tiahleigh Palmer's Body and Investigation into Her Suspected Murder." *ABC News*, 24 March 2016.

Tran, Danny. "Working with Children Checks Granted to Sex Offenders and Criminals Through VCAT Challenges." *ABC News*, 3 April 2018.

Where Is William: 60 Minutes Part 2 of 3, September 6, 2015. Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0H5fhsGSVOM.

"William Tyrrell: Timelines of Boy's Disappearance in September 2014." *ABC News*, 12 September 2016.

Index

A

Abbotsford Catholic School, 211. *See also* industrial schools, Abbotsford
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 3, 58, 106, 118, 245, 264, 281. *See also* Aboriginal Australians; Australian Indigenous people; Indigenous Australians; Indigenous children
Aboriginal Australians, 8, 76, 82, 141, 230, 232, 239, 248, 298
abortion, 29
Abrams, Lynn, 6, 162
absconding (escaping or running away), 64, 78, 81, 109, 183, 184, 188, 247. *See also* foster children, absconding, running away
abuse, 14, 27, 35, 36, 38–42, 59, 89–91, 98, 100–103, 106–108, 113, 117, 119, 123, 183, 188, 206, 242, 243, 246–248, 250, 260, 262, 266, 268, 277, 283–285, 296, 300, 301. *See also* foster children, emotional abuse; foster children, exploitation; foster children, physical abuse; foster children, sexual abuse; foster children, verbal abuse
access to records, 89, 94, 107, 216
adoption, 3, 8, 13, 15, 16, 96, 97, 131, 145, 151, 185, 187, 222, 234, 277–279, 281, 282
The Advocate, 212
Aldridge, James, 232
Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA), 249
America. *See* United States of America
Anderson, Osborne Westland, 68, 69
Anderson family, 69
apologies, 3, 13, 198, 259, 260, 283
Apology to Former Child Migrants and Forgotten Australians, 120
Apology to the Stolen Generations, 198
The Argus, 165, 168, 169, 214
Australian Capital Territory, 263
Australian Indigenous people, 264
The Australian Journal, 224–226, 236

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2018

N. Musgrove and D. Michell, *The Slow Evolution of Foster Care in Australia*, Palgrave Studies in the History of Childhood,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93900-1

Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 108
Australian Story, 223

B
baby farming/baby farmers, 31, 207
Barbalet, Margaret, 13, 77, 184, 225, 234
Barber, James, 263
Bartlett, David, 223
Baum, Caroline, 251
Beachley, Layne, 239
Bin-Sallik, Mary Ann, 246
birth families, 52, 75, 76, 78, 80, 114, 120, 151, 170, 279, 281, 300, 301
boarding out, allowances, 63, 128. *See also* foster carers, payments to
boarding out, 6, 8–10
boarding out to mothers, 175–180
Boarding Out Society, 11
boarding out, young mothers and their own children, 62
Borusiewicz, Luke Anthony, 27, 46–49, 102, 293, 296, 301
Borusiewicz, Michael, 46, 47, 301
Bowlby, John, 235, 236
Bringing Them Home, 19, 52, 76, 95, 106, 118, 121, 141, 187, 242, 245–249, 278
Britain, 4, 16. *See also* United Kingdom
Brown, Eamon, 76
Burnett, Frances Hodgson, 227

C
Canada, 5, 7, 140
care leavers, 14, 17, 21, 88, 110, 117, 118, 120, 121, 182, 198, 216, 239, 249, 286–288
Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN), 108, 121, 197, 249
Catholicism, 6, 70, 82, 211–213
Chaplin, Charlie, 161, 162
Chapman, Laurie, 213
child labour, 13, 14, 35, 108, 137, 188. *See also* children's work
child migrants, 3, 19, 76, 95, 120, 198, 249. *See also* Former Child Migrants
Child Protection Party, 303
Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, 262, 284
children's work, 171, 174
Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry. *See* Mullighan Report
Children's Home
  Halloween, 240
  Melbourne Orphan Asylum/Melbourne Orphanage, 166
  Mount Lawley, 247
  Randwick Asylum, 164
  Royal Park, 242
  Welfare Department, Victoria, 20
children's work, 127, 131, 132, 134, 136, 137, 167. *See also* child labour
child rescue, 7, 17
Christie, Agatha, 3
Clare, Monica, 239, 240
Clark, Caroline Emily, 10, 162, 163, 202
Clarke, Marcus, 224
class, 11, 12, 28, 29, 95, 103, 112, 114, 127, 128, 133, 135, 136, 140, 159, 165, 167, 186, 187, 190, 225, 226, 228, 229, 233–235, 304
Cobb, Sylvanus, 225
commercial care, 284. *See also* emergency care
confinement, 61, 62. *See also* pregnancy

corporal punishment, 37, 184
cottage home, 87, 93
courts, 53–56, 61, 67, 206, 207, 215
CREATE Foundation, 238, 239, 243, 301
Cunningham, Hugh, 136, 208
Curtis Report, 4. *See also* Report of the Care of Children Committee

D
Department for Child Protection, South Australia, 2
Department for Neglected Children, Victoria, 20, 31, 32, 36, 43, 52, 67, 69
Department of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, Victoria, 20, 132, 173
depression (economic), 6, 10, 38, 73, 135, 136, 178, 179, 181, 203
deserving/undeserving poor, 21, 61, 63, 160, 165, 172–181, 304
Destitute Asylum, South Australia, 10
Dickens, Charles, 227, 233, 236
Dickenson, George Dixon, 35
disabilities, children with, 35–37, 43, 101, 107, 113, 138, 139, 177, 190, 277
domestic service, 29, 55, 57, 60, 61, 167, 184, 185, 215, 225, 229
domestic violence, 82, 98, 188, 261, 280, 298
Douglas, John, 171

E
Eden, Karise, 223
education, 14, 90, 91, 110–112, 114–116, 127, 131, 133, 134, 149, 171, 187, 189, 190, 213, 225, 228, 241, 244, 247, 248, 268, 285–287, 300. *See also* foster care, education
emergency care, 15, 184, 284
employment, 105, 110, 112, 114–116, 143, 150, 151, 164, 178, 263. *See also* work placements
England, 6, 7, 10, 12, 28, 29, 95, 140, 161–163, 165, 172, 183, 224, 226–229, 245, 246
Ethiopia, 221
Europe, 5, 203, 235

F
Families SA, 3, 260–262, 271, 273, 282
Family & Community Services (FACS), 297–299, 302
family breakdown, 95, 99
family group homes, 16, 93, 95
Family Inclusion Network (FIN), 301, 302
Farleigh, Richard, 223
farm labour, 225, 240
Fawcett, Henry, 166
Ferguson, Harry, 44, 136, 137, 181
Forgotten Australians, 19, 58, 75, 80, 88, 95, 120, 198, 235, 242, 248, 249, 278, 279
Former Child Migrants, 19, 76, 95, 120, 198, 249
former foster children, mental health, 75, 91, 117. *See also* mental health
former foster children, parenting, 75, 94, 120–123
foster care
  contact with birth family, 282
  education, 90, 111, 114, 115, 127, 244, 248, 286, 300. *See also* education
  informal or non-statutory, 78, 98, 100, 102, 149, 185

permanency planning, 277
placement stability, 47
sibling groups, 69, 73, 74, 173, 212
voluntary placement, 79, 152
foster carers
attrition, 48, 128, 140, 149, 152, 265, 269, 270, 272, 303
gender, 137, 150, 167, 168
motivations of, 21, 127, 139–141, 145–150, 152, 153
payments to, 11, 38, 48, 55, 127, 130, 131, 134–136, 138, 143, 150, 151, 166, 167, 177, 179, 265–269, 272–274, 277, 282, 283, 300, 304
recruitment, 48, 129, 130, 135, 138, 139, 141, 146, 167, 205, 206, 210, 266, 275
same sex couples, 138
support for, 49
foster children
absconding, running away, 234. *See also* absconding (escaping or running away)
contact with birth family, 14, 33, 57, 75, 77, 78, 80, 91, 93, 104, 117, 118, 151, 170, 171, 174, 185, 189, 281–283. *See also* birth families
criminalisation of, 182–184, 188, 189, 191
death, 2, 3, 192, 206, 208, 294, 296, 297, 300
emotional abuse, 108, 186, 188, 271, 300
exploitation, 108, 234
physical abuse, 27, 40, 108, 109, 120, 186, 188, 247, 250, 271, 300
sexual abuse, 41, 43, 81, 89, 90, 101, 106–108, 247, 250, 260, 269, 271, 284, 300
training of, 11, 164
verbal abuse, 300
foster homes
location of, 6, 11, 13, 14, 19, 137, 209
stability of. *See* placement instability
supervision and inspection, 13, 14, 37, 48, 89, 159, 267, 300; supervising, 33
supply of, 37, 38, 47, 48, 130, 134, 135, 263, 265, 300
foster mothers, 36, 38, 39, 55, 77, 93, 106, 127–132, 134, 135, 137, 151, 159, 167–169. *See also* foster carers
foster parents, birth children, 81
foster siblings, 19, 41, 45, 81, 82, 274, 277, 300
France, 225
Fraser, Rosalie, 187, 247, 248

G

Gargula, Amanda, 80, 81, 93
Golding, Frank, 182
Grahame, Harriet, 296
Grandmothers Against Removals (GMAR), 302
Greer, Germaine, 99, 185, 251
Greer, Reginald, 185
Grenville, Kate, 251
Guardian for Children and Young People, 275, 284
Guillaume, George, 60, 133, 134, 174–177, 211, 212, 214

H

Harvey, Andrew, 238, 287
Henry, John, 181
Hill, David, 239
Hill, Florence, 87, 162, 166
Hill, Florence Davenport, 12, 162
Hill, Matthew Davenport, 10, 163

Hill, Rosamond, 87
holiday hosts, 104, 237
Hood, Justice Joseph Henry, 180
Hotham, Charles, 166

I
illegitimacy, 28, 185, 187, 243
immigrants/immigration, 28, 96, 141, 187, 203, 204
Indigenous Australians, 112, 245, 246
Indigenous children, 7, 58, 118, 141, 302
Industrial and Reformatory Schools Office, Victoria, 20
industrial schools, 9, 11, 54, 70, 129, 130, 132, 133, 164, 171, 182, 183, 212
  Abbotsford, 211, 212
  Sunbury, 70
infant deaths. *See* infant mortality
infanticide, 30
infant mortality, 9, 35, 129–131, 208
institutional care of children, 7–9, 11, 14, 87, 97, 138, 159–161, 164, 166, 171, 204, 205, 213, 217, 263, 264
International Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood from Care (INTRAC), 286
Ireland, 10, 14, 185
Irons, Steve, 223

J
Jackson, David, 79
Jacobsen, Walter, 78, 186–188, 242, 243, 247
James, John Stanley, 168
Jefferis, Marian, 11
Jenkins, Josh, 223
Johns, Mark, 261, 277, 281
Jurczyszyn, Reeny, 287

K
Kenny, Jacob, 189, 244
Kent, Hannah, 237
Kew Asylum, Victoria, 35, 42
Killens, Sharyn, 250
kinship care, 15, 16, 97, 98, 111, 145, 176, 221, 231, 234, 263–267, 269, 281, 284, 286

L
Ladies Committees, 10, 33, 36, 57, 70, 130, 134, 135, 137, 167–169, 176, 178, 209, 210, 212. *See also* Ladies Visiting Association; Ladies Visiting Districts
Ladies Visiting Association, 130, 131, 133, 168
Ladies Visiting Districts, 57, 134, 168, 209
Largactil, 90
Leoutsakas, Dennis, 222, 232, 250
Leslie, Lachlan, 298
Lester family, 69
licensing out. *See* work placements
Lost Innocents, 76, 242, 248, 249, 278
Lovett, Sarah, 61
Luke Borusiewicz, 102

M
Madden, Mary Agnes, 33, 34, 36–38, 44, 45
magistrates, 175, 176, 179, 180, 302
Mango, Rebeccah, 189, 244
Marcus, Malcolm, 189, 244
Martin, David, 232
Masters, Olga, 233, 235, 236
McCoole, Shannon, 260, 262
Meehan, Donna, 187, 248
Meekins, Ki, 79, 182, 188, 249
Melbourne Orphan Asylum, 166

mental health, 76, 96, 101, 111, 117, 118, 235. *See also* former foster children, mental health
middle class. *See* class
Millar, Thomas, 38, 44, 177–179
Monckton Report, 4
Montgomery, Lucy Maud, 227
The Mousetrap, 3
Mullighan, Ted, 259
Mullighan Report, 184, 260
Murphy, John, 60

N
National Sorry Day, 245, 302
Neal, Henry French, 133, 211
neglect, 14, 105, 119, 123, 180, 182, 185, 235, 261, 268, 271, 277, 285
Neglected Children's Department, Victoria, 209
Neild, James Edward, 41
New South Wales, 8, 11, 18, 139, 151, 163, 179, 182, 183, 187, 197, 231, 233–235, 240, 246, 248, 278, 297, 298, 301, 302
New Zealand, 14, 69
Norway, 14, 140
Nyland, Margaret, 184, 260, 262, 268

O
O'Brien, John Murphy, 60
O'Brien, Norah, 60
O'Byrne, Margot, 80
O'Neill, Dennis, 3
O'Neill, Terence, 3
O'Reilly family, 173
orphanages, 6, 32, 103, 226, 249
Other Parent Guardianship, 283. *See also* permanent care/permanency planning
Owen, Jan, 243

P
Penglase, Joanna, 115, 249
permanent care/permanency planning, 263, 277, 279–282
placement instability, 74, 76, 81, 87, 90, 91, 100, 101, 107, 111, 130, 138, 172, 189, 237, 269, 270, 275, 281, 285
Pledger family, 29
Pledger, John Wood, 2, 4, 20, 27, 28, 32, 35–48, 73, 89, 102, 135, 169, 214, 293, 296
Pledger, Rachel, 28–32, 46
police, 37, 39–41, 44, 55, 56, 64, 65, 67, 90, 97, 101, 107, 176, 178, 182–184, 191, 211, 246, 260, 293–295, 298
Poor Law, 4, 164, 166, 172
poor relief, 10, 12, 166, 172, 176. *See also* poverty
poverty, 3, 9, 92, 96, 113, 136, 149, 159, 160, 165, 170, 172, 173, 175, 178, 182, 189, 225, 226, 235, 242, 275
pregnancy, 28, 29, 58–60, 63, 65, 107, 117, 148, 215
prostitution, 66, 183, 215
Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry, 280
Protecting Vulnerable Children, 235
Protestantism, 6
psychology/psychologists, 96, 115, 260, 271
Purser, Alice, 62

Q
Queensland, 8, 17, 27, 46, 58, 163, 171, 185, 240, 248, 249, 293–295, 301
Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC), 294, 295

R
racism, 66, 141, 187, 248
Rann, Mike, 259, 283
rape, 59, 91, 107, 117, 182, 250. *See also* sexual assault
records
  access to. *See* access to records
  errors in, 52
  gaps in, 55, 59, 70, 71, 214, 216
reformatory, 9, 11, 54, 55, 61, 63, 65, 68, 99, 182–184
  Abbotsford, 60
  Coburg, 61
  Oakleigh, 64
Report of the Care of Children Committee, 4. *See also* Curtis Report
residential care, 6, 16, 93, 103, 159, 231, 239, 250, 260, 261, 263–265, 284, 286
respectability, 28, 30, 130, 137, 159, 167, 178
respite care, 15, 47, 107, 143, 146
Ring, Charlotte, 39–41
Rout, Mary Ann, 35–40, 42, 44
Royal Commissions, 9, 13
Royal Park Depot, 32, 187, 213, 214, 242
Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne, 28

S
Salvation Army, 67
school, 70, 76, 90, 91, 96, 100–102, 105, 111–116, 122, 131–134, 137, 140, 142, 146, 150, 161, 167, 186–191, 225, 237, 241, 244, 248, 268, 273, 277, 285, 286, 294, 295. *See also* education
Scotland, 6, 161, 162
Seal, 223
service placements. *See* work placements
sexual assault, 59, 106, 234, 261. *See also* foster children, sexual abuse
sex work, 10. *See also* prostitution
Seymour, Bryan, 279
Sheedy, Leonie, 197, 198, 249
Shields, Andrew, 34
Sin, Ling, 64, 67
single mothers, 9, 28, 29, 61, 92, 96, 100, 129, 130, 175
Sissay, Lemn, 221, 222, 232, 250
Slager, Braxton, 296–298
Smith, Allanna, 299
Smith, Bernard, 10, 185–189, 231, 241, 242, 245
social work/social workers, 46, 79–82, 105, 107, 142, 145, 151, 152, 191, 217, 251, 263, 266, 276
sodomy, 59
South Australia, 2, 8, 10, 11, 13, 17, 93, 139, 141, 160, 162, 163, 202, 246, 249, 259, 260, 262–269, 281, 283, 285–288
South Australian Register, 11
Spain, 225
Spence, Catherine Helen, 11, 12, 99, 162, 269
Spence, Eleanor, 227, 230, 231
sponsoring, 145. *See also* holiday hosts
State Children's Council (South Australia), 11
state ward. *See* ward of the state
Stawell, William, 166
stigma/shame, 28, 88, 92, 96, 97, 136, 160, 181, 182, 184, 186–191, 197, 198, 217, 226, 232, 238, 239, 241, 243, 250, 251, 267, 297, 299, 303
Stolen Generations, 7, 82, 118, 141, 191, 198, 237, 239, 246, 247
Strong-Boag, Veronica, 5

survivor activism/survivor testimony, 13, 18, 75, 88, 95, 105, 127, 198
Swain, Shurlee, 7, 9, 12, 14, 29, 30, 42, 59, 92, 130, 161–163, 168, 200, 207, 208, 245

T
Talbot, Michael, 189, 244
Tasmania, 8, 18, 163, 182, 185, 187, 223, 248
Tennant, Kylie, 230, 233, 236
terminology, 16
Thomas, Annie, 51, 52, 61, 63, 68, 73, 214
Thomas, Annie (Jr), 51, 52, 63, 68
Thomas, Bessie, 64, 65, 68, 69. *See also* Thomas, Elizabeth
Thomas, Elizabeth, 52, 64, 68
Thomas family, 52–56, 68
Thomas, Kate, 55, 69
Thomas, Walter, 54
Thompson, Denise, 188, 244
Thorburn family, 293
Tiahleigh, Palmer, 293–295
trauma, 80, 82, 91, 96, 101, 115, 117, 121, 187, 224, 243, 250, 265, 266, 268, 270, 276, 283, 288
Turner, Ethel, 227–229, 231
Tyrrell, Karlie, 298, 299
Tyrrell, William, 197, 298, 299, 301

U
United Kingdom, 287
United States, 7, 116, 140, 269, 287
University, 82, 110, 112–116, 140, 150, 187, 191, 221, 223, 240, 242, 246–248, 272, 287, 288

V
vagrancy, 182, 183
Valentine, Chloe, 2, 3, 261, 262, 264, 277, 281
Vardon, Cheryl, 294, 295
Vasek, Lania, 223
Victoria, 8–10, 13, 18, 20, 28, 32, 52, 69, 72, 114, 129, 131, 139, 160, 163, 171, 178, 179, 181, 209, 236, 238, 242, 246, 263, 279, 280, 301, 302
The Voice Australia, 223

W
wages, 58, 211
Walsh, Larry, 182, 191
ward of the state, 17, 32, 36, 57, 62–65, 68, 78, 79, 91, 117, 136, 137, 160, 185, 188, 223, 241, 242, 247, 279
Watts, Rob, 279, 280
Weatherill, Jay, 259, 260
Weaver, Jackie, 251
welfare workers, 49, 79, 137, 144, 152, 265, 296. *See also* social work/social workers
Welsh, 3
Western Australia, 8, 18, 58, 223, 247, 249
wet nurses, 9, 31, 60, 61, 129–131, 209
W4W Walking Warriors Australia, 299, 301
White, Corey, 223
Wilson, Jacqueline Z., 287
Wilson, Karen Lee, 80
Wood, John, 31
working class. *See* class
work placements, 55, 57, 59, 61, 74, 132, 133, 211
Wright, Henrietta Christian, 12

Z
Zusak, Markus, 237