

## SCOTTISH CHILD ABUSE INQUIRY

### CLOSING SUBMISSION for CROSSREACH, the Social Care arm of the CHURCH OF SCOTLAND in relation to the topic of CHILD MIGRATION

1. This submission is presented on behalf of Crossreach, the social care arm of the Church of Scotland. All responses submitted in writing on this topic, and the oral evidence of Mrs Dickenson given on 2 October 2020, proceed on the basis of research of written material, including in the National Archives of Scotland. This is necessarily so, as there is no one in the organisation today who has an actual recollection of the Church's actions concerning the migration of children.

2. The first involvement the Church had in migration of young people appears to have been in the period between 1910 and 1932. In 1907, Cornton Vale (which later became a prison for women) opened as a rehabilitation and training centre for destitute men, run by the Church, with the aim of training them in farm work and helping with the transition from institutional care or homelessness to independent living. In 1910, emigration to Canada from Cornton Vale began. Those who travelled appear to have been over the age of 18, with the only known exception being one young man, [REDACTED] who was aged 16 and who arrived in Nova Scotia in [REDACTED] 1927. It is possible that others under the age of 18 also travelled from Cornton Vale. The research carried out by the Church is set out in the Case Study, ref COS.001.001.0640 at pages 1-4.

3. The Church had further involvement in migration, this time of children, in 1948 and then again for around 6 years from 1950 and on further occasions in 1960, 1961 and 1963. This related only to Australia. The circumstances, so far as uncovered by the research referred to above, are set out in the Crossreach response, Part C, at answer 4.11(a) and (b).

4. The arrangements whereby the Church organised migration to Dhurringile Training Farm in Victoria from 1950 onwards appear to have proceeded from personal connection. In 1950, Reverend Andrew Boag visited Scotland from the Presbyterian Church of Victoria. Rev Boag had, himself, been an assisted migrant to Australia in 1926 (File note of meeting between F J Pittard, Secretary, Children's Welfare Dept, State Immigration Office and Rev Andrew Boag in Melbourne dated 20 April 1950<sup>1</sup>). He seems to have been convinced of the benefits of such migration. It is likely that he was also well received personally in Scotland, coming as he did from another Presbyterian church.

5. As part of the establishing of the scheme to send boys to Dhurringile Training Farm, it was necessary for there to be a committee in the United Kingdom. The rationale for this appears to have been that, once regulations were made in the UK to govern such arrangements, there would need to be a body on whom duties under the regulations were enforceable. Dr Lewis Cameron, Rev Andrew Buchan and Miss Mary Cumming were willing to facilitate migration by forming the necessary committee. They began its work in 1950; its establishment within the Committee on Social Service was ratified at the General Assembly in 1951. As the Chair observed at the hearing on 2 October 2020, it would have been difficult for such ratification to have been withheld, since the work had commenced and the first boys had been sent under the auspices of the committee, on [REDACTED] 1950.<sup>2</sup>

6. From that point, the committee was the sole representative in Scotland of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria in relation to the migration scheme.

---

<sup>1</sup> Page 12 of 71 in ED11\_386.

<sup>2</sup> Date comes from papers relating to individual BGD at item 005, being letter dated 15 December 1950 from 'Field Secretary' to the Ministry of Pensions at Norcross, Blackpool.

7. Turning to the question of consent, the Church's response makes reference to the Annual Report of the Committee on Social Service to the General Assembly in 1952, in particular the statement that 'The boy's own wish to emigrate is the starting point....'. There is evidence of agreement from a boy of 14 being recorded.<sup>3</sup>

8. A child's wish to participate would seem to be a necessary part of any arrangement for him to be sent to Australia, in that it is unthinkable for a child to be sent contrary to his will. The Church does not, however, make any submission suggesting that such an expression of will by a child could ever constitute valid consent in law to such a far-reaching change of situation. In this regard, the Church makes no challenge of the legal analysis presented by Professor Norrie on 2 April 2019 – even the consent of a parent for a boy under 14 to emigrate would not appear to be legally valid.

9. With regard to conditions in Dhurringile, there were reports to positive effect, including favourable comments apparently made by the Moderator of the General Assembly following a visit in 1951.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the comments made by John Moss recorded in the 'rough note' from his visit to Australia in 1951/52<sup>5</sup> refer to the difficulty in preventing the home becoming 'rather institutional' and the likelihood of its being 'exceptionally cold in winter'. The findings of John Ross following his visit in 1956 were considerably more damning; from contemporaneous material, it appears that the detail of the Ross report was not shared with the Church of Scotland.<sup>6</sup> A certain amount of diplomatic activity appears to have been generated by these comments, which probably contributed to the decision to withhold the documents.

10. There does appear to have been migration of one boy early in 1957, but then the Church committee were 'inactive for a very long time'<sup>7</sup> until they made arrangements for 11 boys from Quarrier's to emigrate to Dhurringile at the beginning of [REDACTED] 1960 and then a further five boys in [REDACTED] 1961. For this to have occurred without involvement from the relevant government departments in the UK appears to have been contrary to arrangements made in 1957, on the strength of the negative reports from John Ross. Had these findings been shared, that might have reduced the chances of the errors being made in 1960 and 1961.

11. In conclusion, Crossreach accepts that it played a part in facilitating migration of children to homes in Australia, both from its own homes and by making administrative arrangements for other organisations. Trauma and suffering was undoubtedly caused to children because of this. We reiterate the apology issued at the conclusion of oral evidence from Mrs Dickenson on 2 October 2020.

---

<sup>3</sup> Application form for juvenile migration, 14 – 18 years, to the Commonwealth of Australia completed by FI, document 015.

<sup>4</sup> Information from 'The Challenge of Need' by Lewis Cameron.

<sup>5</sup> Page 42 of 71 in ED11-386.

<sup>6</sup> Page 69 of 71 in ED11-386 - the note on Dhurringile will not be shared at a forthcoming meeting.

<sup>7</sup> Letter of January 1960 from N D Walker of the Scottish Home Department to R J Whittick in the Home Office, page 62 of 71 in ED11-386.