

# The professionalisation of Australian catholic social welfare, 1920-1985

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# **The Professionalisation of Australian Catholic Social Welfare, 1920-1985**

Damian John Gleeson

**PhD Thesis**

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This thesis explores the neglected history of Australian Catholic social welfare, focusing on the period, 1920-85. Central to this study is a comparative analysis of diocesan welfare bureaux (Centacare), especially the Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide agencies. Starting with the origins of professional welfare at local levels, this thesis shows the growth in Catholic welfare services across Australia. The significant transition from voluntary to professional Catholic welfare in Australia is a key theme.

Lay trained women inspired the transformation in the church's welfare services. Prepared predominantly by their American training, these women devoted their lives to fostering social work in the Church and within the broader community. The women demonstrated vision and tenacity in introducing new policies and practices across the disparate and unco-ordinated Australian Catholic welfare sector. Their determination challenged the status quo, especially the church's preference for institutionalisation of children, though they packaged their reforms with compassion and pragmatism. Trained social workers offered specialised guidance though such efforts were often not appreciated before the 1960s.

New approaches to welfare and the co-ordination of services attracted varying degrees of resistance and opposition from traditional Catholic charity providers: religious orders and the voluntary-based St Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP). For much of the period under review diocesan bureaux experienced close scrutiny from their ordinaries (bishops), regular financial difficulties, and competition from other church-based charities for status and funding.

Following the lead of lay women, clerics such as Bishop Algy Thomas, Monsignor Frank McCosker and Fr Peter Phibbs (Sydney); Bishop Eric Perkins (Melbourne), Frs Terry Holland and Luke Roberts (Adelaide), consolidated Catholic social welfare. For four decades an unprecedented Sydney-Melbourne partnership between McCosker and Perkins had a major impact on Catholic social policy, through peak bodies such as the National Catholic Welfare Committee and its successor the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission.

The intersection between church and state is examined in terms of welfare policies and state aid for service delivery. Peak bodies secured state aid for the church's welfare agencies, which, given insufficient church funding proved crucial by the mid 1980s.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to many individuals and organisations for their support over the past six years. Firstly, I express thanks to my principal supervisor, Dr Anne O'Brien, whom I first met in mid 2001. Dr O'Brien has been an important guiding force, in combination with my assistant supervisor, Professor John Gascoigne.<sup>1</sup> Both have challenged my examination of Australian Catholic welfare provision in a broad context and within other developments – social, political and religious and women's historiography – impacting social welfare provision and policy.

Fr John Usher, a trained social worker, the fifth director of Centacare Sydney (1983-2004), and the current Chancellor of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney<sup>2</sup> introduced me to the possibilities of researching this topic. A statistician before entering the priesthood, Fr Usher's career has intersected with, and shaped, the ongoing development of social work practice and policy at local, state and national levels. His interest in history led to the preservation of a large archival collection belonging to Monsignor J.F. McCosker, the second director of Centacare Sydney (1948-57) and the NSW Director of Catholic Charities (1957-87).

My interest in this topic was aroused in late 1998 when I viewed some archival records at Centacare Sydney, some of which had been damaged and regrettably diminished by a fire that year. As a result a brief catalogue of extant Centacare Sydney records was prepared.<sup>3</sup> This research rekindled an earlier interest in welfare organisations, such as the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP).<sup>4</sup> Arising from this examination an initial article on the foundation of professional Catholic

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Gascoigne was my first lecturer in history at the University of New South Wales in 1984.

<sup>2</sup> Appointed May 2005.

<sup>3</sup> D. J. Gleeson, Original Documents held at Centacare Sydney, 15 March 1999, [revised April 2001], Centacare Sydney Archives (CSA).

<sup>4</sup> For example, D. J. Gleeson, 'Catholic Charity during the 1930s Great Depression', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 73, No. 1, January 1996.

welfare in Australia was published in *Australasian Catholic Record*.<sup>5</sup> In mid 2001 I formally began research as a part-time candidate for this thesis.

Fr Usher facilitated access with several dioceses on my behalf. In Canberra the director of Catholic Welfare Australia, Mr Toby O'Connor provided hospitality and support during my visits to the large and uncatalogued archives at Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA), which houses the archives of its predecessors, the National Catholic Welfare Committee (NCWC) and the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission (ACSWC) as well as a portion of Monsignor McCosker's collection of papers, some of which Fr Usher had lent to Mr O'Connor some years earlier.<sup>6</sup>

Br Alexis Hall and Ms Pauline Garland, the former and current archivists of the Sydney Archdiocesan Archives, (SAA), Rachel Naughton, archivist of the Melbourne Diocese Historical Commission (MDHC), and Sr Frances Stipi PBVM, archivist at the Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Perth (ARCAP), assisted with access to their respective archives, within the parameters of relevant archdiocesan policies. Emeritus Professor Patrick O'Farrell described the SAA as 'the basic collection for any study of the Catholic Church in Australia, vast in dimension and very wide in scope'.<sup>7</sup>

I am grateful for the co-operation of many archival repositories. I express particular thanks to the late Monsignor John Hoare of Canberra-Goulburn; Bishop Michael Malone of Newcastle-Maitland; Margaret Phelps of Bathurst Diocese; and, Monsignor David Cappel, Vicar-General of the Archdiocese of Adelaide. Bishop Patrick Power, Auxiliary Bishop of Canberra, and a former Secretary of the Australian Bishops' Committee for Social Welfare provided consistent encouragement. I am also grateful to the following archivists: Br Michael Naughtin,

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<sup>5</sup> D.J. Gleeson, 'Professional Social Workers and Welfare Bureaus: The origins of Australian Catholic Social Work', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 77, No. 2, April 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Mr O'Connor is currently the Advocate for Children in Care - Victoria.

<sup>7</sup> P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History* (Fourth Revised Edition, Kensington, University of New South Wales Press, 1992), p. 453.

Marist Brothers, Hunter's Hill, NSW; Olivia Delfs, Diocese of Bathurst Archives; Julie Cox, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle; Sr Josephine Jefferies, Loreto Sisters, Adelaide; and, Dr Margaret Press, Catholic Institute of Sydney.

I wish to acknowledge the co-operation of staff at the following libraries and archives in Australia and Britain.

- Archives at the universities of Melbourne, New South Wales, Sydney, and Western Australia
- London Metropolitan Archives
- Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick
- National Library of Australia
- Rare Books Collection, University of Sydney
- Royal Free Hospital Archives
- State libraries of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and, Western Australia
- State records' offices of New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia

Relatives of the late Associate Professor Norma Parker Brown have shown much interest in this project. Associate Professor Gay Baldwin, kindly arranged an interview with her aunt, and facilitated contact with another cousin, Mr A. John Parker of Perth, who provided a synopsis of correspondence between Norma Parker and her family, during the period she studied at the National Catholic School of Social Service in Washington, 1928-31.<sup>8</sup> Mr Tony Phillips, of Perth, a relation of Constance Moffit, made available invaluable primary records.

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<sup>8</sup> A.J. Parker, (comp.), Norma Parker's Letters, 1928-1932: Excerpts from family correspondence during the time Norma met her Parker relatives in Liverpool, England and studied for a Masters Degree in Social Work at Washington, USA.

Associate Professor Peter Travers of Flinders University, Adelaide, a former director of Adelaide's Catholic Welfare Bureau, lent me his 1972 thesis and also provided other interesting information.<sup>9</sup> Staff of Catholic Social Services Australia (formerly Catholic Welfare Australia) willingly obliged with requests for assistance. Dr Lesley Hughes of the Social Work Department of the University of New South Wales and a councillor of the Australian Catholic Historical Society, provided helpful advice, especially at critical junctures. Fr Peter Morrissey, the fifth Parish Priest of St Patrick's Parish Mortlake allowed me to borrow several church publications; likewise, Fr Joe Camilleri, Parish Priest of St Augustine's Balmain and formerly Parish Priest of St Joseph's Burwood Heights (Enfield), provided access to the archives of both parishes and was a source of much encouragement.

Finally, I express sincere thanks to family members, especially Gwenda and Loughlin. My parents, Gerald Gleeson KCSG, AC and Frances Carlon, who have been closely involved in the Catholic Church over the course of their long lives, provided much valued encouragement.<sup>10</sup> To everyone mentioned above, and anyone I have accidentally omitted, I express my gratitude. Any mistakes and misinterpretations are entirely my own.

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<sup>9</sup> P. Travers, 'Planning in a Church Welfare Agency', Masters Thesis, Flinders University, August 1972.

<sup>10</sup> For some information on the contribution of Gerald Gleeson to the Australian Catholic Church, see *Catholic Weekly*, 11 November 2001, p. 11; *Catholic Weekly*, 8 December 2003, pp: 1,16.

## **Abstract**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### Archives & Libraries

AAA	Archdiocesan Archives of Adelaide
ACA	Archives of Centacare Adelaide
ACGA	Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Archives
AJPA	A. John Parker Archives
ARCAP	Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Perth
BDA	Bathurst Diocesan Archives
BSLUA	Barry Smith Library, University of Adelaide
CAA	Centacare Adelaide Archives
CMA	Centacare Melbourne Archives
CSA	Centacare Sydney Archives
CSSAA	Catholic Social Services Australia Archives
DOMNA	Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle Archives
FRL	Fisher Research Library, University of Sydney
GSSA	Good Samaritan Sisters Archives
JUA	John Usher Archives
LCMA	Little Company of Mary Archives
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
LSMA	Loreto School Marryatville Archives
MBAS	Marist Brothers Archives Sydney
MCA	Melbourne Centacare Archives
MCPCSA	McCosker Papers, Centacare Sydney Archives
MDHC	Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission
MLSA	Mortlock Library, State Library of South Australia
MLNSW	Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales
MRCUW	Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NLA	National Library of Australia
PBA	Patricia Burke Archives

FRHA	Royal Free Hospital Archives
RMHA	Royal Melbourne Hospital Archives
RSCA	Religious Congregation of Sisters of Charity Archives
SAA	Sydney Archdiocesan Archives
SABA	St Augustine's Balmain Archives
SLV	State Library of Victoria
SLWA	State Library of Western Australia
SRNSW	State Records New South Wales
SROWA	State Records Office of Western Australia
SVHMA	St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne Archives
TPA	Tony Phillips Archives
TWC	Teresa Wardell Collection
VLCIS	Veech Library, Catholic Institute of Sydney
UCNSWA	Uniting Care NSW Archives
UMA	University of Melbourne Archives
UNSWA	University of New South Wales Archives
USA	University of Sydney Archives
UWAA	University of Western Australia Archives
WBHA	Westmead Boys' Home Archives

### **Organisations**

AAA	Australian Association of Almoners
AAHA	Australian Association of Hospital Almoners
AASW	Australian Association of Social Workers
ACCA	Association of Child Care Agencies
ACCC	American Catholic Conference of Charities
ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Service
ACR	Australian Catholic Relief
ACSWC	Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission
ACTS	Australian Catholic Truth Society
AEC	Australian Episcopal Conference

AIC	Archdiocesan Institute of Counselling
AIPP	Australian Institute of Industrial Psychology
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANC	Australian National Committee
ANSCA	Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
AWD	Action for World Development
ASWC	Australian Social Welfare Council
BCSW	Bishops' Committee for Social Welfare
BSST	Board of Social Study and Training
CA	Catholic Action
CAA	Catholic Adoption Agency
CAC	Chaplains Advisory Committee
CBCS	Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics
CCA	Catholic Charities Appeal
CCAC	Civil Chaplaincies Advisory Committee
CCHIS	Catholic Children's Homes Inquiry Service
CCO	Catholic Charities Office
CEO	Catholic Education Office
CCWB	Catholic Child Welfare Bureau
CDSS	Commonwealth Department of Social Services
CFWB	Catholic Family Welfare Bureau
CMAC	Catholic Marriage Advisory Council
CMGC	Catholic Marriage Guidance Bureau
CMGC	Catholic Marriage Guidance Centre
COS	Charity Organisation Society
CRC	Civil Rehabilitation Committee
CSSB	Catholic Social Service Bureau
CSSM	Catholic Social Studies Movement
CSSNSW	Council of Social Service of New South Wales
CSWC	Catholic Social Welfare Commission

CSWG	Catholic Social Workers Group
CTSWA	Catholic Trained Social Workers Association
CUA	Catholic University of America
CUSA	Catholic United Services Auxiliary
CWA	Catholic Women's Association
CWB	Catholic Welfare Bureau
CWF	Charitable Works Fund
CWL	Catholic Women's League
CWAN	Child Welfare Association of New South Wales
CWD	Child Welfare Department
CWO	Catholic Welfare Organisation
CWSG	Catholic Women's Social Guild
CWSV	Citizen's Welfare Service of Victoria
CYO	Catholic Youth Organisation
DLP	Democratic Labor Party
DSL	Diocesan Secretariate of the Lay Apostolate
ECC	Episcopal Committee for Charities
ECDC	Episcopal Committee for Dependent Children
ECSCW	Episcopal Committee for Social and Charitable Works
EMWA	Episcopal Migration and Welfare Association
FWA	Family Welfare Association
HCAC	Hospital Chaplaincy Advisory Committee
HMS	Home Mission Society
ICCC	International Conference of Catholic Charities
IHA	Institute of Hospital Almoners
IRO	International Relief Organisation
JCWL	Junior Catholic Women's League
LBS	Ladies Benevolent Society
LCA	Law Council of Australia
LCW	Legion of Catholic Women
MGC	Marriage Guidance Council

MHA	Mental Health Association
NCCC	National Conference of Catholic Charities
NCCW	National Conference of Catholic Women
NCSSS	National Catholic School of Social Service
NCSWC	National Catholic Social Welfare Commission
NCW	National Council of Women
NCWC	National Catholic Welfare Committee
NCWCA	National Catholic Welfare Council, America
NGWA	Non Government Welfare Agency
NSWHB	New South Wales Hierarchy of Bishops
NSWBSST	New South Wales Board of Social Study and Training
NSWC	New South Wales Catholic Welfare Commission
RAH	Royal Adelaide Hospital
RFH	Rachel Forster Hospital
RMH	Royal Melbourne Hospital
RPA	Royal Prince Alfred Hospital
RPH	Royal Perth Hospital
SABSST	South Australian Board of Social Study and Training
SACOSS	South Australian Council of Social Service
SCHC	Standing Committee on Hospital Chaplains
SVHM	St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne
SVHS	St Vincent's Hospital Sydney
SVdP	St Vincent de Paul Society
SWA	Social Workers' Association
UN	United Nations
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association
UWA	University of Western Australia
VAHA	Victorian Association of Hospital Almoners
VBSS	Victorian Board of Social Studies
VCB	Victorian Charities Board
VCMH	Victorian Council for Mental Hygiene

VCCGC	Victorian Vocational and Child Guidance Centre
VCOSS	Victorian Council of Social Service
VCST	Victorian Council for Social Training
VIA	Victorian Institute of Almoners
VIHA	Victorian Institute of Hospital Almoners
WEA	Workers' Education Alliance
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association



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## A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

This thesis includes some language that may cause discomfort to some people. Words and phrases such as ‘inmates’, ‘mental defectives’ ‘slow children’, ‘penitents’, ‘dull children’, ‘slow children’, ‘little mites’ and ‘black fellas’ were frequently used by church and state welfare officials until the third quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such language reflects the contemporary approach to the care of children and teenagers. Historians, Shirley Swain and Renate Howe in *Single Mothers and their children*, said that they used ‘the terminology which was current at the time of which we write although it is recognised that such terminology can be hurtful’.<sup>11</sup>

This writer recognises that this language may cause offence to people who were placed involuntarily over long periods of time in multiple orphanages, hospitals or other institutions. The inclusion of such language in this thesis is for the purpose of accurately conveying the attitudes of the era under review.

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<sup>11</sup> S. Swain and R. Howe, *Single Mothers and their children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia* (Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1995).

# CHAPTER ONE:

## Introduction

### 1.1 Overview

This chapter introduces professional Catholic welfare and its neglect in Australian historiography. For the purpose of this thesis professional Catholic welfare is defined as the activities of a small number of trained women and clerical social workers who worked at diocesan, state and national levels. These 'professionals' had considerable interaction with the largely unregulated and autonomous Catholic welfare sector, which comprised religious orders and voluntary organisations such as the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP). Trained social workers made significant contributions to both church and community-based welfare organisations. This thesis covers the period from 1920, when the Catholic Church's provision of charitable services was dominated by children's institutions, to 1985, which coincides with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Melbourne's Catholic Social Service Bureau (CSSB), Australia's first professional Catholic welfare service.

The Catholic sector's role in welfare is important because it was the first Australian church to employ social workers in its hospitals and welfare services.<sup>12</sup> Social workers and historians have noted that the church's entry into professional social work preceded the employment of social workers in government departments<sup>13</sup>, and other organisations such as the Charity Organisation Society (COS)<sup>14</sup> and the

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<sup>12</sup> Parker says that the availability of Moffit and herself influenced the Catholic Church 'at an early date ahead of other churches and ahead of the time they [Catholics] would otherwise would have been'. N. Parker, 'Early Social Work in Retrospect', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 32, No. 4. December 1979, p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, This view is supported by E.M. W. Martin in 'Themes in a history of the social work profession', *International Social Work*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 1992, and also given Australian-born women working in social work at that time had completed a less rigorous and 'experimental course' conducted by the Victorian Institute of Hospital Almoners (VIHA) or a Certificate from the NSW Board of Social Study and Training. See VIHA, *The Origin and Development of Medical Social Work in Victoria* (Melbourne, 1950), pp: 4-6.

<sup>14</sup> The Melbourne-based Charity Organisation Society appointed its first social worker in 1954.

SVdP; and, thirdly, many early Catholic social workers, unlike their peers, had been educated in America and a social justice paradigm characterised their Australian careers.<sup>15</sup> The thesis focuses on the individuals and groups that comprised the Catholic welfare sector. It examines in particular the role of Catholic lay women in the social work profession, whose treatment hitherto has been even more superficial than that of women in the profession generally.<sup>16</sup> The church's ministry in social work was not isolated from other developments in the profession nor from the growth of more professional approaches to welfare by other Christian denominations across Australia.

While the traditional Catholic welfare sector in the 1930s and 1940s was catching up to the boarding-out practices in children's care that the state had introduced more than half a century earlier, in other respects, the small number of Catholic social workers in the inter-war period set new benchmarks for professional practice in the non-government and government sectors. Norma Parker, probably the most luminary Australian social worker in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, displayed an American rather than British social work perspective, which disappointed some of her contemporaries.<sup>17</sup>

The literature review will explain that while there has been an increasing amount of scholarship on welfare related topics, such as state and church child welfare, service provision by individual Catholic religious orders, and histories of charitable organisations operated by non-government providers and other churches, the history of Catholic diocesan welfare bureaux (Centacare) and the contributions by its leaders – trained lay women and priests – both within the Catholic church and in the community is a fertile area for study.

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<sup>15</sup> Kate Ogilvie laments that notwithstanding Norma Parker's achievements, Parker had little British experience. See, for example, K. Ogilvie, 'Norma Parker's Record of Service', *Australian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 22, No. 2, June 1969.

<sup>16</sup> S. Brown, 'A Woman's profession' in H. Marchant and B. Wearing (eds.), *Gender Reclaimed: Women in Social Work* (Marrickville, NSW, Hale and Iremonger, 1986).

<sup>17</sup> M. Mills, 'Editorial: Professor Norma Parker CBE, Mrs Norma Brown', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 39, No. 2, June 1986.

The main themes of this thesis are:

- a) The influence of American social welfare practices and principles on the development of Australian Catholic social work;
- b) The inspirational role and tenacity of lay women in the foundation of Australian Catholic social work programs;
- c) The broader influence of Catholic social workers in the development of the almoner and social work professions, especially during 'the 1930s, the pioneer decade of professional social work in Australia'<sup>18</sup>;
- d) The obstacles – attitudinal, financial, and gender-based – that restricted Catholic welfare from implementing a full vision for the church's welfare responsibility;
- e) The tension between voluntary and professional models of social work, exemplified by the battles between diocesan welfare bureaux and children's institutions;
- f) The development of professional Catholic welfare from locally-delivered services to state and national peak bodies, and their influence on church and state welfare policies; and,
- g) The intersection between church and state and the influence of state aid on the development of Catholic services.

The development of Catholic social services in Australia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has received little coverage in the literature. Welfare historian, Anthony McMahon comments that 'the history of Catholic social services... is an important, albeit

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<sup>18</sup>

L. O'Brien and C. Turner, *Establishing Medical Social Work in Victoria* (Melbourne, University of Melbourne, 1979), p. 7.

neglected, field of inquiry in itself as well as a neglected part of a wider Australian history of social welfare services and social policy'.<sup>19</sup>

Chapter Two examines the transition from charity to professional care. It explores the history of almoning within the tradition of caring for the neglected and 'deserving' and the rise of lady almoners at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is an important context from which to examine early professional social work in Australia. Similarities between British and Australian social work will be contrasted with Catholic social work, whose philosophy and practices more reflected an American approach.

Chapter Three examines the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when welfare services provided by Catholic religious orders and organisations such as the SVdP focused on clients' immediate material and perceived spiritual needs. This examination occurs against a backdrop of community, church and government attitudes to welfare and the role of Catholic institutions. This chapter also assesses the role of lay Catholic women's associations, such as the Catholic Women's Social Guild (CWSG) in Melbourne and the Catholic Women's Association (Sydney) in supporting professional social work practices.

An important catalyst for the Catholic Church's entry into professional social welfare was the combined influence of two unlikely collaborators: psychologist, Dr Ethel Stoneman and a leading priest, Monsignor John McMahon. Their interest in social welfare led two University of Western Australia graduates, Norma Parker and Constance Moffit, to study social work at the National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS) in Washington, America in the late 1920s. After their graduation, Parker and Moffit became Australia's first professionally trained social workers and successfully convinced a fairly unimaginative and financially constrained church to establish diocesan welfare bureaux in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide.

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<sup>19</sup> A. McMahon, 'Australian Catholics and the development of professional social services in Australia' in P. Starkey (ed.), *Occasional Papers from the conference on 400 years of charity* (London, Voluntary Action History Society, 2003).  
[www.ivr.org.uk/vahsconferencepapers](http://www.ivr.org.uk/vahsconferencepapers)

Chapter Four examines the first stage of diocesan welfare bureaux inspired by the women. Trained social workers challenged a) male clergy; b) unskilled religious sisters and brothers who operated large institutions with little accountability; and, c) the SVdP which had a monopoly on parish-based Catholic welfare services. Lay women introduced a new paradigm of professional care and a philosophy that sought to challenge community attitudes to welfare provision and to enhance the dignity of the poor. The agencies they inspired represented a major change from the orthodoxy of voluntary-supervised institutional care and new approaches sought to explain the complexity of social, psychological, medical and financial issues impacting on individuals and families.

The different policies of the bureaux in the 1940s are also examined. Fr A.R.E. Thomas and Alice Blackall laid the foundations for the Sydney bureau, which by 1985 was Australia's largest and most influential Catholic welfare bureau.<sup>20</sup> In the case of Melbourne, Connie Moffit, Teresa Wardell and Fr Leo O'Rourke were central figures in the CSSB's first decade and provided a solid platform for the bureau's third director, Fr Eric Perkins. The CSSB struggled for financial support and recognition within the Melbourne Archdiocese, partly due to the influence of independently owned Catholic institutions and other church organisations, such as the Catholic Welfare Organisation.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless the CSBB had a positive influence on Melbourne bishop, Matthew Beovich, who after being promoted to Archbishop of Adelaide, established a similar bureau in Adelaide in 1942.

Chapter Five details the bureau's directorships under Fr (later Bishop) A.R.E. Thomas and Monsignor McCosker. The key themes of this chapter include the ongoing growth of diocesan bureaux despite numerous obstacles within the Catholic sector; the significant role of lay trained women in policy development and service delivery; the influence of Monsignor McCosker in shaping Catholic welfare

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<sup>20</sup> This statement is based on the numbers of staff employed at Centacare Sydney and also the diversity of its welfare programs and services.

<sup>21</sup> The CWO had a specific mandate to provide welfare services to war service personnel and their families in Melbourne. In several other dioceses, notably Adelaide and Sydney, the diocesan welfare bureau had responsibility for these families.

in NSW; and, despite the era of professionalisation, ongoing failures in standards of care, including physical and sexual abuse, in both institutions and foster care programs. Paradoxically, Catholic welfare bureaux became perhaps better recognised outside the church. Catholic welfare leaders sometimes found it easier to convince government organisations, rather than clerical colleagues, about the need for policy reforms. For many years Catholic social workers experienced resistance from the church, received little tangible support from their bishops and interacted with religious who were unable to recognise the benefits of new welfare approaches.

Chapter Six continues the story of Catholic welfare with an examination of welfare services in NSW over three decades commencing with the appointment of Fr Peter Phibbs as Sydney director in 1958. Despite some initial hesitancy Phibbs became a strong advocate for alternate programs of care of children. His successor, Fr John Davoren continued this direction, though the second half of Davoren's directorship was clouded by significant financial issues and internal dissension that did not dissipate with the employment of lay executive directors. This chapter includes an assessment of the leadership of Fr John Usher in western Sydney and his initial years as Sydney bureau director. During much of this period second generation female social workers, such as Mary Lewis, Dorothy O'Halloran and Margaret McHardy, continued to be influential in its development.

The development of the National Catholic Welfare Committee (NCWC) and its role in sponsoring the development of diocesan bureaux across Australia are explored in Chapter Seven. Parallel with the NCWC, Monsignor McCosker and Bishop Perkins sponsored a second spurt in diocesan agencies, with new bureaux opening in Hobart (1960), Perth (1970) and Canberra (1971). Together with Fr Luke Roberts of Adelaide and Fr Clem Kilby of Hobart, McCosker and Perkins made an impressive contribution to national Catholic social policy. Bishops Thomas McCabe of Wollongong and John Toohey of Maitland encouraged other bishops to support the overhaul of adoption legislation and practices. This chapter



also reviews the genesis and early achievements of the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission (ACSWC).

With the benefit of hindsight Chapter Eight appraises whether the original goals of the Bureaux were achieved and poses some reasons for the success and failures of diocesan-based welfare. It summaries the key characteristics of Catholic social welfare and reflects upon the original contribution of this thesis to Australian social welfare literature

## 1.2 Literature Review

It is important to position this topic within Australian and international welfare historiography. This section will highlight the absence of Catholic professional social work within the most relevant schools of scholarship, such as welfare history, women's history, Catholic history and other churches' history.

Professor Clark Chambers, who has written extensively on Canadian social work history views social welfare history as a subset of scholarship within social history, women's history, or the history of the family.<sup>22</sup> He also argues that welfare history has not really achieved its own status in Canada, and internationally. This analysis has some relevance to Australian welfare history, which on an academic level has been located within sub-fields of history, though in the case of the Catholic sector, has often fallen within the history of churches or accounts of religious orders.<sup>23</sup>

Within the more defined field of social work history, there remain some notable gaps. James McCullagh, for example, has identified the absence of pioneer social workers in American schools in historiography.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> C.A. Chambers, 'Uphill All the Way', Reflections on the Course of the Study of Welfare History', *Social Service Review*, Vol. 66, No. 4, December 1992, p. 493.

<sup>23</sup> R. Burns, *Those that sowed: The First Religious Sisters in Australia* (Sydney, E.J. Dwyer, 1968); K.E. Burford, *Unfurrowed fields: A Josephite Story, NSW, 1872-1972* (North Sydney, St Joseph's Convent, 1991).

### 1.2.1 Social Work/Welfare historiography

Historians and social scientists generally agree that social work arose out of the activities of benevolent and charitable organisations in England.<sup>25</sup> Almoning dates from the eight century. In terms of Australian historiography, Emeritus Professor John Lawrence recently commented that 'systematic serious historical study of the [Australian] social work profession appears to have been given very little attention'.<sup>26</sup> Lawrence's seminal work 40 years ago remains the only national study of Australian social work.<sup>27</sup> It emphasised the role of 'powerful men' such as Professor Tasman Lovell, Professor Harvey Sutton, Professor G L Wood, Dr John (later Sir) Newman Morris, and Greig Smith of the COS in the establishment of social work. Several writers, including Helen Marchant, Sue Brown and Anthony McMahon, have criticised Lawrence's account for understating the contribution of women in the profession's development.<sup>28</sup>

Marchant's critique is especially important because she outlined the influence of groups such as the National Council of Women (NCW) in the development of social service training in NSW, and thereby revised the dominant and assumed view that Melbourne was the birthplace of Australian social work. Several scholars have also criticised Brian Dickey's history of Australian welfare history for neglecting the influence of women in creating the social work profession.<sup>29</sup> Significantly, neither Lawrence nor Dickey commented on the contribution by Catholic social workers to the profession generally, or to the church, specifically. In

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<sup>24</sup> J.C. McCullagh, 'Early School social work Leaders: Women Forgotten by the Profession', *Social Work in Education*, Vol. 20, Iss. 1, January 1998.

<sup>25</sup> P. Camilleri, *Reconstructing Social Work: exploring social work through text and talk* (Aldershot, Hants, England, Avebury, ca. 1996).

<sup>26</sup> R.J. Lawrence, 'In memorium: A tribute to Norma Parker', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 57, No. 3, September 2004, p. 303.

<sup>27</sup> R.J. Lawrence, *Professional Social Work in Australia*, (Canberra, Australian National University Press, (Sydney, 1965).

<sup>28</sup> S. Brown, 'A Woman's profession', p. 223.

a section entitled female 'pioneers', Lawrence referred to Agnes Macintyre, Amy Wheaton and Katharine Ogilvie, but largely omitted any reference to their contemporary Catholics. This oversight was partly corrected by Lawrence when he published a collection of the writings of Parker, who had been his predecessor at the University of New South Wales, 'to place on the record the main features of her contribution to Australian social work'.<sup>30</sup> Lawrence was also one of the main speakers at a memorial function in Sydney to commemorate Parker's life in 2004.<sup>31</sup>

Dickey is inattentive to the Catholic sector's contribution, describing the church as having 'long justified the effort and the expense of a sometimes second-best range of welfare services on the grounds that the community discriminated against it'.<sup>32</sup> Standard welfare texts, such as *Out of Luck* by Stephen Garton, have also not considered the Catholic contribution to Australian social work in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup> Anne O'Brien's *Poverty's Prison* covers Catholic welfare, including the St Vincent de Paul Society and the church's orphanages up until 1918.<sup>34</sup> van Kriekan's observation that historians have shown least interest in Australia social welfare after 1914 has begun to be addressed by scholars with a social work background,

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<sup>29</sup> H. Marchant, 'A Feminist Perspective on the Development of the Social Work Profession in New South Wales', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 38, No. 1, March 1985.

<sup>30</sup> J. Lawrence (ed.), *Norma Parker's Record of Service* (The Australian Association of Social Workers, The Department of Social Work, University of Sydney, The School of Social Work, University of New South Wales, 1969). Whereas Parker was an Associate Professor, Lawrence was appointed as a full Professor, largely due to Parker's persuasiveness with the UNSW senate.

<sup>31</sup> Lawrence, 'In memorium'.

<sup>32</sup> B. Dickey, *No Charity There: A Short History of Social Welfare in Australia*, Second Edition, (North Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1987), p. 15.

<sup>33</sup> S. Garton, *Out of Luck: Poor Australians and Social Welfare* (North Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1990); R. van Kriekan, *Children and the State: social control and the formation of Australian child welfare*, Studies in Society Series, (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1992), p. 110.

<sup>34</sup> A. O'Brien, *Poverty's Prison: the poor in NSW, 1880-1918* (Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1988).

but his own work also omitted Catholic welfare.<sup>35</sup> Marion Wilkinson has studied child welfare in NSW from 1945 to 1988, though she only makes small mention of the intersection between the government and voluntary welfare sectors.<sup>36</sup> Paul Smyth has focused on the Church's social teachings and alluded to the nexus between state and Church's charitable activities.<sup>37</sup> But little scholarship, including Richard Kennedy's self-described 'radical welfare' writings, has examined the Catholic sector.<sup>38</sup>

Australian social work historiography has benefited, to some extent, by several oral history projects undertaken by volunteer and professional researchers in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth. Melbourne University academics, Laurie O'Brien and Cynthia Turner, undertook the largest study involving more than 20 pioneer almoners in the early 1980s.<sup>39</sup> Elaine M.W. Martin's doctoral thesis and her subsequent accounts of the social work profession's development in South Australia incorporated interviews with early social workers.<sup>40</sup> Frances Crawford and Sandra Leitman have published initial findings of their research into early West Australian social workers.<sup>41</sup> Finally, several volunteers at Sydney's Mitchell Library

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<sup>35</sup> R. van Kriekan, *Children and the State: social control and the formation of Australian child welfare*, Studies in Society Series, (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1992), p. 110.

<sup>36</sup> M. Wilkinson, 'From neglected to protected? child welfare in NSW 1945-1988', PhD, Department of Social Work, Social Policy and Sociology, University of Sydney, 1999.

<sup>37</sup> P. Smyth, *From Charity to the welfare state: Catholic welfare agencies 1940-1960*, Conference Paper, Catholic Welfare Australia, 2000.

<sup>38</sup> R. Kennedy, (ed.), *Australian Welfare History: Critical Essays* (Melbourne, MacMillan, 1982); R. Kennedy, *Australian Welfare: historical sociology* (South Melbourne, MacMillan, 1989).

<sup>39</sup> L. O'Brien and C. Turner, *History of Medical Social Work in Victoria* Collection, located in Australian Association of Hospital Almoners and Australian Association of Social Workers (Victorian Branch), Accession Number 90/24, Boxes 30-32, University of Melbourne Archives (UMA).

<sup>40</sup> E.W. Martin, 'Gender, Demand and Domain: The Social Work Profession in South Australia, 1935-80', PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1990; E. Martin, 'Social Work as a profession: The South Australian perspective', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 1987.

<sup>41</sup> F. Crawford, and S. Leitmann., 'The midwifery of power: Reflections of the development of professional social work in Western Australia', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 54, No. 3, September 2001.

recorded interviews with a small number of social workers in 1990.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, however, these interviews are a piecemeal record of the profession because apart from Hannah Buckley and Viva Murphy, most pioneer Catholic social workers, including Norma Parker, Constance Moffit, Eileen Davidson and Teresa Wardell were not interviewed.<sup>43</sup>

Regional historiographical studies are best exemplified by Martin's detailed research and numerous publications concerning South Australian welfare.<sup>44</sup> Martin correctly identified the significant role of women, as both pioneers and numerically dominant members of the social work profession in its foundation decades. O'Brien and Turner's interpretative study of medical social work in Victoria identifies only a very small number of Catholic social workers and describes them as a 'separate' group.<sup>45</sup> This thesis will challenge this interpretation by demonstrating the broader role and engagement of Catholic social workers within the profession in Melbourne in the 1930s.<sup>46</sup>

Other publications such as *Great Australian Women: From Federation to Freedom*, and *With Passion, Perseverance and Practicality: 100 Women who influenced Australian Children Services, 1841-2001*<sup>47</sup> do not refer to Catholic social workers. In general, non-academic historical accounts of the welfare sector have tended to reflect the paucity of funding. By contrast, some charitable organisations, such as

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<sup>42</sup> State Library of New South Wales, Betty Marshall interviewed Gwen Kemmis, Joy Moran, Enid Davis and Helen Halse-Rogers, CY MLOH 156/1-8; 157/1-2; 158/1-2; 159/1-3; MLNSW.

<sup>43</sup> Of ten pioneer Catholic social workers, only Elvira Lyons had died before 1980. Unfortunately, Buckley's interview could not be located.

<sup>44</sup> Martin, 'Gender, Demand and Domain'.

<sup>45</sup> O'Brien and Turner, *Establishing Medical Social Work*,; L. O'Brien and C. Turner, 'Hospital Almoning: Portrait of the First Decade', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 32, No. 4, December 1979.

<sup>46</sup> Cynthia Turner to Teresa Wardell, 1981, Box 14, Teresa Wardell Papers, UMA.

<sup>47</sup> S. De Vries, *Great Australian Women From Federation to Freedom* (Pymble, NSW, HarperCollins, 2002); *With Passion, Perseverance and Practicality: 100 women who influenced Australian Children's Services, 1841-2001* (Carlton, Victoria, OMEP Australia March 2002).

religious congregations, have been more inclined to allocate funding for research, to commemorate their work, especially as in the last decade a number of religious orders have amalgamated their services. As a result, the attention afforded to church-based charities has varied.<sup>48</sup> Edmund Campion's *Great Australian Catholics* contains only passing reference to Norma Parker, in contrast to biographical entries for other prominent Catholic reformers Anna Terese Brennan and Mary Tension Woods.<sup>49</sup>

### 1.2.2 Catholic Historiography

Philip Mendes has written about the large role by churches in the provision of Australian welfare services.<sup>50</sup> In the case of the Catholic Church, several social work practitioners have described its contribution as 'poorly understood and its history neglected'.<sup>51</sup> A recent survey article of Catholic social services by Camilleri and Winkworth concluded that 'the Church's role as a major provider of human services throughout the last 170 years has not been well documented in the social policy discourse'.<sup>52</sup>

Catholic historians have largely ignored diocesan welfare bureaux (Centacare) and their important role in reforming church institutions and welfare practices, as well as their broader influence on government policy. Patrick O'Farrell, the doyen of

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<sup>48</sup> R. Howe and S. Swain, *All God's Children: a centenary history of the Methodist Home for Children and the Orana Peace Memorial Homes* (Kambah, ACT, Acorn Press, 1989); D. Jaggs, *Asylum to Action: family action 1851-1951, a history of services and policy development for families in times of vulnerability* (Oakleigh, East Victoria, Family Action, 1991); M. Robinson, *Kildonan, One Hundred Years of caring: a brief history of the work of Kildonan Homes for Children, 1881-1981* (Camberwell, Victoria, Council of the Uniting Church, 1981).

<sup>49</sup> E. Campion, *Great Australian Catholics* (Richmond, Victoria, Aurora Books, 1997) pp: 60-61; 134-135.

<sup>50</sup> P. Mendes, *Australia's Welfare Wars* (Sydney, UNSW Press, 2003), pp: 7, 153.

<sup>51</sup> P. Camilleri, A. McMahon, H. Hughes, V. Llewellyn and S. Gilies, A partnership in research: ACU and Centacare, Paper presented to National Centacare Conference, 12-15 September 2000, Canberra.

<sup>52</sup> P. Camilleri and G. Winkworth, 'Catholic social services in Australia: a short history', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 58, No. 1, March 2005, p. 84.

Australian Catholic historiography, does not mention diocesan social services in his extensive array of publications.<sup>53</sup> Social historians, including Naomi Turner and Edmund Campion, have also excluded them.<sup>54</sup> A survey of Australian religious historiography in 2001, concluded, that apart from medical studies, few researchers were examining social welfare activities.<sup>55</sup> Important Catholic welfare reformers, both clerics and lay women, await detailed studies. John Luttrell's doctoral thesis on Cardinal Sir Norman Gilroy, while an impressive account, does not contain reference to the Sydney welfare bureau, which was one of the major archdiocesan welfare apostolates during Gilroy's thirty year tenure as archbishop.<sup>56</sup>

Despite their church and community influence, Catholic pioneer social workers have received little recognition by the church. A few exceptions include the naming of Hannah Buckley Home in Adelaide after South Australia's first Catholic social worker, Hannah Buckley<sup>57</sup>; in 1996 St Vincent's Hospital Sydney renamed its Social Work Department in honour of its founder, Norma Parker; more recently Centacare Sydney named a facility in her honour.<sup>58</sup> Catholic Social Services Australia honours Monsignor J.F. McCosker through an annual oration, and also Bishop E.G. Perkins through an annual award.

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<sup>53</sup> O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church*.

<sup>54</sup> N. Turner, *Catholics in Australia: A Social History*, Volumes 1 and 2 (North Blackburn, Victoria, Collins Dover, 1992).

<sup>55</sup> H. M. Carey, I. Breward, N. Doumanis, R.M. Frapell, D. Hilliard, K. Massam, A. O'Brien, R. Thompson., 'Australian Religion Review, 1980-2000: Part 2: Christian Denominations', [Literature Review] *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 25, No. 1, February 2001. Other writers who omit Catholic social workers include A. O'Brien, *God's Willing Workers: Women and Religion in Australia* (Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2005). See also J. West, *Daughters of Freedom* (Sutherland, NSW, Albatross Books, 1997).

<sup>56</sup> J.J. Luttrell, 'Norman Thomas Cardinal Gilroy as Archbishop of Sydney', PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 1998.

<sup>57</sup> Archbishop James Gleeson to Hannah Buckley, 14 March 1980, Catholic Institutes Various, Box 619, Folder 5, Archdiocese of Adelaide Archives (AAA).

<sup>58</sup> The re-naming at St Vincent's occurred in 1996 – the social work department's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. This gesture was initiated by lay social workers, and not by the Sisters of Charity. *Catholic Weekly*, July 2005.

One of the largest growth areas in Catholic historiography in recent years has been the various accounts of religious brothers and sisters, and their Catholic schools, hospitals, and occasionally, welfare institutions.<sup>59</sup> *Holding On To Hope* by Jill Barnard and Karen Twigg shows the capacity for high quality scholarship when researchers have unfettered access to rich primary sources and the freedom to critically appraise the subject.<sup>60</sup> This book follows Twigg's earlier welfare history of the Sisters of Mercy in Melbourne<sup>61</sup> and the impressive scholarship on women's religious orders by Margaret Walsh and Sophie McGrath.<sup>62</sup>

But not all sponsored histories of religious orders and their welfare services have been as even-handed. Several works, for example, while recognising the limitations of institutional care, give credit for changes in institutional care to religious orders, without considering the broader context of changing community attitudes and the possible influence of professional social workers.<sup>63</sup> Fr Brian Lucas' study of the Good Shepherd Sisters welfare facility at Ashfield, NSW, is an example of understating the influence of social work ideas on the institutionalisation of girls.<sup>64</sup> Br Gerald Burns, a former director of Westmead Boys Home, acknowledged his history of the institution as an 'unacademic work'.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The numerous histories of religious organisations include Burns, *Those that sowed*; K.E. Burford, *Unfurrowed fields: A Josephite Story, NSW, 1872-1972* (North Sydney, St Joseph's Convent, 1991); C. Duncan, *Waterloo and the Sisters of Mercy: a century of change* (Sydney, Mercy Family Centre, 1994).

<sup>60</sup> J. Barnard and K. Twigg., *Holding on to Hope: A History of the Founding Agencies of MacKillop Family Services 1854-1997* (Kew, Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2004).

<sup>61</sup> K. Twigg, *Shelter for the Children: A History of the St Vincent de Paul Child and Family Service, 1854-1997* (Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne, 2000).

<sup>62</sup> M. Walsh, *The Good Sams*; S. McGrath, *These women? Women religious in the history of Australia, the Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta 1888-1988* (Kensington, NSW, New South Wales University Press, 1989).

<sup>63</sup> For example, *The Sisters of the Good Samaritan : one hundred years on the Cooks River, 1885-1985* (Arncliffe, NSW, Sisters of the Good Samaritan, 1985).

<sup>64</sup> B.J. Lucas, 'The Good Shepherd Sisters and the Adolescent Girl in Need of Care', Master of General Studies Thesis, University of New South Wales, 1984.

<sup>65</sup> G. Burns, *A simple work: the story of St Vincent's Boy's Home, Westmead, 1891-1981*



Marion Fox has focused on the welfare sector through two main contributions: a master's thesis on the transformation of a Sydney Catholic welfare institution in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which surprisingly does not cover the influence of social work principles,<sup>66</sup> and a PhD thesis on changing educational policies and practices in NSW orphanages, which applies a critical paradigm to produce a refreshing history that considers a broad – and at times – controversial subject.<sup>67</sup>

Across the national network of Centacare agencies, several priests have sketched the history of their respective bureaux. In Sydney, Fr John Usher, prepared a manuscript on the bureau's history from 1940 to 1988, based not only on his significant role, but discussions with Monsignor McCosker and social worker, Mary Lewis. Usher acknowledges the benefits and pitfalls of the use of memory and oral history.<sup>68</sup> In the twilight of his career, McCosker prepared some 'notes', which outlined Catholic welfare developments, including his own leadership role. While both accounts are useful contributions, they are weakened by the absence of references.<sup>69</sup>

Internal perspectives have sometimes simplified history. Writing to Bishop Lyons in 1952, McCosker, for example, felt the Sydney bureau had evolved 'primarily as a child placement agency'.<sup>70</sup> In a more recent document, Fr Usher, said 'the reality is that Centacare started because the Catholic orphanages were in a mess and the

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(Westmead, NSW, 1991).

<sup>66</sup> M. Fox, 'From Penitence to Pastoral Care: the work of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan at St Magdalen's Retreat Tempe (Arncliffe)', Master of Education Thesis, University of New England, 1984.

<sup>67</sup> M Fox., 'The Catholic System of Orphanages in NSW 1881-1981', PhD Thesis, Faculty of Education, University of Sydney, 1994.

<sup>68</sup> Fr John Usher, Centacare, 1940-1988, MS., CSA. His plans to publish this manuscript have not yet eventuated. Interview with Fr John Usher, North Strathfield, July 2006.

<sup>69</sup> Monsignor J.F. McCosker, Notes on the Beginning of Catholic Welfare, The National Catholic Welfare Committee and the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission (9 May 1989), MS., CSA.

<sup>70</sup> Monsignor J.F. McCosker, Memo for Most Rev P. Lyons, ca 1952, CFWB, CSA.

then archbishop asked Monsignor Thomas to do something about the problem'.<sup>71</sup> With the benefit of hindsight and a professional social welfare paradigm, it is true that Catholic orphanages in the 1940s needed reform. There is little evidence, however, that Gilroy's authorisation of the Sydney bureau in 1941 was based on this premise. Indeed, over the next two decades, Gilroy resisted recommendations from various directors to establish a centralised body that would be directly responsible for the management and conduct of Catholic institutions.<sup>72</sup>

During their post-graduate studies in social work, Peter Travers and Barry Hickey of Adelaide and Perth prepared histories of their respective diocesan welfare bureaux.<sup>73</sup> Hickey, now the Archbishop of Perth, said his thesis gave 'particular emphasis... to Catholic welfare services as a power group within society', yet his work is a chronological account of church welfare services in Western Australia. More recent specialised accounts of Western Australia, for example by Christian Brother, Barry Coldrey, have identified the gross inadequacies of several large child welfare facilities operated by religious orders, including the one of which he is a member.<sup>74</sup>

With the exception of Travers' historical overview, which was used by Moya Shaw (nee Britten-Jones) in her manuscript, there has been no account of Adelaide's Catholic welfare bureau.<sup>75</sup> Surprisingly, South Australia's first Catholic social worker, Hannah Buckley, rates only a passing mention in Margaret Press'

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<sup>71</sup> J. Usher, Centacare Catholic Family Welfare, A Review of the Agency, 1985, p. 5.

<sup>72</sup> This will be discussed in Chapter Six.

<sup>73</sup> P.D. Travers, 'Planning in a Church'; B. Hickey, 'The development of Catholic Welfare Services in Western Australia, 1847-1970', Masters Thesis, University of Western Australia, 1971.

<sup>74</sup> B. M. Coldrey *Child Migration and the Western Australian Boys Home*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Como, Western Australia, Tomanarik Press, 1995); B.M. Coldrey, *Brother Paul Kearney's apprenticeship scheme at Clontarf and Bindoon boys towns 1936-1951* (Manning, Western Australia, Tomanarik Press, 1993); B. Blyth, *Counting the cost: Christian Brothers and child abuse in Australian orphanages* (Como, Western Australia, P and B Press, 1999).

<sup>75</sup> Travers, 'Planning in a Church', M. Shaw (nee Britten-Jones), History of Adelaide Centacare, MS., ca. 1982.

otherwise fine history of South Australian Catholics.<sup>76</sup> The Melbourne bureau has received little coverage.<sup>77</sup> Fr Clem Kilby of Hobart, whose welfare career spanned 40 years before his retirement in 2001, has written an overview of Catholic welfare in Tasmania.<sup>78</sup> Despite access to primary records and published works, a more recent monograph on the Maitland-Newcastle diocesan bureau, Australia's first non-metropolitan Catholic welfare bureau, reads as a commemorative publication rather than a study of the policy debates that frequently marked Catholic welfare services.<sup>79</sup>

On a national level, there has been no published history of the National Catholic Welfare Committee (1956-73) or its successor, the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission ACSWC (1974-90),<sup>80</sup> both of which influenced the development of Catholic social welfare policies and had an influence on government policy.

In the charitable sector, the St Vincent de Paul Society's role has been recorded, though often within a 19<sup>th</sup> century charity model approach. There has been little acknowledgement of broader church and state changes that influenced, *albeit* reluctantly, SVdP policies.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> M. Press, *Colour and Shadow: South Australian Catholics, 1906-1962* (Adelaide, Archdiocese of Adelaide, 1991).

<sup>77</sup> A useful starting point for the history of the Melbourne bureau is R. Cotter, A brief history of the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, Melbourne, 1935-1988, MS., MCA. Some Centacare Melbourne pre-1980 records have survived and are located in the Archdiocese of Melbourne Vicar General's Papers.

<sup>78</sup> C. Kilby, *Brief History of Centacare, 1960-1985* (Hobart, 1985). Kilby departed Centacare Hobart in 2001, but retained his role as Vicar General of Welfare, which, without an operational base, is more a figurehead role.

<sup>79</sup> *40 Years of Centacare Newcastle* (Centacare, Newcastle, 2001).

<sup>80</sup> Toby O'Connor made a start in this area with his 'draft' manuscript, *A Short Account of Catholic Welfare in Australia and the relationship with the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission* (1991), CSSAA.

<sup>81</sup> F.S. Egan, *The Society of St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia - The First 100 Years* (Sydney, SVdP, 1981); E.M. Bond, *The Society of St Vincent de Paul in Victoria: A Short History, 1854-1990* (Sydney, Brougham Press, ca 1990).

Much historiography of Protestant welfare has focused on organisations, such as Brian Dickey's history of Anglicare in South Australia.<sup>82</sup> One of the few examinations of the impact of professional social workers in church agencies was undertaken by Dahl.<sup>83</sup> While there have been few substantive comparative studies of Christian or non-government welfare services, some useful studies include Elizabeth Bleby's appraisal of church social welfare agencies in South Australia, 1940-60; Richard Lomas' account of the relationships between evangelism and welfare services in NSW, and Janice Nicholson's comparative study of the Family Welfare Bureau, Red Cross Society, Smith Family and the SVdP.<sup>84</sup>

### 1.2.3 Feminist Historiography

By international comparison, and notwithstanding Australia's small size, Catholic lay women's involvement in Catholic welfare has been poorly chronicled in feminist literature. Impressive Northern American literature on Catholic welfare include *The Poor Belong to Us* and an earlier history of the National Conference of Catholic Charities by O'Grady and Gavin.<sup>85</sup> There does not appear to be an Australian equivalent to Kathy Kennelly's edited collection of papers on American Catholic

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<sup>82</sup> B. Dickey, *Giving a Hand: A History of Anglicare South Australia since 1860* (Adelaide, Hyde Park Press, 2003). Other histories of Protestant organisation include B. Dickey, and E. Martin., *Building Community: A History of Port Adelaide Central Mission* (Adelaide, The Port Adelaide Wesley Centre Inc, 1999); R. Howe, & S. Swain, *All God's Children: a centenary history of the Methodist Home for Children and the Orana Peace Memorial Homes* (Kambah, ACT, Acorn Press, 1989). R. Howe & S. Swain, *The Challenge of the City: The Centenary History of Wesley Central Mission, 1893-1993* (South Melbourne, Hyland House, 1993).

<sup>83</sup> B. Dahl, 'The Social Welfare Activities of the Adelaide Central Mission and the employment of qualified social workers', Department of Social Administration, Flinders University.

<sup>84</sup> E. Bleby, 'Signs of the Kingdom: The Work of Church Social Welfare Agencies in South Australia, 1969-1980', Masters of Arts in Social Administration Thesis, Flinders University, South Australia, 1982; W.J. Lomas, 'The Relationship between Evangelism and Welfare Services', Masters of Arts Thesis, Department of Social Work and Social Policy, University of Sydney, 1991; J.E. Nicholson, 'Charitable Action: A Comparative Study of Four Voluntary Organisations in NSW, MA Honors Thesis, Department of Government and Public Administration, University of Sydney, 1969.

<sup>85</sup> J. O'Grady, *Catholic Charities in the United States: History and Problems* (National Conference of Catholic Charities, Washington, DC, 1931; D.P. Gavin, *The National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1910-1960* (Catholic Life Publications, Milwaukee, 1962).

women<sup>86</sup> or Elizabeth Usherwood's history of British Catholic women reformers.<sup>87</sup> Prominent American Catholic reformers, such as Agnes Regan, Jane Hoey, Louise McGuire and Caroline Gleason have been incorporated in histories of state and church in America.<sup>88</sup> K.A. Kendall has also made a solid contribution which her study of three 'great' international social workers: Alice Salomon of Germany; Edith Abbott of the United States, and Dame Eileen Younghusband of England.<sup>89</sup> Kendall views them as great people, not because of their gender, but because of their intellectual drive, compassion and vision.

Historians such as Anne O'Brien and Janet West have written of Catholic women's intersection with the church, though neither directly focuses on social workers.<sup>90</sup> Apart from occasional newspaper articles, the significant contribution by Australian women to professional Catholic welfare has generally been overlooked.<sup>91</sup> Norma Parker and her contemporaries do not appear in important feminist works on Australian social workers, among which Marchant and Wearing's collection of essays on the role of Australian women in social work, is the most surprising omission.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, Heather Radi's attempt to 'redress' the role of women

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<sup>86</sup> K. Kennelly (ed.), *American Catholic Women: A historical exploration* (New York, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989).

<sup>87</sup> E. Usherwood, *Women first: biographies of Catholic women in the forefront of change* (London, Sheed and Ward, 1989).

<sup>88</sup> M.J. Oates, 'Catholic Laywomen in the Labor Force, 1850-1950' in Kennelly, *American Catholic Women*; Another good reference is J. Redmont, *Generous lives: American Catholic Women's Lives* (New York, Morrow and Co, ca. 1991). See also biography on Regan in *American Reformers* (H. W. Wilson).

<sup>89</sup> K.A. Kendall, *Social Work Education: Its Origins in Europe* (Council on Social Work Education, Alexandria, VA, 2000).

<sup>90</sup> A. O'Brien, *God's Willing Workers: Women and Religion in Australia* (Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2005). J. West, *Daughters of Freedom* (Sutherland, NSW, Albatross Books, 1997).

<sup>91</sup> 'Renowned W.A. social workers together again in Perth', *The Record*, 16 August 1973; S. Wilkins 'Social Welfare Pioneer', *The Age*, 9 November 1979; M. Brown and T. Stephens, 'Lives devoted to helping others in need', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 January 2001, p. 11.

<sup>92</sup> Marchant and Wearing, *Gender Reclaimed*. S. De Vries, *Strength of purpose: Australian women of achievement from Federation to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century* (Pymble, NSW Harper

restricts Catholic biographical entries to prominent women such as Anna Brennan and Mary Tenison Woods.<sup>93</sup>

The American influence on Australian Catholic social welfare history has been largely ignored in Australian welfare historiography. On an international level, Caroline Skehill's history of Irish social work, and the transition from volunteerism to professionalism, has some parallels given Eire's predominantly Catholic community. The Australian Catholic Church, despite its misgivings about professional social work, began to employ almoners in hospitals nearly two decades before Eire.<sup>94</sup>

Studies of Catholic women's organisations, such as Sally Kennedy's *Faith and Feminism* and Hilary Carey's *Truly Feminine Truly Catholic* provide important contextual background to this study, but they do not focus on the women closely, though Carey does touch on professional social workers.<sup>95</sup> In conclusion, the literature on professional Catholic welfare topic is limited, which provides an avenue for this research thesis to try to redress some of this imbalance.

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Collins, 1998); *Who's Who of Australian Women; A Sense of Purpose: Great Australian Women of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* Port Melbourne, Victoria, Reed Reference, 1996).

<sup>93</sup> H. Radi (ed.), *200 Australian women : a Redress anthology* (Broadway, N.S.W, Women's Redress Press, 1988).

<sup>94</sup> C. Skehill, *The nature of social work in Ireland: An historical perspective* (Lampeter, Ireland, Mellen, Edwin Press Ltd, 1999); C. Skehill, 'An examination of the transition from philanthropy to professional social work in Ireland', *Research on Social Work Practice*, Vol. 10, No. 6, November 2000; M. Purcell, *50 Years of Catholic Social Service Conference: A Brief History*, (Dublin, Catholic Social Service Conference, 1991).

<sup>95</sup> S. Kennedy, *Faith and Feminism* (Studies in the Christian Movement, Manly, Sydney, Blackburn Dove, Sydney, 1986); H.M. Carey, *Truly Feminine Truly Catholic: A History of the Catholic Women's League*, (Kensington, NSW, University of New South Wales Press, 1987). See also S. Willis (ed.), *Women, faith and fetes: essays in the history of women in the Church in Australia* (Melbourne, Dove Communications and the Australian Council of Churches, 1977).

#### 1.2.4 Approaches to writing welfare history

One of the conclusions from the foregoing discussion is that almoners and social workers have made the largest contribution to recording their profession's history. In Britain, I.F. Beck, J. Snelling and C. Morris made early contributions.<sup>96</sup> Moberley Bell's history of British almoning, although not regarded as an 'inside' account, has been criticised for providing insufficient attention to technical aspects of medical social work'.<sup>97</sup> In Australia, too, trained social welfare clerics have been the main contributors to the nevertheless small historiography of Australian Catholic social work.

This thesis aims to study Catholic social welfare in the context of its policy development and professional practices. Because this thesis centres upon welfare policy history it faces the challenge of using an appropriate methodological approach. One approach, known as Liberal, Whig or 'first-stage (welfare) writing'<sup>98</sup>, has been criticised by Australian welfare historians, including Brian Dickey and Rosemary Kerr. Dickey cautions against the assumption that policy change automatically creates 'an approving record of progress towards the present and therefore a history of progress approved by the reader and author'.<sup>99</sup> Kerr comments that:

The error of liberal history is that its narrative frequently portrays the point of view of the dominant agents, i.e. those who instigated the reforms. It mostly excludes history from below or portrays the objects of the policies as merely passive recipients.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> I.F. Beck, *The Almoner* (London, Council of the Institute of Almoners, 1947); J. Snelling, 'Medical Social Work' in C. Morris (ed.), *Social Case Work in Great Britain* (New York, Whiteside Press, 1955).

<sup>97</sup> L. O'Brien, 'The history of Medical Social Work – E. Moberley Bell's contribution', *Australian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 16, No. 3, November 1963.

<sup>98</sup> For a good discussion of different methodological approaches, see J.R. Graham, 'An Analysis of Canadian Social Welfare Historical Writing', *Social Service Review*, Vol. 70, March 1996.

<sup>99</sup> B. Dickey, 'Problems in Writing Welfare History', *Journal of Australian Studies*, No. 21, November 1987.

<sup>100</sup> R. Kerr, 'Writing Welfare history: An historiographical jigsaw?', *Proceedings Western*

Another approach, exemplified by Richard Kennedy's self-described 'radical welfare' writings, utilises Marxist theory to critically assess the power imbalances between charity providers and their clients.<sup>101</sup> Kennedy, whose writings have also neglected the Catholic scene, advances a social control thesis, which has been challenged by later historians, such as van Kriekan, who argued that many working class parents saw welfare for their children as providing them with significant assistance in life.<sup>102</sup> This thesis will argue that Christian motives, professional welfare practices, diocesan personalities and politics shaped the development of the Catholic welfare sector. The thesis does not trace only progress and reform: it is also a study of the failings and lost opportunities of the Catholic Church's professional welfare services from 1920 to 1985.

While it is true that welfare history written from the perspective of the organisation alone is limited, it is also true that it is increasingly difficult to access welfare-related records in Catholic repositories, a situation that appears to have been exacerbated by ongoing serious allegations and criminal convictions for sexual crimes committed against children in church-based institutions.<sup>103</sup> During the research period of this thesis there was a noticeable restriction in the level of access to Catholic archives, notwithstanding the researcher's references from senior clerics, including a bishop and two archdiocesan vicar-generals. In any case, given the paucity of information about the development of the Catholic welfare sector, the history of the organisations themselves is an important beginning.

Dickey also suggests that welfare writers include a personal statement to indicate their values, because, as he says, readers 'are entitled to know about... [writers']

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*Australian Institute for Educational Research Forum*, 1996.  
<http://cleo.murdoch.edu.au/waiver/forums/1996/kerr.html>

<sup>101</sup> Kennedy, *Australian Welfare History*; Kennedy, *Australian Welfare*.

<sup>102</sup> For example, R. van Kriekan, *Children and the State: social control and the formation of Australian child welfare*, Studies in Society Series, (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1992).

<sup>103</sup> See for example, L. Morris, 'Hidden sins of the Father', *Sydney Morning Herald*, Weekend edition, 17-18 June 2006, p. 13..



perceptions and beliefs'.<sup>104</sup> Briefly, therefore, my culture is Australian-Irish Catholic. This year my maternal family celebrates 200 years living in NSW. My paternal ancestors migrated in the 1840s and 1850s, mostly as a result of the Great Irish Famine.<sup>105</sup> Three generations of my family have been associated with Catholic charities, such as the SVdP and Centacare.<sup>106</sup> I have worked for several Catholic-based charitable organisations. To ensure integrity I have discontinued formal involvement with these bodies during the writing of this thesis.

### 1.3 Archival sources

Many of the primary sources utilised in this thesis have hitherto been unexplored in Catholic social welfare history. In consulting a variety of archives – parish, diocesan, welfare bureaux, religious orders and government – policy differences in terms of the storage of records and attitudes towards their accessibility emerged. The extensive new material presented in this thesis has been positioned within secondary literature on welfare and church history and the recollections of several key players in Australian Catholic social welfare.

Several factors may explain the incompleteness of records pertaining to Australian Catholic welfare. First, the church traditionally did not place of a lot of importance on record keeping. Similar to the situation in parishes, diocesan agencies, such as Centacare, have usually been responsible for preserving their own historical materials and artifacts, and as a result the views of individual directors have often

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<sup>104</sup> Dickey, *No Charity There*, p: xviii-xix.

<sup>105</sup> Family histories by D. J. Gleeson include *The Road to Stoney Creek : a history of the Gleesons of Nenagh, Windsor and Mudgee* (Concord, NSW, 1994); *Carlton's Town: A History of the Carolan/Carlton Sept and related Irish pioneer families in New South Wales* (Concord, NSW, 1998); *Irish Dusk, Colonial Dawn : the Dooly, Hickey, O'Brien, O'Neill (Neale), O'Toole (Toole) & Ryan Septs* (Concord, NSW, 1999).

<sup>106</sup> The writer's grandfather, T.J. Gleeson was a staunch conference (branch) member of the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP) for half a century and parish secretary at All Hallows Parish, Fivedock, NSW. My mother, F.P Gleeson was extensively involved in fundraising for Catholic charities, including Westcare and the SVdP National Council. I have worked for the SVdP and the Sisters of Charity Health Service.

dictated whether records were kept. A major exception has been client records pertaining to children, which, in general, have been subject to much greater care and consolidation.<sup>107</sup>

Within the welfare sector, the importance of client confidentiality has made some administrators distrustful of maintaining records. Unfortunately, in some cases, such as Melbourne and Sydney, administrative records relating to the diocesan bureaux have been misplaced, permanently. The financial burden of maintaining large record series has also had an impact. Significant gaps appear within record series and in various archival repositories. Unlike the papers of bishops and religious orders, which were usually well cared for, a lack of resources, and to some extent, disinterest, has caused some important record series, such as the archives pertaining to Melbourne's Catholic Social Service Bureau, to be largely incomplete. Catholic welfare has also not been immune to the consequences of natural events. A fire at Centacare Sydney in 1998, for example, partially destroyed some of this bureau's early manuscripts and client records.

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Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, *A Piece of the Story: national directory of records of Catholic organisations caring for families separated from families* (Curtin, ACT, 1999).

## CHAPTER TWO

### From Charity to Professional Altruism

#### 2.1 Introduction

Professional social work is not the product of a new and strange idea, divorced from former social effort. It is something that has grown gradually from roots in our social history.<sup>1</sup>

This remark by pioneer Australian social worker, Kate Ogilvie, introduces the purpose of this chapter, which is to examine the foundations of modern social work, within what Roy Lubove describes as the transition from charity to professional altruism.<sup>2</sup> The late 19<sup>th</sup> century rise of almoning, the antecedent of modern day social work, grew out of the activities of benevolent organisations, such as the Charity Organisation Society (COS). A long-term international survey aims to contextualise the early history of the Australian profession, and to set the scene for the detailed focus on Catholic sector in this thesis.

A principal theme is the role women played in the establishment and delivery of social services, especially in the foundation decades of professional social work. Between the 1890s and the 1930s women occupied the majority of almoner positions in England.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding their contributions in terms of service

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<sup>1</sup> K. Ogilvie, An address to three Service Clubs, 1943, Katharine Ogilvie Addresses, Speeches, Broadcasts, Papers, 1933-1962, Lesley Campbell Brown Collection, MSS 5570/3, Item 3, p. 11, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales (MLNSW).

<sup>2</sup> R. Lubove, *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career, 1880-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1965).

<sup>3</sup> An important exception was Thomas Cramp. See A. Sackville, 'Thomas William Cramp, Almoner: the Forgotten Man in a Female Profession', *British Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 19, 1989. Cramp's records are located in the British Association of Social Workers Collection - Institute of Medical Social Workers (IMSW) MSS.378/IMSW/A1/7/1, Metropolitan Hospital, Almoner Reports, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick (MRCUW).

delivery and training bodies, almoning required the support of influential men to finance and sustain the profession's development.

The dominance of women in English social work also occurred in Australia. Women were instrumental in the formation of Australian social work and dominated service provision for more than three decades. Many women, reflecting the British tradition, came from high socio-economic backgrounds and had been educated at elite Protestant schools. Whether this status motivated or supported women's entry into social work is an interesting question in the context of general and Catholic social work. In a recent critique of Australian social work historiography, Philip Mendes supports Laurie O'Brien and Cynthia Turner's earlier research that Melbourne's almoner movement 'attracted a cohesive group of women from a particular upper middle-class private school background'.<sup>4</sup>

Another common characteristic of English and Australian almoning was the influence of professional men. Medical practitioners, in particular, aided the profession's development in Melbourne, whereas in Sydney a broader support base included Protestant clerics, community leaders and academics. In America medical practitioners also played an instrumental role in the development of medical social work. This chapter also examines the obstacles experienced by early hospital almoners and social workers in the government and community sectors. These difficulties provide an important context to the experiences of Australian Catholic social workers.

## **2.2 International social work origins**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century almoning and the development of social work in the 20<sup>th</sup> century had their roots 1,000 years earlier. By 950 AD hospitality for travellers was divided between officers for the rich (*custos hospitum*) and the poor (the almoner), which

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<sup>4</sup> P. Mendes, 'The history of social work in Australia: A critical literature review',

led to the formation of hospitals, such as St Thomas' London in 1106.<sup>5</sup> In 1139 the Order of St John of Jerusalem was specifically founded to provide medical care for the poor.<sup>6</sup> These hospitals operated primarily as almshouses for indigent people.<sup>7</sup> Each hospital had at least one almoner who reviewed admissions and discharges of the poor. Prior to the reign of King Henry VIII the titles hospital governor and almoner were synonymous, and at St Thomas', hospital governors elected three almoners for the 'daily oversight of the house'.<sup>8</sup> At St Bartholomew's Hospital four of the original twelve governors appointed in 1546 were designated as almoners and entrusted to discharge and admit equal numbers of poor, provide alms to necessitous patients leaving hospital<sup>9</sup>, and 'to keep an inventory of the utensils of the house, to see that the service of bread, meat and drink was delivered to the patients... provide wood, coal and other necessities'.<sup>10</sup>

A dissatisfaction with the quality of hospitals led to the development of private almshouses or *maisons dieu*, which had a matron's house and a chapel attached.<sup>11</sup> Admission to almshouses was influenced by benefactors, often differentiated by their occupations, such as haberdashers, drapers, weavers, knitters, ironmongers

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*Australian Social Work*, Vol. 58, No. 2, June 2005, p. 123. L. O'Brien and C. Turner, *Establishing Medical Social Work in Victoria* (Melbourne, School of Social Work, University of Melbourne, 1979).

<sup>5</sup> N. Manning, 'New Risks, New Welfare: Signposts for Social Policy', *Social Policy and Administration*, Vol. 33, Iss.4, December 1999 p. 339. St Thomas' was named after St Thomas the Martyr who was canonised in 1173. F.G. Parsons, *The History of St Thomas Hospital*, Volume 1 (London, Methuen and Co, 1932), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> D. Bethune, 'An historical survey of almoner work in Victoria', 1946, p 2. Accession No 1185, History of Social Work and Social Work Education file, c 1933-1977, Royal Melbourne Hospital Archives (RMHA).

<sup>7</sup> A.E. Hake, *Suffering London* (London, The Scientific Press, 1892).

<sup>8</sup> Parsons, *The History*, pp: 175-176.

<sup>9</sup> N.J.M. Kerling, 'Administration', in V.C. Medvei and J.L. Thornton (eds.), *The Royal Hospital of Saint Bartholomew, 1123-1973* (London, 1974), p. 26.

<sup>10</sup> N. Moore, *The History of St Bartholomew's Hospital* Volume 2 (London, C Arthur Pearson, 1918), pp: 168-169.

<sup>11</sup> C. Rawcliffe, *The Hospitals of Medieval Norwich*, Studies in East Anglian History No 2 (Norwich, Centre of East Anglian Studies, University of East Anglia, 1995), p. 146.

and goldsmiths and by Church of England parishes and their parish committees.<sup>12</sup> A revival in the quality of English hospitals in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century led some of them to combine with almshouses.<sup>13</sup>

In the Catholic sector, the church remained committed to the poor, despite it having fewer almshouses in post-Reformation England. The Council of Trent (1546-68) reaffirmed the bishops' duty to oversee relief measures for the poor.<sup>14</sup> In 1708, tradesmen, mechanics and 'well known Catholic families' established an Aged Poor Society to provide pensions for poor people aged over 60.<sup>15</sup> By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century the society opened almshouses at Brooking Green, Hammersmith.<sup>16</sup> Individual Catholics also founded almshouses, such as F.R. Wegg-Prosser at Belmont, Herefordshire in 1852. Richard Sibthorpe, who the historian Bailey described as an 'intermittent Catholic', established St Anne's Bedeshouse, Lincoln.<sup>17</sup> Catholic charities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century also began to recognise the benefits of integrating services for the poor, and brought together their orphan schools and asylums.<sup>18</sup>

The early seeds of professional social work stem from the COS, now known as the Family Welfare Association.<sup>19</sup> Founded as the Society for Organising Charitable

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<sup>12</sup> C. Berridge, *The Almshouses of London* (Southampton, Ashford Press Publication, 1987). W.K. Jordan, *The Charities of London, 1480-1660* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1960), p. 139.

<sup>13</sup> A. G. Stephenson, 'Historical Review of Australian Hospitals', *The Hospital Magazine*, Vol. 2, No. 10, August 1949, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> M. Boylan, 'The Diocesan Bureau of Social Welfare: Its nature and scope in Catholic Charities' in M. Boylan (ed.), *The Catholic Church and Social Welfare: A Symposium* (New York, Greenwich Book Publishers, 1961), p. 43.

<sup>15</sup> Aged Poor Society, *1937 Report*, 4439/02/008a, London Metropolitan Archives (LMA)

<sup>16</sup> J.J.L. Ratton, *Historic Records of the Aged Poor Society: An Abstract* (London, 1915), pp 6, 9; 4439/02/009, LMA.

<sup>17</sup> B. Bailey, *Almshouses* (London, Robert Hale, 1988), p. 170.

<sup>18</sup> *The Associated Catholic Charities* (London, J. Brooker, 1815), Special Collections, National Library of Australia (NLA).

<sup>19</sup> M. Roofe, *A Hundred Years of Family Welfare: A Study of the Family Welfare*

Relief and Repressing Mendicity in London in 1869, the COS succeeded several smaller charitable bodies, which comprised middle aged women who acted as 'friendly visitors' to the poor.<sup>20</sup> The COS was supported by 'influential patrons who included prominent Protestant churchmen, businessmen, and men and women who were eminent in the University teaching of economic and philosophy'.<sup>21</sup>

England's late 19<sup>th</sup> century expanding economy generated considerable poverty. The English Poor Law provided material relief, such as food and clothing, but it proved insufficient.<sup>22</sup> Anne Cummins, an early English almoner, remarked that the 'seeds of injustice, greed and oppression' developed despite improved economic conditions.<sup>23</sup> Another commentator, Hagerty, says social work arose in direct proportion to the inefficiency of the 'regular social institutions such as the family, church and the state' to function perfectly and to look after increasing numbers of poor community members.<sup>24</sup>

### 2.2.1 'Women of education and refinement'

A core aspect of the COS was to investigate applicants. Increasing poverty, in its view, reflected a person's failings and the 'tender-hearted givers of alms who gave no thought to the plight or character of the poor who begged for help' exacerbated

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*Association (formerly the Charity Welfare Organisation), 1869-1969* (London, Michael Joseph, 1972) p. 23; B. Watkin, *Documents on Health and Social Sciences 1834 to the present day* (London, Methuen and Co, 1975), p. 411.

<sup>20</sup> D. Brieland, 'Social Work Practice: History and Evolution' *Encyclopaedia of Social Work*, Nineteenth edition (Washington, DC, National Association of Social Workers, 1995), p. 2247.

<sup>21</sup> L. O'Brien and C. Turner, Searching for a professional identity in health and welfare: The English conception of medical social work as hospital almonry and its translation into Victoria as a new occupation for women in the 1930s, 1978, Lesley Campbell-Brown Papers, ML MSS 5570/3 Item 3, p. 11, MLNSW.

<sup>22</sup> B.N. Rodgers and J. Dixon, *Portrait of Social Work* (Nuffield Provincial Hospital Trust, 1960) pp: 17-18.

<sup>23</sup> A. Cummins, 'The Selection and Training of Hospital Almoners, 1932' reprinted as document No 1 in O'Brien and Turner, *Establishing Medical Social Work*, p. 43.

<sup>24</sup> J.E. Hagerty, *The Training of Social Workers* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1931), p. 31.

the problem.<sup>25</sup> In London 'numerous, diverse, un-coordinated and competitive' private charities had grown and provide an 'immediate, short-run solution', which many saw as contributing to pauperism.<sup>26</sup> The COS encouraged co-operation between charitable relief agencies, encouraged an expansion in the number of 'friendly visitors' and established a central register of cases aimed at distinguishing between the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving'.<sup>27</sup>

Historiography has often credited Sir Charles Loch as the founding father of social work.<sup>28</sup> However, Dr W Fairlie Clarke, a member of the inaugural COS medical committee, in a report, 'The Uses and Abuses of Hospitals', suggested almoners could ease demands on overcrowded outpatients' departments.<sup>29</sup> In 1875 after Loch was appointed COS secretary he adopted Fairlie's idea and became a leading advocate of what he termed 'scientific charity' and the employment of trained hospital almoners. Loch commented that many people attending outpatients' departments in voluntary hospitals needed support other than medical assistance.<sup>30</sup> In an address to London's Metropolitan Provident Association in 1885, Loch recommended that hospitals appoint a 'charitable assessor or co-operator... well instructed in forms of relief other than medical... to represent those interests which are other than medical'.<sup>31</sup> In 1888 a COS petition, supported by the medical profession, called on the House of Lords to appoint a Select Committee or

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<sup>25</sup> K.A. Kendall, *Social Work Education: Its Origins in Europe* (Council on Social Work Education, Alexandria, VA, 2000), pp: 26-27.

<sup>26</sup> K. Woodruffe, *From Charity to Social Work in England and the United States* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966) pp: 25-26.

<sup>27</sup> *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia*. Volume X111 (Washington, DC, Catholic University of America, 1967) p. 362.

<sup>28</sup> For example, I.F. Beck, *The Almoner, A Brief Account of Medical Social Service* (London, Council of the Institute of Almoners, ca 1948).

<sup>29</sup> B.E. Astbury, 'Hospital Almoning: How it all Began', *The Almoner*, Vol. 1, No. 6, September 1948, p. 114.

<sup>30</sup> A. Macintyre, 'The Hospital Almoner', *Medical Journal of Australia*, 8 February 1930, p. 184.

<sup>31</sup> Hospital Almoners Association, *The Hospital Almoner* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1932), p. 34.



Royal Commission to investigate the charitable sector and in particular the role of medical charities.<sup>32</sup> At a subsequent 1890 Committee of Inquiry into overcrowded hospitals, Loch argued that almoners could assist other hospital staff by assessing the needs of patients seeking medical assistance.<sup>33</sup> While the House of Lords did not endorse Loch's ideas, he continued to argue for 'medical charity... [to] act in alliance with general charity'.<sup>34</sup>

Some London hospitals in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century responded to over-crowding by appointing 'inquiry officers', predominantly men, who sought 'satisfactory replies' as to patients' earnings, employment and number of dependents.<sup>35</sup> Loch criticised hospitals such as Kings College, St Bartholomew's, and London,<sup>36</sup> for this 'sort of preventative mendicity check' and argued for a more professional service that provided a 'true solution to hospital abuse' and which promoted close co-operation between hospitals and community charities.<sup>37</sup>

Loch's persistence resulted in the appointment of an almoner to the outpatients department at London's Royal Free Hospital in January 1895.<sup>38</sup> Mary Stewart, COS district secretary of St Pancras North, was seconded to the hospital for three

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<sup>32</sup> Roofs, *A Hundred Years of Family Welfare*, p. 104.

<sup>33</sup> J. Langdon-Davies, *Westminster Hospital: Two Centuries of Voluntary Service, 1719-1948* (London, John Murray, 1952), pp: 242-243.

<sup>34</sup> C.S. Loch, 'The Confusion in Medical Charities', *Nineteenth Century*, August 1892, p.19; B. Abel-Smith, *The Hospitals: 1800-1948: A Study in Social Administration in England and Wales* (London, Heinemann, 1964) p. 174.

<sup>35</sup> E. W. Morris, *A History of the London Hospital* (London, Edward Arnold and Co, 1926) p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Joint University Council for Social Studies, *Training for Hospital Social Work* (Westminster, London, P.S King and Son, 1926), p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> *Second Report, Metropolitan Hospitals, Session 1890-91*, Evidence given by Mr C.S. Loch before the Select Committee of the House of Lords and Metropolitan Hospitals, MSS.378/IMSW/AI/1/1, MRCUW. Cited in O'Brien and Turner, *Establishing Medical Social Work*, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> E. Moberly Bell, *The Story of Hospital Almoners: The Birth of a Profession* (London, Faber and Faber, 1961).

months.<sup>39</sup> In this new role she 'had to combat the prejudices of a section of the Board', as well as some doctors who feared her work would reduce the number of patients.<sup>40</sup> After the trial period Stewart returned to the COS, while the hospital considered whether to make the position permanent. When two doctors and the COS agreed to fund the position equally, Stewart's role was confirmed.<sup>41</sup> Historian Jean Snelling says Stewart commenced the world's first professional social services department in a 'dingy, dark and unventilated corner'.<sup>42</sup> The 'Lady Almoner' was expected to 'prevent abuse... refer patients already in receipt of parish relief... to the Poor Law Authority... [and] to recommend suitable persons to join the Provident Dispensaries'.<sup>43</sup>

Over time Stewart modified her role to provide a broader range of social services to patients, thereby acting more in the spirit that Loch had envisaged. Stewart also became responsible for the hospital's Samaritan Fund, which volunteers had operated since its creation in 1852.<sup>44</sup> The fund offered patients 'necessary nourishment or a change of air' in the three months after discharge from hospital.<sup>45</sup>

Loch's choice of the term almoner reflected both historic and contemporary British traditions. The house committee at London's St Luke's Hospital, for instance, acted collectively as almoners and admitted necessitous patients at no charge up until

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<sup>39</sup> The COS introduced paid district secretaries in 1883. See R. Chambers, 'Professionalism in Social Work' Appendix 11 in B. Wootton, *Social Science and Social Pathology* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1959), p. 356.

<sup>40</sup> W. Locket, 'A Glance at the past', *The Almoner*, Vol. 1, No. 6, September 1948, p. 116.

<sup>41</sup> The two doctors were also members of the COS. See C. L. Mowat, *The Charity Organisation Society, 1869-1913: Its Ideas and Work* (London, Methuen and Co 1961), p. 78. The COS contribution came from the Moccatta Trust Fund. Joint University Council for Social Studies, *Training*, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> J. Snelling, 'Medical Social Work' in C. Morris (ed.), *Social Case-Work in Great Britain* (New York, Whiteside, 1955).

<sup>43</sup> Hospital Almoners Association, *The Hospital Almoner*, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> C. Morris, 'Hospital Almoning', *St Thomas Hospital Gazette* ca 1938, located within the Institute of Medical Social Workers Archives (IMSWA) A17/5/4, MSS.389, MRCUW.

<sup>45</sup> L. A. Aimdon (ed.), *An Illustrated history of the Royal Free Hospital* (London, Special Trustees for the Royal Free Hospital 1996) p. 552.

the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>46</sup> Almoners provided ‘the kind of discrimination that is so very much needed’ in distinguishing between the deserving and the undeserving. Loch lamented that the traditional system of almoners ‘has fallen out of use partly because of the large numbers of patients’.<sup>47</sup> The inclusion of ‘lady’ distinguished gender and functions.<sup>48</sup>

In some respects lady almoners followed in traditional almoners’ footsteps in the assessment of patients’ financial needs.<sup>49</sup> Where they differed was that doctors usually referred patients to a lady almoner.<sup>50</sup> Over the next decade seven other London hospitals appointed women of ‘education and refinement’ as lady almoners.<sup>51</sup> Authorities gave them the priority of reducing abuse of public facilities. Yet, surveys of these hospitals in the late 1890s and early 1900s did not uphold the perception of widespread patient abuse. The following chart shows the small percentage of cases that almoners at London hospitals determined to be without merit.

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<sup>46</sup> D. Manchee, *Textbook for Almoners* (London, Bailliere, 1947), p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Second Report Metropolitan Hospitals Session 1890-91*, C.S. Loch, ‘The Confusion’.

<sup>48</sup> Morris, ‘Hospital Almoning’.

<sup>49</sup> Hospital Almoners Association, *The Hospital Almoner*, p. 36.

<sup>50</sup> C.S. Loch, quoted in I.M. Cannon, *Social Work in Hospitals: a contribution to progressive medicine* (New York, 1917) p. 10.

<sup>51</sup> L.A. Maule, ‘The Hospital Almoner’, *Our Hospitals and Charities*, Vol. 1, No. 8,

**Table 2.1:**

**Patients assessed by almoners at various London Hospitals<sup>52</sup>**

<b>Hospital</b>	<b>Number assessed</b>	<b>Refused Treatment (%)</b>
Charing Cross	6,288	1
St George's	4,378	4
St Mary's	12,562	3
Royal Free	6,728	2

In 1897 the governors of Guys Hospital commented:

The Outpatients Department was seldom improperly taken advantage of, and, with few exceptions, the people attending this department were fit recipients for charitable aid.<sup>53</sup>

The focus on assessing patients' financial situation led to community protests.<sup>54</sup> At Swansea and also Belfast, Northern Ireland, communities objected to patients being 'interrogated'.<sup>55</sup> Westminster Hospital, for example, restricted the almoner's role during World War One to the 'distasteful' task of assessing people's ability to pay for medical services. In these circumstances Langdon-Davies concluded that almoners 'became more an inspector of taxes than a Good Samaritan'.<sup>56</sup> In 1911,

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September 1904, MSS.378/IMSW/A1/A:39, MRCUW.

<sup>52</sup> One London almoner who assessed 2,037 cases between July and December 1902 judged only 118 (five per cent) who could pay for treatment; most did not return to the hospital after being told that full enquiry would be made. IMSW, MSS.378/IMSW/A1/4, COS Correspondence re Hospital Almoners, 1902-03. At St George's Hospital, London, Edith Mudd, after investigating applicants for hospital treatment, said 'I think therefore about four per cent may be regarded as unsuitable for medical treatment. St George's Hospital London Almoner Reports & Correspondence, Almoner's Report, St George's Hospital, 6 January 1901, IMSW, MSS.378/IMSW/A1/4, MRCUW.

<sup>53</sup> Extract from hospital reports (Guys, Charing Cross, London, Middlesex, Royal Free, St Mary's) re enquiry (ca 1897), IMSW, MSS.378/IMSW/A1/1:4, MRCUW.

<sup>54</sup> In 1903, for example, members of the Saturday Fund complained to the governors of St George's Hospital that the almoner applied a means test.

<sup>55</sup> F.F. Cartwright, *A Social History of Medicine* (New York, Longman, 1977), p. 164.

<sup>56</sup> Langdon-Davies, *Westminster Hospital*, p. 243.

St Thomas' reported that about 10 per cent of patients were 'undeserving', as shown in the following table.

**Table 2.2:**  
**Main categories of patients visiting**  
**St Thomas' Casualty Department, 1910-11<sup>57</sup>**

Category	Medical cases	Surgical cases
	%	%
Passed	65.5	72
Dismissed: able to		
pay privately	9.4	11
Referred to Provident		
Medical Dispensaries	8.4	5
Warned to bring Doctor's		
Card on next attendance	6.6	2
Referred to Poor Law	2	5
Referred back to other Hosp.	1	-
Sent by private drs (without		
Cards or letters	1	-

Assessing patients' financial circumstances – rather than direct patient support and advocacy – became a characteristic of British almoning for several decades.<sup>58</sup> In Granshaw's assessment 'most almoners were employed to turn away apparently better-off patients'.<sup>59</sup> In 1923 the problem of overdue patient fees at Bethlem

<sup>57</sup> St Thomas Hospital, *Lady Almoner's Report March 1910-1911*, St Thomas Hospital Box 12, University of Melbourne Archives (UMA).

<sup>58</sup> Abel-Smith, *The Hospitals*, pp: 174-175.

<sup>59</sup> L. Granshaw, *St Mark's Hospital London: A Social History of a Specialist Hospital* (London 1985), p. 413.

Hospital, a specialist mental health facility, led to the appointment of a lady almoner with this objective as well as to investigate new patients' ability to afford fees.<sup>60</sup>

The 1905 appointment of Anne Cummins to St Thomas' Hospital would prove important to developments in Australia.<sup>61</sup> Cummins, as will later be discussed, would be instrumental in negotiating the appointment of the first British almoner to an Australian hospital. Her role at St Thomas' was to develop:

A complete system of medical social work, touching all patients and not a selected few... functioning as an ancillary service to the medical, nursing and administrative services, and also closely linked with the work of state and voluntary agencies in the outside world.<sup>62</sup>

Initially, some medical staff and governors were sceptical of almoning and in this 'hostile' environment Cummins operated discretely, entering wards with visitors, rather than as a staff member.<sup>63</sup> By the late 1920s St Thomas' had become London's major centre for training social workers, influenced by Cummins' leadership and preparedness to respond to community needs, such as developing clinics in the areas of child welfare, tuberculosis and venereal disease.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless an overriding focus on 'preventing abuse' impeded the growth of medical social work at London hospitals such as St Thomas'.<sup>65</sup> Beck says the almoner profession had a 'slow and sometimes uncertain growth' which was not aided by the decision of many hospital authorities to pursue the joint aims of

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<sup>60</sup> J. Andrews, A. Briggs, R. Porter, P. Tucker and K. Waddington, *The History of Bethlem* (London, Routledge, 1997) p. 601.

<sup>61</sup> Anne Cummins, the daughter of an Anglican clergyman. M. Cummins, *The Selection and Training*.

<sup>62</sup> Saint Thomas' Hospital, Social Work Department: Reports and Statistics, H01/ST/J/02/001, LMA.

<sup>63</sup> W.M. Hume, 'Miss Anne Cummins' *The Almoner*, Vol. 1, No. 1, May 1948, p. 26. *The Times* (Obituary) Miss A.E. Cummins, 17 February 1936.

<sup>64</sup> C. Graves, *The Story of St Thomas's, 1106-1947* (London, Faber and Faber, 1947).

<sup>65</sup> F. K. Prochaska, *Philanthropy in the Hospitals of London*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992) p. 55.

detection and solicitation of funds.<sup>66</sup> The 1930 Public Assistance Order which formalised relieving officers to assess the admission of patients resulted in many local hospital authorities appointing almoners.<sup>67</sup> An English almoner reported in 1937 that her work had three main aspects – administration, co-operation with the medical staff and co-operation with external charitable bodies. Administratively, she was involved in the ‘patient’s obligation to the hospital – his duty to contribute, in one way or another, towards its upkeep’.<sup>68</sup> Such contributions included both fees and donations. Almoners at St Thomas’, for example, collected £15,000 from inpatients and £4,000 from outpatients, which represented 22 per cent and 3 per cent respectively of the total costs of patient care in 1937.<sup>69</sup> It would not be until the 1948 British National Health Service Act that medical social workers were no longer responsible for assessing patients’ financial situation.<sup>70</sup>

Social work in America derived from London’s COS but developed its own paradigm in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. American cities in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were also characterised by social dislocation, rising unemployment and a growth of shanty districts.<sup>71</sup> In 1877 the first American COS branch was established at Buffalo. In 1898, Mary Richmond, secretary of the Baltimore COS, established a six weeks social work training course.<sup>72</sup> Richmond is acknowledged as the

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<sup>66</sup> Beck, *The Almoner*, p. 49.

<sup>67</sup> J.D. Allan Gray, *The Central Middlesex Hospital* (London, Pitman Medical Publishing Company 1963).

<sup>68</sup> J.M. Douglas, ‘Specialised Social Service: How Almoners work at Provincial Hospitals in England’, *The Hospital Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 7, September 1937, p. 14.

<sup>69</sup> Parsons, *History*.

<sup>70</sup> I.F. Beck, ‘New Trends in Almoning’, *The Almoner*, Vol. 4, No. 12, March 1952, p. 533.

<sup>71</sup> K. Van Wormer, *Social Welfare: A World View* (Chicago, Nelson Hall, 1997), p. 160.  
A. Wood, ‘The Origins of Family Work: The Theory and Practice of Family Social Work since 1880’, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1996, p. 20.

<sup>72</sup> R.J. Lawrence, *Professional Social Work in Australia*, (Canberra, Australian National University Press, (Sydney, 1965) p. 7.

'foremother of America professional social work'.<sup>73</sup> America's first social service department was established at Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston by Dr Richard Cabot, a Harvard professor of medicine, in 1905. Two factors motivated Cabot: firstly, he 'needed information' about the patient', such as their home, work, family and concerns, which may have impacted on their health; secondly, there was a need for a 'home visitor or social worker to complete my diagnosis through more study of the patient's malady or economic situation [and] to carry out my treatment'.<sup>74</sup> Ida Cannon, one of the first trained social workers, became a leading advocate for the profession, replicating Cummins' role in London.<sup>75</sup> Psychiatric social work was an early American specialisation and in 1906 the first 'after care agent', a graduate of the New York School of Philanthropy (later the New York School of Social Work) was employed by the State Charities Board.<sup>76</sup>

Early British and American social work practices had similarities and dissimilarities. The medical profession influenced the employment of North America's first almoners, who were called medical social workers, a reflection of their broader and holistic approach to patient care. American social work also attracted university-trained staff and also nurses who were seeking 'more independent status'.<sup>77</sup> British training, by contrast, revolved around hospitals and was less associated with professional family welfare agencies.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> An insightful collection of Richmond's extensive writings is Mary E Richmond, *The Long View: Papers and Addresses* (New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1930).

<sup>74</sup> R.C. Cabot, *Social Work: Essays on the meeting-ground of doctor and social worker* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1919), pp: xxii-xxv.

<sup>75</sup> M. Cannon, 'Fifty Years of Medical Progress: Medicine as a Social Instrument: Medical Social Service', *The Almoner*, Vol. 4, No. 12, March 1952. I.E. Morris and Sr Raymonda, 'The Catholic contribution to Medical Social Work' in Boylan (ed.), *The Catholic Church*, p. 43.

<sup>76</sup> L.M. French, *Psychiatric Social Work* (New York, The Commonwealth Fund, 1940) p. 35.

<sup>77</sup> Brieland, 'Social Work Practice', p. 2249.

<sup>78</sup> R.J. Lawrence, 'Australian Social Work in Historical, International and Social Welfare Context', in P.J. Boas and J. Crawley (eds.), *Social Work in Australia*, (Melbourne, Australian International Press Publications, 1976) p. 2.



A similarity between England and America was the attraction of Protestant women in the formative years of social work, many of whom came from affluent backgrounds. The path for Catholic women interested in philanthropy lay more in religious orders or in charity groups attached to Catholic parishes.

### 2.3 Australian origins

This section briefly outlines the foundations of Australian social work and different historical interpretations of it. Australian social work is usually placed in the context of the lead role taken by the Melbourne Charity Organisation Society (COS) and Royal Melbourne Hospital (RMH).<sup>79</sup> Historians, such as Lawrence, O'Brien and Turner, and Martin, emphasise that Australian social work evolved in the late 1920s when rising unemployment and poverty led to new approaches by the COS to minimise family and societal dislocation.<sup>80</sup> Lawrence's seminal account of Australian social work marks the profession's defining movement as the combined influence of the COS and other 'powerful', predominantly medical, men in securing the appointment of hospital almoners.<sup>81</sup> In Lawrence's assessment 'the only field of social work that showed any real development in the 1930s in Australia was hospital social work in Melbourne, and to a lesser extent in Sydney'.<sup>82</sup>

Richard Kennedy acknowledges the COS influence, arguing 'professional social work in Australia originated primarily in theory and in practice from the first decade

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<sup>79</sup> K. Ogilvie, *Twenty Years A' Growing*, MS. p. 1, Katharine Ogilvie Personal Papers, P104, Series 2, University of Sydney Archives (USA) p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> Lawrence, *Professional Social Work in Australia*. R. Kennedy, *Charity Warfare: the Charity Organisation Society in Colonial Melbourne* (Melbourne, Hyland House, 1985).

<sup>81</sup> To claim [COS] heritage for Australian social work in particular in the Australian welfare system generally is problematic... Australia was not a fertile breeding ground for the charity organisation movement', according to Tony McMahon in 'Australian Catholics and the development of professional social services in Australia', in P. Starkey, (ed.), *Occasional Papers from the conference on 400 years of charity* (London, Voluntary Action History Society, 2003, <http://www.ivr.org.uk/vahsconferencepapers>)

<sup>82</sup> Lawrence, *Professional Social Work in Australia*, p. 7.

of the COS in colonial Melbourne'.<sup>83</sup> Operating along similar lines to its British parent, the COS mobilised charity workers and organised relief on a systematic basis. By the mid 1890s casework practices and consideration of 'the needs of a family as whole', he argues, were in place.<sup>84</sup> COS volunteers investigated cases to protect the community against imposition, to provide assistance to people in real need, and to educate public opinion about the nature of poor relief.<sup>85</sup> Social work academics, such as Peter Camilleri, question Kennedy's view that the COS was the forerunner to Australian professional social work, claiming it employed mainly untrained male investigating officers.<sup>86</sup> Botsman is one of several commentators who argue that social work was a 'late invention', probably synonymous with post war nation building and later community development.<sup>87</sup> McDonald and Jones, acknowledge that 'while its origins can be traced back to at least the 1920s, Australian social work as an occupation with a clearly defined identity and organisation is essentially a post World War Two phenomenon'.<sup>88</sup>

### 2.3.1 Melbourne, medicine and men

A close relationship between powerful sections of the medical community in England and Victoria, has given rise to the interpretation that social work was 'transplanted' from England.<sup>89</sup> Jean Snelling, for example, suggests that Cummins

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<sup>83</sup> R. Kennedy, *Charity Welfare*; R. Kennedy, 'Charity and Ideology in Colonial Victoria' in R. Kennedy, (ed.), *Australian Welfare History: Critical Essays* (Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1982), p. 72.

<sup>84</sup> Kennedy, *Charity Warfare*: p. 239.

<sup>85</sup> *Reminiscences of the Charity Organisation Society of Melbourne, 1887 to 1908* (Charity Organisation Society, Melbourne, n.d.), p. 3. MLNSW.

<sup>86</sup> P. Camilleri, *Reconstructing Social Work: exploring social work through text and talk* (Aldershot, Hants, England, Avebury, ca. 1996), pp: 19-20.

<sup>87</sup> P. Botsman, 'Social Work in the Marketplace 1', Paper for the 'Social Work in the Marketplace Conference, Australian Association of Social Workers, Western Australia, State Conference, 21 August 2001', [www.whitlam.org/resources/socialwork1./html](http://www.whitlam.org/resources/socialwork1./html)

<sup>88</sup> C. McDonald and A. Jones, 'Reconstructing and re-conceptualising social work: the emerging milieu', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 53, No. 3, September 2000.

<sup>89</sup> Melbourne's Dr Newman Morris, for example, attended meetings of the Institute of Hospital Almoners (London) in 1932, See IMSW, MSS.378/IMSW/A15//1:43

was 'largely responsible for its inauguration as professional service in Australia' with the appointment of Agnes Macintyre as Australia's first trained almoner in 1928.<sup>90</sup> Similarities between London and Melbourne included the dominant role of the medical profession and their mentoring of female service providers, many of whom had middle and upper class backgrounds.

Several factors led RMH to introduce almoning. According to Moberley Bell the origins of Australian medical social work did 'not satisfy any theory of charitable administration' but arose from the concerns by a nurse, Constance Kent Hughes, about a young patient, who had not kept an appointment. She visited the girl, the eldest of eight at her home, and discovered the mother's death the previous night had caused the missed appointment. This case prompted Kent Hughes' involvement in social service.<sup>91</sup> In 1921 Kent Hughes became secretary of the hospital's Red Cross Auxiliary to support patients' non-medical needs.<sup>92</sup> In addition to Kent Hughes' role, increasing interest in the social needs of patients occurred following visits by RMH board members, Arthur Baillieu, George Fairburn and Joseph Levi to London hospitals in the mid 1920s.<sup>93</sup> In 1924 RMH took the first step towards almoning with the renaming of the auxiliary service as the Social Service Bureau.<sup>94</sup> After a visit to St Thomas' in 1927, Kent Hughes returned home determined to establish a professional Almoner Department.<sup>95</sup> Laurie O'Brien, however, has questioned whether Kent Hughes' 'searchlight vision penetrating a

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<sup>90</sup> Snelling, 'Medical Social Work'.

<sup>91</sup> Cited in Moberley Bell, *The Story of Hospital Almoners*, pp: 129-130.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*, p. 131. The year of the Auxiliary's formation is suggested as 1922 by A. Gregory, *The Ever Open Door: A History of the Royal Melbourne Hospital 1848-1998* (South Melbourne, Hyland House, 1998) p. 188; and, 1924 by K.S. Inglis, *Hospital and Community: A History of Royal Melbourne Hospital* (Carlton, Victoria, Melbourne University Press, 1958), p. 86. The word 'Royal' was added to the hospital's title in 1935.

<sup>93</sup> Bethune, 'How the Hospital Almoner works', p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> O'Brien and Turner, *Establishing Medical Social Work*, p. 2.

<sup>95</sup> *The Origin and Development of Medical Social Work in Victoria* (Victorian Institute of Hospital Almoners, July 1950), p. 2.

dark land does not do justice' to others, such as Mrs Norman Brookes<sup>96</sup>, Mr Love (secretary of the Victorian Charities Board) and Drs Newman Morris, Georgina Sweet and Ethel Osborne.<sup>97</sup>

With no local trained almoner, RMH turned to St Thomas' London and offered to pay the travelling expenses and first year's salary for an applicant.<sup>98</sup> Agnes Macintyre, who had 12 years almoner experience at the Northcote Trust, attached to St Thomas', was selected and came to Melbourne in mid 1929 to establish the RMH almoner department.<sup>99</sup> She also became the inaugural director of the Victorian Institute of [Hospital]<sup>100</sup> Almoners (VIHA) in 1930. Macintyre's challenges included securing the support of voluntary ladies' groups and selling the importance and role of an almoner's department to medical, nursing and administration staff. Ogilvie says Macintyre began 'in the traditional way of almoners in a ghastly office which was a converted bathroom'.<sup>101</sup> This new profession experienced resistance from several quarters, including some nurses. In 1931, for example, the RMH matron sought to replace almoners with nurses.<sup>102</sup>

British influence on early social work in Melbourne continued through the appointments of Joan Brett, the first almoner appointed by a public authority at the

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<sup>96</sup> Brooks was the daughter of a solicitor, Harry Emmerton. Her career included many positions on hospitals and charitable organisations, including Queen Victoria Hospital. See 'Australian Women Biographical Entry' [www.womenaustralia.info/biogs](http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs)

<sup>97</sup> L. O'Brien, 'The History of Medical Social Work – E Moberley Bell's Contribution', *Australian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 16, No. 3, November 1963, p. 67.

<sup>98</sup> *The Argus*, 13 March 1929, p. 18.

<sup>99</sup> N. Parker, 'Early Social Work in Retrospect', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 32, No. 4, December 1979, p. 13; L. O'Brien and C. Turner, 'Hospital Almoning: Portrait of the First Decade', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 32, No. 4, December 1979, p. 17.

<sup>100</sup> Originally established as the VIA. In 1933 Hospital was added to the title, i.e. Victorian Institute of Hospital Administrators (VIHA), which, according to Lawrence, signified a 'narrower scope than that envisaged by its founders'. See Lawrence, *Professional Social Work in Australia*, p. 36.

<sup>101</sup> Ogilvie, *Twenty Years*, p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> Macintyre to Newman Morris, 3 June 1931, Document 12.5 in O'Brien and Turner, *Establishing Medical Social Work*, p. 109.

General Hospital at Kingston-on-Thames, and Helen Rees.<sup>103</sup> Influential Melbourne physicians, such as John Newman Morris, VIHA president, 1931-50, were strong advocates of almoning. McIntyre praised Morris for supporting the 'rapid growth' of medical social work in Victoria.<sup>104</sup> By 1935, eight Victorian hospitals employed almoners, including the Children's Hospital, whose almoner was financed by the Junior Red Cross.<sup>105</sup>

Almoning in Victoria reflected the British tradition of detecting unworthy patients. At Geelong Hospital, for example, a 'major duty' of the inaugural almoner appointed in 1934 was to 'means test all applicants seeking admission as public patients, to ensure they were financially eligible, and to set the level of fees to be charged in each case'.<sup>106</sup> Yet, by World War Two, almoning was focusing more on proper convalescent care to prevent patients' relapsing and encouraging their long term independence.<sup>107</sup>

To a large extent the origins of social work in Victoria has been assumed to be the national story.<sup>108</sup> Although not providing supporting evidence, Dorothy Bethune, an early Melbourne almoner, says the 'results of [almoner] experiments' at RMH led to the extension of medical social work to other states.<sup>109</sup> O'Brien and Turner assert that Victorian medical social work became the 'elite field of social work practice' prior to the 1950s.<sup>110</sup> Similarly, Margaret Alston and Jennifer McKinnon credit the

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<sup>103</sup> Moberley Bell, *The Story of Hospital Almoners*, p. 122.

<sup>104</sup> A.S. Macintyre, 'Obituary: Sir John Newman Morris' *The Almoner*, Vol. 9, No. 12, March 1957, p 435.

<sup>105</sup> K. Ogilvie, Medical Social Work in Australia, August 1955, MS. Lesley Campbell-Brown Personal Papers, 1924-1992, MSS 5570, Box 4, MLNSW.

<sup>106</sup> J.E. McClelland, *From Infirmary to Hospital: Geelong and District Hospital* (Kitchener Memorial, The Geelong Hospital, 1996) p. 120.

<sup>107</sup> A. Hyslop, *Sovereign Remedies: A History of Ballarat Base Hospital 1850s to 1890s* (North Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1989), p. 315.

<sup>108</sup> Moberley Bell, *The Story of Hospital Almoners*, p. 129.

<sup>109</sup> D. Bethune, 'How the Hospital Almoner works', *The Hospital Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 2, April 1937, p. 29.

medical profession with instigating formal training of social workers through the formation of the VIHA and its Sydney equivalent, established in 1936.<sup>111</sup> Michael Foley says that the development of social work theory was shaped by the medical setting in which practice took place'.<sup>112</sup>

### 2.3.2 Characteristics of early social workers

Macintyre is regarded as laying the foundations for medical social work in Victoria and being Australia's first social worker.<sup>113</sup> But developments occurred in other states. In a history of Sydney's Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPA), Doherty outlines a case for RPA establishing 'the first Social Services Department in Australia' in 1916.<sup>114</sup> Mary Adelaide Buisson, a nurse, had travelled to Boston, United States, where she studied medical social work. On returning to Sydney she established a social service department at RPA in 1916, which marked a step away from voluntary auxiliaries. Buisson was assisted by another nurse, Nina Robinson, who took over the department's management a year later and managed the department for another 15 years.<sup>115</sup> While the social service department initially focused on inpatients, its founders recorded a broad vision whose main objective was:

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<sup>110</sup> O'Brien and Turner, *Establishing Medical Social Work*, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup> M. Alston and J. McKinnon (eds.), *Social Work: Fields of Practice* (Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2001), p. xviii. D. Manchee, *Textbook for Almoners*, p. 10.

<sup>112</sup> M. Foley, 'From Almoner to Advocate: The Intelligent Parasitism of Social Work', *Australian Social Work*, 1979.

<sup>113</sup> S. Greig Smith, 'Three Ladies from England' *Forum*, Vol. 2, 1954.

<sup>114</sup> M. K. Doherty, *The Life and Times of Royal Prince Alfred Hospital* (NSW College of Nursing, Glebe, NSW, 1996) p. 320. The case for NSW is more certain – RPA operated the only 'systematic' welfare department until the mid 1930s. See Board of Social Study and Training, *Directory of Social Agencies*, (Sydney, 1933), p. 77.

<sup>115</sup> Robinson said she became department manager in July 1916. Robinson to Buring 21 January 1929, G7.71/1/Series 6 NSW BSST Records, University of Sydney Archives (USA).

to assist the patient... after he or she has left the hospital or to take such steps as will enable patients to receive treatment which would otherwise not be possible, and to be a sort of link between the Hospital and other charitable organisations.<sup>116</sup>

Buisson and Robinson visited patients and their families and advised on matters such as diet and hygiene, arranged for after care where patients did not have family members to support them, secured temporary accommodation for children whose mothers were hospitalised, arranged aid for destitute families, and secured surgical appliances and spectacles.<sup>117</sup> Perhaps because of Buisson's American experience, she did not interview patients to detect fraud.<sup>118</sup>

RPA offered the only social service department in NSW for a decade. In 1926 Royal North Shore Hospital appointed a former clerical officer, Alice Whiting to develop a department focused for the 'emotional and general needs of patients'. Together with Robinson and several other women with employment experience in social service, Whiting commenced studying for the certificate in social service through the newly formed NSW Board of Social Study and Training (BSST) in 1929.<sup>119</sup> While the combined pressures of work and study led Robinson to discontinue studying, Whiting became one of the first graduates of the NSW BSST.<sup>120</sup>

Unlike Victoria a broader coalition of supporters, including the National Council of Women (NCW), Sydney University academics, psychologists, the Presbyterian, Anglican and Salvation Army churches, and non-government agencies supported

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<sup>116</sup> Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, *Annual Report for the 18 months ended June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1918* p. 32.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>118</sup> There is nothing recorded in the Royal Prince Alfred *Annual Reports*.

<sup>119</sup> The records of the NSW BSST are housed in several locations, principally at the USA and MLNSW.

<sup>120</sup> Robinson to Buring, 18 March 1930, BSST G 71 Box 6 Series 8 Correspondence USA. Whiting did not hold an almoner's certificate and while she was recognised by the NSW Institute of Almoners, the Victorian Institute required more convincing. Stella Davies proposed that the Whiting be officially recognised by the Victorian (and hence national body of almoners) 'as she has been employed in hospital social services for 12

social work in NSW.<sup>121</sup> A St Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP) representative joined the BSST in 1934, followed by Catholic legal reformer, Mrs Mary Tenison Woods, who lectured on the legal aspects of social work.<sup>122</sup>

Helen Marchant has made a convincing case for positioning the origins of the BSST within a 'feminist perspective'. She has argued that early social work in Sydney arose from a 'web of affiliations' among women's groups, especially the NCW and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), which in the 1920s sponsored training programs on social work principles. The YWCA also advocated the needs and rights of women workers, including young girls in industry. Independent of the medical community, these organisations articulated a range of social issues, including child welfare, and assisted the setting up of the BSST in 1928 and the NSW Social Workers' Association (SWA) in 1932.<sup>123</sup> Marchant recognises the role of female welfare officers employed by Sydney-based companies such as Farmers and Anthony Hordern in the 1920s.<sup>124</sup> Quaker, Margaret Sturge Watts made an impressive contribution to women's social welfare as the first welfare officer and organiser of the Women's Auxiliary of the NSW Society for Crippled Children from 1930 to 1946.<sup>125</sup>

Three prominent and 'very capable' women attached to the University of Sydney played a pivotal role: Lady MacCallum, wife of the University's Chancellor, Miss

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years and has made visits of observation to England and America'. Davies to Alison Player, 30 August 1937, Australian Association of Almoners, Box MLK 03472, MLNSW.

<sup>121</sup> Board of Social Study and Training, Sydney, NSW, *Biennial Report to Year Ended 1930*, MLNSW.

<sup>122</sup> The SVdP representative was Mr F. D. Byrne, see Board of Social Study and Training, Sydney, *1934 Annual Report*, MLNSW; For Tenison Woods see A. O'Brien, 'Mary Tenison Woods' in H. Radi (ed.), *200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology* (Marrickville, NSW Women's Redress Press, 1988).

<sup>123</sup> H. Marchant, 'A feminist perspective on the development of the social work profession in New South Wales', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 38, No. 1, March 1985.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*, pp: 38-39.

<sup>125</sup> K. Coles and J. Donaldson, *The History of the NSW Society for Crippled Children* (Sydney, 1976), pp: 10, 34-46; *Australian Dictionary of Biography 1940-1980*, pp: 507-08.



Isobel Fidler, the university's first adviser on women's studies and Mrs Mildred Muscio, joined Dr A.H. Martin, a psychologist, in forming the Australian Institute of Industrial Psychology (AIIP) in association with the NSW Chamber of Manufacturers in 1927. These women encouraged senior academic staff from education, economics, anthropology, psychology and public administration disciplines to develop a certificate course in social studies. Muscio, NSW NCW president, 1927-38, strongly supported professional training for social workers, and at the 1934 inquiry into the NSW Child Welfare Department emphasised the importance of welfare workers being properly trained.<sup>126</sup>

Another important – but less well known – person in the development of social work training in Sydney was Blanka Buring, the NCW secretary for health.<sup>127</sup> Buring, became the BSST foundation honorary secretary in July 1928 and articulated a vision for professionalising medical social work:

Medical social work... definitely disassociates itself from the dispensing of charity in the ordinarily accepted sense of the word; nor is it necessarily connected with charity.<sup>128</sup>

A year later at her own expense Buring studied social work in England and America.<sup>129</sup> Upon her return in September 1930, Buring experienced resistance from voluntary charitable organisations when she sought field placement for students. She advised the BSST executive committee that 'many institutions had been diffident in allowing students to do practical work in their organisations.'<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> M. Foley and G. Fulloon, 'Mildred Muscio' in H. Radi (ed.), *200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology* (Marrickville NSW, Women's Redress Press, 1988)

<sup>127</sup> Marchant, 'A feminist perspective'. In an unpublished account of the development of social work in NSW, Norma Parker said she was unable to discuss Buring's contribution because 'very little seems to be known by anyone. She must have been connected with some agency'. N. Parker, A Talk given on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1984 to the Alumni of the School of Social Work, University of New South Wales, p. 5, UNSWA.

<sup>128</sup> B. Buring, 'Medical Social Service', *The Australian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy*, Vol. V1, No. 1, March 1928, p. 35.

<sup>129</sup> NSW BSST, Minutes of First Meeting, 7 March 1928, G.71/Series 1, NSW BSST Records, USA.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*, 15 September 1930.

Buring left the BSST in March 1931. The BSST minutes do not record a reason for her unexpected departure, though make mention of an exchange of letters between the parties.<sup>131</sup> Upon her death in 1958, Buring bequeathed an annual student prize in psychology to the University of Sydney.<sup>132</sup>

Other early developments in Sydney centred upon Rachel Forster Hospital (RFH) for women and children, where the executive secretary, Katharine Ogilvie, an Arts graduate of Sydney University, pushed for the development of a Social Service Department 'capable of investigating the case of each patient and giving assistance and advice where necessary'.<sup>133</sup> Ogilvie's interest was cemented following a 1930 study of 40 hospitals in Britain and North America, including St Thomas' London. In 1931 RFH and the BSST held discussions to establish a specialised two year medical social work course, but a lack of funds as well as lukewarm support from some board members saw the matter lapse.<sup>134</sup> Impressed by her experience overseas and the chance meeting on her return voyage with Westralian, Norma Parker, who had successfully completed a Master of Arts and a Diploma in Social Service at Washington's National Catholic School of Social Service, Ogilvie was determined to push ahead.<sup>135</sup> The two would become close friends and professional colleagues, forging an influential partnership in the development of social work education and professional development in NSW. Parker, for example, credited Ogilvie with providing 'the leadership in the beginnings of our [NSW] social work history'.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> The minutes of the general meeting record a vote of thanks for Buring's contribution; the minutes of the executive committee are sparse on the matter, nor is there any mention in the correspondence files of the NSW BSST, held at MLNSW.

<sup>132</sup> Annual prize awarded on the recommendation of the Head of the Department of Psychology to the student enrolled in Arts who demonstrates the greatest proficiency in Psychology 301 and 302.

<sup>133</sup> L. Campbell-Brown, *Rachel Forster Hospital: Katharine Ogilvie Department of Social Work*, 1972, Lesley Campbell-Brown Personal Papers, 1924-1992, MSS 5570, Box 2, MLNSW.

<sup>134</sup> Parker, A Talk at UNSW, pp: 6-7.

<sup>135</sup> See Chapters Three and Four for detailed assessment of Parker's pioneering work.

In 1933 a RFH board member, Frances Gillespie, provided the major funding for Ogilvie's second trip to England, where she studied almoning at St Thomas' Hospital.<sup>137</sup> After graduating Ogilvie returned home and established RFH's almoner department in January 1934, a position which she directed for eight years.<sup>138</sup> She was also instrumental in convincing Sydney Hospital to establish a similar department in mid 1936.<sup>139</sup> Ogilvie said that the importance of almoners working with medical staff was to 'encourage people to recognise and develop the sources of strength and self-reliance which lie within themselves'.<sup>140</sup> She added:

The medical social worker is not a distributor of largesse nor a purveyor of nostrums, nor is she is a clinical psychologist... she is a specialist in the art of helping the patient to recognise problems in social condition which may need the services of other, non-medical specialists for their solution.<sup>141</sup>

Outside NSW nurses also featured prominently in the development of medical social services before the advent of formal social work training. In 1924 Royal Adelaide Hospital formed a hospital auxiliary 'to provide patients with comforts which could not ordinarily be expected in a public institution'.<sup>142</sup> In 1927 Royal Perth Hospital (RPH) appointed New-Zealand born Aimee Eakins (1890-1966) to establish a social service department.<sup>143</sup> Eakins, a trained nurse, had been

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<sup>136</sup> Parker, A Talk at UNSW, p. 4.

<sup>137</sup> Rachel Forster Hospital for Women and Children *Almoner Department: Report for the Six Months ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 1934*; L. Cohen, *Rachel Forster Hospital: The First Fifty Years* (Sydney,) p. 23.

<sup>138</sup> L. R. McCarthy, 'Uncommon Practices: Medical Women in NSW, 1885-1939', PhD Thesis, UNSW, April 2001, p. 201.

<sup>139</sup> Sydney Hospital, *Annual Report 1936*, 'Medical Superintendent's Report, acknowledges the role played by the NSW Hospital Commission in supporting the establishment of an almoner department.

<sup>140</sup> K. Ogilvie, 'Medico-Social Services in Repatriation Hospitals, ca 1947', MSS 5770/4 Item 3, MLNSW.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> J.E. Hughes, *A History of the Royal Adelaide Hospital*, Second (revised) edition (Netley, South Australia, Griffin Press, 1982), p. 82.

<sup>143</sup> *Western Australian Biographical Register, 1788-1939*, Vol. 1, 1987, p. 199.

recognised for her work at Salonika in Greece during World War One.<sup>144</sup> Her mandate at RPH was not dissimilar to the work of professional almoners nearly a decade later to 'look after patients whose slender financial resources hindered them from obtaining supplementary treatment, surgical appliances or proper diet'.<sup>145</sup> The introduction of almoner training in Melbourne enabled Eakins to move east to study for the VIHA's certificate.<sup>146</sup> She returned to Perth to 'lay down the foundations for a qualified [social service]', a position she held until 1949.<sup>147</sup> A nursing background was also considered essential at Fremantle Hospital, which in 1934 advertised for a triple certificate nurse to establish a social services department.<sup>148</sup> The tradition of a nurse performing the social worker's role continued until the appointment of Fremantle Hospital's first specialised social worker in 1962.<sup>149</sup>

As in the other states, women dominated applications for the NSW BSST course. The course's selection process included an academic examination conducted by the AIIP, which was affiliated with the National Institute of Industrial Psychology in London.<sup>150</sup> Not all BSST applicants were approved for study.<sup>151</sup> In 1934, for

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<sup>144</sup> 'Pioneer Social Worker Dies', *West Australian*, 10 February 1966, p. 39; Royal Perth Hospital *Newsheet*, 11 February 1966.

<sup>145</sup> G.C. Bolton and P. Joske, *History of Royal Perth Hospital* (Perth, University of Western Australia Press, 1982) p. 117.

<sup>146</sup> The Western Australian Lotteries Commission made a grant that enabled Eakin to study in Melbourne.

<sup>147</sup> Bolton and Joske, *History of Royal Perth Hospital*, p. 117; 'Hospital pays tribute to an Almoner', *The West Australian*, 8 October 1958, p. 10.

<sup>148</sup> P. Garrick and C. Jeffrey, *Fremantle Hospital: A Social History to 1987* (Fremantle, Western Australia, Fremantle Hospital, 1987) p. 217.

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>150</sup> A. P. Elkin, 'The emergence of Psychology, Anthropology and Education' in *One Hundred Years of the Faculty of Arts: A series of Commemorative lectures given in the Great Hall University of Sydney during April and May 1952* (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1952) p. 34.

<sup>151</sup> For example Helen Halse-Rogers became a major figure in NSW social welfare policy, being the secretary of the NSW Council of Social Service for more than three decades. The AIIP assessed Halse-Rogers was 'not an academic type... we consider it

example, the AIIP approved only 60 per cent of applicants for the NSW BSST course.<sup>152</sup>

An examination of the demographics of early social workers provides a base for positioning early Catholic social workers. The NSW BSST extant papers - the main primary source for this analysis - include the files of approximately 70 women who applied between 1929 and 1938. One dominant characteristic is the educational background of the majority of applicants entering social work: from elite Protestant schools, such as Presbyterian Ladies' Colleges at Bathurst, Croydon and Pymble, Methodist Ladies' Colleges at Burwood and Bowral, Abbotsleigh and Frensham, and the Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School at Darlinghurst and Redlands.

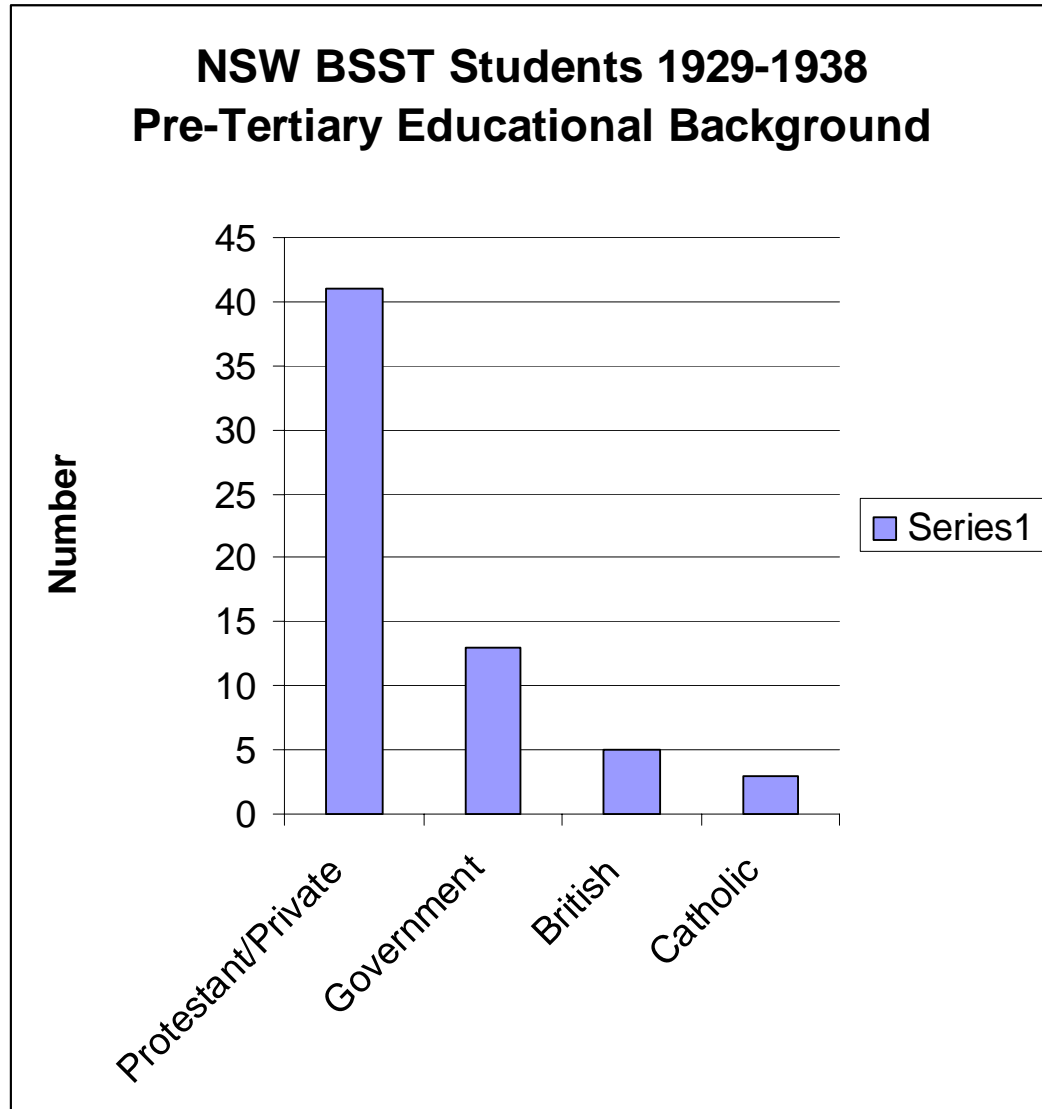
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would be well for her not to undergo the Board's course, involving the University lecturers and examination... [she could] take up nursing, kindergarten teaching or position as a social secretary'. AIIP Report, 12 March 1937, USA. Halse-Rogers undertook the course and graduated with a Certificate in Social Studies in 1939.

<sup>152</sup>

Australian Institute of Industrial Psychology, *Seventh Annual Report, 1933-34*, p. 5.

**TABLE 2.3: NSW BSST: EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUNDS OF APPLICANTS,  
1929-38**



These statistics for NSW mirror research undertaken in Victoria and South Australia; in the latter case, Elaine Martin concluded ‘the majority had attended girls’ private Protestant schools with a minority from either Catholic schools or state high schools’.<sup>153</sup> However, not all these women were of sufficient ‘independent means’ to study without a regular income in the 1930s.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>153</sup>

E.M.W. Wilson, ‘Gender, Demand and Domain: The Social Work Profession in South

Further analysis identifies five Catholic women who studied social work in the 1930s. These women have been identified from cross-referencing BSST students' files, school and clergy references, voluntary and professional employment in social work, and the membership records of the NSW Institute of Almoners and the Catholic Trained Social Workers Association (CTSWA).<sup>155</sup> The Catholics were Bridget Barlow, an Irish-born hostel matron; Phyllis Bland, a bank manager's daughter; Elvira Lyons, a businesswoman and Imelda Burfitt, from Murrundi in rural NSW; and Mrs Vivienne Cliffe.<sup>156</sup> Only Lyons and Cliffe continued their social work career after studying. Given the Catholic Church's opposition to its children attending non-Catholic schools, it is unlikely that many women attending Protestant schools were Catholics. An exception appears to be Lyons, who attended Brisbane Grammar School. Lyons completed the Certificate in Social Studies at the BSST in 1935. In 1939 she was member of the CTSWA and was a founder of Sydney's Catholic Welfare Bureau in 1941.

The extant BSST papers also confirm what Helen Halse-Rogers remarked as a considerable gap in candidates' ages. Women entering social studies training in the 1930s were either in their 40s with employment experience in children's welfare-related activities, women who had recently left school, or young Arts

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Australia 1935-1980', PhD, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne, 1990, p. 69.

<sup>154</sup> For example, Ruby Alice Pocklington, a graduate of PLC Bathurst, had been secretary of the YWCA for 15 years when she applied to do the course in 1935. Her motive for undertaking the course was 'I have very little money of my own and this course is really an act of faith'; Pocklington, 1935, Application to study BSST Course, 1935, Student Records, NSW BSST, SUA.

<sup>155</sup> In 1937, Norma Parker commented that if she accepted an almoner position at Wellington Hospital, New Zealand she would 'be leaving the field clear' to non-Catholic social workers at a time when there were no Catholic qualified social workers in Sydney, except Eileen Davidson. See Parker to Sr Hedwige, 9 April 1937, A522.4/401, Sisters of Charity Congregational Archives (RSCA), Sydney.

<sup>156</sup> Barlow, born in 1898, was one of the oldest women to study social work in the 1930s. She has been educated by the Loreto Sisters in Co Wexford Ireland and at the time of studying her occupation was recorded as matron of a hostel; Bland, from Goulburn, NSW, had completed her leaving certificate at St Scholastic's Catholic School, Glebe; Burfitt was one of the youngest students, and after her marriage in 1942, is not recorded as returning to social work. Cliffe, BA (1923) and Dip Ed. (1924), Sydney University.

graduates.<sup>157</sup> Early graduates became involved in the development of social work in NSW. Dorothy Poate, a volunteer almoner at RPA's Orthopaedic Department, for example, became inaugural president of the NSW Social Workers Association in 1932, the first professional social workers' organisation in Australia (except the more narrowly focused VIHA).<sup>158</sup> In 1934, on the recommendation of Professor Dawson, Poate, who was also secretary of the Council of Mental Hygiene, was appointed social worker in the RPA psychiatry department.<sup>159</sup> Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children sponsored Stella Davies to undertake further study in England. She returned to Sydney in 1934 as the first qualified almoner.<sup>160</sup>

### 2.3.3 Professionalisation of non-government organisations

This section briefly reviews the transition to professional welfare activities by other Australian Christian churches and non-government organisations. Particular emphasis is given to the Anglican Church, which established diocesan bureaux not dissimilar to those which developed in the Catholic sector.

Prior to the advent of specialised courses in social studies, churches had primary responsibility for providing charitable services. Most activities occurred at a parish level through organisations such as the SVdP and the Anglican Home Mission Society (HMS) or in homes for 'neglected children' or 'rescue societies'.<sup>161</sup> The Anglican Church's welfare initiatives were reflected in Archdeacon Hammond's work at St Barnabas, Broadway, and Christ Church's welfare programs. During the 1930s the church developed a chaplaincy and support service at the Children's

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<sup>157</sup> B. Marshall, Interview with Helen Halse-Rogers, 1993, State Library of New South Wales, CYMLOH 159/1-3, MLNSW.

<sup>158</sup> Poate's background typified many of the early social workers. She was educated at St Catherine's Church of England School at Waverley, Sydney.

<sup>159</sup> Board of Social Study and Training (NSW), *Annual Report 1933*, p. 8.

<sup>160</sup> Lawrence, *Professional Social Work in Australia*, p. 37.

<sup>161</sup> In Victoria for example, the Presbyterian, Methodist and Church of England operated homes for neglected children. In the Catholic sector, the SVdP established a Boys Brigade. See *A Guide to Charity and Philanthropic Work of Victoria* (Melbourne, Charity Organisation Society, 1912).



Court. In their history of the Sydney Anglican Church, Judd and Cable, say church welfare services were 'perceived as unnecessary because Christians were already very active in philanthropic societies'.<sup>162</sup> The HMS appeared to operate on the premise that the 'mere provision of clergy and lay evangelists resolved the problem of the poor'.<sup>163</sup> From the 1930s Sydney's Anglican Diocese began to integrate its children's homes into the HMS.<sup>164</sup> The HMS also established a Family Welfare Centre at Petersham in 1942, but a social worker was not appointed until 1945.<sup>165</sup> By 1950 the Family Service Bureau had evolved into Church of England Social Services.<sup>166</sup>

In Adelaide, an Anglican Synod member, Phyllis David, proposed a family bureau to meet the needs of 'Church of England families' and to co-ordinate church homes. A diocesan Social Welfare Committee was established in the early 1940s, but its progress was slow until Joy McClelland's appointment as 'executive secretary' of a diocesan bureau in 1947.<sup>167</sup> In 1960 McClelland was appointed diocesan director of Social Welfare.

Churches responded to the 1930s Great Depression by increasing material aid to the unemployed. The depression's debilitating effects led to new or enhanced social services, such as unemployment relief funds operated by the Methodist

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<sup>162</sup> S. Judd and K. Cable, *Sydney Anglicans: A history of the Diocese* (Sydney, Anglican Information Office, 2000, reprint) p. 195.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>164</sup> W.J. Lomas, 'The relationship between Evangelism and Welfare Services', Master of Arts, University of Sydney, 1991, p. 74.

<sup>165</sup> For Hammond Social Services see discussion in B. Kay, *Anglicanism in Australia: A History* (Carlton, Victoria, Melbourne University Press, 2002).

<sup>166</sup> R. Morse (ed.), *Anglicans celebrate 150 Years: The Sequicentennary of the Sydney Diocese, 1847-1997* (Sydney, 1997) p. 26; Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*, pp: 230-32.

<sup>167</sup> E. Bleby, 'Signs of the Kingdom: The Work of Church Social Welfare Agencies in South Australia, 1960-1980', Masters of Arts in Social Administration Thesis, Flinders University, 1982, pp: 45, 139; B. Dickey, *Giving a Hand: A History of Anglicare South Australia since 1860* (Adelaide, Hyde Park Press, 2003), p. 135.

Church and the SVdP.<sup>168</sup> Training bodies in social studies provided a pool of talented social welfare workers, though few were Catholics. The transition to professional welfare for many churches paralleled the Catholic experience – reliance on clerical endorsement, female dominance of service provision and inadequate funding.

The Methodist Church in Melbourne responded to the ‘perils facing the community’ by creating a Social Service Department in 1935.<sup>169</sup> The title ‘social service’ was a misnomer as it focused on ‘a healthy social conscience in the community on matters of sexual purity, gambling and temperance’.<sup>170</sup> In Adelaide, the Methodists appointed a social work graduate in 1948, but the position lasted only a few months. It was not until the 1960s that it again appointed a trained social worker.<sup>171</sup> In Sydney, after Reverend Winston O’Reilly completed social studies at Sydney University in 1948, he joined Methodist Social Services.<sup>172</sup>

In the children’s welfare arena the Presbyterian-operated Burnside Home at Parramatta in Sydney appointed an investigations officer in 1926 to assess the financial circumstances of parents wishing to place their children at Burnside. While this officer could report on the applicants’ social issues, they focused on financial matters.<sup>173</sup> In 1946 a clerk was appointed as a welfare officer to maintain contact with children after they left Burnside and to assist them in their post-

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<sup>168</sup> D. Wright and E.G. Clancy, *The Methodists: A History of Methodism in NSW* (St Leonard’s NSW, Allen and Unwin, 1993) pp: 178-179; D. J. Gleeson, ‘Catholic Charity during the 1930s Great Depression’, *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 73, No. 1, January 1996.

<sup>169</sup> C. Irving Benson, *A Century of Victorian Methodism* (Melbourne, Spectator Publishing, 1935) p. 287.

<sup>170</sup> *ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>171</sup> When Rev George Martin was appointed Superintendent of the Port Adelaide Central Mission, he was completing his post-graduate studies in social work at Flinders University. See discussion, pp: 127-29 in B. Dickey and E. Martin, *Building Community: A History of Port Adelaide Central Mission* (Adelaide, The Port Adelaide Wesley Centre Inc, 1999).

<sup>172</sup> *The University of Sydney Graduates and Diploma Holders 1974* (Sydney, 1974).

<sup>173</sup> S. Keen, *Burnside: 75 years of caring* (North Parramatta, NSW, 1986) p. 63.

institutional endeavours.<sup>174</sup> But it was another two decades before Burnside appointed a professional social worker.

From the late 1930s the Presbyterian Church's social services department, staffed by a non-social work minister, offered placements for Institute of Hospital Almoners students.<sup>175</sup> In Melbourne the first social work training course began for home mission students studying at the Presbyterian Deaconess Training College. COS Secretary, Stanley Greig Smith delivered 'expert instruction in social work' in 1930 and 1931.<sup>176</sup>

The Church of Christ in Adelaide had some success with its social service bureau, perhaps because its first director was a male minister who had specialised in social work.<sup>177</sup> In 1946, the Lutheran Church established a social welfare bureau in Adelaide. In the Congregational Church, Rev Jim Downing, a trained social worker was appointed Superintendent to the church's metropolitan missions in the late 1950s.<sup>178</sup>

Apart from the churches, community organisations began to employ almoners in the late 1930s. World War Two had a strong bearing on the profession with non-government agencies employing trained social workers. Several states established Fighting Forces Family Welfare Agencies. The appointment of Vivienne Cliffe to the NSW Family Welfare Association, established by the Australian Comforts Fund in 1939, reflected an appointment outside a hospital setting.<sup>179</sup> The Red Cross, which had relied on women's auxiliaries since the 1918 influenza epidemic,

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<sup>174</sup> R. J. R. King, *In Trust for Child Care: An evaluation study of a non-government child care agency* (November 1981, Community Research Centre, University of Sydney).

<sup>175</sup> The NSW Institute of Hospital Almoners, *First Annual Report for the Year Ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 1938* (Sydney, 1938), p. 11.

<sup>176</sup> *The Other Half*, Vol. 2, No. 4, March 1930.

<sup>177</sup> *ibid.*, pp: 41-42.

<sup>178</sup> Congregational Union of NSW: Home Missions Department, *Annual Report 1959*, p. 9.

<sup>179</sup> Family Welfare Bureau Files, MSS 2733, MLNSW.

increasingly turned to social workers in the 1940s.<sup>180</sup> In 1936 the Society for Crippled Children in Victoria and its equivalent body in South Australia appointed trained almoners.<sup>181</sup> The appointment of social workers occurred more slowly. The Citizens Welfare Service of Victoria (CWSV) – previously the COS – did not appoint its first professional social worker, Len Tierney, until 1954.<sup>182</sup>

What differentiates the development of the Catholic social work sector is the American influences on two Westralian women – Norma Parker and Constance Moffit – who returned from America with post-graduate qualifications in social services in 1931 and embarked on establishing professional welfare services in the non-government sector. Chapter Three will discuss how Parker and Moffit established the Catholic Social Service Bureau – the country's first professional welfare bureau - in Melbourne (1936), followed by similar agencies in Sydney (1941) and Adelaide (1942).<sup>183</sup> The transition to professional welfare for many churches paralleled the Catholic experience, including female dominance of service provision and inadequate funding.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The material presented in this chapter shows key similarities in the early development of professional social work in England, America and Australia. Firstly, the profession was heavily feminised in these countries, attracting women from the upper strata of society or daughters of professional men, such as doctors or solicitors. In Melbourne and Adelaide the women were more likely to come from privileged backgrounds, whereas in Sydney, more social work entrants had prior

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<sup>180</sup> N. Minogue, 'The Red Cross, 1914-1975: Years of Change', *The Victorian Hospital Journal* Vol. 47, 183<sup>rd</sup> issue, February 1976.

<sup>181</sup> *The Argus*, 19 November 1936, p. 3.

<sup>182</sup> P. Anderson, *The Citizens Welfare Service of Victoria, 1887-1987: A Short History* (CWSV, 1987) p. 25.

<sup>183</sup> Parker, 'Early Social Work in Retrospect', p. 18.

experience in nursing, teaching, and welfare activities. In Australia, similar to America, but less so than England, early medical social workers often had a nursing background. In some areas it was the 'custom to consider that the training of a nurse was in itself nearly or quite sufficient to qualify for social work'.<sup>184</sup>

In both England and Australia women relied on influential male-dominated organisations, such as the COS and hospitals boards, to provide the necessary finances to enable almoning to commence. Almoners in Australian public hospitals often received support from medical and nursing staff and also usually had a committee or fundraisings auxiliary to support their endeavours.<sup>185</sup>

Australian almoners differed from their British counterparts in several ways. The English practice of almoners assessing patients' financial situation was less common in Australian hospitals, and as a result patients were less likely to be suspicious of their work. This was despite Australian training institutes promoting the detection of fraud as one role of almoners. The NSW Institute of Hospital Almoners, for example, said that an almoner could be required 'to advise upon the ability of patients to contribute towards the cost of their treatment'.<sup>186</sup> In practice, however, few Australian almoners engaged in the 'negative' task of patient financial assessments. I.F. Beck wrote in the 1940s that 'Australian almoners have from the first, firmly established their function as medical social work, and except in one of two cases, they have had no connection with the assessment of fees'.<sup>187</sup> In a 1943 submission to Federal Parliamentary Committee on Social Security, the Australian Association of Hospital Almoners advised that almoners' work had been

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<sup>184</sup> J. Newman Morris, *Social Work in Hospitals: Some American Investigations* (Victorian Institute of Almoners, 1930).

<sup>185</sup> Gregory, *The Ever Open Door*, p. 189.

<sup>186</sup> NSW IHA, *Annual Report 1942* (Sydney, 1942) p. 12.

<sup>187</sup> Beck, *The Almoner*, p. 62.

‘modified’ because ‘it has not been considered desirable that almoners’ duties should include the assessment and collection of patients’ contributions’.<sup>188</sup>

By 1950 more than twenty five Australian hospitals included almoner departments. With a few exceptions they no longer assessed patients’ ability to pay for treatment.<sup>189</sup>

The evolution of Australian almoning – which led to professional social work – has often been attributed to Melbourne’s Royal Melbourne Hospital. This chapter has outlined a case for considering the activities of social service departments, often staffed by qualified nurses, in other states. Semi-professional welfare activities began in NSW as early as 1916 at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Helen Marchant agrees that medical social workers and doctors were responsible for the social work profession’s development.<sup>190</sup> But she argues that medical social work became the ‘major thrust of professional activity’ only after women invited men to help in setting up a formal training body.<sup>191</sup>

Social work in Sydney in the inter-war period had distinct characteristics including a broader training program, avenues apart from hospitals, and less reliance on the British training model. The Sydney social work scene evolved from a broad grouping of health, community, government, church and academics, whereas in Melbourne the health sector almost exclusively dominated the profession’s early growth. A common element in Melbourne and Adelaide was that social work attracted women from affluent backgrounds. The next chapter will assess whether

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<sup>188</sup> Australian Association of Hospital Almoners, Statement Prepared for the Parliamentary Committee on Social Security concerning the function and development of the work of almoners, May 1943, p 5, AAHA Box 03471, MLNSW.

<sup>189</sup> Beck, *The Almoner*, p. 62.

<sup>190</sup> *ibid.*, p 35. Jill Roe also supports this view, *albeit* more briefly in ‘The end is where we start from: women and welfare since 1901’ in C.V. Baldock and B. Cass (eds.), *Women, Social Welfare and the State in Australia* (Studies in Society, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1988), p. 15.

<sup>191</sup> Marchant, ‘A feminist perspective’, pp: 36-37.

these demographic trends were applicable in the context of the Catholic social work sector.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### Australian origins of professional Catholic welfare

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter, building on the framework of the origins of social work, explores the evolution and meaning of Catholic social work within four contexts: firstly, the social work profession, both locally and internationally; secondly, the nature of the Catholic Church's disparate welfare services across Australia; thirdly, the impact that sectarian tensions had on the church's insular approach to caring for its own adherents in large-scale institutions; and finally, the growth of Catholic social work and its significance for both the church and wider community in Australia in the 1930s.

In the interwar period Australian Catholic social welfare faced many challenges: funding difficulties, criticism of institutional care, unprecedented demand on children's institutions, sectarianism, and the dawn of new welfare approaches. The period began, says Marion Fox, with the Catholic Church having failed to solve the serious funding problem confronting its orphanages for several decades.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the church felt institutional facilities provided the best option for 'dependent' children, given unsympathetic government practices such as the 'boarding-out' of children to non-Catholic homes, which the Catholic sector interpreted as motivated by sectarianism.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. Fox., 'The Catholic System of Orphanages in NSW 1881-1981', PhD Thesis, Faculty of Education, University of Sydney, 1994, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> Sectarianism was evident in a diverse range of circumstances and incidents, some of which involved the Catholic Archbishops of Melbourne and Sydney asserting the right of Catholics to be independent, unashamedly vicious attacks on Catholicism by extreme Protestants, and outspoken remarks by priests, such as Vincentian, Monsignor Maurice O'Reilly. See Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia* (Kensington, NSW, New South Wales University Press, 1987), and *The Catholic Church and Community* (Kensington, NSW, New South Wales University Press, 1992).



The march of sectarianism presented particular difficulties. Catholic concerns were heightened during the 1922 NSW Election, which Michael Hogan described as 'probably the high point of sectarian politics in Australian history'.<sup>3</sup> Sectarianism was not just restricted to religious or political matters. As Michael McKernan notes, 'sectarianism had ceased to be only, or predominantly, a religious matter and had become an aspect of ordinary civilian life'.<sup>4</sup> In this context the care of children became somewhat a minor battleground between bureaucrats and Catholics in the interwar period. Sectarianism, actual and perceived, in terms of Catholic 'dependent' children, was an ongoing source of tension, in Melbourne and Sydney especially. It contributed to the church operating its large welfare sector autonomous of government, and expanding the number of homes. Without state aid or a co-ordinated church approach to their operations, Catholic orphanages often set their own standards for the care and education of children.<sup>5</sup>

What were the characteristics of the new profession of social work and in what ways did social workers differ from their unpaid predecessors? Some historians, including American welfare scholar, Daniel Walkowitz, believe the daily routine of social workers in the 1930s did not differ greatly from the activities of 'Lady Bountifuls'.<sup>6</sup> This interpretation mirrors the view by contemporaries, such as Louise Odencrantz, who questioned whether there was a difference between almoners and voluntary charity workers.<sup>7</sup> Social work publications also cast a shadow of doubt over the 'profession's' legitimacy. At a time when Catholic

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<sup>3</sup> M. Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand: Religion in Australian History* (Ringwood, Victoria, Penguin, 1987), p. 190. For a detailed account of the 1922 election, and indeed, sectarian incidents from before World War One to 1924, see J. Kildea, 'Troubled Times: A History of the Catholic Federation of New South Wales, 1910-1924', PhD Thesis, School of History, University of New South Wales, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> M. McKernan, *Australian Churches at War: Attitudes and Activities of the Major Churches, 1914-1918* (Catholic Theological Faculty and Australian War Memorial, Sydney and Canberra, 1980) p. 178.

<sup>5</sup> Fox, 'The Catholic System', p. 129.

<sup>6</sup> D.J. Walkowitz, 'Women With (Out) Class; social workers in the twentieth-century United States', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 14 No. 2, 2005, p. 325.

<sup>7</sup> L.C. Odencrantz, *The Social Worker in Family, Medical and Psychiatric Social Work*

hospitals in Sydney were embarking on almoner departments, the American Social Work Year Book, for instance, commented that 'social work cannot pretend to be a fully developed or established profession'.<sup>8</sup> The same publication argued that social work displayed 'varying degrees in trends' that might resemble a profession and training organisations had evolved to oversee education, a primary aspect of gaining professional identity.<sup>9</sup> Yet social work at this time included formal academic training, certification by governing bodies and payment for labour, none of which characterised voluntary charity. While it was heading towards a separate identity, it would not be until social work developed a body of scientific knowledge that some contemporaries would regard it as having achieved professional status.<sup>10</sup>

The context in which Catholic social work had its origins was very different from other private or government agencies. Catholic lay women, with specialised American social work training, sought to initiate change. The opportunity for three young Western Australians – Norma Alice Parker, Constance Pauline Moffit<sup>11</sup> and Mary Eileen Davidson<sup>12</sup> – to undertake post-graduate studies in the United States provided the catalyst for Australian Catholic social work. North American social service training encompassed a broader academic base and casework approach than the predominantly British-based training programs adopted in Australia. The unique features of Catholic welfare will be appraised in this chapter, including its differentiation from the British model of hospital almonry 'transplanted' from St

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(New York, Harper and Brothers, 1929).

<sup>8</sup> G.F. Marcus, 'Social Work as a Profession', R.H. Kurtz, *Social Work Year Book 1937* (New York, Sage Foundation, 1937), p. 487.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 488.

<sup>10</sup> Flexner, 'Is Social Work a Profession?' cited in J. Hopps and E.B. Pinderhughes 'Profession of Social Work: Contemporary Characteristics', in *Encyclopedia of Social Work*, 18<sup>th</sup> edition, Vol. 2, 1987, p. 351.

<sup>11</sup> Spelt Moffitt or Moffat (t) in numerous contemporary and recent publications. These incorrect spellings displeased Conny. Interview with her cousin, Tony Phillips of Perth, 11 September 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Known as Eileen Davidson.

Thomas' Hospital London to Melbourne.<sup>13</sup> This examination will reassess O'Brien and Turner's thesis that Catholic social work represented a 'separate' entity in its formative years.<sup>14</sup> It will also demonstrate that apart from some small studies,<sup>15</sup> there has been a paucity of attention to Catholic social work in the literature.<sup>16</sup> Did Australian Catholic social work reflect the Church of England social work strand known as moral welfare work?<sup>17</sup> Was spirituality the dominant motivation, such as in the case of Protestant women employed as home missionaries and deaconesses in Australia between the 1920s and 1960s,<sup>18</sup> or did other forces

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<sup>13</sup> A. E. Hartshorn, 'Transported to Australia! Some thoughts on Re-reading *Professional Social Work in Australia*' by R.J. Lawrence, *Medical Social Work*, Vol. 21, No. 1, April 1968.

<sup>14</sup> O'Brien and Turner, *Searching for a Professional identity in Health and Welfare: The English conception of medical social work as Hospital Almonry and its translation into Victoria as a new occupation for women in the 1930s*, 1978, Lesley Campbell-Brown Papers, MSS 5570/3, p. 43, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney (MLNSW). A copy of this manuscript, with some annotations by the authors, was located in the O'Brien and Turner history collection of almoning, Australian Association of Hospital Almoners and Australian Association of Social Workers (Victorian Branch), Accession Number 90/24, University of Melbourne Archives (UMA). *Searching for a professional identity*, p. 43.

<sup>15</sup> F. Crawford and S. Leitmann, 'The midwifery of power? Reflections on the development of professional social work in Western Australia', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 54, No. 3, September 2001.

<sup>16</sup> For example, S. Garton, *Out of Luck: Poor Australians and Social Welfare* (North Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1990); R. van Krieken, *Children and the State: social control and the formation of Australian child welfare*, Studies in Society Series, (Sydney, Allen Unwin, 1992). Two historians who have briefly discussed the influence of trained social workers on Catholic children's institutions are S. McGrath, *These Women: Women religious in the history of Australia: The Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta 1888-1988*, (Kensington, NSW, UNSW Press, 1989), and, Fox, 'The Catholic System'.

<sup>17</sup> R. Chambers, 'Professionalism in Social Work', Appendix 2 in B. Wootton, *Social Science and Social Pathology* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1959), pp: 361-366. The Moral Welfare Workers Association (UK) was formed in 1938 and by 1945 had 360 members. It is unclear whether all members had social work training. Its records are located within are located in the British Association of Social Workers Collection - Moral Welfare Workers Association, MSS.378/MWWA/M1/1, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick (MRCUW).

<sup>18</sup> A. O'Brien, 'Spirituality and Work: Sydney Women, 1920-1960', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 102, October 2002.

represent what Norma Parker described as the necessary 'conditions' for social work?<sup>19</sup>

One notable characteristic of Catholic social work was the large impact on the profession's development by a small number of lay women and later clerics. Catholic social workers influenced – and were influenced by – the growth of professional welfare services and policies in Australia. While Catholic efforts did not occur in isolation, the sector took the initiative amongst Christian denominations in employing trained social workers, commencing at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne (SVHM) in April 1932.<sup>20</sup> The growth of social services in the healthcare and community sectors also motivated the church to enter the field.

Another theme addressed in this chapter is that Australian social work represented the first profession for Catholic lay women outside teaching and nursing, in a church dominated by clerics, and where religious orders operated most health, education and welfare activities. While the fledgling Catholic social work profession received support from some senior clergy<sup>21</sup> personnel changes, a narrow understanding of the nature of social work, and stiff opposition from traditional charities, notably the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP), led to this support stalling by the early 1940s. During the 1930s, which Laurie O'Brien and Cynthia Turner describe 'as the foundation decade of professional social work in Australia',<sup>22</sup> the depression exacerbated strains on the very large number of Catholic children's institutions sector, and they also began to experience new

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<sup>19</sup> N. Parker, Talk to the Alumni of the School of Social Work, University of New South Wales, 4 April 1984, p. 1, University of New South Wales Archives (UNSWA).

<sup>20</sup> E.M. Martin 'Themes in a history of the social work profession', *International Social Work*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 1992. Associate Professor Norma Parker says that the availability of Moffit and herself influenced the Catholic Church 'at an early date ahead of other churches and ahead of the time they [Catholics] would otherwise have been'. N. Parker, 'Early Social Work in Retrospect', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 32, No. 4, December 1979, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> J.F. McCosker, Notes on the beginning of Catholic Welfare, The Diocesan Agencies, the National Catholic Welfare Committee and the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, May 1989, MS. Centacare Sydney Archives (CSA); J. Usher, 'Centacare, 1940-1988, (Sydney, 1991) MS. CSA.

<sup>22</sup> O'Brien and Turner, Searching for a professional identity.

challenges – largely from within – to traditional approaches to child welfare. Professional social work also operated in an era when many church members remained mute in terms of the church's social welfare role. As Fr Cleary noted in a 1937 address to the Catholic Women's Social Guild in Melbourne, 'many people think that the church should play no part in the social and economic world. They think that the church's sole purpose is to form a background in giving an atmosphere to weddings and funerals'.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.2 Traditional Catholic charity

This section in discussing traditional Catholic charity in Australia prior to the 'professional' era, is an important pre-cursor to the debate about moving Catholic welfare from autonomous welfare services into a more co-ordinated and structured model. Prior to 1930 the Australian church steadfastly 'continued and expanded its provision of institutional care of orphan and destitute children'.<sup>24</sup> The 1873 NSW Royal Commission into Public Charities, which had recommended boarding-out, did not sway the church from large scale institutional care of children.<sup>25</sup> Historian Sophie McGrath says the Catholic sector did not adopt boarding-out for several reasons: an excess number of Catholic children requiring care, concerns about the suitability of (Catholic) foster parents, including insufficient funds to raise children; and the availability of religious orders to care for large numbers of children.<sup>26</sup>

Boarding-out, too, had its problems. In 1929 the conviction of a Victorian mother for the death of one of her foster children due to malnutrition, brought the practice

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<sup>23</sup> *The Advocate*, 27 April 1936, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> L. Hughes, 'Catholic and the care of destitute children in late nineteenth century New South Wales', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 51, No. 1, March 1998, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> For an example of another Christian organisation taking up new social work ideas see S. Keen, 'The Burnside Homes for Children: An overview of their social history, 1911-1980', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 48, No. 1, March 1995.

<sup>26</sup> McGrath, *These Women*, p. 84.

into question.<sup>27</sup> In 1937, C.T. Wood, the NSW Child Welfare Department (CWD) secretary, expressed concern that due processes had been ignored by some of his staff in their cavalier appointment of guardians. He cited cases of children being placed with guardians who previously had been considered 'unsatisfactory'.<sup>28</sup> However, the 'barrack-style' accommodation provided by Catholic orphanages did not guarantee the best possible standards of care. In the interwar period the Church sought to find Catholic homes for dependent children in an effort to stem the loss of Catholic children to other religions. The institutional imperative of ensuring young Catholics were not 'lost to the faith' outweighed other options such as boarding out.

The provision of material aid – food, clothing and occasionally short term shelter – to the poor was also a central aspect of Catholic welfare. A strong moralistic tone underpinned Catholic welfare services, such as in Melbourne where the SVdP, which Brian Dickey describes as a 'lay Catholic parochial male' organisation,<sup>29</sup> established the Boy's Brigade, to provide spiritual support to street children to ensure they became 'Christians and moreover practicing Catholics'.<sup>30</sup>

By 1920 the church operated more than twenty children's institutions in its two major dioceses of Sydney and Melbourne;<sup>31</sup> in NSW, Catholic facilities cared for more than half the state's total number of children in institutional care, including the state's two largest facilities, St Magdalen's Retreat and Asylum at Tempe<sup>32</sup>,

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<sup>27</sup> This case is discussed by J. Barnard and K. Twigg, *Holding On To Hope: A History of the Founding Agencies of MacKillop Family Service 1854-1997* (Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing 2004) p. 119.

<sup>28</sup> NSW Child Welfare Department, 7/75874, File 04790, State Records of New South Wales (SRNSW).

<sup>29</sup> B. Dickey, *No Charity There: A Short History of Social Welfare in Australia* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1987), p. 67.

<sup>30</sup> B. Collins, 'The SVdP Boy's Brigade', *Footprints*, Vol. 12, No. 2, December 1995, pp: 4-5.

<sup>31</sup> *Australasian Catholic Directory 1920* (Sydney, 1920).

<sup>32</sup> Of the several accounts of this institution the most analytical and comprehensive is M. Walsh, *The Good Sams: Sisters of the Good Samaritan, 1857-1969* (Mulgrave Victoria, John Garratt, 2001).

which accommodated 128 girls and 'penitent' women; and St Vincent's Boys Home, Westmead, which housed 120 boys.<sup>33</sup> By 1930, Westmead, which was promoted as 'the grandest of works', catered for 200 boys. The home epitomised a Catholic attitude towards institutionalisation, 'save one young man: make him a fearless, uncompromising Catholic and you are doing more for your country than all of the legislators'.<sup>34</sup>

The church encouraged the expansion of its homes and new facilities because it felt state institutions could not guarantee appropriate religious instruction for Catholic children. The bishops insisted that Catholic 'inmates' be segregated in state homes,<sup>35</sup> a view that upheld the earlier writings of Cardinal Moran, who had argued that State institutions 'failed' because they only taught 3Rs, whereas Catholic institutions taught 4Rs – i.e. Religion, and it came first.<sup>36</sup> The church's suspicion of Catholic children being placed in non-Catholic homes, motivated the church to establish its own facilities.<sup>37</sup>

Most Catholic institutions relied on local parish support to finance their operations. They were staffed by a small number of religious men and women, who Monsignor McCosker described as either 'dedicated religious' or members of orders deemed unsuitable for any other job.<sup>38</sup> At St Brigid's Home, Sydney, for example, two nuns cooked and cared for more than 120 children.<sup>39</sup> In the

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<sup>33</sup> NSW Statistical Register; *Australasian Catholic Directory for 1920* (Sydney, 1920).

<sup>34</sup> Rev. J. Hall, 'The spirit, purpose and achievements of the Society in a century of endeavour', in Society of St Vincent de Paul, *Centenary Celebrations and Fifth Australasian Triennial Congress*, held in Sydney from 14-21 May 1933 (Superior Council of Australasia, Sydney, 1933).

<sup>35</sup> At the Mittagong home, for example, Homes 7, 8 and 11 were reserved for Catholics divided into junior, intermediate and senior ages, Child Welfare Department, General Correspondence, 8/1754, SRNSW.

<sup>36</sup> Cited in Hall, 'The spirit, purpose and achievements', p. 87.

<sup>37</sup> M. M. Press, *Colour and Shadow: South Australian Catholics, 1906-1922* (Adelaide, Archdiocese of Adelaide, 1991) p. 109.

<sup>38</sup> McCosker, Notes on the beginning of Catholic Welfare, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

absence of a mechanism to co-ordinate Catholic institutions before the 1940s,<sup>40</sup> new facilities were set up with little forward planning as to how they would be financially sustained.

In Victoria, the Charities Board (VCB) asked Catholic facilities to house state wards, because it recognised its own 'unsatisfactory homes'.<sup>41</sup> The payment of a small subsidy for each state ward in Catholic institutions exacerbated overcrowding in homes, as well as reinforcing the institutional care. Broadmeadows Home, for example, cared for more than 250 babies, a quarter of whom were illegitimate.<sup>42</sup> In the mid 1930s 'over 300 boys' aged between 9 and 14 years crowded into Melbourne's St Vincent's Boy's Orphanage.<sup>43</sup> As Bishop E.G. Perkins noted, in retrospect, institutionalisation was a poor substitute for children who had been:

Abandoned by their parents, loved and wanted by no-one and passed from institution to institution... in the end they found themselves so often unable to cope outside the institution in a world which was so unfamiliar to them.<sup>44</sup>

Another interwar avenue of welfare support was probation support to girls and women. The needs of homeless Catholic girls and women attending Melbourne courts motivated Marie Teresa Englebrecht, a qualified St Vincent's nurse, to work with the Good Shepherd Sisters to establish a hostel and night shelter.<sup>45</sup> In 1927 Mrs Emily Dare – Englebrecht's successor - supervised children allocated by magistrates, during which time each child reported periodically to her. At the end of this period Dare made recommendations to the courts as to whether children

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<sup>40</sup> McGrath, *These Women*, p. 98.

<sup>41</sup> Charities Board, Annual Report 1926, *Victorian Parliamentary Papers*, 1926, Vol. 2, cited in Barnard and Twigg, *Holding On To Hope*, p. 112.

<sup>42</sup> E.G. Perkins, Talk on Catholic Family Welfare Bureau to the General Conference of Catholic Women's Social Guild, 20<sup>th</sup> May 1968, Perkins Collection, Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission (MDHC).

<sup>43</sup> *The Advocate*, 26 September 1935, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> Perkins, Talk on Catholic Family Welfare Bureau.

<sup>45</sup> 'Obituary: Miss M.T. Englebrecht, RIP', *The Horizon*, Vol. 7, No. 87, 2 March 1931, p. 14.



should be charged.<sup>46</sup> Dare argued against the misperception that material wants were necessarily the underlying cause for juvenile offences.<sup>47</sup> In 1929 Mary V. Lyons was appointed Catholic probation officer for the Archdiocese of Melbourne, with responsibility for taking women to hospital, arranging children's placements into institutions and purchasing necessary equipment for clients, such as chairs for people with a disability.<sup>48</sup>

In terms of responding to mass unemployment in the 1930s the Catholic Church, says historian, Fr Bruce Duncan, undertook its 'grave duty of charitable works, almsgiving and benevolence... however inadequate it was in practice'.<sup>49</sup> The SVdP provided relief to people of all creeds, though in practice most people assisted were Catholics. In addition, the SVdP created the Australian Employment Bureau to help secure employment for (Catholic) men who had been referred by their local parishes.<sup>50</sup> Material relief, social policy and preventive welfare measures during this period were dismal as successive national and state governments failed the lot of the poor.<sup>51</sup> But despite their 'sympathy and general intelligence' voluntary charity workers were not always able to respond effectively to the growth and complexity of social needs. Looking back on the 1930s, Associate Professor Norma Parker, one of Australia's first trained social workers, commented:

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<sup>46</sup> 'The Probation Officer's Work', *The Horizon*, No. 4, Vol. 44, (New Series) 1 August 1927.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Lyons to Fox, May 1929, Vicar General Files (VG), 96/3/5, MDHC.

<sup>49</sup> B. Duncan, 'Catholic Efforts to Combat Unemployment', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 81, No. 1, January 2004, p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> D.J. Gleeson, 'Catholic Charity during the 1930s Depression', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. LXXIII, No. 1, January 1996.

<sup>51</sup> Garton, *Out of Luck*, p. 123. For an account of the inadequacy of government policies see D.J. Gleeson, 'Mass Unemployment and Unemployment Relief Policies in New South Wales during the 1930s Great Depression', M Com (Hons) Economic History Thesis, University of New South Wales, 1994. Queensland was an exception because it operated an Unemployment Insurance Scheme.

Financial aid was piece-meal... one of the ways agencies adapted to make their resources go further was to tell an applicant with an economic problem that the agency would help with a monetary request if the person concerned could get part of what was needed elsewhere.<sup>52</sup>

### 3.3 'a great leakage from the church'

In Sydney and Melbourne relations between Catholic welfare operators and the CWDs were often tense. The SVdP's Sydney president expressed concern to Archbishop Kelly in 1929 that 'the faith of many of the Catholic children under the jurisdiction of the CWD is in danger'.<sup>53</sup> The SVdP accused the government of bypassing Catholics for senior CWD appointments, such as James Connelly, a 'good practical Catholic', who was overlooked in favour of Alexander Thompson who they accused of being 'a bigot and hostile to Catholic institutions'.<sup>54</sup> The society also claimed the CWD minister was a bigot.<sup>55</sup> The SVdP may have fared better had it focused on Thompson's general unsuitability for the role and his disinclination to investigate repeated allegations of physical abuse in several state-operated children's facilities. The 1934 McCulloch Inquiry concluded that NSW institutions were overcrowded and lacked quality staff and expressed concern that Thompson had not read – or implemented – recommendations arising from previous CWD reviews.<sup>56</sup> Unsurprisingly, Thompson's demise was

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<sup>52</sup> N. Parker, 'Social Work in Sydney Today', reprinted in R.J. Lawrence, *Norma Parker's Record of Service* (The Australian Association of Social Workers, The Department of Social Work, University of Sydney, The School of Social Work, University of New South Wales, 1969) p. 266.

<sup>53</sup> SVdP President to Kelly, St Vincent de Paul (SVdP) Correspondence, L2626, Sydney Archdiocesan Archives (SAA).

<sup>54</sup> Haugh to Kelly, 10 April 1929, SVdP Correspondence, L2626, SAA. Peter Quinn refers to Thompson's personal diaries and concludes he 'certainly was a member of a number of Masonic lodges'; See P. Quinn, 'That other State Aid Question: Assistance to Charitable Homes for Children', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 26, 2005, p. 41.

<sup>55</sup> Haugh to Kelly, 10 April 1929, Kelly Correspondence, T2312, SAA

<sup>56</sup> C. Picton and P. Boss, *Child Welfare in Australia : an introduction* (Sydney, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich [Australia], 1981) p. 24.

swift.<sup>57</sup> His successor, C.T. Wood, while more sympathetic to Catholic interests, also struggled with the department's culture, which led to his downfall in 1938.<sup>58</sup>

The SVdP also brought to Archbishop Gilroy's attention cases of Catholic children being 'committed to the care of the Salvation Army' despite parental requests that they be placed in Catholic homes.<sup>59</sup> Such incidents led Monsignor O'Brien to advise Gilroy that 'officers of the CWD are very antagonistic' to institutions.<sup>60</sup> Underlying this 'antagonism' was both sectarianism and philosophical 'opposition' to children's homes. Peter Quinn, whose research has confirmed these contemporary concerns, says that 'many' CWD senior officials from the 1920s to the 1960s were active freemasons.<sup>61</sup>

While CWD officials held some genuine concerns about the quality of care in Catholic institutions, their criticisms also reflected the sectarianism of the period. Sydney, in the inter-war period, experienced increasing episodes of sectarianism.<sup>62</sup> Suspicion between Catholics and Protestants, especially at government levels, had been on the rise since World War One. In the words of Michael Hogan, the nationalist Fuller Government in NSW in the early 1920s was 'not just Protestant [but] militantly Protestant and anti-Catholic'.<sup>63</sup> In 1921 Fuller withdrew the very small subsidies for Catholic institutions that had been introduced during World War One. Soon after the State member for Newcastle, Walter Skelton, made serious allegations that the Sisters of St Joseph had ill-treated several inmates at its Kincumber orphanage, which caused a mother to

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<sup>57</sup> *Report into NSW Children's Institutions, 1934, NSW Parliamentary Papers.*

<sup>58</sup> R. van Kriekan, 'State Bureaucracy and Social Science: Child Welfare in New South Wales, 1915-1940', *Labour History*, No. 58, 1989, p. 25.

<sup>59</sup> For example, C. Stuart, Hon Secretary, Probation Children's Committee to the Archbishop of Sydney's Secretary, 20 April 1936, SVdP, L2626 1.37.1, SAA.

<sup>60</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 7 June 1939, Catholic Action Correspondence, B1418, SAA.

<sup>61</sup> Quinn, 'That other State Aid Question', p. 35.

<sup>62</sup> Kildea, 'Troubled Times', especially Chapter Nine.

<sup>63</sup> Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand*, p. 193.

remove her malnourished children.<sup>64</sup> Skelton, an authorised Methodist lay preacher, generated public consternation with his allegations.<sup>65</sup> A State Children's Relief Board inquiry concluded no evidence to support Skelton's allegations of 'serious dereliction or culpable neglect' by the nuns.<sup>66</sup> An unmoved Skelton publicly challenged the findings, creating more tension, which, along with other anti-Catholic incidents propagated by the NSW Protestant Association, of which he was a 'militant' member, contributed to the Catholic Church's vigorous defence of its institutions and apparent isolationist approach to the control of its institutions.<sup>67</sup>

In this atmosphere it was not surprising that NSW bishops expressed reservations about Catholic children being housed in state institutions. At Mittagong, for instance, Kelly fought to uphold the segregation of Catholic boys from Protestants and refused requests from the CWD to separate 'work boys' from 'school boys'. Kelly rejected Wood's pledge that 'every care will be taken to ensure that the religious duties are scrupulously observed in every aspect', because the proposal involved Catholic boys being placed in a 'Protestant home... with protestant boys... and a protestant couple in charge'.<sup>68</sup> Kelly explained why Catholic children needed to be cared for in their own setting:

Spiritual life and eternal life depend fundamentally on the Faith purely divine and unalloyed. In duty to every child of the Catholic Church we strive to promote Catholic homes and schools as necessary means towards welfare, temporal and eternal.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Allegations against Mount St Joseph Orphanage, Kincumber, 1922, 7/7587, SRNSW.

<sup>65</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 7 September 1922.

<sup>66</sup> Mount St Joseph Orphanage Kincumber, Report of Inquiry, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, *Parliamentary Papers*, 7 September 1922, p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> L.E. Fredman, 'Walter Peden Joyce Skelton', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 16, 1940-1980, p 253; J. Kildea, *Tearing the Fabric: Sectarianism in Australia: 1910-1925* (Sydney, Citadel Books, 2002) p. 245.

<sup>68</sup> Wood to Kelly, 20 March 1936, Kelly Correspondence, T2312, SAA.

<sup>69</sup> Kelly to Wood, 19 August 1938, Kelly Correspondence, T2312, SAA.

The veiled threat of sectarianism made it almost impossible for Catholic (and also other) orphanages to receive state aid. As Quinn has noted successive NSW governments, including Labor administrations which had close Catholic connections, were reluctant to address government funding for children's institutions, because they feared it might reignite debate about state aid for schools.<sup>70</sup> A similar situation existed in Melbourne. Probation officer, Mary Lyons, considered government officials were unsympathetic to the church's request:<sup>71</sup>

I put up a big fight in the CWD for the Catholic child. It meant a great effort for the 'anti' treatment had been going on so long. I hope now that the Catholic child will get a fair deal.<sup>72</sup>

The 'anti' treatment referred to Lyons' belief that public officials allocated children to institutions, regardless of religion. The church felt that this policy caused Catholic children to be placed in non-Catholic homes, where they were at risk of losing their faith. Lyons' tenacity and philosophical objection to State welfare for Catholic children was reflected in her correspondence to the vicar general, Monsignor (later Bishop) Arthur Fox.<sup>73</sup> On numerous occasions Lyons reported that she had secured a 'Warrant to save a baby from the State'.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps because of the high demand for places, Lyons also insisted that only Catholic children be accepted into Catholic facilities: when a mother expressed frustration to Fox that Lyons had not placed her child, Lyons' replied that Church homes were full and doubted the child's Catholicity.<sup>75</sup> The manager of one Catholic institution said Lyons was well regarded for her unbounding 'discretion, knowledge and efficiency'.<sup>76</sup> The situation was not helped by insufficient numbers

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<sup>70</sup> Quinn, 'That other State Aid Question', p. 38

<sup>71</sup> M.V. Lyons to Fox, 20 August 1930, VG 96/3/5, MDHC.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, 31 July 1931, VG 96/3/5, MDHC.

<sup>73</sup> Catholic Probation Officer records in VG 96/3/5, MDHC.

<sup>74</sup> Statement 31 July 1931 to 15 January 1932, Catholic Probation Officer, Melbourne Archdiocese, VG 96/3/5, MDHC.

<sup>75</sup> Lyons to Fox, 8 September 1931, VG 96/3/5, MDHC.

<sup>76</sup> Brother Doyle, St Vincent de Paul Boy's Orphanage to Monsignor Lonergan, 13

of Catholic families offering to adopt children, which led *The Horizon* to comment that a 'consequence is that there is a great leakage from the Church as many Catholic children, may and do drift into non-Catholic homes'.<sup>77</sup>

Funding Catholic institutions became more difficult in the inter-war period. In 1930 Sydney's co-adjutor archbishop, Michael Sheehan, acknowledged that without state aid it was 'impossible to meet the essential charges for the maintenance of the little children in their care'.<sup>78</sup> Several institutions had potentially serious health issues. At St Anthony's Home for Infants and Children in Croydon, Sydney, the management committee described the home as being 'totally inadequate for its work', because:

we have no isolation ward, no dining space for the mothers who are compelled to use the children's dining room, and lack of lavatory and laundry accommodation; it is felt that should an epidemic occur amongst the children, the Board of Health might see fit to close the home.<sup>79</sup>

An extra wing built at St Anthony's was quickly filled, and by 1937, the home 'sheltered 33 girls-mothers and 126 children, the largest number of inmates we have ever had'.<sup>80</sup> Some 'slight additions' to Westmead increased numbers to 250.<sup>81</sup> Overcrowding at many Catholic institutions prompted suggestions to renovate and extend homes, so that 'decent accommodation' could be provided to 'deserving applicants'.<sup>82</sup>

By the mid 1930s the NSW CWB displayed more interest in non-government providers. An interest in the 'many ways in which the government can be of

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August 1933, VG 96/3/5, MDHC.

<sup>77</sup> 'Wanted: Homes for Catholic Children', *The Horizon*, No. 37, Vol. 4, (New Series) 1 January 1927, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> Sheehan to Parish Priests, May 1930, SVdP Correspondence, L2626 1.2.1, SAA.

<sup>79</sup> SVdP President to Kelly, 30 January 1955, SVdP Correspondence, L2626, SAA.

<sup>80</sup> SVdP President to Kelly, 22 June 1937, SVdP Correspondence, L2626, 1.48.1, SAA.

<sup>81</sup> Coogan to Kelly, 17 February 1938, SVdP Correspondence, L2626 1.51.1, SAA.

<sup>82</sup> *The Advocate*, 26 September 1935, p. 11.

service to the greatest cause of the welfare of the child',<sup>83</sup> led Kelly to appoint a SVdP layman with probation experience. Monsignor O'Brien later took over this role and in the 1940s joined the NSW Child Welfare Council. In other areas, such as court and hospital chaplaincies, the Church became more involved in the 1930s. Regardless of suitability or training, young priests attached to large inner-city parishes, such as Darlinghurst, were appointed chaplains to courts.<sup>84</sup>

Another aspect of Catholic welfare was its belief in providing a superior quality of service. Sydney's Waitara Foundling Home, for example, made the bold assertion that mothers had given up their children because they 'would not have faintest hope' of being able to provide the 'rearing and attention' that the Home could provide for their children. Unlike birth mothers, the home claimed self-confidently that it did not 'produce many failures'.<sup>85</sup>

### **3.4 Western Australian influences**

What were the origins of professional Catholic welfare and did they intersect with the foundations of almoning? The influences on Australian professional Catholic welfare included the unique opportunity for Australian women to study social services at the Catholic University of America (CUA), a model provided by American diocesan welfare bureaux, and general momentum towards social work in Melbourne in the 1930s. Looking back from 1968 Bishop Perkins argued that the fluid and changing nature of society:

imposed upon the Church the necessity of creating new machinery and resorting to new methods for the efficient discharge of an old duty committed to her by her Founder – that of practising the supernatural virtue of charity and bringing aid and succour to those in need of them.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Wood to Kelly, 10 December 1934, Catholic Action, B1418, SAA.

<sup>84</sup> For example, Sacred Heart Darlinghurst Parish, located adjacent to Darlinghurst Courts.

<sup>85</sup> Waitara Foundling Home, *Annual Report 1931*.

<sup>86</sup> Perkins, Talk on Catholic Family Welfare Bureau.

Yet the impetus for Australian Catholic social work did not come from the prominent cities of Melbourne or Sydney, but from Perth. Two people connected with the University of Western Australia (UWA), psychologist, Ethel Turner Stoneman, and Monsignor John Thomas McMahon, whom Professor Patrick O'Farrell described as a 'remarkable cleric of all trades', inspired the church to consider professional social work.<sup>87</sup> McMahon, distinctly Irish in culture, but exposed to professional American welfare services, had little in common with the Wesleyan, Stoneman, whose lectures stimulated third year undergraduate students, including Norma Parker and Constance Moffit. McMahon converted the women's interest into reality by securing scholarships for them, and later, for a third graduate, Eileen Davidson, to study at the National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS)<sup>88</sup> in Washington, DC. On their return to Australia these women initiated the first Catholic diocesan welfare bureaux based largely on similar agencies they had worked for in the United States.

#### 3.4.1 'No psychological experts'

Stoneman, the daughter of John Stoneman and Minnie Caroline Farmer of Perth, completed her matriculation at London University in 1911. She returned to Claremont Training College, Perth and commenced a Bachelor of Arts Degree at UWA in March 1913. Stoneman's student correspondence reflects her spirited nature and challenge towards officialdom.<sup>89</sup> She graduated from UWA in March 1916, obtaining second class honours in philosophy A & B, and English.<sup>90</sup> During World War One Stoneman moved to the United States where she completed a

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<sup>87</sup> P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, Fourth Revised Edition (Kensington, NSW, University of New South Wales Press 2000), p. 453.

<sup>88</sup> Founded as the National Catholic Service School of Women; in 1925 the name changed to the National Catholic School of Social Service.

<sup>89</sup> See for example, Stoneman's questioning of subject requirements in correspondence to several senior academics of the University of Western Australia (UWA).

<sup>90</sup> Stoneman to Vice Chancellor, UWA, Student File S10093807, University of Western Australia Archives (UWAA). Her mother died when Ethel was one and she was reared by her maternal grandmother, Lydia Farmer of Perth.



Master of Arts (A.M.<sup>91</sup>) majoring in psychology, at Leland Stanford University, California. She studied under leading American psychologist, Lewis Madison Terman<sup>92</sup>, and supervised intelligence testing of American armed services personnel.<sup>93</sup> While at Leland Stoneman commenced a PhD thesis on 'the mental state of patients under anesthetics'.<sup>94</sup> Stoneman did not complete this study and returned to Perth in August 1918.<sup>95</sup> By 1921 Stoneman was 'anxious to come into closer contact with workers in the same field' - abnormal psychology - and she applied, unsuccessfully for a grant to complete her PhD in England.<sup>96</sup>

In Perth, Stoneman combined laboratory work with lecturing in psychology and mental and moral philosophy at UWA.<sup>97</sup> In 1926 she convinced the Collier Labor Government to establish a State Psychological Clinic with herself as head. The Western Australian Psychological Clinic gained a reputation nationally and in England for its use of modern methods of psychology to assist children with a range of mental conditions.<sup>98</sup> Yet this 'model clinic' attracted opposition from some medical staff and influential academics, including one of Stoneman's former lecturers, Professor Walter Murdoch (1874-1970), head of UWA's Department of

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<sup>91</sup> American style for Masters of Arts Degree.

<sup>92</sup> Terman, 1877-1956 was a professor of psychology at Standford from 1910 until his death. See [www.indiana.edu/~intell/terman.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~intell/terman.shtml).

<sup>93</sup> E. Cocks, C. Fox, M. Brogan & M. Lee, *Under Blue Skies: The social construction of intellectual disability in Western Australia* (Centre for Disability Research and Development, Faculty of Health and Human Sciences, Edwin Cowan University, Western Australia, 1996), p. 216.

<sup>94</sup> J. W. Patterson, UWA Vice Chancellor to Perth Public Hospital, 31 October 1918, UWAA.

<sup>95</sup> Leland Stanford Junior University, Graduate Record, Stoneman, Ethel Turner, Copy held in Stoneman's Student File, S10093807, UWAA. Upon her return to Perth, UWA subsequently recognised her A.M. degree *ad eudem gradum* in March 1919. E.T. Stoneman, 'Studies of Personality', MA Thesis, University of Western Australia, 1919. She is regarded as the first person to graduate with a Masters Degree in Psychology from UWA.

<sup>96</sup> Stoneman to UWA Vice Chancellor, 7 March 1921, First Series, File 763, UWAA.

<sup>97</sup> UWA Vice-Chancellor to Stoneman, 5 March 1926, First Series, File 763, UWAA.

<sup>98</sup> *The Lancet*, 3 December 1928.

English, a columnist for *The West Australian* and a friend of McMahon.<sup>99</sup> Generally suspicious of the new science of psychology, Murdoch urged parents to be wary of terminology such as 'mental defective'.<sup>100</sup> In a history of the Australian psychology profession, William O'Neil refers to Murdoch's 'scurrilous attack' on Stoneman and argues Murdoch's following comments were directed against Stoneman:<sup>101</sup>

I beseech all parents who may be told by the alleged expert that their boy or girl is a mental defective to treat the alleged expert as more of a bad joke, and to remember that there are as, yet, no psychological experts in the world.<sup>102</sup>

Stoneman's ideas influenced the Perth Archdiocese and in particular the articulate McMahon (1893-1989), who displayed a 'great breadth of vision' in Australia.<sup>103</sup> Born in Ennis, County Clare, McMahon came from a prominent Catholic family, which had close connections with Perth's Archbishop Clune.<sup>104</sup> McMahon's uncle, Canon John McMahon, was Parish Priest of Nenagh, the capital of Tipperary North, and Vicar General of the Diocese of Killaloe.<sup>105</sup> The young McMahon

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<sup>99</sup> Walter Murdoch, for example, wrote the preface to Dr McMahon's *A Little Harvest* (Perth, Patterson Printing Press, 1944); A. Gaynor and C. Fox, 'The Birth and Death of the Clinic: Ethel Stoneman and the State Psychology Clinic 1927-1930', *Historical Refractions: Studies in Western Australian History*, Vol. 14, 1993, pp: 87-88. In correspondence Murdoch expressed to McMahon, 'Though I am, as you are aware, a heretic, I have a feeling that our fundamental differences may not be so great as it seems', 29 March 1952, J.T. McMahon Collection, Box 233, File 1, Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Perth (ARCAP).

<sup>100</sup> W. Murdoch, *Collected Essays* (Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1939) cited in A.M. Turtle and M. Orr, *The Psyching of Oz: A Pictorial History of Psychology in Australia* (Archives Committee, Australian Psychological Society, Parkville, Victoria, 1989).

<sup>101</sup> W.M. O'Neil, *A century of psychology in Australia* (Sydney, Sydney University Press, 1987), p. 43.

<sup>102</sup> Murdoch, *Collected Essays*.

<sup>103</sup> N. Parker Brown and E. Davidson, A Tribute to the memory of Monsignor John McMahon, Some reflections on his influence in the early development of Professional Social Work in Australia, 18 February 1989, MS. p. 1, CSA.

<sup>104</sup> *The Melbourne Herald*, 11 June 1925, incorrectly described McMahon as Clune's 'nephew'.

<sup>105</sup> *The Record* published articles on Canon McMahon, including 2 August 1930, p. 9, and an obituary on 20 February 1932.

graduated from All Hallows College, Dublin in 1919 and also completed a Masters of Arts with first class honours and a higher diploma in education.<sup>106</sup>

Along with many seminary classmates, McMahon migrated to Australia in 1920, and upon his arrival in Perth he immersed himself in education and pastoral activities.<sup>107</sup> In 1922 Clune appointed McMahon the archdiocesan director of Catholic Education. McMahon displayed a strong pastoral empathy and established several groups, including the Catholic Bush Mission, which provided catechism and support to children living in isolated communities in Western Australia.<sup>108</sup> McMahon also engaged with the secular community, being the first Australian priest to sit on a University Senate.<sup>109</sup> He developed a reputation, as one local newspaper reported, for an 'wide circle of friends outside his own flock and has an enviable reputation as a raconteur and scholar'.<sup>110</sup> At UWA he transformed the fairly low presence of Catholics by founding the Newman Society 'to undertake, engage and assist in Catholic Social Service work in the community'.<sup>111</sup> In its obituary of McMahon, *The Record* noted that 'if there were rumblings in the Protestant establishment at this precocious gesture they had been swept aside by Fr McMahon developing friendships with university personalities at every level'.<sup>112</sup>

Stoneman's ideas for the care of delinquent children impressed both McMahon and Clune, and in response McMahon became the official promoter for

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<sup>106</sup> *Footprints*, Vol. 6, No. 10, May 1989, p. 14.

<sup>107</sup> J.T. McMahon, *Parish and Pastor: a double diamond jubilee celebration*, (Perth, Catholic Church, 1979); J T McMahon, *The child in the Bush: religious holiday schools* (Sydney, Pellegrini, 1936). D. F Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia* (Perth, Archdiocese of Perth, 1979), pp: 202-03.

<sup>108</sup> J.T. McMahon, *The bushies' scheme in Western Australia: an attempt to face the problem of the isolated Catholic homestead* (Perth, Record Press, 1927)

<sup>109</sup> J.T. McMahon Collection, Box 237, File 4, ARCAP.

<sup>110</sup> *South Perth District News*, 19 June 1959, located in Monsignor McMahon Newspaper Clippings, Box 234, File 9, ARCAP.

<sup>111</sup> Cited in Bourke, *The History of the Catholic Church*, p. 203.

Castledare, a home dedicated for mentally deficient boys.<sup>113</sup> The home operated for only a few years before a formal review by the Christian Brothers, who had never been supportive of the project, confirmed the institution's malaise and a senior Christian brother, J.C. McCann, was critical of Stoneman's influence over the clerics:

What a pity psychology faddists and inexperienced teachers have been allowed to foist such a scheme upon the Archbishop and the Brothers! Miss Stoneham [sic] – the prime mover – was supposed to hold an important government position. His Grace and Dr McMahon placed great confidence in her.<sup>114</sup>

### **3.5 'Too much about heaven and too little about earth'**

Professional Catholic social work had its origins in America, rather than England, or predominantly Catholic Ireland. This section briefly overviews the signposts of American welfare, which are important to understand given they had a large influence on the development of Australian Catholic welfare.

From the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Catholic Church had been a major provider of welfare in the United States, especially through institutions and material aid provided by voluntary organisations. The church's preference for orphanages aroused criticism about the individual needs of children and whether initiative was stifled. One critic exclaimed that Catholic children 'are often taught too much about heaven and too little about earth'.<sup>115</sup> The church interpreted such criticisms as anti-Catholic rather than examining the substantive question as to whether institutional care was a suitable substitute to home life or foster care.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *The Record*, 16 January 1989, pp: 2-3.

<sup>113</sup> B. M. Coldrey, *The Scheme: The Christian Brothers and Childcare in Western Australia* (Argyle Pacific Publishing, Perth, 1993), pp: 56, 59.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, pp: 65-66.

<sup>115</sup> Cited in M.J. Morton, 'The Transformation of Catholic orphanages: Cleveland, 1851-1996', *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. LXXXV111, No. 1 February 2002, p. 71.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, pp: 72-73.

In late 19<sup>th</sup> century America the church focused on ways to respond to both the demands caused by industrialisation and the growth of shanty districts, and the new scientific welfare approach, being advocated by the Protestant COS, which established its first branch at Buffalo in 1877.<sup>117</sup> One such initiative was the formation of a Sociology Department at the CUA, which Hartmann-Ting in her PhD thesis, describes as indicative of the church's desire to be 'more responsive to issues in American society'.<sup>118</sup>

In 1910 America's Catholic charities came together under the National Conference of Catholic Charities (NCCC), with the objective of inspiring consistent social work standards.<sup>119</sup> While clerics created this environment for a co-ordinated approach and gave the imprimatur for diocesan welfare bureaux, starting with the Boston Catholic Charitable Bureau in 1903,<sup>120</sup> it was lay women who laid the basis for professional social work in the American church. As Katherine Kendall observed, women were also critical in the ongoing growth of social work, because 'social work was one of the few acceptable outlets for the talents and energies of educated women'.<sup>121</sup>

In 1914 Frederic Siedenburg, a Jesuit priest and academic inspired the creation of a School of Sociology at Loyola University.<sup>122</sup> Siedenburg believed the objectives of Catholic social work were self-realisation, family integrity and moral

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<sup>117</sup> K. Van Wormer, *Social Welfare: A World View* (Chicago, Nelson Hall, 1997), p. 160.

<sup>118</sup> L.E. Hartmann-Ting, 'Called to Service: the National Catholic School of Social Service and the Development of Catholic Social Work, 1900-1947', PhD Thesis, Brown University, 2003, p. 16.

<sup>119</sup> D.P. Gavin, *The National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1910-1960* (Milwaukee, 1962), p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> C. McGovern, *Services to Children in Institutions* (Washington DC, National Catholic School of Social Service, 1948)

<sup>121</sup> K. A. Kendall, *Women at the helm: Three Extraordinary Leaders* (Washington, 1989), p. 23.

<sup>122</sup> M. Boylan, *Social Welfare in the Catholic Church: Organisation and Planning* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1941) p. 202.

supremacy.<sup>123</sup> He became an important member of the National Catholic Welfare Council and the NCCC.<sup>124</sup> Cardinal Patrick Hayes of New York, an advocate for professional social work, believed it was necessary to respond to 'the changed conditions and complex problems of modern life'.<sup>125</sup> Hayes recognised the limitations of the charity model and cautioned against reliance on volunteer workers:

the chance that untrained zeal might be misguided, though lacking nothing in goodwill, is probable to a serious degree and signals of warning should be set against it. There is a multitude of problems confronting the Church today which were unknown a few generations ago. The situation calls for skilful training if the wise Catholic principle is to be worked out "Search out the cause and remove the occasion".

The role of women in American Catholic welfare evolved slowly. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the church's hierarchy excluded women from Catholic tertiary institutions, including the CUA.<sup>126</sup> Two factors contributed to the American bishops changing their attitude. Firstly, the needs of World War One service personnel and their families led to the formation of Clifton College to train female rehabilitation workers.<sup>127</sup> Secondly, the NCWC identified the need to professionally train social workers and vested responsibility with the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW). In 1919 the NCCW established the NCSSS as a specialist residential college for lay women to study social work.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Cited by Fr E.G. Perkins, A brief study of the history and philosophy of Catholic Social Work, Student Project, University of Melbourne, December 1947, Perkins Papers, MDHC, p. 9.

<sup>124</sup> *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Volume X111 (Washington, DC, CUA, 1967), p. 198.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>126</sup> Religious women, also, faced similar restrictions. A Benedictine nun admitted to CUA in late 1924 was an exception. See discussion in L.M. Cohen, 'Early efforts to admit sisters and lay women to the Catholic University of America: An introduction' in E.C. Dunn and D.A. Mohler, (eds.), *Pioneering women at the Catholic University of America*. Papers presented at a centennial symposium, November 11, 1988, (Washington DC, Catholic University of America, 1990).

<sup>127</sup> Catholic University of America, *Graduate Studies*, National Catholic School of Social Service, Vol. 86, No. 2, August 2000, p. 235.

<sup>128</sup> Boylan, *Social Welfare in the Catholic Church*, p. 205.

Originally the NCSSS served as an autonomous tertiary institution for women not permitted to attend the CUA. By specifically catering for women, Lawler says the NCSSS represented 'a radical departure from Catholic tradition'.<sup>129</sup> In 1923 the NCSSS gained accreditation from the National Association of Schools of Social Work and became formally affiliated to the CUA. Historian, Fr John O'Grady, said the 'bishops were well aware that social work was a recognized [sic] profession demanding special training, just as much as other professions'.<sup>130</sup> By the late 1920s the NCSSS had operated for ten years as a specialist residential college for women to study social services.<sup>131</sup> Its inclusion of foreign students, through a scholarship program funded by the NCCW and individual benevolent Catholic women, aimed to combat the 'fear that Protestant groups were making inroads into Catholic communities abroad through the provision of social services'.<sup>132</sup> These scholarships had a profound influence on Catholic social work development in The Philippines, China, Puerto Rico and Mexico.<sup>133</sup> Compared with Catholic social work colleges, in Chicago and New York, the NCSSS had the unparalleled advantage of the involvement of influential church leaders such as Monsignor William Kerby (1870-1936), who was regarded as the founder of 'scientific social work' in the American Church and Monsignor John Augustine Ryan, one of America's most outspoken Catholic social reformers in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> L.R. Lawler, *Full Circle: The Story of the National Catholic School of Social Service, 1918-1947* (Washington DC, CUA, 1951), p. 83.

<sup>130</sup> J. O'Grady, *Catholic Charities in the United States: History and Problems* (Washington, D.C., National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1931), p. 340.

<sup>131</sup> R.L. O'Halloran, 'Organised Catholic Laywomen: The National Council of Catholic Women, 1920-1995', PhD Thesis, CUA, 1996.

<sup>132</sup> Hartmann-Ting, 'Called to Service', p. 134.

<sup>133</sup> E. Davidson, 'The National Catholic School of Social Service' in J.T. McMahon, *Cloister, College, Campus*, (Perth, University of Western Australia Press, 1969).

<sup>134</sup> *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Vol. V111 (Washington, CUA, 1967, pp. 164-65).

In late 1926 McMahon left Perth to continue his PhD research at CUA.<sup>135</sup> He met Agnes Gertrude Regan (1869-1943) at the NCSSS and the two formed a close bond.<sup>136</sup> Regan had moved from San Francisco to Washington in 1920 to become the NCCW Executive Secretary, a role that allowed her teaching and organisational skills to be put to good use in mobilising Catholic support for the evolving NCSSS. She was also part of a women's group that lobbied for social policy reforms such as the 1921 Sheppard-Towner legislation, which formalised state aid for child and maternal health care programs.<sup>137</sup> With 'iron determination' Regan succeeded in raising the profile of social work and generating sufficient funds to erase the NCSSS debt, which had peaked at \$US350,000 during the 1920s.<sup>138</sup>

Regan arranged for McMahon to visit several American services for people with disabilities, including the renowned Vineland Training Centre in New Jersey, an institution for intellectually disabled boys.<sup>139</sup> After McMahon completed his PhD in education through the National University of Ireland (NUI),<sup>140</sup> he returned to Perth in 1928 and 'talked enthusiastically about the NCSSS at meetings of the Newman

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<sup>135</sup> 'Fr McMahon leaves for Washington', *The Record*, 20 November 1926, p. 15.

<sup>136</sup> D.A. Mohler, 'Jane Hoey and Agnes Regan: Women in Washington', in R.F. Trisco, *Catholics in America, 1776-1976* (Washington, DC, 1976).

<sup>137</sup> *American Reformers: An H.W. Wilson Biographical Dictionary* (1985) pp: 684-686.

<sup>138</sup> A.I. Abell, *American Catholicism and Social Action: A Search for Social Justice - A comprehensive study of the Catholic social movement in the United States from 1865 to 1950* (University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1960), p. 220.

<sup>139</sup> J.T. McMahon, 'Vineland: A Home for Sub-Normals', *The Record*, 13 August 1927, pp: 2-3.

<sup>140</sup> J.T. McMahon, *The Perth Plan for teaching religion by correspondence*, The Supplementary section of a Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, National University of Ireland (Department of Education, University College, Dublin, Browne and Nolan, 1928). J.T. McMahon, *Some Methods of Teaching Religion*, A Survey submitted in partial fulfilment of the prescribed exercises leading to the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the National University of Ireland. McMahon's PhD was not from the Catholic University of America (CUA) as several writers have claimed, including Parker, 'Early Social Work in Retrospect', p. 17 and also Obituary, Monsignor J.T. McMahon, *Footprints*, Vol. 6, No. 10, 1989, p. 14.



Society'.<sup>141</sup> He urged students to consider post-graduate studies in social service in America.<sup>142</sup> As editor of the periodical, *The Record*, from 1928-32, McMahon promoted social work and extending links in this field with America.<sup>143</sup>

### 3.6 'Hard things of popes, priests and priestcraft'

McMahon's passion for social work caught the attention of final year Arts students, Norma Parker (1906-2004) and Constance Moffit (1906-88), whose interest had already been stimulated by Stoneman.<sup>144</sup> In the context of the Australian church, heavily Irish in its composition, it is relevant to briefly review both students' heritage. Each was the eldest of five children, whose fathers had converted to Catholicism at the time of their marriages. Both families practiced their faith, but were not 'pillars of the church'. Their fathers instilled in them curiosity and an 'entrepreneurial' spirit and supported female tertiary education in the 1920s.

Moffit's roots were staunchly evangelical Christian, similar to the maternal evangelical ancestry of early British almoner Anne Cummins.<sup>145</sup> Conny's grandparents, William (1848-1911) and Margaret (1845-1911) Moffit, migrated from Liverpool, England to Victoria in 1867, along with Margaret's brother, James Hamill, and his young family, from County Antrim, Ireland.<sup>146</sup> Brother Moffit and Deacon Hamill were devout members of the Church of Christ, and during their

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<sup>141</sup> N. Parker, Speech at the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Centacare Sydney 1990, CSA.

<sup>142</sup> McMahon, *Cloister, College, Campus*, p. 182.

<sup>143</sup> Obituary for Mons J.T. McMahon, *Footprints*, Vol. 6, No. 10, 1989.

<sup>144</sup> Wilson, 'Ethel Stoneman'. See also E.T. Stoneman, *Halfway to the hereafter: an enquiry into the motivation of attempted suicide* (Perth, 1935).

<sup>145</sup> Obituary for William Moffit, *Adelaide Chronicle* 17 June 1911; *Port Pirie Advertiser*, 10 June 1911. Surprisingly, William Moffit was not mentioned in Brian Dickey's *The Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* (Sydney, Evangelical History Association, 1994).

voyage to Australia, it is reported that they expressed their faith robustly, leading to ‘animated discussions’ with other Christians, notably Catholics.<sup>147</sup> Historian, Graeme Chapman, says Moffit defended his faith by saying ‘hard things of popes, priests and priestcraft’.<sup>148</sup>

A blacksmith by trade William Moffit spent much of his time evangelising and the family lived variously at Ballarat, Launceston, Adelaide, Mt Gambier, and Port Pirie.<sup>149</sup> His strict adherence to Bible teachings was reflected in his comment, ‘we are still endeavouring with the Lord’s help to present the old old story of Jesus [original emphasis] and his love and truth to the people’.<sup>150</sup> The Moffits’ youngest child, Gilbert Tickle,<sup>151</sup> was born at Mt Gambier, Adelaide on 17 October 1875. He attended Adelaide’s Prince Alfred College and later studied accountancy. Gilbert moved to Western Australia in 1899 and was appointed accountant at the Sons of Gwalia Mine.<sup>152</sup> In August 1905 he married Sarah Emmeline Connolly, a Tasmanian Catholic. Constance, their eldest child, was born a year later at Oroya Brownhill Mine at Boulder, where Gilbert went on to become the mine’s manager.<sup>153</sup>

Concerned about the remoteness and culture of mining, Sarah Moffit sent her three daughters to Loreto Convent, Osborne, which promoted itself as a ‘High

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<sup>146</sup> Arrived Port Philip Bay per *Donald Mackay* 1867 with their young child, Jane Moffit.

<sup>147</sup> G. Chapman, *Ballarat Churches of Christ: A History* (Mulgrave North, Victoria, Church of Christ, 1994) p. 24.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Australian Christian Advocate*, Vol. V111, No 86, January 1879; *ibid.*, No. 87, February 1879, p. 62.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. V111, No. 91, June 1879, p. 196.

<sup>151</sup> Tickle was a maternal family name; Gilbert’s first cousin Joseph Tickle Hamill (1871-92) also inherited this (unusual) family name.

<sup>152</sup> ‘Mr Moffit’s eldest daughter, Miss C Moffit MA had a most brilliant career in America, where she specialised in psychology and took her degrees at the Washington University’, V.H. Colless, *Men of WA*, Plate no 146, (Perth, 1938).

<sup>153</sup> Birth Certificate, Constance Pauline Moffit, Boulder Registry, District of Western Australia, No 476/06. Provided by John Phillips of Perth.

Class Boarding School for Young Ladies'.<sup>154</sup> In 1923 Conny sat for the University Public Examinations, the only Loreto student to do so, and achieved high grades in English, Mathematics, French, Latin and History. She and her sister Sheila received a first in Fr McMahon's exam in 'Christian Doctrine and Church History'.<sup>155</sup> Norma Parker dryly recalled her surprise that Conny had attended Loreto because, in Parker's estimation, Loreto did not usually produce high academic achievers.<sup>156</sup>

Parker's father was also a convert to Catholicism. Norma's paternal grandparents, Thomas and Alice Parker, from Lancashire, England, migrated to Victoria and operated small businesses in Castlemaine and Melbourne.<sup>157</sup> The Parkers were fervent members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and their son, Ernest (1873-1931) was educated at Scotch College, Melbourne. Ernest moved to Perth in the early 1900s and married Annie Westhoven in 1906, a member of an Anglo-German family. Norma attended Perth's Sacred Heart Highgate School and won a scholarship to study Arts at UWA in 1925. In her first year at UWA Parker won the Lady Hackett Prize for Latin, and she graduated with six distinctions.<sup>158</sup>

Through his 'powers of persuasion and conviction of the importance of the work which lay ahead in Australia',<sup>159</sup> McMahon 'volunteered to explore the possibility of scholarships' for Parker and Moffit.<sup>160</sup> He secured scholarships for them, after

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<sup>154</sup> J. Stephenson, *The First Forty Years 1897-1937* (Hesperian Press, Carlisle, WA, 1988), p. 25.

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Norma Parker, Brighton, Victoria, April 2002.

<sup>157</sup> Norma Parker Letters 1928-1932, Norma Parker's 1928-31 Overseas Study Trip, A. John Parker Archives (AJPA), Perth, Western Australia.

<sup>158</sup> Parker's resume was found amongst the Almoner Department File at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne Archives (SVHMA). Thirty four of the forty one Arts graduates at UWA in 1927 were women. UWA, Conferring of Degrees, 20 April 1928 at Government House Perth. Conny Moffit's signature is on the program's cover. Thanks to John Phillips of Claremont, WA for lending this program. See also *The Record*, 14 December 1929, p. 34.

<sup>159</sup> Parker Brown and Davidson, A Tribute to the memory of Monsignor John McMahon, p. 1.

<sup>160</sup> McMahon, *Cloister, College, Campus*.

they had been accepted into the graduate teacher program of the West Australian Education Department.<sup>161</sup> A few years later Moffit remarked that while she did not have a lot of affection for McMahon he had saved her 'from a life of school teaching'.<sup>162</sup> Parker saw Moffit - 'a go-ahead person' – as the catalyst for her interest in accepting the scholarship.<sup>163</sup> While Parker's mother 'had many misgivings' about Norma travelling overseas at the tender age of twenty, her father, Ernest, president of Perth's Celtic Club<sup>164</sup>, and a friend of McMahon's, was more easy going and supported the women's plan.<sup>165</sup> McMahon's efforts and ongoing encouragement of the women laid the foundations for professional Catholic welfare in Australia.<sup>166</sup> He later remarked the scholarships were 'a big risk ... [which] meant resigning from a secure position with its possibilities of advancement ... to take the plunge to a distant land'.<sup>167</sup>

### 3.6.1 Mentors

In September 1928 Parker and Moffit left Perth and travelled via Britain to the United States. Their scholarships provided financial support for two years' academic study and they joined seven Americans and one Porto Rican, where they were instructed by 'the very best American teachers', including Monsignor Ryan, Director of the NCWCs Social Action Department (1919-44) and Professor of Moral Theology at CUA.<sup>168</sup> An occasional censure from the American Catholic

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<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>162</sup> Moffit to Parker, 26 October 1938, AJPA.

<sup>163</sup> Parker, Interview, 2002.

<sup>164</sup> Incidentally the Parkers were English, not Celtic, a point confirmed by A. John Parker of Perth.

<sup>165</sup> See correspondence from Ernest Parker to his daughter in Norma Parker's 1928-31 Overseas Study Trip, AJPA.

<sup>166</sup> 'Renowned W.A. social workers together again in Perth', *The Record*, 16 August 1973, p. 5.

<sup>167</sup> McMahon, *Cloister, College, Campus*, p. 177.

<sup>168</sup> The Catholic University of America, *Forty-First Annual Commencement and Conferring of Degrees*, June 11, 1930.

hierarchy did not deter Ryan from his strong advocacy for welfare reforms.<sup>169</sup> Ryan, Monsignor Kerby and Rev Dr Thomas Verner Moore OSB, the head of CUA's department of psychology taught sociology, industrial ethics and child problems. Rose McHugh and Helen Cronin taught social legislation and casework.<sup>170</sup>

Parker says that she, Moffit, and later Davidson, were supported in their studies by Regan, 'a real Catholic woman'.<sup>171</sup> The NCSSS offered a 'religiously charged atmosphere' and an academic environment that encouraged research into child welfare issues.<sup>172</sup> First year students undertook two days a week fieldwork, which increased to three days in their second year.<sup>173</sup> The experience of working with the Bureau of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York had a profound impact on Parker:

The poverty here is appalling, more dreadful than one can imagine – and nine-tenths of the poor in the slums are Catholic ... we haven't anything in Perth to compare with the stretches and stretches of slums ... the Bureau of Catholic Charities is wonderfully organised.<sup>174</sup>

Although they undertook a diversity of placements, some contemporaries perceived the NCSSS training as more narrow, compared with, for example, the social services training provided by the Jewish community. Nevertheless some commentators acknowledged the benefit of NCSSS approach, with the students

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<sup>169</sup> An excellent critique of Ryan is contained in C.E. Curran, 'John A Ryan', *American Catholic Social Ethics* (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1982) See also D.J. O'Brien 'John A Ryan and the Social Action Department' *American Catholics and Social Reform: The New Deal Years* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1968).

<sup>170</sup> McHugh played a key role in a 1925 Survey of Diocesan Charities in the Catholic Archdiocese of Newark, which led to the formation of the Associated Charities Network of Newark.

<sup>171</sup> Parker, Interview, 2002.

<sup>172</sup> J.J. Keneally, *The History of American Catholic Women* (New York, Crossroads, 1990), p.141. The NCSS published several *Social Science Monographs*, including M.M. Eisenmann, H. Farrell, C. Mangan, R.F. O'Grady, M.A. Riley, M.E. Walsh, *Studies in Child Welfare* (Washington DC, 1929).

<sup>173</sup> Odencrantz, *The Social Worker*, p. 341.

<sup>174</sup> N. Parker, 'Working in New York Slums', *The Record*, 14 December 1929, p. 34.

'living together and their daily religious services, must contribute to the *esprit de corps* and morale of the group'.<sup>175</sup>

NCSSS academic staff had a profound influence on Parker and Moffit. Beatrice Mullin prompted Parker's specialisation in psychiatric social work and child guidance clinics.<sup>176</sup> At one clinic, operated by psychiatrist, Dr Thomas More, Parker gained insight into the care of 'defective', epileptic and feeble-minded children who had been referred from the Children's Courts and the Board of Education.<sup>177</sup> Louise McGuire, who headed the NCSSS family and children welfare program, arranged for the two Australians to attend important social welfare and economic legislation debates in Washington.<sup>178</sup> Welfare historian Loretta Lawler says McGuire was an 'outstanding professional mentor' and the proponent for child welfare to be a discrete field within social work at the NCSSS.<sup>179</sup> Margaret Lynch and Clara Bradley also assisted Moffit and Parker.<sup>180</sup>

Under the supervision of Fr Paul Hanley Furfey, Parker, Moffit and another student, Californian, Eileen Ward<sup>181</sup>, focused their dissertations on personality issues impacting girls aged between eight and sixteen – an area of childhood development that had hitherto received little academic attention.<sup>182</sup> Parker's study

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<sup>175</sup> A.G. Warner, S.A. Queen and E.B. Harper, *American Charities and Social Work*, Fourth Edition (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Co, 1930) p. 568.

<sup>176</sup> The first psychiatric social worker in the United States was appointed in 1913. L.M. French, *Psychiatric Social Work* (New York, The Commonwealth Fund, 1940), p. 37.

<sup>177</sup> *The West Australian*, 1 July 1931, p. 16.

<sup>178</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Lawler, *Full Circle*, p. 129.

<sup>180</sup> Norma Parker to family, 14 May 1930, in A. John Parker, *Norma Parker's 1928-31 Overseas Study Trip* n.d., AJPA.

<sup>181</sup> E. Ward, 'The Girl Grows Up: A Study of the Development of Personality in Girls Six and Eight Years of Age', An Essay submitted to the Faculty of Philosophy of the Catholic University of America in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Masters of Arts, Washington, 1930.

<sup>182</sup> Rev. Paul Hanley Furfey of the Catholic University was the inspiration for this piece of

was 'an objective study of a child's changing interests and rounded personality at different development states, particularly in connection with the normal child'.<sup>183</sup> Her seventy 'subjects' came from several parochial grade schools, one private Catholic school, three Catholic high schools and from a Catholic-sponsored orphanage from different parts of Washington DC, and their families' socio-economic background included 'ordinary and skilled labor, clerical and professional classes'.<sup>184</sup> Parker and Moffit's findings formed the basis of their respective dissertations, which in May 1930 'were approved practically without change'.<sup>185</sup> Parker proudly wrote home to advise that the CUA had congratulated her for 'a very excellent [sic] piece of work'.<sup>186</sup>

After their graduation in June 1930, Regan arranged employment for Moffit and Parker at several government, private and church welfare agencies.<sup>187</sup> Parker worked at the Department of Public Welfare, the social service department of Providence Hospital, Washington, operated by the Charity Sisters of St Vincent de Paul, and at the city's largest mental health hospital, St Elizabeth's, which had an arrangement with the NCSSS to provide specialised training in psychiatric social work.<sup>188</sup> Moffit and Parker's vision for Catholic welfare in Australia was strongly influenced by their studies and experiences in diocesan Catholic and state welfare

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research and whose assistance has been particularly valuable', N.A. Parker, 'The Girl Grows Up: A Study of the Development of Personality in Girls Fourteen and Sixteen Years of Age', An Essay submitted to the Faculty of Philosophy of the Catholic University of America in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Masters of Arts, Washington, 1930. C.P. Moffit, 'The girl grows up: a study of the development of personality in girls ten and twelve years of age', Master of Arts, CUA, 1930.

<sup>183</sup> Parker, 'The Girl Grows Up', p. 1.

<sup>184</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>185</sup> The three candidates were asked to major minor amendments so as to include more of the 'very valuable data' they have researched', Furfey to Parker, 14 May 1930, AJPA.

<sup>186</sup> Norma Parker to family, 14 May 1930. A. John Parker, Norma Parker's 1928-31 Overseas Study Trip.

<sup>187</sup> In 1951 the Catholic University of America named the Agnes Regan Memorial Hall in recognition of her considerable contribution to welfare and the university.

<sup>188</sup> French, *Psychiatric Social Work*, pp: 252-253; 'Almoner for St Vincent's', *The Advocate*,

bureaux, including New York, Cleveland, Ohio and Los Angeles.<sup>189</sup> Parker spent six months at Los Angeles' Catholic Welfare Bureau<sup>190</sup>, whose director, Monsignor Thomas J O'Dwyer, gave her sixty-five cases to manage. Parker also worked at Ohio's Children's Welfare Bureau.<sup>191</sup> Moffit worked at the Humane Society, a specialist child welfare agency in Cleveland, Ohio, before moving to the Los Angeles CWB as a case worker from October 1930 to September 1931.<sup>192</sup> In correspondence with McMahon, Regan complimented the Australians for the impression they made 'I do not think that any other students enrolled in the school were more thoroughly respected and for whom there was more affection'.<sup>193</sup>

### 3.7 Early setbacks

Australian Catholic social work faced considerable early challenges. During 1930 Parker and Moffit weighed up the opportunities of continuing to work in the United States or returning home. Ernest Parker advised his daughter that Ethel Stoneman had made some progress 'convincing' the Collier Government that a home was required for 'sub-normal children', which could provide employment for them.<sup>194</sup> He also encouraged Norma to stay longer in America if she could gain more experience.<sup>195</sup>

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18 February 1932, p. 26.

<sup>189</sup> For a comprehensive contemporary account of Catholic Social Welfare in American Dioceses see M. Boylan, *Social Welfare in the Catholic Church*.

<sup>190</sup> Established in 1917.

<sup>191</sup> Parker, Resume.

<sup>192</sup> Report of Course by Miss Constance Moffitt [sic] to the Committee on Training for Social Work, 26 January 1932, Social Work Training, Australian Association of Hospital Almoners (AAHA) and Australian Association of Social Workers (Victorian Branch), Accession 90/24, Box 20, UMA.

<sup>193</sup> Regan to McMahon, undated letter, cited in McMahon, *Cloister, College, Campus*, p. 179.

<sup>194</sup> Ernest Parker to Norma Parker, August 1929, AJPA.

<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*



In early 1931 a sharp deterioration in Ernest's health prompted Norma to 'leave [San Francisco] at a moment's notice'.<sup>196</sup> He died before she arrived home. Parker's boat stopped en-route in Melbourne, allowing her to meet briefly with Agnes Macintyre, an English almoner, working at Royal Melbourne Hospital (RMH).<sup>197</sup> When Parker returned to Perth in June 1931 she displayed characteristic modesty. Parker had 'warm memories, some knowledge and skills and a feeling of commitment'.<sup>198</sup> In the words of *The Advocate* she was 'very reticent and unassuming about her own brilliant career'.<sup>199</sup> *The Record* hoped that an 'opening will be found for this talented daughter of the West within her own State'.<sup>200</sup> However the 1930s Depression had created 'widespread unemployment, extensive cuts in government services, no or few opportunities any more in any direction so that hopes for the introduction of social work in any form were non-existent'.<sup>201</sup>

After the Collier Government's defeat in April 1930, the Mitchell Government closed the State Psychology Unit. The new health minister argued that the savings would enable the government to continue to provide other medical and dental services for children. McMahon, unsuccessfully joined other church, community, trade union and Jewish organisations, in calling for the clinic's reinstatement.<sup>202</sup> The YWCA's general secretary said that the government 'cannot estimate the results of such work in commercial figures'.<sup>203</sup> Protest letters in *The West Australian* did not change the situation.<sup>204</sup> Shortly afterwards Stoneman

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<sup>196</sup> Parker to Healy, 1 September 1931, Box 8, AAHA, UMA.

<sup>197</sup> *The Record*, 4 July 1931, p. 13.

<sup>198</sup> Parker, Speech at 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Centacare Sydney, p. 2.

<sup>199</sup> *The Advocate*, 18 February 1932, p. 10.

<sup>200</sup> *The Record*, 27 June 1931, p. 11.

<sup>201</sup> Parker, Speech at 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Centacare Sydney, p. 2.

<sup>202</sup> *The West Australian*, 22 November 1930, p. 13.

<sup>203</sup> *ibid.*

resigned from UWA and went overseas and completed her PhD at the University of Edinburgh in 1933.<sup>205</sup>

Both the secular and Catholic press covered Parker's return to Perth. *The West Australian* article headed 'Miss N. Parker's Disappointment' said Parker's immediate employment prospects were bleak.<sup>206</sup> Parker told the newspaper that in the half year since Stoneman's clinic closed the medical profession had not sent one boy to the Castledare Home.<sup>207</sup> In an interview in *The Record*, Parker said that while it was not her 'function' to criticise the state government, the clinic's closure was a 'retrograde step'.<sup>208</sup> She outlined the benefits of social work and psychology and challenged the government view that medical staff could undertake welfare work that she believed belonged to social workers. She continued her push for professional welfare:

It would be false to all my teaching if I did not think so, and say so... it is just a little depressing to find one's own country going back, while other countries are pressing forward in a wonderful and very necessary field of social welfare.<sup>209</sup>

Parker noted that, unlike America, 'Australian people do not yet realise what the application of sociology means to the community... America has taken the lead in this work'.<sup>210</sup> She spoke enthusiastically at church and community meetings about the relevance of social work to Australia.<sup>211</sup> At a National Council of Women forum in July 1931, Parker spoke about 'misfit' children appearing before Children's Courts, who, having engaged in some form of delinquent behaviour, nevertheless

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<sup>204</sup> Parker, November 1930.

<sup>205</sup> The title of Stoneman's thesis was 'Motivation of Attempted Suicide'. Extract from Graduation Programme, First Series, File 763, UWAA.

<sup>206</sup> *The West Australian*, 1 July 1931, p. 16.

<sup>207</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> *The Record*, 27 June 1931, p. 11.

<sup>209</sup> *ibid.*, 4 July 1931, p. 14.

<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> *The West Australian*, 3 July 1931, p. 14.

had normal intelligence and sometimes, superior intelligence.<sup>212</sup> Through preventative actions, such as the employment of social workers and psychologists in schools, Parker argued these 'misfits' could receive ongoing support and training to prevent re-offending.<sup>213</sup>

With no employment prospects in Perth, Parker wrote to an uncle in Melbourne, Joseph Charles Westhoven, a high-profile Catholic and the Commonwealth public service arbitrator in Victoria.<sup>214</sup> Westhoven was supportive and forwarded her correspondence on to SVHM, the Victorian Charities Board (VCB) and the Victorian Institute of [Hospital]<sup>215</sup> Almoners (VIHA), which since its establishment in 1929, had developed protocols for recruitment of almoners.<sup>216</sup>

St Vincent's interest in appointing an almoner reflected in part encouragement from the VIHA. From early in its history the VIHA had encouraged St Vincent's representation. Mrs George Bowcher, wife of a St Vincent's doctor, and Miss Cavanagh, secretary of the SVHM auxiliary joined the VIHA committee and endorsed its constitution.<sup>217</sup> Their early involvement contradicts O'Brien and Turner's claim that the Catholic Church did not have representation at the VIHA's inaugural annual meeting.<sup>218</sup>

VIHA president, Dr Newman Morris, also lobbied St Vincent's medical staff to consider appointing an almoner. He reported back to the VIHA executive

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<sup>212</sup> *ibid.*, 16 July 1931, p. 12.

<sup>213</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *Who's Who in Australia 1941*, p. 684.

<sup>215</sup> From 1935 known as the Victorian Institute of Hospital Almoners (VIHA) and hereafter referred to as VIHA for consistency.

<sup>216</sup> Westhoven to Newman Morris, 10 September 1931, Box 10, File V.1.05, Executive Committee Papers, VIA; another copy of this letter held in Box 20, Social Work Training, UMA.

<sup>217</sup> VIHA, Letters, 1929-1933, VIHA secretary to Mrs George Bowcher, 9 September 1929, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>218</sup> O'Brien and Turner, Searching for a professional identity; VIHA, *First Annual Report for Year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1930*.

committee in August 1931 that SVHM had a 'favourable' attitude to employing a trained almoner, and that the hospital's ladies auxiliary had been charged with fundraising for a social service department.<sup>219</sup> The VIHA was also pleased that the hospital's mother rectress, Sr Mary Gertrude Healy, 'accepted the principle of employing an almoner' and would do so 'as soon as a certified student became available'.<sup>220</sup> In October 1931 Westhoven advised his niece of the 'probability' of the state's largest Catholic hospital establishing an almoner's department.<sup>221</sup>

After reading Parker's resumé Healy advised McVilly that Parker 'evidently has had exceptional training in America'.<sup>222</sup> Healy received a supportive reply that Parker was a 'highly capable and suitable appointment to a large institution such as SVH'.<sup>223</sup> Parker's appointment, therefore, looked apparent, even though she had not yet met with St Vincent's staff. In a pre-emptive report *The Record* said that Parker had been appointed to organise the 'Social Welfare Department of the Melbourne Hospital'.<sup>224</sup> This incorrect reference should have related to Parker undertaking studies through Melbourne Hospital to obtain her certification as an almoner.<sup>225</sup>

Parker travelled from Perth to Melbourne in late 1931. Before commencing at SVHM, McVilly advised Healy that Parker should 'extend her knowledge of local conditions' so that she 'could be of real value' to the Sisters of Charity.<sup>226</sup> In

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<sup>219</sup> VIHA, Executive Committee Minutes, *ibid.*, 19 August 1931, Box 9, Group 1, UMA.

<sup>220</sup> Healy to McVilly, 31 August 1931; Greig Smith to McVilly, 29 January 1931, Box 8, AAAH, UMA.

<sup>221</sup> Westhoven to Parker, October 1931, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

<sup>222</sup> Healy to McVilly, 7 September 1931, Box 8, AAHA, UMA.

<sup>223</sup> VIHA, Executive Committee September 1931.

<sup>224</sup> *The Record*, 30 October 1931, p. 12.

<sup>225</sup> A. Macintyre, 'The Hospital Almoner', *Medical Journal of Australia*, 8 February 1930.

<sup>226</sup> McVilly to Healy, 9 November 1931, File Victorian Hospitals-Almoner V.6.02, VIHA Collection, UMA. See *The Argus*, 16 January 1932, p. 23; Also 'Almonry is regarded, nowadays, as indispensable in the administration and proper conducting of large hospitals, and a great asset to the medical staff', *The Advocate*, 18 February 1932, p. 26

December 1931 Healy agreed that Parker should undertake three months 'preliminary practical experience', thereby postponing the almoner department's opening until Parker's completion of fieldwork in March 1932.<sup>227</sup> At her own expense Parker studied under the supervision of Joan Brett, the VIHA's Director of Training at RMH, and also at the COS. In April 1931 Parker received the VIHA Certificate, only the seventh person to do so.<sup>228</sup> With American qualifications Parker was unusual amongst Melbourne's English almoners.<sup>229</sup>

The VIHA had been an important link in helping promote the employment of an almoner at SVHM, at a time of considerable financial stringency.<sup>230</sup> The hospital's ladies auxiliary and Rosary Club financed Parker's position.<sup>231</sup> On 9 April 1932<sup>232</sup> Parker established the country's first Catholic almoner department and only Australia's third.<sup>233</sup> At the time of Parker's appointment Healy is reported to have said 'God has answered our prayers'.<sup>234</sup> Yet an article published shortly afterwards, perhaps written by Parker, said an almoner's work 'conveys little or nothing' as it is a 'scarce position and little understood'.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Greig Smith to McVilly, 11 December 1931, Box 8, AAHA, UMA; Healy to McVilly, 12 November 1931, File, Victorian Hospitals-Almoner V.6.02, Box 6, VIHA Collection, UMA; VIHA Minutes Executive Committee Meeting, 28 October 1931, p. 2, Box 12, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>228</sup> O'Brien and Turner, Searching for a professional identity.

<sup>229</sup> *The Advocate*, 18 February 1932, p. 26.

<sup>230</sup> See reports in *The Argus* in the late 1920s and during the 1930s about the issue of overcrowding and various proposals by the Victorian Government and individual hospitals to ease the situation.

<sup>231</sup> Parker, Interview, 2002.

<sup>232</sup> Brian Egan incorrectly says the almoner department opened in 1 April 1932. B. Egan, *Ways of a Hospital: St Vincent's Melbourne, 1890s-1990s* (St Leonard's, NSW, Allen and Unwin, 1993), p. 106.

<sup>233</sup> *The Advocate*, 8 September 1932, p. 18.

<sup>234</sup> Cited in Parker Brown and Davidson, A Tribute to the memory of Monsignor John McMahon, p. 1.

<sup>235</sup> *The Horizon*, No. 102, Vol. 8, New Series, July 1932, p. 11.

Within a short period SVHM management expressed happiness with the almoners' department and Parker's work was 'justified', because 'even the most highly skilled medical treatment and nursing will not restore every ailing person to health unless co-operative effort is obtained in the patient's home'.<sup>236</sup> In her first three months at SVHM Parker supported sixty-three cases and referred another twenty-one to non-Catholic external groups, such as the COS and the Ladies Benevolent Society (LBS).<sup>237</sup> Co-operation with these organisations enabled extra nourishment for patients during and after hospital treatment. It also signalled Parker's flexible approach to seeking solutions outside traditional Catholic charities, such as the SVdP.<sup>238</sup>

From the outset Parker worked more as a social reformer and community advocate than as a traditional 'Lady Almoner'. Taking inspiration from her American tutors, Parker raised issues of inequity with the Victorian Government during the bitter Depression years. In late 1932, for example, Parker urged the government to extend its policy of providing extra dietary requirements to Melbourne Hospital patients to other hospitals, including St Vincent's.<sup>239</sup> The government agreed to make the system more equitable; when the scheme fell into abeyance in 1935, Parker again advocated for support for undernourished patients.<sup>240</sup>

Meanwhile, at every opportunity, Parker promoted the concept and benefits of almoning. *The Horizon* sought to 'demystify' the almoner's role, which has a 'very definite need in the hospital, being born from a realisation of the insufficiency of

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<sup>236</sup> St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, *Thirty-Eight Annual Report for the Year ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 1932*, p. 8.

<sup>237</sup> *The Advocate*, 8 September 1932, p. 18.

<sup>238</sup> N. Parker, 'Almoner Department', St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, *Thirty-Eight Annual Report for the Year ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 1932*, p. 15. This 'first report' covered the period April to June 1932, as distinct from the 'First Annual Report of the Almoner Department' which covered the full financial year 1932-1933.

<sup>239</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee, Victorian Association of Hospital Almoners (VAHA), 18 October 1932, Box 3, AAHA and AASW, UMA.

purely medical work'.<sup>241</sup> The phrase 'medical insufficiency' implied physicians too busy or not having the necessary aptitude to consider patients' needs outside their immediate physical condition. Almoners, by contrast, trained to identify and support the social needs of patients, could contribute to assessing non-medical factors that so 'often contribute to medical disease'.<sup>242</sup> The almoner also supported destitute and homeless patients. In an interview with *The Advocate*, Parker said her role was to liaise with charitable organisations to provide clients with the resources to afford convalescent accommodation and medical appliances, such as glasses and dentures.<sup>243</sup> The early identification of social issues was important. Parker advocated 'Prevention rather than Cure' as the hallmark of the contribution that almoning could make to the community.<sup>244</sup>

At the 1932 annual general meeting of the CWSG Parker urged support for almoning, which she described as the 'connecting link between the hospital and the home'.<sup>245</sup> The almoner's diverse role included helping heart and tuberculosis patients to find new employment, arranging financial support for people whose accidents prevented them from returning to the workforce and assistance to people with diabetes.<sup>246</sup>

Building on her American studies of female child development, Parker brought together Melbourne's Catholic girls' groups into a co-ordinated movement, whose aims included recreation, spirituality and charitable work, such as hospital visitation. Recreation, Parker told *The Advocate*, was not trivial because it had a

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<sup>240</sup> *ibid.*, 22 November 1932; *ibid.*, 16 October 1935.

<sup>241</sup> *The Horizon*, No. 102, Vol. 8 New Series, July 1932, p. 11.

<sup>242</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> *The Advocate*, 15 September 1932, p. 26.

<sup>244</sup> *The Horizon*, No. 102, Vol. 8, New Series, July 1932, p. 12.

<sup>245</sup> *The Advocate*, 14 April 1932, p. 15.

<sup>246</sup> *The Horizon*, No 100. Vol. 8 (New Series), May 1 1932, pp: 4-5.

bearing on forming girls' character.<sup>247</sup> Parker also recommended that girls be encouraged to socialise, because increasing numbers were undertaking the burden of being the sole breadwinner in households afflicted by the scarcity of adult employment.<sup>248</sup>

Meanwhile, Moffit returned to Perth and found the squeeze on public funds caused by the Depression also left her unemployed.<sup>249</sup> She, too, moved to Victoria to seek employment and to link up with her colleague, Norma Parker. In late 1931 a Victorian Vocational and Child Guidance Centre (VVCGC) was formed under the auspices of the Victorian Council for Mental Hygiene (VCMH) and the Vocational Guidance Association.<sup>250</sup> The VVCGC had a child guidance team comprising a psychiatrist, psychologist and social worker.<sup>251</sup> The advertisement for the last position attracted applications from across Australia.<sup>252</sup> In the first of several instances Parker provided crucial support to Moffit. Parker recalls that when she heard the selection committee was unsure whether to appoint a social worker or a secretary, she lobbied them and sent Conny a telegram 'Learn to type immediately'.<sup>253</sup> Parker may have been frustrated by the selection committee's ignorance about social work, but she did not openly challenge their misconceptions. This pragmatic approach helped Moffit secure the position. It

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<sup>247</sup> N. Parker, 'The Catholic Girl's Movement', *The Advocate*, 26 September 1935, p. 13.

<sup>248</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> *The Record*, 7 November 1931, p. 14.

<sup>250</sup> The Victorian Council for Mental Health provided funds for the establishment of the Australian Council for Educational Research in 1930. See A. R. Phillips, 'The Approach to Child Guidance in Victoria', *Social Service*, November 1946.

<sup>251</sup> C. Moffit, 'The Victorian Vocational and Child Guidance Centre', *The Horizon* No 111 Vol. 8 (New Series), April 1933.

<sup>252</sup> Victorian Council for Mental Hygiene (VCMH) *Second Annual Report 1931-32*, Report of the Board of Management of the Vocational and Child Guidance Centre, p 11, located in NSW Council of Mental Hygiene Records, Box K48910, Council of Social Service of New South Wales Collection, MSS 2929, MLNSW.

<sup>253</sup> Parker, 'Early Social Work', pp: 17-18.



would be another decade before professional social workers were appointed outside hospitals or charities in Victoria.<sup>254</sup>

Moffit's vision for the child guidance clinic reflected her professional training and she regarded it as aiming 'to assist [children to have a] better understanding of themselves and their motives'.<sup>255</sup> The deepening financial crisis exacerbated the centre's already tight financial situation and after eighteen months it was forced to 'dispense with the services of the third professional member of staff, Miss C.P. Moffit'.<sup>256</sup> Two years later the clinic, which, up until that time, had been largely funded from a grant from the Australian Council for Education Research, could no longer meet its financial commitments and closed.<sup>257</sup> With practical and academic experience, Moffit gained advanced entry into the VIHA course and Parker recommended her election to the VIHA Board in 1934.<sup>258</sup>

### 3.8 Professionalism in turmoil

In the mid 1930s three issues relating to SVHM threatened to derail Catholic social work in Victoria: an ill-conceived plan to terminate Parker's services; disputes between the Sisters of Charity and the VIHA over an untrained almoner; and perceived bias against Catholic social work, which led to fears of sectarianism.

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<sup>254</sup> A. Markiewicz, 'Panacea or scapegoat: The Social Work Profession and its history and background in relation to the State Welfare Department in Victoria', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 49, No 3, September 1996, p. 26.

<sup>255</sup> Moffit, 'The Victorian Vocational and Child Guidance Centre'.

<sup>256</sup> VCMH, *Fourth Annual Report, 1933-34* p.12, NSW Council of Mental Hygiene Records, Box K48910, Council of Social Service of New South Wales (CSSNSW) Collection, MSS 2929, MLNSW.

<sup>257</sup> VCMH, *Sixth Annual Report, 1935-36*, p. 10, NSW Council of Mental Hygiene Records, Box K48910, CSSNSW, MSS 2929, MLNSW.

<sup>258</sup> Australian Association of Hospital Almoners (AAHA), Minutes, 10 October 1934, Box 3,

### 3.8.1 Attempted termination of Parker

In a few short years Parker and Moffit had begun to make their mark on Melbourne's Catholic welfare sector. Their legacy would be the formation of the CSSB in 1936 and changes to Victorian Catholic children's institutions over the following decades.<sup>259</sup> Reforms occurred against a backdrop of resistance from existing Catholic welfare providers, especially religious orders that operated children's institutions. Reflecting on her early career Parker recalls Melbourne in the 1930s as a 'dampening and wearing experience... incredibly stuffy' and a difficult environment for a professional woman with new ideas to be accepted.<sup>260</sup> Parker 'did not realise that in the Melbourne in those days one served quite a long apprenticeship before you earned the right to have anything to say at a public meeting'.<sup>261</sup>

1934 began a difficult period for social work at SVHM, which would have wider ramifications for professional Catholic social work.<sup>262</sup> The prelude had been Parker's successful establishment of the almoner department, reflected in medical staff sending her a steady stream of referrals. Stanley Greig-Smith and external agencies also referred Catholics in necessitous circumstances. Parker, however, never felt accepted by many nuns and increasingly they resented her contact with the sick poor. Looking back on the events more than half a century later, Parker said:

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AAHA Minute Book, 1934-1938, UMA.

<sup>259</sup> The CSSB will be discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>260</sup> Parker, 'Early Social Work in Retrospect', p. 19.

<sup>261</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>262</sup> M.E. Awbuyn, St Vincent's Hospital Social Work Department, 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Symposium, 30 November 1994, p. 5. SVHMA.

Quite a number of the nuns in the hospital came to have a strong feeling that work which they felt was their proper function had been removed from them by the appointment of a lay social worker... the result of a mistaken idea of what was involved in social work and a lack of understanding that social work necessarily must be based on special training.<sup>263</sup>

Parker's enthusiasm and professionalism challenged the nuns, who up until that time had been the hospital's distinctive feminine figures. Possibly for the first time, an articulate lay woman was occupying a role of leadership and had gained respect, in what had traditionally been the sisters' domain. One sister felt so 'threatened' by Parker that she reportedly 'forcibly pushed' Parker out of one ward.<sup>264</sup>

In June 1934 Sr Alphonsus O'Doherty<sup>265</sup> who had succeeded Healy as SVHM Mother Rectress, wrote to C.L. McVilly, the VCB chairman, indicating that from 1 August 1934 'we will be able to undertake the almoner's work, [which] in passing I might say is essentially ours'.<sup>266</sup> McVilly in discussions with O'Doherty 'explored some difficulties with the proposal' and advised Greig Smith that O'Doherty had 'no objection' to his suggestion that nuns would be expected to undertake appropriate training through the VIHA, before assuming almoner positions.<sup>267</sup> The August date passed without incident, although the matter continued to smoulder.

In early February 1935 O'Doherty, acting on a groundswell of sisters' dissatisfaction with the position of lay almoner and the hospital's 'grave financial situation', advised Parker that her employment would be terminated at the end of the month.<sup>268</sup> The decision came as a 'great shock' to Parker; nevertheless, she composed a calm and detailed submission seeking O'Doherty's

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<sup>263</sup> Parker, Speech at 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Centacare Sydney, p. 3.

<sup>264</sup> Undated document on SVHM letterhead, p. 1, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

<sup>265</sup> Also spelt O'Dougherty.

<sup>266</sup> O'Doherty to McVilly, 11 June 1934, Box 8, AAHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>267</sup> McVilly to Newman Morris, 18 July 1934, Box 8, AAHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>268</sup> Parker to O'Doherty, 11 February 1935, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

reconsideration.<sup>269</sup> Parker addressed several themes. Firstly, 'the prestige of St Vincent's Hospital must suffer if the department is not conducted by a qualified almoner'.<sup>270</sup> Parker said this to highlight the almoner department's role as a training centre for both the VIHA and the Board of Social Studies.<sup>271</sup>

Secondly, Parker felt that O'Doherty's plan for her to train a Sister of Charity as her replacement would not satisfy the VIHA because it required more training than the time frame anticipated.<sup>272</sup> Parker also cited Monsignor McMahon's encouragement 'to go abroad to qualify for the profession' and the American bishops support of social work. She emphasised that an almoner needed both formal qualifications and significant casework experience.<sup>273</sup> O'Doherty's reply to Parker acknowledged the 'highest opinions' of her 'qualifications and management of the almoner's department', but expressed the view that:

social service work in connection with our hospital is essentially that of the Sisters of Charity who have vowed service to the poor... we feel it is somewhat incongruous to engage an intern to attend to the needs of the very poor.<sup>274</sup>

The Mother Rectress explained that separating the almoner's work from the outpatients department had caused the 'sister in charge [to] realise that she has been deprived of the work that to her is of obligation'.<sup>275</sup> In O'Doherty's view 'the obvious solution is to train a Sister for the duties of an Almoner'.<sup>276</sup> In correspondence to Greig Smith, O'Doherty nominated Sr Mary Hedwige, a teacher who also had welfare experience in goal visitation in Sydney and Hobart

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<sup>269</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>272</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>274</sup> O'Doherty to Parker, 15 February 1935, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

<sup>275</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>276</sup> *ibid.*

and management of 'refractory girls'.<sup>277</sup> About this time O'Doherty began publicising the merits of the hospital's almoner service provided by the Sisters of Charity. Several articles in *The Advocate* appealed for volunteers to support the Mother Rectress and other sisters who cared for the 'sick poor'.<sup>278</sup> Curiously they did not refer to a lay almoner,<sup>279</sup> and readers may have gained an impression that the sisters alone were:

doing wonderful work amongst the very poor... arranging transport to convalescent homes or patients' homes, placing children where they are looked after whilst their parents are in hospital, supplying splints, spectacles and medicines.<sup>280</sup>

Meanwhile, anger and considerable opposition from SVHM medical staff, resulted in a deputation, led by psychiatrist, Dr John Williams, to O'Doherty, seeking a reversal of the decision.<sup>281</sup> The VIHA also delivered similar messages, yet the sisters remained firm that Parker's position should go.<sup>282</sup>

Tensions surrounding the almoner's position occurred during the depression's harshest years and consequent large financial squeeze on hospitals, such as St Vincent's. In the early 1930s the VCB had recommended the formation of an advisory committee to the Sisters of Charity, to assist in the management of the hospital's finances.<sup>283</sup> Healy established a committee of two senior priests and Catholic and non-Catholic laymen, under Westhoven's chairmanship, to advise her. The committee worked well with Healy. O'Doherty, though, was less inclined to accept the need for a committee. By late 1934 the committee's lay representatives had tired of being ignored by O'Doherty. In a letter to the

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<sup>277</sup> O'Doherty to Greig Smith, 22 February 1935, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

<sup>278</sup> *The Advocate*, 14 February 1935, p. 26.

<sup>279</sup> See for example, *The Advocate*, 17 August 1933, p. 23.

<sup>280</sup> *ibid.*, 26 April 1934, p. 12.

<sup>281</sup> Awbuyn, St Vincent's Hospital Social Work Department, p. 5.

<sup>282</sup> For example, VIHA Executive Committee Minutes, 20 March 1935, Box 11, V.1.07, VIHA, UMA. Greig Smith to Mother Rectress, 27 March 1935, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

archdiocesan vicar general, Monsignor Lonergan, also a committee member, Westhoven said 'it is not a committee of management and I am convinced that no good purpose can be served by continuing its existence'.<sup>284</sup> O'Doherty attributed the committee's unease with her decision to dispense with Parker's services. In a 'very personal note' to Lonergan she questioned whether the committee had discussed the almoner issue.<sup>285</sup> Lonergan firmly replied that Westhoven was 'unimpeachable... and his withdrawal is more likely to cast grave suspicion upon the affairs of SVHM'.<sup>286</sup> Lonergan added:

He [Westhoven] is known to be one who does not act for personal motives in his criticism of departmental affairs and if his withdrawal on this occasion be the case of the Almoner, it would be because he does not wish to be concerned with retention or dismissal of relatives.<sup>287</sup>

Lonergan involved the Archbishop, Dr Mannix, who wrote to the Superior General of the Sisters of Charity in Sydney, expressing concern that the committee's work was not appreciated.<sup>288</sup> In terms of Westhoven's niece, O'Doherty remained firm and advised Greig Smith that the Sisters of Charity's 'long experience with that type of work... was primarily the reason for our existence as a religious order'.<sup>289</sup> She added that the 'first social workers in Australia were the Sisters of Charity whose work dates from 1838 to the present'.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Egan, *Ways of a Hospital*, p. 74.

<sup>284</sup> Westhoven to Lonergan, 9 October 1934, St Vincent's Hospital, Special Bundle, Vicar General Collection, Archdiocese of Melbourne, MDHC.

<sup>285</sup> O'Doherty to Lonergan, 23 March 1935, Catholic Social Service Bureau (CSSB) File, Archbishop's Papers, MDHC. [Accessed with special permission].

<sup>286</sup> Lonergan to O'Doherty, 22 March 1935, St Vincent's Hospital, Special Bundle, Vicar General Collection, MDHC.

<sup>287</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> Cited in Egan, *Ways of a Hospital*, p. 81.

<sup>289</sup> O'Doherty to Greig Smith, 22 February 1935, Almoner Department File, SVHMA

<sup>290</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

Greig Smith 'very deeply' regretted Parker's dismissal, which he described as a 'retrograde step'.<sup>291</sup> He recognised the sisters as an 'Order of Charity for many years and that many of the poor of this country have received much needed material and spiritual help through it'.<sup>292</sup> But Greig Smith noted that there was an important difference between the care provided by untrained charity workers and professional welfare staff:

it is not correct to regard Social Service, as we know it today, whether in hospitals or in the community generally, as synonymous with charity, in the accepted sense of the word, which implies the sympathetic relieving of some immediate and obvious need.<sup>293</sup>

In the face of internal and external opposition, O'Doherty granted Parker a one month reprieve, a situation gladly accepted by Parker 'in the absence of any other position in social service work'.<sup>294</sup> During this period Parker was expected to adequately train Hedwige to take over the almoner's position.<sup>295</sup>

### 3.8.2 'Conceited enough... to do the work, without any study'

St Vincent's quest for the VIHA to officially certify Hedwige caused several difficulties. O'Doherty believed Hedwige's 'considerable experience' in welfare including 'management and suitable placing of refractory girls' and goal visitation as well as her teaching experience qualified her for 'exceptional' status.<sup>296</sup> The VIHA insisted Hedwige undertake the almoner's course, but it recognised her past experience and developed a shortened two year program.<sup>297</sup> This concession did

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<sup>291</sup> Greig Smith to O'Doherty, 11 March 1935, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

<sup>292</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>293</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> Parker to O'Doherty, 22 February 1935, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

<sup>295</sup> Parker, Speech at 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Centacare Sydney, p. 3.

<sup>296</sup> O'Doherty to Greig Smith, 22 February 1935, Almoner's Department File, SVHMA. According to Mitchell there were six other trained almoners in Melbourne seeking employment at this time; see A.M. Mitchell, *The Hospital South of the Yarra* (Melbourne, Alfred Hospital, 1927) p. 182.

<sup>297</sup> Rees to O'Doherty, 29 April 1935. Almoner's Department File, SVHMA.

little to appease Hedwige, who in correspondence to Mother St Paul, the superior general of the Sisters of Charity, said 'I am conceited enough to feel that I am able to do the work without any study and so begrudge having to make time when there is so much to be done; it [almonry] is so much a sister's duty.'<sup>298</sup>

A stalemate occurred. After several months the nuns backed down and Hedwige commenced the course.<sup>299</sup> Before long another contentious issue arose. The VIHA opposed Hedwige wearing a religious habit when undertaking fieldwork. Norma Parker described the situation:

The opinion was strongly expressed that clients would not be prepared to discuss their various problems unless this change was made. No compromise could be reached so eventually the nun was accepted as a student for the academic work of the course but restricted in the part of its covered by field work.<sup>300</sup>

Again, the VIHA showed a willingness to make concessions, by reducing Hedwige's case work. Hedwige also experienced difficulties with some coursework. In her first year she failed a subject called social organisations twice, and had similar problems in another subject, modern political institutions.<sup>301</sup> While there is no indication of the concerns of Hedwige and the Sisters of Charity, perhaps the comparative study of modern government analysis, including the Soviet system in theory and practice and the 'organisation and function of the Communist Party', was a source of concern.<sup>302</sup> Hedwige failed supplementary and oral exams. She appealed to both the VIHA President, Dr Newman Morris and the VIHA's secretary, Mrs Bowcher, that she had been 'misled' in respect to both the need to sit for exams and placed in an unfair position' because of the postponing

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<sup>298</sup> Hedwige to Mother St Paul, 10 May 1936, A522.1/181-186, Religious Sisters of Charity Archives (RSCA).

<sup>299</sup> D. Bethune, Briefing Note on Hedwige attached to letter from Bethune to Greig Smith, 7 January 1938, Students' File, Box 12, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>300</sup> Parker, Speech at 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Centacare Sydney, p. 2.

<sup>301</sup> Bethune to Stanley Greig Smith, 1 June 1937, Students' Files, Sr Hedwige, Box 12, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>302</sup> BSST Syllabus 1935, Social Work Training, Box 20, AAHA and AASW, UMA.



of exams.<sup>303</sup> The VIHA strenuously denied any breakdown in communication between the parties.<sup>304</sup> The view of Melbourne University's Professor Gunn that 'this case offers special difficulties to the Board of Social Studies as this woman is a nun, knows little about the world outside and nothing of University examinations', reflected the gulf between academics and the nuns.<sup>305</sup>

After much debate between the VIHA and the nuns, the education committee of the Victorian Council of Social Training (VCST) resolved to 'eliminate' MPI from Hedwige's program.<sup>306</sup> For 'cultural purposes' Hedwige was asked to undertake a course in social philosophy.<sup>307</sup> [Perhaps it was a coincidence but Teresa Wardell, the next Catholic to study social services in Melbourne, experienced similar difficulties with the political subject.]<sup>308</sup>

The Hedwige matter soured relations between the VIHA and St Vincent's for many years. In late 1936, Dorothy Bethune, the VIHA director of training and almoner at RMH, suggested to her Sydney counterpart that Hedwige complete her studies under Norma Parker's stewardship, who by this time was almoner at St Vincent's Hospital Darlinghurst.<sup>309</sup> Helen Rees of Sydney's Board of Social Studies and Training firmly rejected the proposal, saying 'I do not want to connect up the training of Catholic sisters with the local BSST. The situation with regards

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<sup>303</sup> Hedwige to Newman Morris, 3 April 1936; Hedwige to Bowcher 15 April 1936, Students' File, Box 12, UMA.

<sup>304</sup> Bethune to O'Doherty, 6 April 1936, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

<sup>305</sup> Memorandum from Professor Gunn, Social Science Committee, University of Melbourne 8 April 1936, Almoner's Department File, SVHMA.

<sup>306</sup> Greig Smith to O'Doherty, 11 March 1935, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

<sup>307</sup> Bethune to O'Doherty, 6 April 1936, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

<sup>308</sup> The only other two Catholics to study through the VIHA and subsequently VCST in the 1930s – Parker and Moffit – had shortened programs due to their prior post-graduate qualifications and experience.

<sup>309</sup> Bethune, Directress of Training, VIHA to Mother Rectress, SVHM, 28 May 1936, Almoner Department File SVHMA.

to their standards and methods is already very difficult and I think that this might complicate it'.<sup>310</sup>

On this basis Bethune advised Greig Smith that it would be 'quite impossible' for Hedwige to complete her studies in Sydney.<sup>311</sup> The VIHA believed it had made sufficient concessions and tensions between the parties reached a peak. In March 1937 the VIHA terminated Hedwige's enrolment as there had been no resolution to the issues it had hoped 'in a spirit of hopefulness... would disappear as the training progressed'.<sup>312</sup> Greig Smith defended the decision:

The difficulties in the matter of practical work are not creations of the Committee, but appear to be inseparable from the training of one who has to face the conditions imposed by membership of a religious order such as that which claims the adherence of Sr Hedwige.<sup>313</sup>

O'Doherty responded by claiming Hedwige had undertaken the course as set down by the VIHA, and 'we are at a loss to know when we have created difficulties'.<sup>314</sup> In May 1937 Greig Smith expressed to O'Doherty his view that 'the committee feels much unhappiness on account of the situation that has arisen... they can see no way out of the impasse that has been reached'.<sup>315</sup> O'Doherty requested the VIHA outline 'the reasons which have prevented Sr Hedwige' from being recognised as a trained almoner as 'it is possible that inaccurate explanations may be made by those who do not know the true facts and to correct these, I think it is wise to have an official statement'.<sup>316</sup> Greig Smith did not reply.

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<sup>310</sup> Rees to Bethune, 5 January 1937, File V.2.03, Box 10, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>311</sup> Bethune to Greig-Smith, 8 January 1937, File V.2.03 Box 10, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>312</sup> Bethune, 'Briefing Notes on Hedwige', *op. cit.*

<sup>313</sup> Greig Smith to O'Doherty, 18 March 1937, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>314</sup> O'Doherty to Greig Smith, 18 April 1937, Students File, VIHA Collection, Box 12 UMA.

<sup>315</sup> Greig Smith to Mother Rectress, SVHM, 6 May 1937, Almoner's Department File SVHMA.

<sup>316</sup> O'Doherty to Greig Smith, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

The matter did not rest there, however. In late 1937 Newman Morris advised the VIHA education sub-committee that ‘members of the honorary medical staff at St Vincent’s Hospital had frequently expressed a desire for the appointment of a lay almoner’.<sup>317</sup> O’Doherty offered a compromise saying the nuns were ‘not opposed to a lay almoner being employed as an assistant’, provided the VIHA recognised Sr Hedwige as a fully trained almoner.<sup>318</sup> Newman Morris, who appeared keen to resolve the impasse, hoped the VIHA could grant Hedwige an almoner’s certificate, provided she did not train almoners.<sup>319</sup> The VIHA education sub-committee agreed to this set of compromises with an additional clause that Hedwige’s accreditation as an almoner held no status outside Victoria. The VIHA executive committee, however, said the education sub-committee’s recommendation involved a ‘doubtful precedent’. Dr Ethel Osborne, an executive member, was asked to hold further discussion with O’Doherty to try to find an ‘agreeable compromise’.<sup>320</sup> There is no record of any discussions and the VIHA remained steadfast because of Hedwige’s incomplete academic and practical work. Reports on her fieldwork experience were not in accord with ‘justifying the granting of the certificate without further training’.<sup>321</sup>

### 3.8.3 Presbyterian Almoner

Parker’s departure posed a problem for St Vincent’s. Hedwige was not yet certified and as much as the sisters might think otherwise, the hospital required a trained almoner if it wanted to maintain its reputation. Yet, the decision to advertise Parker’s position was ironical, given only a few years earlier, insufficient finances had been cited as one of the reasons for dispensing with the almoner’s

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<sup>317</sup> VIHA, Report of the Education Sub-Committee, 9 December 1937, CWSV Collection 1/21, Institute of Almoners Minutes 1937-1943, UMA.

<sup>318</sup> O’Doherty to Bethune, 5 January 1938, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

<sup>319</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>320</sup> VIHA, Minutes of the Executive Committee, 15 December 1937, CWSV Collection 1/21, Institute of Almoners Minutes 1937-1943, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>321</sup> Bethune, ‘Briefing Notes on Hedwige’, *op. cit.*

role. In correspondence to Newman Morris, O'Doherty denied that Parker's departure was unrelated to her move two years earlier to dismiss Parker.<sup>322</sup> The small, closely-knit almoner movement would have been unlikely to be impressed by the treatment that Parker had received from the nuns. A shortage of trained social workers, especially Catholics, led to no applicants at first.<sup>323</sup> Ironically, given the separation between Catholic and Protestant almoners in Melbourne at this time, Una Riall a Presbyterian emerged as the potential successor to Parker. Trained in both nursing and almoning, Riall had managed the St Vincent's almoner department, on Parker's behalf, during the 1933 Christmas period. Riall worked for the Melbourne District Nursing Society and After Care Home from December 1934 until she joined St Vincent's in July 1936.<sup>324</sup>

Riall was well regarded for her 'maturity and balance' and the VIHA reported that her appointment gave 'great satisfaction' to medical staff.<sup>325</sup> Nevertheless, Riall faced several obstacles at St Vincent's. Firstly, she was a Presbyterian, working in a staunchly Catholic organisation.<sup>326</sup> Secondly, while O'Doherty may have modified her views about the need for a lay almoner, many sisters had not. Riall experienced difficulties in being accepted and was forced to mingle with visitors when visiting wards, so as to escape detection from the nuns.<sup>327</sup> Finally, her tenure coincided with the last – and quite tense – phase of Hedwige's disputes with the VIHA. As Parker's successor, Riall was nominally the head of the almoner department and therefore Hedwige's supervisor. A non-Catholic lay supervisor may not have impressed some sisters. The VIHA said that

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<sup>322</sup> O'Doherty to Newman Morris, 1936, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>323</sup> Mother Rectress to Bethune, 2 June 1936, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

<sup>324</sup> 'Almoners report progress' *The Argus*, 7 March 1935 p 15; Bethune to Mother Rectress 20 July 1936, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

<sup>325</sup> VIHA, Executive Committee Minutes, 15 July 1936, VIHA, Accession 90/24, Box 11; Student File, Una Riall, Box 13, Almoner and Social Work Students' Files, UMA.

<sup>326</sup> Riall was educated at Presbyterian Ladies College, East Melbourne. Her referee to study through the VIA was Parker. Student File, Una Riall, Box 13, Almoner and Social Work Students' Files, UMA.

'immediately following' their termination of Hedwige's candidature in 1937, the nuns requested Riall to resign.<sup>328</sup>

For the next decade Hedwige led the St Vincent's almoner department. Her successor, Marjorie Awbuyn, believes that the department during this period was a 'closed book to the rest of the Welfare Community', with a shadow cast over professional social work at SVHM.<sup>329</sup> Although she was not recognised as a VIHA member, Greig Smith invited Hedwige to meetings, perhaps in an effort to break down some of the barriers. Hedwige replied that as she had not been accepted as an almoner, she felt her presence, at annual meetings of the Victorian Association of Hospital Almoners 'might not be acceptable' to other almoners.<sup>330</sup>

When Hedwige left SVHM in 1947 she again applied for VIHA recognition.<sup>331</sup> Greig Smith, on the advice of directress of training, told Hedwige that the VIHA was not prepared to award her the certificate.<sup>332</sup> Hedwige's courteous reply, suggests she had finally realised that a certificate would not be granted.<sup>333</sup>

Putting aside internal Catholic resistance to professional social work, what role, if any, did religious differences play in influencing the characteristics of professional Catholic social work in Melbourne in the 1930s? Two documents in the SVHM archives make the point that almoner training in Melbourne was firmly in the hands of 'a very small group with definite Melbourne Hospital sympathies... and the powerful sub-committees' of the VIHA.<sup>334</sup> In itself this situation does not

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<sup>327</sup> n.a. Document, p. 2, Almoner Department File, SVMA.

<sup>328</sup> Bethune, 'Briefing Notes on Hedwige', *op. cit.*

<sup>329</sup> Awbuyn, St Vincent's Hospital Social Work Department, p. 6.

<sup>330</sup> Hedwige to Greig Smith, 21 September 1938, VIHA Collection, Box 10, UMA.

<sup>331</sup> Hedwige to Player, 16 January 1947, Box 10, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>332</sup> Greig Smith to SVHM Mother Rectress, March 1947, Box 10, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>333</sup> Hedwige to Greig Smith, 17 October 1947, Box 10, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>334</sup> Document referred to as 'Minutes Education Sub-Committee, 21 April 1936', Almoner

necessarily equate with sectarianism. The unknown writer lamented that while there was a Catholic on the VIHA Executive Committee (Norma Parker) there were 'no Catholics nor [sic] anyone representing Catholic interests' on its powerful sub-committees.<sup>335</sup> The non-appointment of Parker to the newly constituted Victorian Institute of Social Training in 1935 was perceived as excluding a Catholic and gave rise to the view that:

there is a definite religious prejudice in the Institute of Almoners and the Board of Social Studies... a complete absence of any real spirit of co-operation and goodwill, and a lack of understanding of the Catholis [sic] viewpoint on social questions.<sup>336</sup>

Yet, in 1935, Parker's situation was fluid. While she may have been excluded on account of her religion, it is also quite possible that Parker did not want to commit herself, especially as she was considering moving interstate.

The various disputes between the VIHA and the Sisters of Charity involved cultural and religious issues. Hedwige tried unsuccessfully to defy the VIHA. It appears that the VIHA's ban on Hedwige wearing a habit when interviewing clients was perceived by the Sisters of Charity as anti-Catholic. In an ironic twist, Parker offered Hedwige support, and provided a reference affirming the nun's work at SVHM.<sup>337</sup> In a private letter to Hedwige, Parker proposed the 'only satisfactory solution' to the difficulties and opposition to Catholic welfare generally was to establish a Catholic School of Social Work in Australia.<sup>338</sup>

I do not think that it is the slightest use fighting against them....we shall have to use our best wits and organize quietly so that eventually we shall be a match for the other parties.<sup>339</sup>

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Department File, SMVHMA. [Because of the criticism of the sub-committees of the VIA, it was likely this document was prepared by another Education Sub-Committee, possibly of SVHM. It is written in first person, but not by Norma Parker as it makes implicit references to her.]

<sup>335</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>336</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>337</sup> Parker to Bethune, 1937, Box 12, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>338</sup> Parker to Hedwige, 9 April 1937, p 1, A522.4/401, RSCA.

### 3.9 'Rescued her from a hospital other than ours'

As outlined in Chapter Two, NSW Government hospitals had established social work services independent of the development of almoner services in Melbourne, and at an earlier time.<sup>340</sup> In the case of the Catholic sector, the impetus for establishing social work departments in Sydney's two leading Catholic hospitals in the 1930s was a combination of the lead taken by St Vincent's Melbourne, the availability of trained social workers and the Sydney Archdiocese's desire to establish welfare services on par with government hospitals.

Norma Parker's move to Sydney was a classic push-pull situation. Throughout 1935 her position at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne remained tenuous. Although O'Doherty had postponed Parker's departure, Parker continued to work in an unpleasant atmosphere and she was alert to new possibilities further afield to progress her career.

In early 1936 Parker held discussions with the Little Company of Mary, which operated Lewisham Hospital, a well-regarded Catholic hospital in Sydney.<sup>341</sup> It is unclear why these discussions to establish an almoner department did not crystalise. On 4 May 1936, Parker left Melbourne to join the Sisters of Charity at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney (SVHS). This was somewhat ironic given the same religious order had treated her poorly in Melbourne. Only one sister, for example, attended Parker's farewell from SVHM and *The Advocate* reported her departure in subdued terms.<sup>342</sup> In contrast, the Perth Catholic newspaper spoke glowingly of her contribution to professional welfare, and the secular media – both in Melbourne and Sydney – recorded positive accounts of Parker's achievements.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>340</sup> Norma Parker makes the point that she was 'always interested' in developments which were 'unrelated but going in the same direction' in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth. See Parker, 'Early Social Work in Retrospect', p. 13.

<sup>341</sup> Awbuyn, St Vincent's Hospital Social Work Department, p. 6.

<sup>342</sup> Cited in Egan, *Ways of a Hospital*.

<sup>343</sup> *The Record*, 1936, 'Almoner goes to Sydney', *Herald*, 29 April 1936, UMA.

The VIHA was also disappointed to lose Parker and wished her ‘every success in her new sphere in Sydney’.<sup>344</sup> O’Doherty, perhaps in a sign that her initial decision to dismiss Parker had been hasty, was pleased that Parker was joining another Sisters of Charity hospital. O’Doherty’s claim that she ‘rescued’ Parker from being engaged by the Little Company of Mary overlooks the fine reputation that Parker had developed and the work of the Archdiocese of Sydney and the nuns at St Vincent’s Hospital to recruit her.<sup>345</sup>

From her perspective, Parker ‘fervently hoped that she herself would find in her sphere the co-operation that was wanting here [in Melbourne]’.<sup>346</sup> Why would the same order of nuns – albeit in another city – want to establish an almoner department? Part of the answer lay in the archdiocese’s interest. In late March 1936 Sydney’s Co-Adjutor Archbishop, Michael Sheehan, had written to the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity imploring her to ‘take immediate steps to have an almoner appointed’.<sup>347</sup> Sheehan advanced two reasons for a ‘proposed appointment [being] a matter of urgency’. Firstly, ‘I have been privately informed that the Government is about to inaugurate almoner work in a city hospital and that unless we enter the field at once our interests will certainly suffer’.<sup>348</sup> Secondly, Sheehan said that ‘rarely can you get help’ from the SVHM almoner department, which was not surprising given the distance, and cost of communications, between the two cities.<sup>349</sup> There was no indication of a response from the Mother Superior.

In early May Sheehan wrote again, this time indicating Archbishop Kelly’s interest and advising that Monsignor Patrick O’Doherty, an archdiocesan consultant, had

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<sup>344</sup> VIHA Executive Committee Minutes, 20 May 1936, Box 11, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>345</sup> O’Doherty to Morris, Box 10, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>346</sup> n.a. document, Almoner Department File, SVHMA.

<sup>347</sup> Sheehan to Canice, 27 March 1936, A522.4/387, RSCA.

<sup>348</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>349</sup> *ibid.*



been asked to investigate the appointment of an almoner.<sup>350</sup> There are no extant records as to what investigations O'Doherty undertook.<sup>351</sup> The sisters, however, had been working on the matter, and on 20 April 1936 they had made an offer to Parker to establish an almoner department at SVHS.<sup>352</sup> Parker agreed on the basis that she would receive a 'private' area that would enable her to 'talk over with patients their worries and troubles'.<sup>353</sup> Additionally, Parker understood her role would involve significant general organising of Catholic charitable activities in Sydney, which would be additional to her hospital work, and as such it 'would be only fair that I should be recompensed in some way'.<sup>354</sup>

Kelly congratulated the sisters for a 'move in the right direction' and suggested that Parker make contact with existing Catholic welfare advisers including the Catholic Women's Association, the SVdP and the Medical Guild of St Luke.<sup>355</sup> Several priests, including Doherty, were given responsibility for maintaining a watch over the development of almonry. Kelly reminded the nuns that it was 'desirable' to commence activities before Sydney Hospital established its almoner department in June 1936.<sup>356</sup>

Parker's work attracted a 'staunch band of supporters', including Mother Healy, the previous head of SVHM, now based in Sydney. The CWA welcomed Parker as a trailblazer in this 'rather new profession' of hospital social science.<sup>357</sup> Parker quickly gained an impressive reputation in Sydney and helped to found the NSW

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<sup>350</sup> Sheehan to Canice, 3 May 1936, A522.4/389, RSCA.

<sup>351</sup> For details about Monsignor Patrick A. Doherty see *Manly*, Vol. 7, No. 4, October 1946, p. 86.

<sup>352</sup> Parker to Canice, 20 April 1936, A522.4/391, RSCA.

<sup>353</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>354</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>355</sup> Kelly to Healy, 12 May 1936, A522.4/392, RSCA.

<sup>356</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>357</sup> *Catholic Women's Review*, 6 June 1936, p. 6.

Institute of Hospital Almoners in November 1936.<sup>358</sup> Under the broad objective of providing for the 'social conditions of patients', Parker's role at this time included the supply of insulin, scales, syringes and needles; 'investigation of home conditions' for patients with diabetes, rheumatic hearts and orthopedic conditions; arrangements for convalescent and special care; and the care of patients with inoperable or terminal diseases.<sup>359</sup> Parker's hope that a 'different attitude' would prevail at Australia's oldest Catholic hospital quickly materialised. There was little or none of the animosity that she had experienced in Melbourne, partly because of the 'style' of the Sydney doctors, who, Parker says, enabled a social worker to be 'more involved in the work of patients'.<sup>360</sup>

Parker said the almoner's role was to provide 'help to the doctor that is expected of her, [she] must also map out a plan which will help the patient to help himself – and that is not always easy'.<sup>361</sup> One similarity between Sydney and Melbourne was opposition by some members of the nursing profession towards almoners. In November 1937 Parker raised the matter of some district nurses continuing to undertake specialised work that was the social worker's domain. Parker's colleague, Kate Ogilvie, of Sydney Hospital concurred that 'there is still a great deal of misunderstanding and a little ill-feeling concerning almoners evident in a certain section of the District Nursing Association'.<sup>362</sup> After five years as SVHS social work head, Parker moved on to the first of several important academic appointments as assistant director of social work training at the University of Sydney.<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> *Annual Report, NSW Institute of Almoners, 1938* (Sydney, Australasian Medical Publishing Company Ltd, 1938), located in Institute of Hospital Almoners Files, Council of Social Service of New South Wales (CSSNSW), Box 48927, MLNSW.

<sup>359</sup> *Annual Reports St Vincent's Hospital Sydney, 1937-1941*, (Sydney, Sisters of Charity).

<sup>360</sup> Parker, Interview, 2002.

<sup>361</sup> Newspaper article (title not stated), VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>362</sup> See Australian Association of Almoners (AAA), NSW Branch Minutes, 17 November 1937, MLK 03480, MLNSW.

Following Parker's decision to join SVHS, Lewisham Hospital approached another Australian qualified social worker, Eileen Davidson, who was working at St Thomas' Hospital, London. Davidson, the eldest of four children had been born into a Perth working class family, who lived near the Parkers. She had attended the same school as Parker and also joined the Newman Society committee. She obtained a BA from UWA in 1931.<sup>364</sup> On McMahon's instigation, Davidson became the third Australian to gain a scholarship to study social services at the NCSSS. At the inaugural Newman Society ball in 1932, McMahon advised Davidson and a law graduand, Joan McKenna, of the possibility of CUA scholarships.<sup>365</sup> 'In deference to her family, McKenna did not accept'.<sup>366</sup> When Davidson's father heard this he too was troubled. Eileen recalls her father saying 'you can't go to America by yourself'.<sup>367</sup> She persuaded her father otherwise, and from the moment she landed in America, Eileen 'regarded the NCSSS as her family'.<sup>368</sup>

Vital social and moral questions were brilliantly taught by the eminent Mgr John A. Ryan, Rev Father Haas, who lectured to us on social economics and who was in demand as chairman for the Secretary of Labour's many industrial inquiries, never failed to have us admitted at observers at these important and highly classified hearings.<sup>369</sup>

Davidson graduated with a Master of Arts Degree and a Diploma in Social Services in 1935. Her placements included the Washington Child Guidance Clinic,

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<sup>363</sup> In 1996 St Vincent's Hospital Sydney renamed its Social Work Department in Professor Parker's honour. *St Vincent's Pulse*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 1996), p. 6; *ibid.*, Vol. 4, No. 5, July 1999, p. 8. The writer was a staff member at SVHS during discussions about the renaming of the social work department and recalls a residual attitude amongst some Sisters of Charity about professional social workers displacing the sisters' work.

<sup>364</sup> *The Record*, 26 September 1931, p. 5.

<sup>365</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>366</sup> McMahon, *Cloister, College, Campus*, pp: 184-185. McKenna studied Law and in 1936 was one of the first women admitted to the Western Australian Bar. See *The Record* 14 March 1936, 21 March 1936. McKenna married a Labor lawyer, Eric Heenan, who later became a noted judge.

<sup>367</sup> Interview with Eileen Davidson, Darlinghurst, NSW, 13 July 2001.

<sup>368</sup> *ibid.*

St Elizabeth's Psychiatric Hospital, Anacostia, and the New York Foundling Hospital, one of that State's major adoption agencies. She also worked at the Henry Watson Children's Aid Society of Baltimore, and with the 'District Eleven' organisation, a joint Catholic social service of the SVdP and nine trained social workers under the leadership of Maguire and Elizabeth Mullholland.<sup>370</sup> In 1936 Davidson left America to gain further qualifications in medical social work in England and settled at St Thomas', where she completed the requirements set down by the British Institute of Almoners.<sup>371</sup>

An unexpected visit from two Lewisham nuns to Davidson in 1936 led to an invitation that she establish an Almoner Department at their 'expanding hospital', which included a 'large outpatients department'.<sup>372</sup> She accepted the offer and returned to Australia in late 1936.<sup>373</sup> Davidson established Lewisham's almoner department in February 1937, the fourth such department in a Sydney hospital. Davidson brought considerable international training and experience to her new role, and she received wide acceptance as a professional staff member with a focus on the financial, emotional, and personal aspects of patients. Davidson wrote that the almoner's role was to supplement the doctors and nurses by tending to the 'problems which arise over and over again among the sick poor. They are real difficulties; they interrupt treatment; they can even prevent it'.<sup>374</sup> During five years at Lewisham, Davidson established a solid reputation for almoning as well as her own abilities. She did not experience the same obstacles that Parker had experienced in Melbourne. With the depression era lifting there

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<sup>369</sup> Davidson, 'The National Catholic School of Social Service', p. 302.

<sup>370</sup> *ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>371</sup> E.M. Davidson, Department of Social Work, Lewisham Hospital, Some Explanatory Notes, 1986, p. 1, Little Company of Mary Congregational Archives (LCMCA).

<sup>372</sup> Parker to Gilroy, 30 October 1947, Catholic Welfare Bureau (CWB), B23734, SAA.

<sup>373</sup> On 14 December 1936 Davidson attended the first meeting of the NSW Branch of the Australian Association of Almoner on 14 December 1936. See AAA, NSW Branch, Minutes, MLK 03480, MLNSW.

<sup>374</sup> E. Davidson, 'The Almoner Department of Lewisham Hospital', *Lewisham Hospital* 49<sup>th</sup>

was a little more optimism in the community and the Lewisham nuns gave her considerable support. Davidson also had the rare distinction in the 1930s and 1940s of holding American and British social work qualifications and having worked in both countries. She looked back on this pioneering era, commenting 'it was exciting and challenging and we worked with a will, determined to fulfill the wonderful faith and pride that Miss Agnes Regan and her staff in Washington had in us'.<sup>375</sup>

### 3.10 Conclusion

Trained Catholic social workers experienced multiple pressures in the 1930s: resistance from within the church, mostly from religious women, who as we saw in the case of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne (SVHM) felt threatened by 'professional' staff; an almoner profession deeply rooted in English practice, and a Catholic paradigm of care based on large scale institutions. Unlike the United States where the Catholic bishops promoted social work and its integral role within Catholic welfare, the Australian church, with a few exceptions, adopted less enthusiasm towards professional welfare practices before the 1950s.<sup>376</sup> Despite holding impressive academic qualifications and having international experience, pioneer Australian Catholic social workers faced the challenge of welfare services being a low priority. In 1937, for example, the Australian Bishops reaffirmed their preferential option for Catholic education, saying 'we believe as firmly as did the Catholic Bishops [sic] of fifty years ago that in maintaining our religious schools we are doing the best service to our people and to the nation'.<sup>377</sup>

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*Annual Report, Year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 1938*, p. 16.

<sup>375</sup> Davidson, 'The National Catholic School of Social Service', p. 297.

<sup>376</sup> Parker, Speech at 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Centacare Sydney, p. 1. Cotter says that Moffit took the initiative and wrote to McMahon asking him about scholarships. R. Cotter, A brief history of the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, Melbourne, 1935-1988, MS, p. 3, MDHC. This view is not supported by either McMahon or Parker, the latter, who would be too modest to express it, even if it was correct.

In the context of limited resources during the Depression and uncertainty about a new profession, there were few employment opportunities for social workers outside of hospitals. It is not surprising that Catholic social work, like general social work, began in a medical setting. The difficulties associated with professional recognition of social work at SVHM reflected a broader debate between voluntary-based charity and trained welfare staff, the latter resented by many religious sisters. At SVHM, Norma Parker neither upheld the model 'Lady Almoner' nor traditional Catholic charity. She worked effectively with external individuals and organisations, many of whom were not Catholic. Nor was she content to provide palliative social services. Parker's advocacy on behalf of the poor and powerless represented a progressive, social justice model, more in keeping with North America ideas than the British model of social work which prevailed in Melbourne in the 1930s.

Catholic social workers formed a closely-knit group in Melbourne in the depression decade. Their numbers were small for several reasons. The traditional route for unmarried Catholic women to serve the church was through religious orders. Contemporary attitudes, too, frowned upon women – regardless of religious conviction – pursuing a career, and women in employment usually resigned at the time of their marriage. Young Catholic women were more likely to seek eligible husbands and devote themselves to raising a family, and few had the resources or opportunity to study at university, due to the financial difficulties of the 1930s.

Did Melbourne's Catholic social workers form a separate group as O'Brien and Turner have claimed, and if so, was this inward approach a reflection of sectarianism?<sup>378</sup> The Victorian Institute of Hospital Almoners (VIHA), although set-up along the lines of its British counterpart, did encourage Catholic hospitals to appoint almoners. The VIHA was instrumental in supporting Norma Parker's

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<sup>377</sup> Joint Pastoral Letter of the Archbishops and Bishops of the Fourth Plenary Council of Australia and New Zealand, Sydney, September, 1937 in *Concilium Plenarium IV; Official Documents* (Sydney, 1937).

appointment to SVHM in 1932. In Teresa Wardell's case, the Catholic Women's Social Guild (CWSG) recognised her as a 'trained social worker who will think clearly and act forcefully and carefully' as early as 1936.<sup>379</sup> The evidence is clear that Parker, Moffit, Murphy, and Wardell supported one another. Apart from Wardell, the other women moved to Sydney, where they were able to advance their careers with much greater degrees of co-operation in Catholic and secular organisations. O'Brien and Turner are correct in pointing out the close links between Catholic social workers. Parker, for example, provided significant support to Moffit in her appointments to Melbourne's Child Guidance Clinic (1932), Melbourne's Catholic Social Service Bureau (1935), St Vincent's Hospital Sydney (1939), and Callan Park Psychiatric Hospital (1943). Murphy also followed Moffit to St Vincent's Sydney. Perhaps this succession of appointments can be explained in terms of demand for Catholic social workers exceeding supply as well as sympathy towards members of one faith. Nevertheless in Melbourne in the 1930s Catholic social workers, such as Parker and Moffit, engaged with professional bodies.

The evidence presented in this chapter shows some degree of sectarianism, coupled with efforts by the Protestant ascendancy to include Catholic social workers in professional associations. In the case of an untrained almoner, Sr Hedwige, there does appear to have been unpleasantness towards her, though Hedwige's belligerent attitude, at times, may not have endeared herself to other almoners. The VIHA made concessions to Hedwige, but without a blanket exemption from undertaking training, Hedwige and her religious order, interpreted the VIHA's motives negatively. Wardell, too, experienced some difficulties in her training, but whether this can be attributed to sectarianism or rather a cultural clash with Melbourne Hospital, remains open to interpretation. By contrast, Parker, Moffit and Murphy do not appear to have been on the receiving end of sectarianism, which may, in part, have been due to their more circumspect nature

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<sup>378</sup> O'Brien and Turner, *Searching for a professional identity*, p. 43.

<sup>379</sup> 'How are the slums to be abolished', *The Horizon*, No. 10, Vol. 111, (New Series).

than Hedwige or Wardell. There is little doubt that competition between Royal Melbourne Hospital, which reflected British cultural values and the Irish culture of SVHM, influenced attitudes between staff of both hospitals.

O'Brien and Turner's focus on almoning in Melbourne in the 1930s and 1940s, overlooks the tangible influence by Catholic pioneer social workers on the development of the social work profession in Melbourne. Catholic women do not appear to have embraced a separatist culture, as O'Brien and Turner have proposed.

The inter-war period was also marked by the growth, and over-crowding, of Catholic children's institutions. The church steadfastly maintained its separate facilities to ensure children were raised as Catholic. In NSW and South Australia, the state would have preferred the church to be more open to boarding-out, while in Victoria, limited state aid encouraged an even greater reliance on such institutions. The scene was thus set for a showdown between the infusion of new ideas from a small number of skilled Catholic professionals employed in diocesan welfare bureaux, and an expanding sector of Catholic children's homes that operated virtually autonomously from both church and state. These battles, which would last more than three decades, had their genesis in the 1940s, which will be discussed in the next chapter.



## **CHAPTER FOUR:**

### **Foundation of Catholic welfare bureaux in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines how the momentum for professional Catholic social work in Australia, outlined in the previous chapter, was translated into the establishment of specialist children's and family welfare services in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Australian diocesan bureaux were closely modelled on American Catholic welfare services.<sup>1</sup> American ideas played a central role, though the specific conditions that led to the establishment of Catholic Welfare Bureau (CWB) varied from state to state. The struggle for recognition and adequate financing of the bureaux will be assessed within the context of church attitudes towards the development of professional social welfare services.

A major theme is the introduction of new welfare approaches at a time when the clergy and religious orders dominated the church's welfare services and when the church as whole had strong reservations about programs such as fostering. Trained social workers, Alice Blackall, Constance Moffit, Viva Murphy and Norma Parker (Melbourne and Sydney), Teresa Wardell (Melbourne), Eileen Davidson and Elvira Lyons (Sydney) and Hannah Buckley and Moya Britten-Jones (Adelaide) inspired the formation and subsequent development of bureaux. These articulate women challenged the orthodox welfare practices of voluntary-based parish services and large-scale children's institutions. By advocating a broader range of options for homeless and orphan children, the pioneer social workers made the first serious challenge from within the church to alter the dominant paradigm of institutionalised care.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Boylan, 'The Diocesan Bureau of Social Welfare: Its nature and scope in Catholic Charities' in M. Boylan (ed.), *The Catholic Church and Social Welfare: A Symposium* (New York, Greenwich Book Publishers, 1961).

This chapter also aims to demonstrate the motivation and perseverance of these lay social workers. The women faced considerable financial and personal constraints, and worked within a dominant paradigm that upheld the status quo of Catholic charity. The social workers sought to work co-operatively with the voluntary sector, but there were inherent conflicts between the parties as to the best way to assist clients, especially the assessment and ongoing care of 'dependent' children. The church and its religious orders had successfully staved off external threats, such as governments' push for boarding-out, for several decades. Now, professional social workers employed by the church represented a unique challenge from within. In each of the states mentioned above professionals encountered considerable resistance from powerful 'independent' children's institutions.<sup>2</sup>

The foundation years of professional Catholic welfare in Australia were marked by an artificial bonding between volunteers and professionals, little systematic co-ordination of welfare services, and varying degrees of tension about new and integrated approaches to child and family assessment. The church, as the largest operator of residential child care services in Australia, was challenged by new social welfare practices, such as the care of children in residential settings, admission policies and practices, and ongoing assessment of clients.<sup>3</sup>

Pragmatism, nevertheless, underpinned the approach by most early Catholic social workers. Limited employment prospects restricted the role of social workers. Organisationally, social workers had few moral supporters in their diocesan organisations. During the 1940s opportunities for collaboration between volunteers and trained social workers were reluctantly contested and sometimes rejected outright.

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<sup>2</sup> The descriptive 'independent' has often been used to describe Catholic children's institutions. See for example, P.D. Travers, 'Planning in a Church Welfare Agency', Masters Thesis, Flinders University, August 1972.

<sup>3</sup> F. Tay, 'The administration of social services provisions for under-privileged children in Western Australia, 1947-1954', *University Studies in West Australian History*, Vol. 111, No. 1, September 1957, p. 76.

Another theme of this chapter is the importance of the institutional church in the development of Catholic social welfare. John Lawrence's description of the 'powerful men', who helped shaped the secular social work profession,<sup>4</sup> had a parallel with influential clerics, such as Monsignor (later Archbishop) Eris O'Brien in Sydney, Monsignor John Lonergan (Melbourne) and Archbishop Matthew Beovich (Adelaide). Without their support, the social workers' vision for bureaux would have been unlikely to be achieved. Yet, their dioceses provided insufficient funding to enable the bureaux to develop their services to the potential that the women had envisaged.

The appointment of clerical directors, as recommended by the trained social workers, brought greater credibility to the bureaux, but, as will be discussed in this and the subsequent chapter, it would not be a panacea to financial problems of bureaux in the 1940s.

## **4.2 'Acute and dreadful poverty'**

Lay women's groups played an important role in the development of professional Catholic welfare in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. The most prominent group, the Catholic Women's Social Guild (CWSG), founded by Dr Mary Glowery in Melbourne in 1913, established probation services as well as family support, hospital visitation and care of homeless children, including Santa Casa, 'a rest home for delicate and sick children from industrial areas and outback places'.<sup>5</sup> Although described by *The Argus* as a 'harmless' social meeting place for Catholic women,<sup>6</sup> the CWSG demonstrated a practical application to helping women and children, due to a reformist agenda initiated by Julia Flynn, Maud O'Connell, Anna Terese Brennan, Constance Hoy<sup>7</sup>, Wardell and Blackall, the latter two who would

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<sup>4</sup> R.J. Lawrence, *Professional Social Work in Australia*, (Canberra, Australian National University Press, (Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> 'The Growth of Catholic Social Work in Victoria', *The Horizon*, No. 2, Vol. 11 (New Series) December 1, 1934.

<sup>6</sup> *The Argus*, 28 June 1949, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> 'Obituary for Miss Constance Hoy' *The Horizon*, Vol. XXX, No. 3 (Revised Series)

become foundation social workers at the Melbourne and Sydney Catholic family welfare bureaux.<sup>8</sup> Brennan, Victoria's first female lawyer, served as the Guild's second president from 1918 to 1920.<sup>9</sup> O'Connell worked on reducing community injustice and in 1930 founded the Catholic Welfare Training Centre, a forerunner to the Grey Sisters<sup>10</sup>; Flynn overcame chauvinistic discrimination before being appointed Victoria's first female Chief Inspector of Schools in 1928.<sup>11</sup> The guild's publication, *Women's Social Work*, launched in 1916, and succeeded by *The Horizon* reflected a new consciousness.<sup>12</sup> Yet, the CWSG came into conflict with Melbourne Archbishop, Daniel Mannix, who opposed the CWSG because of its affiliation with the National Council of Women, which supported conscription.<sup>13</sup>

During the 1930s the CWSG attracted new socially conscious women who wanted to make a contribution to Melbourne's welfare services. By the mid 1930s the CWSG had 7,000 members.<sup>14</sup> Mary Rogers, inaugural president of the CWSG welfare committee and a special magistrate at the Richmond Children's Court, led the guild's interest in juvenile delinquency. Rogers, a member of the Australian Labor Party, was the first woman elected to a municipal council in Australia.<sup>15</sup> The involvement of Moffit and Parker inspired a 'lively feminist body' and promoted

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March 1985.

<sup>8</sup> Blackall's role as the first social worker in Sydney's Catholic Welfare Bureau will be outlined in Chapter 4.

<sup>9</sup> A. Blackall, 'Anna Brennan – A Valiant Women', *The Horizon*, 1 January 1963; *Catholic Citizen* (London), November 1962.

<sup>10</sup> *The Horizon*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1985; M.R. MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope: Institutes of Women Religious in Australia* Revised edition (Darlinghurst, NSW, Crossing Press and ACU, 2002), p. 308.

<sup>11</sup> 'A champion for girls', in E. Campion, *Great Australian Catholics* (Richmond, Victoria, David Lovell, 1997), pp: 161-163.

<sup>12</sup> *Women's Social Work*, *The Horizon*, Jubilee Issue, October 1966.

<sup>13</sup> S. Kennedy, *Faith and Feminism* (Studies in the Christian Movement, Manly, Sydney, Blackburn Dove, Sydney, 1986), p. 95.

<sup>14</sup> *The Argus*, 27 April 1936, p. 13; *ibid.*, 28 April 1936, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> 'Death of Mrs Mary Rogers', *The Horizon*, No. 106, Vol. 8, (New Series), November

what Sally Kennedy has described as a 'vigorous role for Catholic women in terms of social and political reform'.<sup>16</sup> This paradigm represented a sharp change from the philosophy that Naomi Turner notes, where 'women remain in the home as mothers and wives'.<sup>17</sup>

The depression's harsh effects had a profound influence on early Catholic social workers. Indicative of hardship levels, official unemployment and underemployment rates remained well into double figures until the eve of the Second World War.<sup>18</sup> Social problems beset the community and the sick poor increasingly turned to hospitals for social service support. Norma Parker at St Vincent's Hospital (SVHM) became aware of clients' distress and their economic and social needs.<sup>19</sup> Parker later said she was distressed at the inadequacy of the government's dole and 'one of the appalling things was the acute and dreadful poverty. I shall never forget the impression it made on me'.<sup>20</sup>

Through their work with the CWSG and other church groups, Parker and Moffit identified the problem that many Catholic welfare services operated in isolation, with little understanding as to how they could work more effectively together to support clients. In August 1935 the women initiated an unprecedented meeting of nearly 150 charity and ancillary workers involved in relief work, family support,

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1932, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Kennedy, *Faith and Feminism*, p. 315.

<sup>17</sup> N. Turner, *Catholics In Australia: A Social History*, Vol. 1, (North Blackburn, Victoria, Collins Dove, 1992), p. 219.

<sup>18</sup> The unemployment rate amongst Australian trade union members peaked at 29 per cent in 1932 and was approximately 10 per cent in 1939, with NSW recording 12.1 per cent that year. These figures are believed to have understated the true level of unemployment because women and youth were not surveyed. The *1939 National Register*, for example, recorded unemployment amongst males aged between 18 and 64 at 14.4 per cent. For discussion of unemployment statistics during the 1930s see D.J. Gleeson, *Mass Unemployment and Unemployment Relief Policies in New South Wales during the 1930s Great Depression*, Master of Commerce (Honours) Thesis, School of Economics, University of New South Wales, 1994, especially Chapters Three and Nine.

<sup>19</sup> N. Parker., 'Early Social Work in Retrospect', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 32, 1979, p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> S. Wilkins, 'Social Welfare Pioneer', *The Age*, 9 November 1979.

recreation, health care, probation, child welfare and kindergartens.<sup>21</sup> *The Horizon* noted the lack of co-ordination between the Catholic agencies represented:

The fault ... lies in our ignorance ... what, for instance, do the majority of hospital workers know of the work of the probation officers, of their function in the civic and legal life of the community, of the problems that beset them, and of their objects and aims?<sup>22</sup>

Arising from the meeting a sub-committee, including Moffit and Parker, was appointed to drive co-ordination of welfare service and to establish study circles for the women to meet and discuss topical welfare issues.<sup>23</sup> Moffit and Parker's ideas for professional Catholic services crystallised and they developed a plan for integrated social services in the archdiocese. Their desire to reform welfare services struck a chord with Monsignor Lonergan. Parker recalls Lonergan as a 'man of immense vision' and suitably impressed with a new approach to Catholic welfare.<sup>24</sup>

At about this time also, Sir Richard Stanwell, president of the Victorian Board of Social Studies (VBSS), encouraged Mannix to appoint a Catholic social welfare representative to the VBSS.<sup>25</sup> Mannix was probably more influenced by Joseph Westhoven, the Federal Public Service Arbitrator in Victoria, (who was introduced in Chapter Three).<sup>26</sup> Parker says Westhoven, also her uncle, supported professional social work and made representations on her behalf to Mannix.<sup>27</sup> According to Parker, Mannix's answer in response to suggestions to professionalise welfare that 'we will look into it' was consistent with the Church's response during the 1930s and 1940s to the enthusiasm of professional social

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<sup>21</sup> S. Kennedy, *Faith and Feminism*, p. 96.

<sup>22</sup> *The Horizon*, No. 10, Vol. 11, (New Series) 1 August 1935, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Others members included Mrs Smithwick, Mrs Bracken, Miss Nurse and Miss Hoy, *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Norma Parker, Brighton, Victoria, April 2002.

<sup>25</sup> R. Cotter, A Brief history of the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, Melbourne, 1935-1988, man, p. 3, Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission (MDHC).

<sup>26</sup> *The Record.*, 13 August 1931, p. 12; *ibid.*, 7 June 1934, p. 16.

work. 'The bishops did not decide quickly, but they always did us the courtesy of considering what we proposed', Parker recalled.<sup>28</sup>

In September 1935 Lonergan convinced Mannix to appoint Moffit to a newly created role of 'social worker to Catholic charities', the first role of its type in the Australian church.<sup>29</sup> Moffit was charged with undertaking a survey of 'existing conditions in all the Catholic institutions of the Archdiocese'.<sup>30</sup> At this time Melbourne's nine over-crowded Catholic institutions catered for about 1,800 children.<sup>31</sup> As foreshadowed in the previous chapter, the Victorian government increasingly looked to the church to provide institutional care for state wards. By 1938 the St Vincent de Paul (SVdP) Girl's Home in Melbourne, was one-third occupied by state wards. There were two effects of Catholic orphanages accepting state wards: firstly, they received a small amount of much needed financial support; and, secondly the acceptance of state wards, Barnard and Twigg claim, resulted in some loss of autonomy by the individual institutions.<sup>32</sup>

The Church's response to increasing demand was to expand its facilities. It did so on the basis that institutional care provided a better moral upbringing for children than the State-sponsored ward system, which often allocated Catholic children to non-Catholic families. But the church did not pay attention to the loss of personal care resulting from over-crowded and largely impersonal institutions. Consistent with the Church's view – though contradictory to social workers' training and changes that had occurred in some government sector institutions – the SVdP

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<sup>27</sup> Parker, Interview, 2002.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> 'Helping Charity to begin at home', *The Hospital Magazine*, Vol. 11, No. 1, March 1938.

<sup>30</sup> 'Almoners great works for hospitals', *Argus*, 19 November 1936, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> E.G. Perkins, Talk on Catholic Family Welfare Bureau to General Conference of Catholic Women's Social Guild on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1968, p. 4, Perkins Papers 2/1/PER/4 MDHC.

<sup>32</sup> J. Barnard and K. Twigg, *Holding on to Hope: A History of the Founding Agencies of MacKillop Family Services 1854-1997* (Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2004) p. 124.

orphanage operated by the Christian Brothers in Melbourne in the mid 1930s was extended to cater for another fifty children, bringing the total number of 'inmates' to 290.<sup>33</sup> Moffit's research, aided by Parker, identified poor co-ordination between Catholic agencies, especially those caring for children who had been abandoned by their parents.<sup>34</sup> The extension of St Joseph's Home at Broadmeadows in 1933, for example, had led to more than 250 babies being 'crammed' into the home. The individual needs of children could never be met under such conditions', said Fr Eric Perkins, the first Victorian Catholic priest to qualify as a social worker.<sup>35</sup>

In March 1936 Moffit presented a memorandum of professional social work to Mannix, which advocated the establishment of a Catholic social service or bureau, based on her knowledge of the Catholic diocesan welfare bureau in Los Angeles. The initial focus, Moffit proposed, would be on co-ordinating and reviewing applications to institutions, and, where appropriate, seeking alternatives to the church's practice of institutionalisation.<sup>36</sup> Moffit spelt out the philosophy underpinning modern child welfare:

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<sup>33</sup> *The Argus*, 18 August 1935, p. 17.

<sup>34</sup> C. Moffit and [N. Parker, sic], ca 1935, Report on the Survey of Catholic Children's Institutions' n.d. This document could not be located in the MDHC, CMA or privately. This does not appear to be the document referred to by S. Kennedy, *Faith and Feminism*, p. 96, as 'the potential for professional social welfare to Archbishop Mannix'. The Westhoven Committee referred to a 'previous report' which adds credence to the view that the Report on the Survey of Catholic Children's Institutions' was an earlier document.

<sup>35</sup> Perkins, Memo for Fox, re: Work of Catholic Social Service Bureau, ca 1951. Perkins' view was that the CSSB was 'formally established' 12 months after Moffit was authorised to make a study of Catholic institutions. See. E.G. Perkins, Report on Bureau's Financial Position – November 1945, CSSB Files, MDHC; K. Twigg, *Shelter for the Children: History of St Vincent de Paul Home and Family Service* (Melbourne, Sisters of Mercy, 2000), p. 67.

<sup>36</sup> C. Moffit and [N. Parker, sic], ca 1936, Proposed scheme for a Catholic Social Service or Catholic Welfare Bureau, n.d. Catholic Family Welfare Bureau Archives, MDHC. There is conjecture as to this report's date and Norma Parker's role in this document. The memorandum is not signed or dated, though it is written in the first person. S. Kennedy, *Faith and Feminism* p. 96 suggests it was written in 1933. Cotter, A Brief history, p. 2, credits Parker as the joint author. Given Parker's close friendship with Moffit and also her leadership role in social work it is plausible that Parker assisted with the report's research and framework. Moreover Parker may have been aware that her uncle could be involved in



The cardinal principle... is that if it can provide anything like adequate care, the home into which a child is born is the place to bring him up... all applications for the care of a child away from its home should be subject to full enquiry.<sup>37</sup>

Moffit cited contemporary American studies that found only 15 to 25 per cent of children in institutions were 'real orphans'; 40 per cent had one parent living, and the remainder had both parents living. She used this information to suggest a review of admission practices within Victorian Catholic institutions.<sup>38</sup> Moffit said that to understand the full extent of Catholic welfare services it would be necessary to make a 'factual survey of the Catholic Institutions engaged in social work... the Bureau could then act as a central clearing house for information'.<sup>39</sup> In proposing an integrated approach to Catholic welfare services that incorporated volunteers and the bureau, Moffit looked forward to the:

bringing together of the many individuals doing social work in a voluntary capacity... so that they will be working in close touch with the Director of the Bureau and their work will be reinforced and made much more effective by trained leadership.<sup>40</sup>

Based on American Catholic welfare bureaux,<sup>41</sup> the memorandum emphasised the importance of a clerical director leading Catholic social services across Melbourne.<sup>42</sup> A bureau could also be responsible for 'obtaining of government and municipal grants, etc and of moneys of various philanthropic trusts'.<sup>43</sup> In the area of policy making Moffit commented that while the Church had a 'much greater programme of social work and much greater value of work than any other sections

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reviewing the document, and so it would not have been appropriate for him to review a document co-signed by his niece.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> A useful succinct story of the origins of America's first Catholic diocesan bureau is contained in S.S. Walton, *To Preserve the Faith: Catholic Charities in Boston, 1870-1930* (New York, Garland Publishing, 1993).

<sup>42</sup> This followed the American precedent. See Boylan, 'The Diocesan Bureau', p. 43.

<sup>43</sup> Moffit [and Parker], Proposed scheme for a Catholic Social Service, p. 2.

of the community', it had little public identity. She noted, with disappointment, the absence of Catholic speakers at the 1935 Child Welfare Congress organised by the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria.<sup>44</sup> The Church's insular welfare view was in part due to its culture of shunning publicity and a minimal interest in the emerging science of social welfare policy.

The philosophy of assessing the needs of each child, including their family background, emotional stability and financial circumstances, ran counter to the church's traditional approach, which was motivated to some extent by the number of available places in institutions and the church's concern about state homes and foster programs. Rather than viewing institutionalisation as an extended or permanent proposition, Moffit felt it was more appropriate to classify children as 'temporary inmates', thereby enabling them to be fully assessed by a trained social worker. The aim was to bring about a 'more constructive solution' for each child.<sup>45</sup> The social workers' submission also placed importance on the role a central bureau could play in training Catholic social workers, providing policy advice to institutions and making appropriate representation to government for better funding for institutions.<sup>46</sup>

Mannix referred Moffit's report to an advisory committee chaired by Westhoven, who was highly regarded by Lonergan. Other members included Esmond. F. Downey, the managing director of the Catholic Church Insurance Council of Australia, and another leading layman, Arthur Adams.<sup>47</sup> In a critique of Moffit's report, the committee carefully noted the independence and strength of the children's institutions. This reflected probably the experience of members, such as Downey, who was chairman of the Broadmeadows Foundling Home.<sup>48</sup> Westhoven's committee praised the 'admirable work now being performed by the

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> For further details on Downey see *The Advocate*, 25 August 1932, p. 15.

religious orders of nuns and brothers', though said it 'needs to be supplemented by an organisation which will make a special study of the work which calls for co-operation, and to plan and recommend such action which will make for the smoother working of the several institutions concerned'.<sup>49</sup>

There was little practical advice as to how the new bureau would interact with existing charitable organisations? A central welfare bureau, Westhoven's group said, would support religious orders and not 'set up an outside authority to dictate to them what should be done'.<sup>50</sup> But the committee failed to provide guidelines on admissions to institutions, something that would limit the bureau's role in forthcoming years.<sup>51</sup> Two delicate – and fundamental questions – remained unanswered: who had the authority to admit and discharge children from institutions; and what role, if any, would the archdiocese's social workers have in the ongoing assessment of children after they had been institutionalised. As a result, Westhoven's committee had set the scene for misunderstandings between the institutions and the bureau.

### **4.3 Melbourne's foundation social workers**

On Lonergan and Westhoven's recommendations, Mannix approved the formation of Melbourne's Catholic Social Service Bureau (CSSB) in 1936. Primary and secondary records indicate several different commencement dates for Australia's first Catholic diocesan bureau. Moffit's first statistical and financial report, which covered the period September 1935-August 1936, reflects her appointment as social worker to the children's institutions in September 1935.<sup>52</sup> Some documents

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, 8 May 1930, p. 31; *ibid.*, 5 July 1934, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> J.C. Westhoven, E.F. Downes and A. Adams, Archdiocese of Melbourne – Proposal for establishment of Central Social Welfare Bureau ca 1936, Vicar General, MDHC, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, pp: 2-3.

<sup>52</sup> CSSB, Statistical Report for Twelve Months, September 1, 1935 to August 31, 1935,

refer to a start date of March or September 1936.<sup>53</sup> The most likely scenario is that the CSSB formally began after Westhoven's Report had been approved by Mannix, which may have been in about April 1936.<sup>54</sup>

The CSSB main aim was to 'co-ordinate the work of all [Melbourne] Catholic charities'.<sup>55</sup> Moffit was ideally positioned to lead the new agency, Westhoven's committee said, and 'no good purpose would be served by inviting applications for the position. Miss Moffit is the only Catholic trained social worker whose services are available and it is a fortunate circumstance'.<sup>56</sup> Bishop Eric Perkins was later to remark that the CSSB's approach may have been new but it was 'inspired by the same spirit of Christian charity that had motivated the social activities of the Church for nineteen centuries'.<sup>57</sup> Mary Lyons, the archdiocese's probation officer, added a note of caution about the many tasks facing the fledgling organisation:

I am afraid it will be some time yet, before I retire gracefully for with our Bureau there seems to be many things attempted. A thing like that takes years to be made to function properly, but it is something I hope will go on for all time.<sup>58</sup>

In its formative years the CSSB focused on co-ordinating placements to some Melbourne orphanages. This was not surprising given the institutions were the primary funding source for the CSSB. In August 1936 Lonergan chaired a meeting

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CSSB Files, Vicar General Special Collection, MDHC.

<sup>53</sup> Two publications that suggest the CSSB commenced in about March 1936 are *The Hospital Magazine*, p. 22, and *Welfare Work in Victoria: A Directory and Guide (Melbourne, Citizen's Welfare Service Victoria, 1948)* p. 42. Yet, in 1985 Centacare Melbourne celebrated its golden jubilee. See pamphlet *Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, 1935-1985, Golden Jubilee Year Historical Supplement*, Centacare Melbourne Archives (CMA). In late 2005 Centacare Catholic Welfare Services Melbourne commenced its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

<sup>54</sup> Moffit advised Monsignor Lyons in February 1939, that the bureau had been formed more than three years ago; Moffit to Monsignor Lyons, 22 February 1939, A. John Parker Archives (AJPA), Perth, Western Australia. Mr Parker kindly made this letter available to me. No other copy has been located in church archives, such as at the MDHC.

<sup>55</sup> Perkins, Memo for Fox, *op. cit.*,

<sup>56</sup> Westhoven, Proposal for establishment of Central Social Welfare Bureau, p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> E.G. Perkins, Student Paper, 1947, University of Melbourne, Perkins Personal Collection, MDHC.

of Catholic institutions which resulted in agreement that the CSSB would investigate 'all new applications for admittance to any of the children's institutions'.<sup>59</sup> Eight institutions were asked to contribute £75 per annum and Ruperstwood, operated by the Salesian Fathers, £25.<sup>60</sup> The fragmented records do not indicate how many of the children's institutions responded to Lonergan's request. In her study of the Sisters of Mercy homes, Karen Twigg says the CSSB brought a 'great relief' to the order, which no longer had to co-ordinate admissions to their Melbourne homes or negotiate payments from parents and guardians of children.<sup>61</sup> In one respect those financial negotiations between Catholic social workers and families bore some resemblance to the administrative tasks undertaken by British lady almoners.

Moffit, as the CSSB's 'administrative head', reported to the Archdiocese's Vicar-General.<sup>62</sup> Through Parker's support the CSSB became an official social work training centre of Melbourne University.<sup>63</sup> The following table, adapted from Moffit's first report, reflects the large number of referrals – and hence the focus on children's institutions.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Mary Lyons to Lonergan, 17 December 1937, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>59</sup> *The Hospital Magazine*, p. 22.

<sup>60</sup> Perkins to Fox, 7 June 1951, p 1 CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>61</sup> Twigg, *Shelter for the Children*, p. 73.

<sup>62</sup> D.F. Bourke, *A History of the Catholic Church in Victoria* (Melbourne, Catholic Church 1988), p. 299. See also discussion by R.J. Lawrence, 'Australian Social Work in Historical, International and Social Welfare Context' in P.J. Boas and J. Crawley (eds.), *Social Work in Australia*, (Melbourne, Australian International Press Publications, 1976), p. 7. Some accounts incorrectly list Moffit as director.

<sup>63</sup> N. Parker Brown and E. Davidson, A Tribute to the memory of Monsignor John McMahon, Some reflections on his influence in the early development of Professional Social Work in Australia, 18 February 1989, manuscript, Centacare Sydney Archives (CSA), p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> CSSB Statistical Report for Twelve Months, September 1, 1935 to August 31, 1936, p.1. CSSB Files, Vicar General's Special Collection, MDHC.

**Table 4.1**

**Referrals to the CSSB, 1 September 1935 - 31 August 1936**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Number</b>
Institutions	86
Priests	23
Almoners	19
Mrs Lyons	29
SVdP	7
Miscellaneous	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>

In the same period Moffit undertook 321 office interviews, liaised with 30 thirty priests, undertook 109 home visits and placed 107 children in institutions; but due to a shortage of Catholic institutions, and by implication a shortage of appropriate foster care homes or a reluctance of families to provide foster care, seventy-two Catholic children remained unplaced.<sup>65</sup> In a significant departure from past practice, Moffit declined ten per cent of children's applications to Catholic institutions in 1936, because after 'investigation, placement was not considered necessary'.<sup>66</sup> In 1937 Moffit reported an increase in the number of applications referred to her. After investigation she recommended many children did not need to be institutionalised. The following table reflects this trend:

**Table 4.2**

**Applications for admittance to Melbourne Catholic institutions, 1937<sup>67</sup>**

Cases (families)	365
Total children involved	597
Children placed in institutions	205
Children placed as a percentage of assessments	34 per cent

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<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> 1937 CSSB Annual Report cited in *Hospital Magazine*, p. 22.

The large downward trend in admissions to institutions was also accompanied by a decrease in the length of stay of children in institutions. In 1937 for example, sixteen per cent of children remained in the institutions for less than three months, and twenty per cent for not more than six months.<sup>68</sup> These shorter stays may be attributed to the CSSB providing ongoing assessment of the children. The large reduction in admissions to institutions had resulted from Moffit's detailed research of the children and their family situations.<sup>69</sup> Moffit suggested that institutions be avoided, where possible, because 'it is the bureau's firm belief that that to place children in institutions when this step can be possibly avoided is wrong in principle'. Moffit emphasised the importance of maintaining the family unit and parental responsibility:

No steps should be taken to relieve the parents of such responsibility until all other measures have failed...the action of removing a child from his family home because he shows signs of becoming difficult to manage is destructive even though it may serve the immediate purpose – the prevention of a definite delinquent act.<sup>70</sup>

Despite success in reducing the numbers of children admitted to Catholic institutions and also providing personal counselling, the CSSB did not move into other areas of welfare in the late 1930s. Insufficient resources made it unlikely Moffit could have initiated other social welfare projects. Yet, it frustrated her that the broader vision for professional Catholic welfare services showed few signs of developing in the late 1930s. The prolonged illness and untimely death of the CSSB's strongest supporter, (now Bishop-elect) Lonergan in July 1938, marked a blow to the CSSB.<sup>71</sup> His immediate successors did not show the same enthusiasm for professional welfare, leaving Moffit without adequate financial or moral support to address the 'wide range' of social welfare functions that Parker and she had foreseen.

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<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Unfortunately these records do not appear to have survived.

<sup>70</sup> *Hospital Magazine*, p. 23.

<sup>71</sup> In early 1938 Lonergan was announced as the new Bishop of Port Augusta, South

In terms of lay support, the CSSB did not receive active support from the CWSG, the SVdP or its board of management, the latter's efforts being haphazard. Moffit had understood that Westhoven's committee would provide ongoing policy and financial support to the bureau.<sup>72</sup> While Downey continued to manage the CSSB finances, Moffit reported in 1937 that 'the other members have not met in consultation with him to discuss more general matters of policy, plans for future development etc, for at least 18 months'.<sup>73</sup>

In late 1938 Moffit expressed frustration at the Church's disinclination to broaden the CSSB's services into other areas of welfare. A focus on children's institutions, while important, had not allowed the CSSB to extend into the other functions for which it was established. One area of concern was the church's disinterest in a boarding-out or foster home system.<sup>74</sup> An insufficient understanding about professional social work hampered Moffit's work.<sup>75</sup> In a lengthy report entitled 'Home for Babies and Toddlers', she described some of the obstacles that lay in the path of reform, and specifically Catholic families providing foster homes.<sup>76</sup> Moffit provided three reasons for the reluctance of Catholics to embrace foster care. Firstly, she felt Catholics had become 'too dependent' on religious orders providing social services through children's institutions; secondly, there was an 'unwarranted prejudice' against providing care to illegitimate children; and, thirdly, a high level of ignorance amongst Catholics as to the nature and quality of services provided in various institutions.<sup>77</sup>

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Australia. Illness indefinitely delayed his installation and he died on 14 July 1938, aged 51. *The Argus*, 21 July 1938, p. 7.

<sup>72</sup> There is no indication that they formally met, though it is possible through their church connections they did informally discuss the CSSB.

<sup>73</sup> Moffit to Monsignor Lyons, 22 February 1939, *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> Moffit to Parker, 28 October 1938, AJPA.

<sup>76</sup> C. Moffit, 'Homes for Babies and Toddlers: Great need for more Catholic Private Homes', ca 1937-38, manuscript, St Anthony's Kew Archive Box (Historical documents). [Copy of this document kindly made available by Karen Twigg].



Meanwhile, in Sydney in the late 1930s, the almoner department at St Vincent's Hospital (SVHS) had continued to flourish. Norma Parker envisaged the appointment of an assistant and turned to Moffit, aware of her skills, and also unhappiness in her CSSB role. Moffit was torn between joining Parker, her mentor and friend, and relinquishing the CSSB, which she feared might be closed, if she left.<sup>78</sup> After some deliberation, Moffit wrote a detailed 'swan song' to the Vicar-General, Monsignor Lyons, in February 1939, in which she canvassed many issues that she thought impeded the CSSB.

It seems to me essential, in the interests of Catholic social work in Victoria, that in the very near future, a start should be made in this work of developing the activities of the Bureau, which... has been functioning solely as a child-placing agency.<sup>79</sup>

Moffit reminded Lyons of the 'very wide scope' envisaged for the CSSB and 'that it was only as a beginning [sic] that it was decided to confine the activities of [sic] the bureau of child welfare'.<sup>80</sup> To facilitate a more generic casework agency and to raise the CSSB profile within the Catholic community, Moffit again recommended the appointment of a priest as director of the archdiocese's social services, with the task would of co-ordinating Catholic social service organisations.<sup>81</sup>

Moffit urged closer linkages between the CSSB and the archdiocese's probation services through the Catholic Probation Officers' Association being based at the CSSB. In separate correspondence to Parker, Moffit expanded on the difficulties of convincing Monsignor Lyons of the CSSB potential:

It is my final effort before leaving to try and get over to him some of the bigger principles involved in an organisation like the bureau – in other words, to use my favourite metaphor, to try and get him to see the whole wood, not only the undergrowth around the roots of the trees.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, pp: 1-3.

<sup>78</sup> Moffit to Parker, 28 October 1938, AJPA.

<sup>79</sup> Moffit to Monsignor Lyons, 22 February 1939, p. 3, AJPA.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, pp: 1-2.

<sup>82</sup> Moffit to Parker, 24 February 1939, p. 1, AJPA.

Moffit left the CSSB in early 1939 more than a little disillusioned though pleased she would be working with Parker again.

#### 4.4 Momentum towards professionalism in Sydney

In NSW the Catholic Action movement played a role in supporting the professionalisation of Catholic welfare. Sydney's Archbishop Kelly had established an Association of Catholic Action in 1932, which aimed to gain 'the co-operation of the Catholic laity in the mission of the successors of the Apostles, i.e. the Archbishops, Bishops and Clergy'.<sup>83</sup> Catholic Action in Sydney in the 1930s involved personal sanctification of members, religious instruction, study groups, support for foreign missions, and the visitation of the sick and poor. Yet, many historians are critical of the nature of Catholic Action in Sydney. Bruce Duncan says Kelly's style was 'dull and pompous... an austere but narrow piety... [and he] did little to promote the Catholic social movements in Australia'.<sup>84</sup> Colin Jury says Catholic Action was premature for the Sydney Church in the 1930s. In his assessment the church was not ready:

Intellectually and psychologically [as] it still lived in a nineteenth century context where the main enemies of the faith were Protestantism and Rationalism, not in the twentieth century where the threat to Christianity came from Secularism and Totalitarianism... it feared and shunned the university... it sheltered its people in a defensive enclave.<sup>85</sup>

Jory's perspective that 'CA had been introduced into Sydney as a duty; it persisted as a superfluity, its purpose ill-understood'<sup>86</sup> has been supported by historians, including O'Farrell and Henderson.<sup>87</sup> Have they overstated their concerns?

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<sup>83</sup> *Association of Catholic Action* (Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, 1932) Sydney Archdiocesan Archives (SAA).

<sup>84</sup> B. Duncan, *The Church's Social Teaching: From Rerum novarum to 1931* (North Blackburn, Victoria, Collins Dove, 1991) p. 182.

<sup>85</sup> C.H. Jory, *The Campion Society and Catholic Social Militancy in Australia, 1929-1936* (Sydney, Harpham, 1986) p. 106.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*

Catholic Action in Sydney resembled the Italian model of a spiritual movement. The archdiocese's association provided an overarching structure to bring together activities that had previously operated in isolation. In late 1938, for example, 1,000 Catholics were actively involved in religious study groups, catechesis in government schools, and attending study groups on social principles. Evangelical aspects included seeking to 'reclaim Catholic prisoners' in jail, while lay people were encouraged to participate in practical activities such as sport.<sup>88</sup>

Dr Norman Gilroy, appointed Sydney's Co-Adjutor Archbishop in July 1937, created a Diocesan Secretariate of Catholic Action.<sup>89</sup> He appointed Monsignor Eris O'Brien, who had recently returned from completing a PhD in social and political science at Louvain University, Belgium, as Sydney's first director of Catholic Action.<sup>90</sup> O'Brien highlighted several concerns with the name.

I know there exists a certain section of the community who are awaiting the inauguration of Catholic Action, and are ready to attribute to it certain sectarian and political aims. The word Action [original emphasis] is being misinterpreted by these, and by certain writers in current magazines.<sup>91</sup>

O'Brien suggested to Kelly that the title be modified to 'Catholic lay Apostolate, so as to clearly identify it as a spiritual work.'<sup>92</sup> Existing archdiocesan charitable works such as the Catholic Women's Association and the Theresian Society, came under Catholic Action. Indicative of its religious focus such groups required 'careful

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<sup>87</sup> See also B. Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy* (Kensington, NSW, University of New South Wales Press, 2001), pp 24-25.

<sup>88</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 16 November 1938, p 3 Diocesan Secretariate of the Lay Apostolate Correspondence, 1938-1943, B1210, SAA.

<sup>89</sup> Gerard Henderson has suggested that Sydney added the 'e' to secretariat to differentiate it from the National Secretariat of Catholic Action. See G. Henderson, *Mr Santamaria and the Bishops*, Second Edition (Sydney, Hale and Iremonger, 1983).

<sup>90</sup> *Manly*, Vol. 5, No. 3, October 1937. O'Brien made a large contribution to Australian Catholic historiography through publications such as *Foundations of Australian Catholicism* (Sydney, 1936); See O'Brien entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1940-80*; and P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Community: An Australian History*, (Kensington, University of NSW Press, Fourth Edition), pp: 384-87.

<sup>91</sup> O'Brien to Kelly, 22 June 1937, Catholic Action, Box B1418, SAA.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*

spiritual and intellectual formation... this can only be done by the priest'.<sup>93</sup> During the late 1930s the Lay Apostolate Secretariate became the main interface between the church and government on welfare issues. Led by O'Brien, who 'exerted considerable influence in government departments' and 'received many favours' for the church, the secretariat took an interest in new welfare practices and lobbied for amendments to the *1938 NSW Child Welfare Act*, which were beneficial to Catholic Wards of the State.<sup>94</sup>

O'Brien also sought to have an official Catholic representative on the NSW Board of Social Studies (BSST), which transferred to the University of Sydney in 1939. When O'Brien's plan failed he lobbied for Mary Tenison Woods to be appointed a board member so that she could 'privately watch Catholic interests'.<sup>95</sup> Tenison Woods, a representative of Lewisham Hospital, had developed an impressive reputation for advocacy on behalf of delinquent children and her legal qualifications held her in good stead.<sup>96</sup>

In 1937, O'Brien, as a member of a key committee of the NSW Child Welfare Department (CWD), suggested that 'expert training should be given to those engaged in doing court visitation and juvenile reforms'.<sup>97</sup> When the Workers Education Association (WEA) responded to O'Brien's suggestion and organised a seminar for probation officers on the 'Social Aspects of Juvenile Delinquency', Gilroy's secretary advised O'Brien that he should encourage 'Catholic social workers to attend'.<sup>98</sup> O'Brien agreed, though noted that Professor H.T. Lovell,

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<sup>93</sup> R. Duggan, 'The Priest and Catholic Action', *Manly*, Vol. 6, 1940.

<sup>94</sup> O'Brien, Observations on Catholic Action in Sydney presented to His Grace the Archbishop and His Grace, the Co-Adjutor by the Director, 28 December 1939, Catholic Action Files, Box 1418, SAA.

<sup>95</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 9 July 1940, B1210, SAA.

<sup>96</sup> M. Tenison Woods, *Delinquent Children* (Sydney, 1937); A. O'Brien, 'Mary Tenison Woods' in H. Radi (ed.), *200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology* (Broadway, NSW, Women's Redress Press, 1988).

<sup>97</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 20 August 1938, Diocesan Secretariate of the Lay Apostolate Correspondence, 1938-1943, B2734, SAA.

President of the NSW Council of Social Service and Dr J.A. George, were 'two lecturers with dangerous tendencies'.<sup>99</sup> Other lecturers, such as Tenison Woods reassured the Church that its probation officers would benefit from attending, because, in O'Brien words, juvenile delinquency was a 'big problem' amongst young Catholics.<sup>100</sup>

1940 marked the inaugural Labour Day Mass by the Australian bishops. Sydney did not accept what Michael Hogan describes as the 'fairly dreary' collection of papal Encyclicals prepared by Archbishop Justin Simonds of Hobart<sup>101</sup>, and O'Brien developed his own statement as well as inspiring 'an important new trend in Catholic life' with the inaugural Social Justice Sunday in Sydney.<sup>102</sup> This decision intensified the gap between the Melbourne-Adelaide-Hobart grouping, led by Mannix and represented by Simonds, and Sydney.<sup>103</sup> Simonds was 'disturbed' that Catholic Action was taking a different course in Sydney and in contradiction to the national bishops' agreement of 13 September 1937.<sup>104</sup> Gilroy, unfazed by the ruckus, considered Santamaria and another layman, Frank Maher, held too much sway over Mannix. Kelly refused to pay £400 towards the operations of the national secretariat, which curtailed a national approach to Catholic Action.

Sydney's different approach to Catholic Action included more interest in welfare activities and less focus on political issues. O'Brien was not entirely comfortable in the director's position and in 1940 advised Gilroy that possible replacements might

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<sup>98</sup> Archbishop's Secretary to O'Brien 20 July 1938, Diocesan Secretariate of the Lay Apostolate Correspondence, 1938-1943, B2734, SAA.

<sup>99</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 20 August 1938, B2734, SAA.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> M. Hogan, *Australian Catholics: The Social Justice Tradition* (Melbourne, Collins Dove, 1993), p. 57.

<sup>102</sup> B. Doyle, 'The Catholic Story from 1928 to 1951', *Catholic Weekly*, 19 April 1951

<sup>103</sup> For a balanced account of Simonds' career, including his considerable frustrations with Mannix, see M. Vodola, *Simonds: A Rewarding Life* (Melbourne, Catholic Education Office, 1997).

<sup>104</sup> Simonds to Kelly, Catholic Action Files, B1418, SAA.

be Monsignor (later Cardinal) James Freeman, because 'he has the right personality and age for influencing and encouraging young men, has a very good brain, is an excellent speaker and is judicious'.<sup>105</sup> When Freeman declined the position, O'Brien recommended either Fr Algy Thomas, or Fr J.F. McCosker, the latter, who was regarded as 'generous and active' but unlikely to 'give the necessary lead'.<sup>106</sup>

#### 4.4.1 A professional association

The momentum for the Sydney church adopting social work came from a combination of professional lay social workers and married women who volunteered their time at the Catholic Court Guild. The guild, formed in 1936, operated in a 'friendly capacity' and also visited some archdiocesan orphanages.<sup>107</sup> Through their efforts Gilroy opened a 'rest room' in William Street, Sydney, which aimed to 'provide recreational facilities for women, taken from the courts, on specific afternoons and nights'.<sup>108</sup>

In the later years of the 1930s social workers raised awareness of new approaches to children and family care. Backed by the Catholic Women's Association (CWA), Parker and Moffit, were joined by their Westralian colleague, Davidson, and Elvira Lyons, the daughter of a schoolteacher, who after being educated at Brisbane Grammar School, became an accomplished businesswoman.<sup>109</sup> Lyons brought considerable organisational skills and business acumen to social work. When she left Nestles in 1928 the company expressed 'very deep regret at her decision to retire 'after such a long service'.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 14 May 1940, Catholic Action Files, SAA.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> 'Catholic Social Service Bureau to be opened in Adelaide: Visit of NSW Director', *The Southern Cross*, 12 December 1941, p. 12.

<sup>108</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 5 December 1939; Court Guild of Catholic Action, 1939-1946, B1210, SAA.

<sup>109</sup> N. Parker, 'Tribute to Elvira Lyons', *Forum* Vol. X1, (No 1), June 1958.

Lyons had been a member of the third group to study for the Certificate in Social Service from the NSW BSST. After graduating in 1934, Lyons embarked on her second noteworthy career, as Secretary of the Royal Society for Mothers and Babies (now known as Tresillian). She served Tresillian with devoted service until ill health forced her retirement in May 1955.<sup>111</sup> During the 1940s and early 1950s, Elvira and her sister, Kathleen, supported new migrants in Sydney seeking employment and housing.<sup>112</sup> Elvira Lyons died on Christmas Day, 1957 and was privately cremated.<sup>113</sup>

Parker, Moffit, Lyons and Davidson relished every opportunity to promote Catholic social work, its principles and the benefits of prevention rather than the Church's traditional reliance on palliative charity. Moffit said the distinction between Catholic social work and secular welfare was the former's 'supernatural charity' which 'enables Catholic social workers to see Christ in the poor, and to carry out her work in a realisation that what we do to the poor we do to Christ'.<sup>114</sup>

The social workers presented their vision at late 1930s national conferences of Catholic women, which senior clergy also attended.<sup>115</sup> Davidson argued that 'to do our work properly the Catholic social worker must be able to see further than the immediate problem; she must be able by close study, to recognise the underlying cause or causes'.<sup>116</sup> Parker and Moffit promoted new approaches to the increasing

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<sup>110</sup> Nestle and Anglo-Swiss Milk Company to E.M. Lyons 11 February 1928, included in File no ST/L2/1: NSW Board of Social Studies and Training, University of Sydney Archives (USA).

<sup>111</sup> Royal Society for the Welfare of Mothers and Babies, *36<sup>th</sup> Annual report for the Year ended 30 June 1955*, p. 11, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales (MLNSW).

<sup>112</sup> N. Parker., 'Elvira Lyons – A Tribute', *Forum* Vol. X1. no. 1, 1958.

<sup>113</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 December 1957, p. 14.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>115</sup> The first national Conference of Catholic Women was held in Melbourne in October 1930. See report in *The Horizon*, No. 84, Vol. 6, (New Series) 1930.

<sup>116</sup> E. Davidson, 'Catholic Social Service', Paper read to the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of

incidence of child delinquency and argued that children who came before Sydney's Children's Court 'need special treatment which could be found through Child Guidance Clinics. There should be with each individual child an attempt at an understanding of his own special problem'.<sup>117</sup>

In an address to the 1937 national women's conference, Moffit emphasised 'charity is not merely an emotion. It is a form of understanding. And understanding presupposes knowledge'.<sup>118</sup> In the same year the social workers called for the training of Catholic social workers in each Australian state, and in 1938 the National Conference of Catholic Women passed a resolution calling on Archbishop Kelly to establish a CWB in Sydney, along the lines of Melbourne's CSSB.<sup>119</sup> The CWA pledged to finance a CWB, but their resolution fell on deaf ears with the hierarchy.<sup>120</sup>

Notwithstanding support from the Catholic Court Guild and the CWA, Parker, Moffit, Lyons and Davidson needed a stronger platform to overcome clerical and lay indifference to social work.<sup>121</sup> As early as 1937, Parker had envisaged an Australian association of Catholic social workers to counter the anti-Catholic sentiment arising from disputes between the Sisters of Charity and the Victorian Institute of Hospital Almoners (VIHA).<sup>122</sup> In early 1940 Parker suggested to Gilroy that a specific Catholic association be formed to organise lectures for the 'growing

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the Catholic Women's Association, held in Sydney in September 1937, published in *Catholic Women's Review*, Vol. 9, No. 7, 16 November 1937.

<sup>117</sup> C. Moffit and N. Parker, 'Child Welfare', Paper read at the Interstate Conference, Brisbane, published in *The Horizon*, No. 116, Vol. 19, (New Series) October 1939.

<sup>118</sup> C. Moffit, 'The influence of Catholic Principles on Social Science', *Catholic Women's Review*, Vol. 8, No. 7, 12 November 1937.

<sup>119</sup> *Catholic Women's Review*, 16 November 1938, p. 4.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> N. Parker, 'Katharine Ogilvie', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 36, No. 2, June 1983.

<sup>122</sup> Parker, 9 April 1937, A522.4/401, Congregational Archives, Sisters of Charity (RSCA).



number of Catholic social workers in Sydney'.<sup>123</sup> O'Brien supported the establishment of the Catholic Trained Social Workers' Association (CTSWA), under the auspices of the Sydney Diocesan Secretariate of Catholic Action.<sup>124</sup> Gilroy accepted Parker's suggestion, on the basis of this advice. O'Brien, says Davidson, provided CTSWA with information on the workings of Catholic Charities in New York, and pointed out the need for a similar diocesan service in Sydney.<sup>125</sup>

Part of O'Brien's agenda arose from concern at what he termed was the 'one sided development' of a subject known as Social Psychology. He therefore supported the proposal to formalise a Catholic social workers' group.

Such an association is daily becoming more necessary. Certain subjects, such as Social Psychology, are likely to have a materialistic complexion... Miss Parker's suggestion is advisable so that any materialistic influences in this course may be compensated for by supplementary Catholic training.<sup>126</sup>

The CTSWA held its first annual meeting in June 1940. Parker, the natural choice as its leader, again displayed modesty and Davidson was elected president. Apart from the four pioneers, Sydney had two other trained Catholic social workers at that time: Mrs Vivienne Cliffe, Assistant Social Worker at the Family Welfare Bureau (FWB) of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic Fund<sup>127</sup>, and Miss Phyllis Bland, Welfare Officer for Lever Bros.<sup>128</sup> Cliffe, also a qualified teacher, was the only

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<sup>123</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 9 July 1940, B1210, SAA; E.M. Davidson, Department of Social Work, Lewisham Hospital, Some Explanatory Notes, 1986, p. 3, Little Company of Mary Congregational Archives (LCMCA).

<sup>124</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 9 July 1940, B1210, SAA.

<sup>125</sup> Davidson, Some Explanatory Notes, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>126</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 26 March 1940, CTSWA, B1210, SAA.

<sup>127</sup> The Family Welfare Bureau had been established in 1940 following three months planning by Katharine Ogilvie, on secondment from Sydney Hospital, with advice from Norma Parker. The Catholic Church's representative on the fund was Monsignor Meaney. Cliffe's work at the FWB is not mentioned in C.O. Bradham Jackson, *Official History of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic Fund of NSW*, City of Sydney Archives (COSA). However, an article in *The Manly Daily*, 23 January 1968 refers to Ogilvie's first supporters being married social workers, who worked in a voluntary capacity at the FWB. This clipping is amongst Family Welfare Bureau Collection, Box K21639, MLNSW.

<sup>128</sup> Phyllis Edna Bland, 'born in 1901, was the daughter of a bank manager'. She attended Our Lady of Mercy College, South Goulburn and later St Scholastica's

married Catholic social worker in the inter-war period.<sup>129</sup> She and Bland had completed the Certificate in Social Studies from the NSW BSST in 1940.<sup>130</sup> In 1942 Cliffe succeeded Davidson at Lewisham Hospital, before moving on to SVHS in 1944, where she is remembered as a talented educator, with a perceptive and compassionate approach to the needs of clients.<sup>131</sup>

The CTSWA's interests included the 'study... in light of Catholic principles [of] the doctrinal, scientific, and practical questions with Social Service' and assistance to members in their vocation as Catholic social workers.<sup>132</sup> CTSWA organised forums at Sancta Sophia College, Sydney University, for the ten Catholic students, who included two male cadets attached to the CWD, and Margaret Lawlor, who in 1942 would become a full time social worker with the Theresians.<sup>133</sup> Journalist Brian Doyle lectured on Catholic social work history, while Dublin-born Jesuit, Fr Richard Murphy, who had a longstanding interest in both health care and social work, lectured on the philosophy of Catholic social work.<sup>134</sup> Study groups were also organised to discuss relevant papal encyclicals. CTSWA added a degree of formality that assisted the women's promotion for a Catholic Welfare Bureau in Sydney.<sup>135</sup>

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College, Glebe Point. Her personal and academic file is among the NSW BSST Papers, G.71 Series 6, Item, 2, USA.

<sup>129</sup> At that time women generally resigned from their positions upon marriage. Most married social workers did not return to the profession.

<sup>130</sup> NSW BSST Papers, G.71 Series 6, Item, 2, USA.

<sup>131</sup> Golden Jubilee Supplement, Department of Social; Work, 1936-1986, St Vincent's Hospital *Circulation* May 1, 1986 p 4; Davidson, Some Explanatory Notes, *op. cit.* p. 4.

<sup>132</sup> Davidson to Gilroy 3 July 1940, Catholic Trained Social Workers' Association Correspondence, Box B1210, SAA.

<sup>133</sup> H. Farland, *Following the Little Way: Spreading the Faith 1918-1998* (Sydney, Chevalier Press, 1998; p. 77. The other CTSWA students were Mary Barber, Molly Burfitt, Kathleen Dalton, Kate Brady, Margaret Lawlor, Aileen Glynn, Margaret Bryant, Anthony Lewis and Peter Clark.

<sup>134</sup> *Catholic Women's Review*, 16 November 1938 p. 4; R.J. Murphy, *The Catholic Nurse: her spirit and her duties* (Sydney, 1929). For details of Murphy's life, see D. Strong, *Australian Dictionary of Jesuit Biography, 1884-1998* (Sydney, Halstead Press, 1999).

#### 4.5 'Needs in the Catholic Social Work Field' - Sydney

The impetus for the formation of a Catholic Welfare Bureau in Sydney was a detailed report submitted by lay social workers. As in Melbourne, Parker and her colleagues tempered their progressive agenda to reform children's institutions with patience. The women realised that a radical strategy would achieve little within the parameters of the male-dominated and institutionally-focused church. The social workers gained in-principle support from the CWA for a professional bureau to assist 'people struggling with poverty and problems of various needs'.<sup>136</sup> Parker, as a foundation member of the Catholic Action board, was in a unique position to advise the benefits of a Sydney bureau of social service.<sup>137</sup>

During the second half of 1940s the four social workers documented their experiences of social welfare institutions and practices. By late 1940 the women, under Parker's *de facto* leadership, had completed a detailed study of Catholic welfare activities in Sydney. On 5 November 1940 they presented a lengthy submission entitled 'Needs in the Catholic Social Work Field' to Monsignor O'Brien.<sup>138</sup> This document appraised the activities of existing Catholic agencies and urged the Sydney Archdiocese to form a social welfare agency or bureau of social services.<sup>139</sup> Their central argument — that the church's existing social

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<sup>135</sup> Although CTSWA was important to the foundation of the Sydney bureau over the ensuing years it would have a 'very spasmodic existence. A need is felt, the group is established, and then, for some reason which we cannot determine, it lapses and dies out', Margaret McHardy to Teresa Wardell, 3 June 1955, Teresa Wardell Collection, Box 19, University of Melbourne Archives (UMA)

<sup>136</sup> Parker Brown and Davidson, A Tribute to the memory of Monsignor John McMahon, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>137</sup> The other members of the board were Miss F Van der Schott (Holy Grail), Miss Nelson (Theresian Society), five clerics, including Eris O'Brien and Frank McCosker, and five laymen. See O'Brien to Gilroy, 29 May 1940, Catholic Action, B1418, SAA. Fifth meeting, Consultative Board of Catholic Action, 29 October 1940, Catholic Action, Box 1418, SAA.

<sup>138</sup> Perhaps because of Moffit's experience in establishing and being the foundation social worker in Melbourne, she was listed first as the author of the document. C. Moffit, E. Davidson, E. Lyons, N. Parker, 'Needs in the Catholic Social Work Field' (Sydney, 5 November 1940), CSA.

services did not meet pressing welfare needs — received support from O'Brien and the Catholic Action board, especially Fr McCosker.<sup>140</sup>

A welfare agency, the women argued, could provide much needed co-ordination of existing Catholic orphanages, assist women and children in the courts, provide family social work and child welfare, especially for short periods, and co-ordinate social work study.<sup>141</sup> The women recommended two areas requiring immediate attention: court support for adults and children, and family social work:

under present day conditions not all families can manage to remain independent of assistance of various kinds... unemployment, irregular employment and ill health often bring families to a point where they have to turn to outside assistance.<sup>142</sup>

The women's submission also deliberated on the vexed question of volunteers. While material aid provided by organisations such as the SVdP was 'extremely useful' the social workers expressed concern about the nature of service provision:

its members are almost always men employed during the day... there are some families whose need is acute and requires urgent action... a case which requires day work immediately is often impossible for a SVdP member.<sup>143</sup>

Nor were volunteers trained to deal with 'complicated cases'. The trained workers felt that 'the SVdP member does not require the requisite knowledge to know what lines of action to pursue'.<sup>144</sup>

World War Two, coming immediately after a decade of mass unemployment, created further instability for many families, especially women and children

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<sup>139</sup> Two copies of this twenty page manuscript are located at CSA. One is very badly damaged, the result of a fire in 1998. The other is in a little better shape. Although referred to in correspondence by Monsignor Thomas, no copy of this document could be located at SAA.

<sup>140</sup> This may be the group that Sophie McGrath refers to as the Catholic Welfare Advisory Committee established in 1940 to review the social workers' document; S.M. McGrath., *These Women: Women religious in the history of Australia: The Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta 1888-1988*, (Kensington, NSW, UNSW Press, 1989). See also Catholic Action: Constitutions and Reports, 1932-1941, SAA.

<sup>141</sup> Moffit *et al.*, 'Needs in the Catholic Social Work Field', *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*, Section 1.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, Section 2.

dependent on service personnel. In response to the war, the Lord Mayor of Sydney had established a Patriotic and War Fund of NSW, with a Family Welfare Bureau in 1939. Monsignor Meaney was the church's official representative on the FWB Executive Committee; Parker was another member. Mrs Cliffe discretely referred 'Catholic cases' to Parker, who arranged referrals to Catholic charities and hospitals.<sup>145</sup> By early 1940 the arrangements had been put in place for 'effective liaison between the FWB and the CUSA in respect to the care of soldiers' families'.<sup>146</sup> While Catholic families received assistance from voluntary groups, the social workers remained concerned that 'in Catholic circles it is not sufficiently realised how much damage can be done to persons with the best intentions in the world and how fatally easy it is to suggest help and to break down the individual's independence'.<sup>147</sup>

In addition to the Catholic Court Guild, the SVdP had a Probation Committee that operated with 'extreme difficulty [but was] a work of great public utility'.<sup>148</sup> Neither provided a comprehensive service. Up until 1930 the Good Shepherd Sisters, based at Ashfield, had ministered at the Children's Court at Darlinghurst. Following concerns about their 'problematic service' the court's magistrate in 1935 visited the Good Samaritan Sisters women's home at Tempe and determined it would become the preferred placement home for troubled girls.<sup>149</sup> This decision alarmed the Good Shepherd Sisters. Although the Good Samaritan Sisters attempted to allay the concerns of the other order, by sharing young Catholic female offenders with them, tensions between the two orders grew. Monsignor O'Brien cautioned

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<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>146</sup> Minutes, Eleventh Executive Committee, p 15, Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund of NSW, CRS 941, City of Sydney Archives (COSA).

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*, Section 2, p. 3.

<sup>148</sup> Society of St Vincent de Paul, *The Fifty-Ninth Annual Report, for period ending 31st December 1939*, p. 14.

<sup>149</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 30 September 1938, Diocesan Secretariate of the Lay Apostolate Correspondence, 1938-1941, B2734, SAA.

against any ill-feelings between the nuns.<sup>150</sup> O'Brien, as head of the archdiocese's charitable works, reported that the Children's Court magistrate considered the Tempe facility, operated by the Good Samaritan Order to be 'superior' to that of Ashfield.<sup>151</sup>

The social workers recommended girls of widely varying ages should not be housed together. They said convents should not receive older girls in an 'unsettled frame of mind', because of the 'disturbance' they can cause.<sup>152</sup> Moffit and her colleagues' research indicated that some girls would be prepared to serve a short prison term rather than being placed in a children's institution for a longer period of time.<sup>153</sup> The women hoped that clerics' support would lead to a Child Welfare section.

An interesting aspect of the social workers' submission was its comment that reform of institutional care 'does not seem to be a particularly urgent one'.<sup>154</sup> Offsetting that view the women said 'it is extraordinarily difficult to get Catholic children into our orphanages and we seem to have no institutions ready to take the children for short periods'.<sup>155</sup>

The women's reluctance to focus solely on the children's institutions may have been acknowledgment of their lack of power as laywomen. The 'professional' social workers appeared to be treading carefully accepting the institutions' independence and the hierarchy's unambiguous support for such welfare services. Secondly, putting aside frustrations with institutions, Moffit et al appeared keen to create a generic social welfare agency and to avoid the disappointments that had occurred at the Melbourne CSSB. This was not the first, nor the last time, that the

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<sup>150</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 30 September 1938, *ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 10 October 1938, *ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Moffit, 'Needs in the Catholic Social Work Field', Section 1, Court Guild.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.*, Section 3, Other Social Work.

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

women's pragmatism would enable them to achieve change in an environment that did not readily accept new ideas. The women's strategy appeared to be the establishment of a Catholic welfare bureau, before addressing contentious issues, such as the institutional model. In terms of their relationship with existing charities, the social workers were conscious not to usurp the role of volunteers.

In addition to over-crowded institutions, almoner departments at Sydney's two major Catholic hospitals reported many external referrals for assistance such as placement of children, counselling for unmarried pregnant girls, and provision of medical aids, such as wheelchairs, for incapacitated people. Parker commented that 'none of these cases had any connection with St Vincent's Hospital, yet all needed care and there is no other Catholic organisation to deal with them'.<sup>156</sup> At Lewisham Hospital, Davidson established public appeals to assist individuals and families. In one case, through the support of Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*, Davidson raised sufficient funds to enable a young girl who had had 'intensive medical treatment' to travel to the tropics to assist in her recuperation.<sup>157</sup>

The women's submission concluded that the archdiocese would benefit from a welfare bureau providing a range of services.<sup>158</sup> Although often credited as the document's prime mover, half a century after its compilation, Parker remained modest about her role.<sup>159</sup> With supporting recommendations from the Catholic Action Board, Gilroy agreed to establish the Sydney bureau. There was no announcement or promotion of the new organisation, nor clergy education about its potential.

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<sup>156</sup> Direction of Existing Catholic Charitable Institutions and Organisations, 5 November 1940, attached to Moffit 'Needs in the Catholic Social Work Field', *op. cit.*

<sup>157</sup> E.M. Davidson, 'Almoner Department', 48<sup>th</sup> *Annual report for the year ending 1937, Lewisham Hospital*, File 40.8 Lewisham Hospital Annual Reports, LCMA

<sup>158</sup> *ibid.*, Section 3, p. 2.

<sup>159</sup> In 1991, for example, she asked Fr John Usher to amend a manuscript history of Centacare that stated she had been 'mainly responsible' for preparing 'Needs in the Catholic Social Work Field'. In an interview on 24 March 2002 Parker emphasised the contributions by the other three women, especially Constance Moffit's role.

The women's role in founding the bureau has been surpassed by male recognition. *Manly*, the clerical magazine credited O'Brien as the bureau's founder, while the diocese of Bathurst gave the bureau's first director, Bishop Algy Thomas, similar credit.<sup>160</sup> Thomas, while acknowledging 'the services of those trained at the Catholic University of Washington have been more than valuable', claims he instigated the women's report.<sup>161</sup> Fr John Davoren, the Sydney bureau's fourth director, has also questioned the women's role. He claims the church was already moving down the path of professional welfare.<sup>162</sup> Davoren provides little evidence to support his view that the church would have established professional welfare services regardless of the women. The women's inspiration for the Melbourne bureau did not feature in his account. Further, Davoren ignores the resistance of the SVdP and other charitable groups in transforming their voluntary services into an integrated social services model.<sup>163</sup> Finally, Davoren misread Archbishop Gilroy. As John Luttrell notes, Gilroy, was a 'practical administrator, not a scholar or visionary, and he preferred to maintain the practices and institutions he had inherited'.<sup>164</sup>

#### 4.5.1 Clerical leadership

The women's call for a clerical leader received support from the Archdiocese. Unlike Melbourne where Moffit had day to day operational responsibility for the bureau, in Sydney clerics dominated policy and operational roles. O'Brien nominated his protégé Fr Algy Thomas (1908-83) to be the welfare bureau's first

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<sup>160</sup> *Manly*, Vol. 8, 1935, p. 11. *Catholic Observer*, Press Statement, 11 April 1983, *Bishop Thomas Papers*, Bathurst Diocesan Archives (BDA).

<sup>161</sup> Thomas to Gilroy, 20 May 1940, Catholic Action, Box 148, SAA.

<sup>162</sup> J. Davoren, The future of social services in the Archdiocese of Sydney, 9 December 1977, CSA.

<sup>163</sup> Nevertheless, much later Davoren supported representations by Professor Tom Brennan of Sydney University for Parker to receive a Queen's Birthday Honour, due to what Davoren described as her 'extensive contribution' to Catholic welfare. Brennan to Davoren 15 February 1968; Davoren to Gilroy, 18 February 1968, CWB, Box 2735, SAA.

<sup>164</sup> J.J. Luttrell, 'Norman Thomas Cardinal Gilroy as Archbishop of Sydney' (PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 1997), p. 306.



leader. Thomas, whose family had migrated from England in 1911, was perhaps at some cultural disadvantage in his adopted city, which was dominated by Irish born clergy and first or second generation Irish-Australians.<sup>165</sup> As parishioners at O'Brien's Bankstown parish, the Thomas family developed a close friendship with him.<sup>166</sup> After being educated at Christian Brothers Lewisham and by the Marist Brothers at St Joseph's College, Hunter's Hill, Thomas entered the seminary and was ordained a priest in November 1931. Thomas' energies were well directed in his priestly work. He was a good preacher and organiser but in 1940 O'Brien described Thomas as not as 'judicious' as other priests, such as Father Freeman'.<sup>167</sup> By the 1940s he was described 'Lord High Everything Else'.<sup>168</sup>

Throughout the 1930s Thomas remained close to O'Brien, and in September 1940, he succeeded O'Brien as head of Catholic Action.<sup>169</sup> Thomas' drive and organising skills assisted in the formation of the Catholic Youth Organisation in Sydney in 1941.<sup>170</sup> He was also appointed to other roles, including Diocesan Director of the Propagation of the Faith, inaugural Policy Director for the Legion of Catholic Women; Secretary of the Manly Union, 1946-1952, as well as Diocesan Director of the Lay Apostolate in September 1941.<sup>171</sup> As CWB director Thomas took up the women's submission and attempted to improve Catholic institutions, whose

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<sup>165</sup> For a discussion of the 'Irishness' of Sydney see P. O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia* (Kensington, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 1987).

<sup>166</sup> *Manly*, Vol. 8, No. 1, October 1948, p. 21.

<sup>167</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 'Suggested Names for Director of Catholic Action', 14 May 1940, Catholic Action files, Box 1418, SAA.

<sup>168</sup> *Manly*, Vol. 7, 1954, p. 54.

<sup>169</sup> The view that O'Brien was 'relegated' in favour of Thomas, advanced by both Bruce Duncan and John Luttrell, overlooks that O'Brien was never comfortable with the role and underestimates Gilroy's respect for O'Brien.

<sup>170</sup> K. Coen, *Monsignor John Leonard and the Catholic Youth Organisation* (Strathfield, NSW, St Paul's Publishing 2000), p. 79.

<sup>171</sup> Catholic Observer, Press Statement, 11 April 1983; *Cui Servire Regnare Est*, The Most Rev Albert Reuben Edward Thomas, DD, Sixth Bishop of Bathurst, September 1983.

problems ranged from overcrowding, inadequate staffing and poor quality homes to the 'total neglect of temporary and difficult boys'.<sup>172</sup>

#### 4.5.2 'her mutual co-operation was... nil'

Sydney's CWB commenced in Harrington Street, near St Patrick's Church Hill in March 1941. Reflecting the scarcity of Catholic social workers in Sydney, a Victorian, Alice Kate Blackall, was appointed as the agency's inaugural social worker.<sup>173</sup> Blackall (1894-1975) had been born at Prahran, the second child of Clareman, Michael Francis Blackall and Tasmanian, Bridget Flora Hegarty. After completing an Arts Degree at Melbourne University in the 1920s, Blackall worked as a high school teacher, in both Victoria and in India. An interest in women's affairs led Blackall to join Melbourne's progressive Catholic Women's Social Guild (CWSG). Blackall gained more prominence in the CWSG, after the resignations of several central committee members.<sup>174</sup>

Blackall, independent of different groupings within the CWSG, used her tact and administrative skills to manage *The Horizon*. Reflecting her independent mind, her strongly worded editorials lamented the 'apathy' of young Catholic women towards social work and in 1924 made one of the first calls for the establishment of an organisation to recruit and to co-ordinate Catholic social workers, and to exert pressure on legislative and administrative bodies concerned with children's welfare and State institutions for orphans and deserted children.<sup>175</sup> As a committee member and CWSG secretary in the late 1920s Blackall helped revitalise the

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<sup>172</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>173</sup> In 1943 the CWB moved to Pacific House, 249 George Street, before joining several other Catholic Action works in 1946 at the Catholic United Services Auxiliary (CUSA) House at 175 Elizabeth Street. See letter from Fr Thomas to Secretary, New South Wales Council of Social Services (NSWCSS), 15 May 1941, Catholic Welfare Bureau (Centacare) File, Box KH708, CSSNSW Collection, MLNSW.

<sup>174</sup> For coverage of the CWSG split see S. Kennedy, *Faith and Feminism*, p. 95. Anna Brennan's distinguished career see a brief biography in Edmund Campion, *Great Australian Catholics* (Richmond, Victoria, David Lovell, 1997) Campion says that Brennan 'made her mark as a Catholic feminist outside formal church organizations', p. 112.

<sup>175</sup> *The Horizon*, 1 February 1924, p. 1.

organisation.<sup>176</sup> She had a broad perspective on the role of Catholic women in church and community and in 1932, for example, travelled to Adelaide to lecture at Loreto Convent's Reading Circle.<sup>177</sup>

After teaching for more than a decade, Blackall commenced studies at the Victorian Board of Social Studies (VBSS) in 1937. She successfully completed her studies in 1939, the first Catholic to do so without the tensions that had characterised the studies of earlier candidates, such as Teresa Wardell and Sr Mary Hedwige.<sup>178</sup> She was also a foundation member of the Victorian Branch of the St Joan's Political Alliance.

In early 1941 Thomas interviewed Blackall 'who is the person recommended for the position should the Archbishop of Sydney decide that it is expedient for a Trainer Social Worker to be attached to the Office of the Lay Apostolate', during a National Secretariate Conference of Catholic Action (NSCCA) in Melbourne.<sup>179</sup> Thomas advised Gilroy that Blackall is a 'practical Catholic... and apparently has a great grasp' of the social work profession. In a sign of the need to self-fund the bureau, Thomas' assessment of Blackall included the comment that she did not have experience in raising funds.<sup>180</sup>

Blackall's early focus in Sydney was to support children and adults brought before the courts. This new service represented a change from the priorities of voluntary groups and religious orders, who appeared more interested in attracting children for institutionalisation, rather than seeking to understand the underlying reasons for their situation. Through research Blackall provided reports on children and their family history to magistrates who were then able to consider the wider

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<sup>176</sup> CWSG *Annual Report* for year ending 31 March 1928; *The Horizon*, July 1975, p. 10.

<sup>177</sup> Pamphlet, 1932 Lecture Series, Loreto Reading Circle, 1932, LSM.

<sup>178</sup> See Chapter 3, Section 3.8 for discussion of the Hedwig dispute.

<sup>179</sup> Thomas to Gilroy, 12 March 1941, Catholic Action Collection, SAA.

<sup>180</sup> *ibid.*

circumstances before making a decision about their future.<sup>181</sup> To forge closer links with the institutions Thomas replicated the Melbourne approach whereby the CWB would collect maintenance from parents or guardians and co-ordinate placements to the institutions. The process was difficult, however. Thomas had to convince both the institutions to provide family details and subsequently those people of the value of paying maintenance. He overcame the 'reluctance of some institutions... by the quarterly cheque for maintenance, which the Bureau had collected from guardians'.<sup>182</sup>

In 1943 the bureau experienced its first internal crisis. Relations between Thomas and Blackall came to a head, perhaps because Thomas felt the pressure of not 'having the necessary knowledge' in social work, which contrasted with Blackall's training.<sup>183</sup> Blackall held an unusual position in the Sydney Archdiocese, which traditionally had not employed qualified lay people. In February 1943, Thomas terminated Blackall's employment, citing office renovations as the reason.<sup>184</sup> Thomas advised Gilroy that he took such action because of Blackall's lack of co-operation, even after 'numerous requests'.<sup>185</sup>

Despite the dismissal and not providing Blackall with appropriate financial entitlements, Thomas appeared surprised when Blackall did not ask him for a reference.<sup>186</sup> Blackall, under no doubt that she had been 'dismissed', appealed to Gilroy which resulted in Thomas agreeing to make financial payments to avoid 'possible irritating publicity'.<sup>187</sup> Blackall returned to Melbourne and continued her

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<sup>181</sup> Regrettably these records have not survived.

<sup>182</sup> J.F. McCosker, Memo for Most Rev P Lyons, ca 1952, CSA.

<sup>183</sup> Bishop A.R.E. Thomas 'Rough Draft: The Catholic Welfare Bureau', MS. undated, reference C19, p. 5, Diocese of Bathurst Archives (BDA).

<sup>184</sup> Thomas to Gilroy, 9 March 1943, CFWB, Box 2734, SAA.

<sup>185</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> Blackall to Gilroy, 22 March 1944; 22 March 1943, CFWB, B2734, SAA.

social justice commitments through the CWSG, St Joan's Alliance and the Australian Association of Social Workers.

Thomas' difficulties with Blackall led him to study social work at Sydney University. He hoped that by acquiring social casework principles he would be better skilled to respond to 'conflicts in administration'.<sup>188</sup> In July 1944 Thomas expressed to Gilroy that 'the bureau must expand to perform the real mission of its work and to safeguard the interests of the church in the ever widening and ever important field of social work'.<sup>189</sup>

#### 4.5.3 Services

Through a multiplicity of archdiocesan positions, Thomas sought to influence his clerical colleagues about the benefits of specialised social services. Manly described Thomas as a 'man of many parts' and commented that 'Sydney priests especially are grateful to him for relieving them of many worries with orphans, delinquents and broken homes'.<sup>190</sup> This appeared an ideal situation; the reality was that many clergy had little contact with the CWB. Moreover, a centralised welfare service remained at odds with the accepted practice of parish-based welfare services, delivered by the clergy in tandem with volunteers, often SVdP members.

Uncertainty about the roles of the SVdP and the CWB led to tension. The CWB aimed to support the SvdP, but it preferred to continue operating independently. The SVdP rejected Monsignor O'Brien's pleas to provide financial support for the growing needs of women and youth involved in court cases.<sup>191</sup> In his first CWB report, Thomas noted that he had 'restricted the [CWB's] actual case work to difficult SVdP cases which seemed beyond the care of the local conferences'

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<sup>188</sup> Thomas, Rough Draft, *op. cit.*

<sup>189</sup> Thomas to Gilroy, 6 July 1944, CFWB, B2734, SAA.

<sup>190</sup> *Manly*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1945.

<sup>191</sup> St Vincent de Paul Society, Minutes of the Board of the Particular Council of Sydney, 26 August 1940, Book 22, K15512, MLNSW.

[branches] and to cases relating to children in orphanages.<sup>192</sup> By Christmas 1941, Thomas reluctantly agreed 'not to handle any cases coming from the Society' until a decision came from Gilroy.<sup>193</sup> Gilroy let the matter rest until August 1942 when he decided, half-heartedly, in favour of the CWB providing support to non-institutional children, with the SVdP remaining the main charity providers. The SVdP would by-pass Thomas when it required advice from the archdiocese.<sup>194</sup> The United States situation, where the SVdP understood the need to enter into partnerships with professional social workers, such as the District 11 concept in New York, would not occur in Australia for several decades.

Thomas viewed welfare as a social science. Reflecting a decision of the local almoners' association, he wore a white coat when counselling clients.<sup>195</sup> Fr John Usher, a more recent CWB director, says Thomas' attire reflected 'a move away from social action towards the more clinical style of the medical and psychiatric professions'.<sup>196</sup>

Another practice by Thomas that concerned social workers, such as Mary Lewis, was referring to clients by numbers. She regarded that as 'too impersonal. It was contrary to all my new ideas about being sensitive to the client, making them feel welcome'.<sup>197</sup> Thomas might have felt numbers helped to protect privacy, but their use was outdated and had attracted resentment from clients at least half a century

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<sup>192</sup> Half Yearly Report, 1941, p. 7. Fr A.R.E Thomas, 15 July 1941, Catholic Action files, B1418, SAA.

<sup>193</sup> Society of St Vincent de Paul, Minutes of the Particular Council of Sydney, 1 December 1941, Book 22, Box K15512, MLNSW.

<sup>194</sup> See for example, in 1946 when the SvdP sought Gilroy's advice to establish a 'new home or colony' for sub-normal boys, there is no evidence that Gilroy sought Thomas' advice. Maher, SVdP President to Gilroy, 12 November 1946, Letter 2.48, Box L2627, SAA.

<sup>195</sup> NSW almoners wore either a white or green coat. Stella Davies to Dorothy Bethune, 5 April 1937, Box MLK 03472, Australian Association of Hospital Almoners (AAHA) Collection, MLNSW.

<sup>196</sup> J. Usher, 'Centacare, 1940-1988, (Sydney, 1991) p. 4, MS. CSA.

<sup>197</sup> Lewis, (comp.). *Always tell a story*, p. 109.

earlier. A boy at the Randwick Asylum had complained that 'they do not call me Henry; they call me 367'.<sup>198</sup>

Under Thomas the Bureau focused on 'social charity'. He maneuvered for the promotion of social justice with its 'distinctive character and objective' to be a 'special branch' of Catholic Action under the influential diocesan adviser, Dr Patrick Ryan MSC, who became the archdiocese's leading anti-Communist advocate.<sup>199</sup> Thomas viewed himself as a hands-on social scientist and thus did not too closely align with social justice. Without an integrated education program of social welfare and justice, however, Thomas' reforms continued to be misunderstood and resisted by clergy, religious orders and the voluntary sector. The separation of social charity from social justice was also not on par with his mentor who specifically considered the issue in *The Catholic's Duty in Australian Social Reform*:

Social charity must stand side by side with social justice. Social Charity is not spasmodic. It is not merely a direct and active assistance given by individuals, institutions or the State, in the form of doles and part-time employment. It is the permanent attitude of the public mind, putting into action its convictions of what a social order should be.<sup>200</sup>

In terms of policies, Thomas recommended to Gilroy that the archdiocese encourage the use of foster families as an alternative to institutionalisation.

Within the Archdiocese there seems to be acceptance ... that the spiritual interests of children are best safeguarded by institutionalisation 'without any regard to its demerit of such forms of care. Foster care by Catholic people sponsored on a proper scale has been little developed. This gives the child a more natural home'.<sup>201</sup>

Thomas, newly graduated in social studies – the first clergyman and one of the first men in Australia to do so<sup>202</sup> – displayed a scientific approach to his work. His

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<sup>198</sup> D. Peyser, 'A Study of the History of Welfare Work in Sydney from 1788 till about 1900', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. XXV, Part 11, 1939, p. 188.

<sup>199</sup> J. M. Franklin, 'Dr Paddy Ryan and the Red Peril', *Australian Catholic Historical Society Journal*, Vol. 17, 1996.

<sup>200</sup> E. O'Brien, *The Catholic's Duty in Australian Social Reform*, Third Edition (Diocesan Secretariate of Catholic Action, Sydney, 1940).

<sup>201</sup> *ibid.*

philosophy was to 'convert a series of heterogeneous and disparate agencies... into an organic, interlocking and fluid whole'.<sup>203</sup> In the mid 1940s he established a child guidance clinic within the bureau. The honorary services provided by a skilled psychiatrist and psychologist at this clinic represented what some writers have described as the para-professionalisation of social work.<sup>204</sup> Their role not only focused on children, but also many parents whose own difficulties were considered to have a bearing on children's situations. Thomas believed the bureau should help clients to overcome dependency, because 'people today do not want to be thought that they are in need – they want to have some independence and social work must always bear that in mind'.<sup>205</sup> By 1948 Thomas had tired of the CWB role and focused his energies on other archdiocesan positions, including being the National Director of Missions.

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<sup>202</sup> In the early 1940s only 5 of the 110 people with Australian social work qualifications were men. See J. Lawrence, 'The future role and development of social work in Australia', *Australian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. XV. No. 2, December 1962. The causes and impact of the high gender ratio of women to male social workers, especially in the period from 1930-1970, has been discussed with clarity by Elaine Martin in 'Gender, Demand and Domain: The Social Work Profession in South Australia, 1935-80', PhD thesis, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne, 1990, which was subsequently published *Gender, Demand and Domain: The Social Work Profession in South Australia, 1935-80*, Adelaide, Australian Association of Social Workers, 1996, and 'The importance of the trained approach: social work education in South Australia 1935-1946', *ASW*, Vol. 36, March 1983. For a variation on the theme see H. Marchant, 'A feminist perspective on the Development of the Social Work Profession in New South Wales', *ASW*, Vol. 38, No. 1, March 1985.

<sup>203</sup> Catholic Missions Office and Secretariat of the Lay Apostolate, 1944 Report, p. 7. SAA.

<sup>204</sup> For example, K. Jackson, 'The use of volunteers and voluntary organisations in community development' in *The role of volunteers in Social Work*, Report of a Conference organised by the Commission for Social Welfare, a sub-committee of the Catholic Bishops Conference [England and Wales] (Aningdon, Berkshire. 1971).



## 4.6 Stirrings in Adelaide

In 1939 the South Australian Government responded to community ire about poor standards of care in children's institutions by appointing a committee to inquire into 'Delinquent and Other Children in the Care of the State'. This committee, which included Catholic solicitor, J.K. Alderman, took evidence and researched children's institutions across Australia and overseas. Historian, Margaret Barbalet, says the committee was scathing of many children's institutions, both state-owned and non-government. The majority of inmates, whether in private or state institutions, were required to work far too hard, which could be soul destroying.<sup>206</sup>

The consecration of Bishop Beovich as Archbishop of Adelaide in April 1940 provided impetus for the local church to consider professional welfare services.<sup>207</sup> One of his early goals in Adelaide, according to Peter Travers, was to establish a welfare bureau, similar in basis to Melbourne's CSSB.<sup>208</sup> Several social workers influenced Beovich. Joan Lupton, an English almoner, who held a Master of Arts from Oxford University, had been instrumental in establishing almoner departments in Sydney and Adelaide.<sup>209</sup> Katharine Ogilvie says Lupton took her concerns about the quality of care in Adelaide's Catholic children's homes to Beovich.<sup>210</sup>

Norma Parker, on Beovich's invitation, visited Adelaide in December 1941 to 'advise him on the establishment of the Bureau'.<sup>211</sup> The Catholic Women's League

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<sup>205</sup> Untitled and undated notes, Bishop Thomas, personal file, DBA.

<sup>206</sup> M. Barbalet, *Far From a Low Gutter Girl: The Forgotten World of State Wards: South Australians 1887-1940* (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1983) pp: 226-228.

<sup>207</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 April 1940, p. 13.

<sup>208</sup> Travers, 'Planning in a Church Welfare Agency', Part 11, pp: 2-3.

<sup>209</sup> Lupton helped establish the social work departments at Sydney's Rachel Forster Hospital and Royal Adelaide Hospital for Children, Biographical Notes, Joan Lupton, 28 August 1986, Joan Lupton Papers, PRG 720, Mortlock Library, State Library of South Australia (MLSA).

<sup>210</sup> K. Ogilvie, 'Twenty Years A' Growing, Paper, ca 1959, South Australia Division of the Australian Association of Social Workers, PRG 744/2/5, MLSA. This view is supported by Martin, *Gender, Demand and Domain*, p. 87.

of South Australia welcomed Parker, whom they described as speaking ‘with a sincerity and earnestness that carry conviction and immediately establish deep interest among her listeners’.<sup>212</sup> Using the recently formed Sydney CWB as a case study, Parker explained why Adelaide could benefit from a similar agency. There were ‘about ten reasons why the archbishop had gradually become convinced that a bureau was absolutely necessary’, Parker said.<sup>213</sup> High on the list, had been voluntary organisations such as the SVdP, the Theresian Club and the LCW, undertaking their charitable activities ‘in watertight compartments, not knowing what the next one was doing’.<sup>214</sup> Parker acknowledged the role of well-meaning volunteers, but said their time and skills constrained their involvement and left more complex matters wanting. Parker cited the example of Guild members visiting girls, when they ‘had no psychological understanding to know what had brought these girls to a particular point and consequently they had no idea how to treat them’.<sup>215</sup> Parker also held concerns about the church’s preference for institutionalisation, which often overlooked proper assessment of the needs of each child and other possible options of care, including keeping families together.

#### 4.6.1 From orphan to social worker

Beovich’s interest in reforming welfare institutions coincided with the availability of Hannah Buckley (1917-81), South Australia’s first Catholic social worker. Buckley’s motivation to study social work and her culture contrasted with that of her Protestant contemporaries. Hannah was born into a fairly well established farming family at Tarlee, South Australia, the second daughter of James Buckley and Cecilia Kerin, both first generation Australians, whose parents were natives of County Clare, Ireland. The Buckleys and Kerins held local government and other civic positions and were well regarded within Catholic circles in South Australia for

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<sup>211</sup> Travers, *Planning in a Church Welfare Agency*, Part 11, p: 2-3.

<sup>212</sup> *The Southern Cross*, 12 December 1941, p. 20.

<sup>213</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *ibid.*

their charitable disposition.<sup>216</sup> An obituary for Hannah's paternal grandmother, Hannah Hogan, for example, commented that she 'was ever ready to promote the welfare of those around her and her benevolent acts are greatly remembered by many'.<sup>217</sup> Buckley's maternal grandfather, Patrick Kerin, was likewise regarded as a 'devoted Catholic', with a great interest in welfare.<sup>218</sup>

Hannah and her two sisters were orphaned at a young age. An obituary in *The Southern Cross* in 1919 noted Cecilia Buckley's deep faith, evidenced by the recent completion of a nine months prayer novena.<sup>219</sup> Two years later when Hannah's father, James, died suddenly, *The Southern Cross* reported the loss of a 'good Catholic man' who had displayed his strong support from people in need through practical measures.<sup>220</sup> The Buckley children inherited a not inconsiderable estate, valued at approximately £25,000. They moved into Adelaide and attended Loreto Convent, Marryatville, being cared for by two unmarried aunts, who lived opposite the school.<sup>221</sup>

Loreto provided an inspiring education which influenced Buckley's career choice. In 1930, the school introduced readings circles, as part of the growing Catholic Action movement in South Australia.<sup>222</sup> The circles aimed at stimulating young people's interest in Catholic culture, social teaching and literature. Under the lead of Jesuit Wilfred Ryan, Loreto, in the words of Mother Brigid Jones, represented the 'cradle

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<sup>215</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> Both Hannah's grandfathers were local councillors. See entries for Patrick Buckley and Patrick Kerin in *Biographical Dictionary of South Australians, 1836-1885* (Adelaide, South Australian Genealogical and Heraldry Society, 1986).

<sup>217</sup> *The Southern Cross*, 26 November 1897, p. 587.

<sup>218</sup> *ibid.*, Obituary, Mr Patrick Kerin, 11 April 1930.

<sup>219</sup> *ibid.*, Obituary, Mrs James Buckley, Tarlee, 19 December 1919.

<sup>220</sup> *ibid.*, Obituary, Mr James Buckley, 28 October 1921, Supplement Section

<sup>221</sup> *Northern Argus*, 4 November 1921, p. 5; Interview Moya Shaw (nee Britten-Jones) 2005.

<sup>222</sup> Mother Brigid Jones, Loreto Convent, Marryatville, Paper for the Diocesan Council, 1943, Loreto School Marryatville Archives (LSMA).

of the youth movement of Catholic Action in Australia'.<sup>223</sup> During the early 1930s the Loreto reading circle developed into a Junior Catholic Women's League (JCWL), consisting of recent Loreto graduates and current students.

The 1936 Eucharistic Congress also had a bearing on Hannah Buckley. The Congress included a visit from Belgium Countess, Mille de Hemptinne, the Vatican's representative, to support the growth of Catholic Action in South Australia.<sup>224</sup> During the Congress the countess delivered a series of lectures at Loreto, which inspired Hannah to produce, at her own expense, a brochure on the JCWL.<sup>225</sup> In their latter years at Loreto, Hannah and Cecilia Buckley joined the JCWL leadership group, which provided catechesis at State schools and encouraged Catholic families to attend Sunday Mass.<sup>226</sup> Mother Brigid Jones says that the countess' encouragement led several students, including Hannah Buckley, and later Moya Britten-Jones to study social work.<sup>227</sup>

In the above context of Catholic Action and her family values of charity and community service, Hannah applied to study at the newly formed South Australia Board of Social Study and Training (SABSST).<sup>228</sup> In February 1937 the SABSST committee accepted six students, including Buckley, whose peers included Joy MacLennan, who would become the foundation social worker at the Anglican diocesan welfare bureau.<sup>229</sup> Buckley's decision to study social work displayed a

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<sup>223</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> *The Southern Cross*, 6 November 1936.

<sup>225</sup> Jones, Loreto Convent, Marryatville, p. 4.

<sup>226</sup> Mother Brigid Jones, *Catechising (Loreto Convent Marryatville)*, 1930- , MS. n.d. LSMA.

<sup>227</sup> Mother Brigid Jones *Reminiscences of the J.C.W.L.: Catholic Action for Giles, 1929-1948* (Adelaide, n.d.) Chapter X111, p. 1.

<sup>228</sup> Buckley's examination results for 1936 show good results in Music (Pianoforte and Theory), Ancient History, Geology. See *The Southern Cross*, 13 November 1936, p. 10.

<sup>229</sup> South Australian Board of Social Studies and Training (SABSST) Committee Meeting, 22 February 1937, Minute Book, SABSST Archives, Special Collections, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide (BSLUA). It took several years planning before the Anglican Church appointed MacLennan in 1947. It is possible that Buckley and MacLennan exchanged ideas

degree of independence because at the time the Church declined to affiliate with the SABSST.<sup>230</sup>

Elaine Martin's analysis of early South Australian social workers concluded that most had attended private Protestant secondary schools.<sup>231</sup> Amy Wheaton, inaugural SABSST director, advocated social work as 'an important profession of the future of women'.<sup>232</sup> Although interested in social workers being employed by the Methodist Church's welfare department, Wheaton displayed an ecumenical attitude by encouraging the National Council of Jewish Women, the Catholic Women's League and the SVdP to become foundation members of the SABSST.<sup>233</sup>

Wheaton combined social work knowledge and her Christian paradigm to emphasise the importance of the individual. She rejected labelling a person's difficulties on the basis of what she called 'sociological abstractions', such as poverty and unemployment. She also disregarded explanations of a person's delinquency or criminality due to physical or moral defects and a person's hereditary.<sup>234</sup> As a Christian, Wheaton said 'Christianity stresses the infinite value of each human soul, the worth and significance of each individual in society'.<sup>235</sup>

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as students, and later, as colleagues. Both would experience similar difficulties in terms of insufficient clerical support and finances for their respective denominational welfare bureaux.

<sup>230</sup> Catholic Women's League, 19 June 19 (36) [sic] to the Honourable Secretary, S.A. Board of Social Studies and Training, South Australian BSST Archives, Special Collections, BSLUA. On 9 June 1939 the Catholic Guild of Social Studies and the Catholic Women's Guild applied to affiliate with the SABSST, See Minutes of Committee for Studies, 11 December 1939, SABSST Archives, BSLUA.

<sup>231</sup> Martin, *Gender, Demand and Domain*, p. 69.

<sup>232</sup> 'Careers for Girls – Training for social service,' *The Advertiser* ca 1936, press clipping, Box 1, SABSST Archives, BSLUA.

<sup>233</sup> Wheaton to Irene Glasson, Secretary, SABSST, 11 December 19(36) [sic], Box 1, SABSST Archives, BSLUA.

<sup>234</sup> A.G. Wheaton, 'The importance of the individual', *The Social Service Record*, Vol. 1, No XXX, 1947, p. 27.

<sup>235</sup> *ibid.*, p. 28.

Buckley's university studies cost £23. During term she spent two days a week undertaking field work, often at government facilities. There is no evidence that Buckley undertook placement at any of the eight Catholic children's institutions, though she continued her active involvement in the JCWL.<sup>236</sup> Indicative of good relations between Christian denominations in Adelaide, the Adelaide BSST course included lectures from Fr Wildred Ryan and J.K. Alderman.<sup>237</sup> Buckley's conscientious nature is reflected in her attendance records at the SABSST and the University of Adelaide.<sup>238</sup> However, in her first year she failed one subject, which resulted in Wheaton recommending she take a year off.<sup>239</sup> A determined Buckley, however, studied hygiene, psychology and social psychology in 1938; economics, social philosophy, social history and dietetics (1939); economics and hygiene; social philosophy, case discussions and examination (1940). Buckley completed her last subject, economics, in 1941, and graduated in 1942.<sup>240</sup>

#### 4.6.2 Adelaide's Catholic Social Service Bureau

In early December 1941 *The Advertiser* reported that a Catholic Social Service Bureau (ACSSB) would be formed in early 1942. It would bring, the newspaper said, a 'definite advance in the administration of social welfare in South Australia... [which] will co-ordinate the work of all charities, such as orphanages, foundling homes, boys' homes'.<sup>241</sup> From the outset it was envisaged that the ACSSB would

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<sup>236</sup> In 1940, for example, Hannah Buckley features in a JCWL photo taken at Loreto Maryatville. Interestingly, one of the youngest girls in the photo is Moya Britten-Jones.

<sup>237</sup> The SABSST *Roll Book* records that Buckley, the only Catholic, received tuition from Fr Ryan in a subject called Social Philosophy Service. This was only the change from the course.

<sup>238</sup> SABSST, *Roll Book*, 1937-1941, SABSST Collection, BSLUA.

<sup>239</sup> SABSST, *Minute Book*, 9 December 1937, SA BSST Collection, BSLUA.

<sup>240</sup> Detailed attendance records of students are held in both the SA BSST and Amy Wheaton's Collection, Boxes 11 and 12, Special Collections, BSLUA.

<sup>241</sup> *The Advertiser*, 9 December 1941, p. 10.

also work in co-operation with the Fighting Forces Family Welfare Bureau and the Children's Welfare Department.<sup>242</sup>

In December 1941 Beovich appointed Buckley as the bureau's executive officer. Buckley, in an interview in *The Advertiser*, stressed the importance of the new bureau working in conjunction with 'voluntary helpers whose efforts over a number of years have been invaluable'.<sup>243</sup> The Southern Cross confirmed that the bureau's 'immediate object... [will be] the co-ordination of the work of our existing charitable organisations'.<sup>244</sup>

Significantly, the ACSSB would be the first church-based professional welfare organisation in Adelaide. Indicative, however, of 'an almost total lack of funds', Buckley was required to purchase her own furniture, a table and some chairs, at a cost of £24 in January 1942.<sup>245</sup> Reimbursement took five years.<sup>246</sup> Buckley's second major challenge, according to Travers, was to introduce social work concepts into 'organisations more accustomed to their own methods of work'.<sup>247</sup> Buckley's work focused on direct family support and the placement of children, many of whom were migrants. As Britten-Jones has noted, the orphanages overflowed in the 1940s 'owing to a backlog of indiscriminate admissions' and the Archdiocese's acceptance of British child migrants.<sup>248</sup>

Notwithstanding Beovich's backing, the ACSSB lacked clout in the 1940s. Due to the archdiocese's small size, Buckley reported to Fr (later Monsignor) William

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<sup>242</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>244</sup> *The Southern Cross*, 12 December 1941, p. 20.

<sup>245</sup> Travers, 'Planning in a Church Welfare Agency', Part 11, p. 3.

<sup>246</sup> Buckley to Beovich, 26 May 1947, CFWB, 1943-48, Box 83, Archdiocese of Adelaide Archives (AAA).

<sup>247</sup> Travers, 'Planning in a Church Welfare Agency', Part 11, p. 3.

<sup>248</sup> M. Britten-Jones, *History of Centacare Adelaide*, MS. ca 1986, p. 2. CFWB Collection, AAA.

Joseph (Joe) Russell (1904-69), the inaugural director of Catholic Education.<sup>249</sup> It is unlikely that Russell's training would have equipped him with the social work knowledge or interpersonal skills to work alongside a professional lay woman. Buckley's reporting relationship to Russell appears to have been more out of convenience.<sup>250</sup> In Travers' assessment:

an almost total lack of funds compounded the delicate nature of her task of introducing the concepts of the new profession of social work into organisations that were accustomed to their own well-established methods of work.<sup>251</sup>

ACSSB records of the 1940s are sparse, with no surviving registers of clients and the few extant administrative papers were subpoenaed by the Inquiry into Child Care in 2005.<sup>252</sup> The limited material available shows that while Buckley had some financial authority, she was restricted in the important area of inter-church relations. There is no evidence, for example, that Buckley represented the Church on peak community or professional bodies, unlike Parker, Moffit and Wardell in Melbourne and Sydney. Reflecting a clericalised structure, Russell became the church's representative at the foundation of the South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS) in 1942; by 1947 he was a vice-president. Adelaide's small size also brought Christian denominations together more readily. In the mid 1940s a Standing Committee of Churches of SACOSS was established and it undertook several initiatives including a leadership course for young adults.<sup>253</sup>

Equally, and perhaps more stubbornly than in Melbourne and Sydney, Adelaide's independent religious orders resisted moves by the ACSSB to assess children entering orphanages. In Travers' assessment, the ACSSB in the 1940s 'found itself

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<sup>249</sup> Russell, a native of Piercestown, Goold's Cross, Co Tipperary, arrived in South Australia soon after his ordination in 1931.

<sup>250</sup> Buckley reporting to a non-social worker was similar to Teresa Wardell reporting to a war chaplain in Melbourne during the 1940s.

<sup>251</sup> Travers, 'Planning in a Church Welfare Agency', Part 11, p. 3.

<sup>252</sup> Roberts to Perkins, 27 January 1950, CAA. Although I was granted access to Centacare Adelaide's archives in 2002-03; in 2005 access was no longer possible due to the South Australian Government's Special Inquiry into Children's Homes.

<sup>253</sup> *The Social Service Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1947, p. 25.



left with those welfare activities not carried out by other groups within the church'.<sup>254</sup> The co-ordination of children placed at Goodwood and Largs Bay, two children's homes directly funded by the archbishop, also proved to be difficult.<sup>255</sup>

Buckley worked enthusiastically to investigate the background of families and to make recommendations to relevant institutions. Nevertheless, in August 1947, after more than five` years service, Buckley advised Beovich of her intention to resign, because she was 'anxious' to undertake further studies in Sydney to complete the requirements to be an almoner.<sup>256</sup> Buckley indicated that the 'services of a more qualified person' would enable 'much greater' progress for the bureau's ideals.<sup>257</sup> Travers interpreted this 'more qualified person' as a priest.<sup>258</sup> Martin, who interviewed Buckley in 1980, notes 'the difficulty she experienced as a lay woman in influencing church organisations dominated by the clergy and the nuns led to her suggestion that a priest be trained in social work then appointed to take charge of the Bureau'.<sup>259</sup> Following Buckley, Miss Healey, a social service graduate from Melbourne, was appointed in a care-taker role in 1947, succeeded by a Miss Palmer in 1948.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> Travers, Planning in a Church Welfare Agency'.

<sup>256</sup> Buckley to Beovich, 6 August 1947, CFWB, 1942-1954, Box 175, AAA.

<sup>257</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> Travers, Planning in a Church Welfare Agency'.

<sup>259</sup> E.M.W. Martin, 'Social Work and Services, 1935-1965' in B. Dickey (ed.), *Rations Residence, Resources A History of Social Welfare in South Australia since 1936* (Netley, South Australia, Wakefield Press, 1986), p. 248. This interview or a transcript could not be located.

<sup>260</sup> Australian Association of Social Workers, South Australian Branch, SRG 744, Series 1, State Library of South Australia. Russell to O'Sullivan, 9 January 1948, AAA.

#### 4.7 'a feeling of professional identity'

Australian social work prior to the 1960s was numerically dominated by women, which reflected its roots in almoning.<sup>261</sup> A 1956 study by Norma Parker, for example, concluded that women comprised 85 per cent of qualified social workers employed by government and private organisations and held 95 per cent of similar roles in the 'voluntary' sector, which included church organisations.<sup>262</sup> The Catholic diocesan bureaux, apart from clerical directors, relied almost exclusively on lay women, the majority of whom were unmarried. Yet as a proportion of the Australian social work profession, Catholics remained statistically insignificant before the 1960s.

Notwithstanding the developments of the bureaux under clerical leadership, female social workers remained the mainstay. Despite frustrations, which will be expanded upon in the next two chapters, lay social workers made a considerable contribution to the church's social services programs. In addition, Catholic social workers contributed to the development of welfare programs and practices in other sectors. They chose to work outside the church because of its limited opportunities for progression, the resistance to the professional status of lay women, a desire to gain broader experience, and higher rates of remuneration. Alice Blackall, Teresa Wardell and Hannah Buckley in their respective bureaux encountered the dual problem of resistance from the religious orders that conducted children's institutions and indifferent support and funding from their dioceses.

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<sup>261</sup> In the early 1940s, 105 people held an Australian social work qualification, yet only 5 were men. Lawrence, 'The future role', p. 1.

<sup>262</sup> N. Parker, 'Social Work in Sydney Today', presented to the Annual Meeting of the NSW Branch of Australian Association of Social Workers, 29<sup>th</sup> February 1960, reprinted in R. J. Lawrence (ed.), *Norma Parker's Record of Service* (Sydney, AASW, Department of Social Work, University of Sydney, School of Social Work, University of New South Wales, 1969), p. 270.

#### 4.7.1 Catholic social workers' contribution outside the church

In the development of the almoner and social work professions, Catholic social workers made a prominent mark. The profound scale of human suffering and relocation of millions of people during and after the war contributed to the expansion and professionalisation of social work practice in Australia. In 1943 the Australian Army requested the Red Cross appoint a medical social worker for every 400 beds in repatriation hospitals in 1943.<sup>263</sup> *The Argus* noted that the demands on the rehabilitating service personnel far exceeded the number of qualified social workers.<sup>264</sup> The Red Cross offered twenty-five scholarships, employed trained social workers and took a larger interest in university-based social work courses.<sup>265</sup> Commencing with the appointment of Mollie Carr, the Red Cross' efforts marked, in Parker's view, a move away from the 'false starts of the 1930s' into the 'beginnings of a feeling of professional identity'.<sup>266</sup>

Opportunities with the Red Cross enabled Catholic social workers to demonstrate their training and skills outside of church employment. Viva Murphy, following stints at Melbourne's CSSB and SVHS, joined the Red Cross in NSW in 1944, before moving to Brisbane to become the organisation's Deputy Director of Social Services – one of Queensland's first professional social work positions.<sup>267</sup> In 1942 Eileen Davidson took up a similar role in South Australia, working with incapacitated ex-serviceman and 'forcefully established' professional social work

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<sup>263</sup> *Argus*, 24 August 1943, p. 6.

<sup>264</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> *Argus*, 11 April 1944, p. 6. See Report by Eileen Davidson cited in Martin, *Gender, Demand and Domain*, p. 108.

<sup>266</sup> N. Parker, Talk to the Alumni of the School of Social Work, University of New South Wales, 4 April 1984, p. 13, University of New South Wales Archives (UNSWA). Norma Bates echoed Parker's view saying the Red Cross made a significant contribution to the professionalisation of social work in the 1940s. N. Bates, 'The way it was: Memoirs to take us into our 50<sup>th</sup> Year', *The South Australian Social Worker*, Vol. 1, No. 2, August 1985, p. 3.

<sup>267</sup> Australian Association of Hospital Almoners, *Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 1944*, AAHA Records, MLK 03473, MLNSW. See also *Social Service* which lists her as Queensland's first professional social worker (November 1946 p. 13).

practices.<sup>268</sup> Davidson says some volunteers displayed a 'certain amount of ignorance and passive resistance'<sup>269</sup> towards professional social work, a situation also experienced in Sydney by Enid Davis, an early Anglican social worker, who recalled resentment towards social workers from Red Cross volunteers of 'independent means'.<sup>270</sup> In Melbourne, Mary Watson, after two years at the CSSB, followed a similar path and worked for the Red Cross, before settling in South Australia.<sup>271</sup>

Murphy's Brisbane work included close liaison with the Charity Organisation Society in assisting families coming to terms with dislocation.<sup>272</sup> She helped establish the Queensland branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers and became its foundation president. When she left Brisbane in 1947 the COS secretary remarked to the CSSNSW executive secretary, Helen Halse-Rogers, that Murphy's experience would equip her well to join Sydney University as its practical social work supervisor.<sup>273</sup> In this role Murphy worked closely with the NSW Child Welfare Department.<sup>274</sup>

Social workers received a less positive reception in the Victorian Child Welfare Department, which traditionally recruited men with no social work training.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> M. Brown, and T. Stephens, 'Lives devoted to helping others in need', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 January 2001. Martin, *Gender, Demand and Domain*: p. 117

<sup>269</sup> Martin, *Social Work and Services, 1935-1965*, p. 246.

<sup>270</sup> Enid Davis Interview, 17 June 1993, CY MLOH 158/1-2, MLNSW.

<sup>271</sup> Watson was one of the few Catholic social workers to marry. In 1950 she is listed as Mrs Hill and working at Mt Gambier Hospital, South Australia. L. O'Brien and C. Turner, *Establishing Medical Social Work in Victoria*, (1978) unpublished paper, p. 149, Lesley Campbell-Brown Papers MSS Box 3, MLNSW.

<sup>272</sup> Charity Organisation Society Brisbane, *45<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, 1944* p 5, located in General Correspondence Files, Box K48928, Council of Social Service of NSW Collection, MLNSW.

<sup>273</sup> Ray Findlay to Helen Halse-Rogers, 12 February 1947, located in General Correspondence Files, Box K48928, Council of Social Service Collection, MLNSW.

<sup>274</sup> *Social Service*, November 1946, p. 13.

Teresa Wardell's appointment as the first 'classification officer' – social worker – in the Child Welfare Department (CWD) raised some shackles amongst the untrained, male dominated bureaucracy. Wardell's enlightened approach to child welfare and juvenile delinquency is reflected in her advocacy on behalf of the powerless. Her case reports demonstrate a balanced approach between punishment and rehabilitation for young people. In one teenager's case Wardell recommended that 'she is a very difficult child but her main need does seem to be for home life and affection'.<sup>276</sup> Like her contemporaries, Wardell generally shunned institutionalisation, but in some cases she recommended a 'period in an institution' might assist a young person to 'again develop a sense of responsibility to herself and the community'.<sup>277</sup> In other instances her pragmatism underpinned recommendations that a teenager should not be returned to court if it wouldn't serve any purpose. Moreover, Wardell requested the CWD not to advise the police of the girl's location.<sup>278</sup>

Wardell's representations did not always gain her superiors' support. In 1952 when the CWD placed girls in solitary confinement, Wardell protested directly to the CWD secretary, Mr Pittard, a move that did not engender harmonious relations with the powerful medical superintendent of the Melbourne Girls Reformatory.<sup>279</sup> Wardell felt frustrated by opposition. 'No work I have previously undertaken had caused me so much concern', Wardell exclaimed to a disinterested Pittard.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> L. Tierney, 'Australia: Family Care', in C.J. Payne, and K.J. White (ed.), *Caring for deprived children: International Case Studies of Residential Settings* (London, Croom Helm [for] the Residential Care Association, ca. 1979).

<sup>276</sup> Wardell, Report 26 May, 1953, Case Number 6903, Personal Papers and Social Work Case (Parole) Reports, 1952-53, Box 8, Wardell Collection , UMA.

<sup>277</sup> *ibid.*, 15 May 1953, Case Number 72885.

<sup>278</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>279</sup> Wardell to Secretary, Victorian Child Welfare Department, 21 October 1952, TMWC, Series 4/2 Box 3, UMA.

<sup>280</sup> *ibid.*

My offers to assist have been rejected in no uncertain terms by yourself and the Medical Superintendent, although if I had been permitted to help there would not be the tension and dangerous situation that now exists in the Reformatory.<sup>281</sup>

Both Pittard and the medical superintendent dismissed Wardell's concerns about the risk of 'moral infection' to inmates at Melbourne's girl's depot. Pittard, citing public service regulations cautioned Wardell for not addressing her concerns to her immediate supervisor. An angry Pittard also remarked that:

it is high time that Miss Wardell appreciated the fact that allocation of duties at the depot... are the responsibility of the Medical Superintendent and to understand very definitely that as [sic] I prefer to be guided in such matters by the views of the Medical Superintendent rather than those of a social worker.<sup>282</sup>

In early 1953 Wardell issued an 'emphatic protest against the new system' of male staff supervising young females because she felt it was 'morally unhealthy' and an indignity for the girls.<sup>283</sup> When Wardell's employment contract concluded in May 1953, Pittard did not re-appoint her, despite indications she would play a key role in reforms of the depot. A 'disappointed' Wardell had probably challenged too many CWD officials.<sup>284</sup> Nevertheless, Fr Perkins of Melbourne's Catholic welfare bureau had no hesitation saying 'no one has done more for Catholic social work here in Victoria than Miss Teresa Wardell'.<sup>285</sup>

In the 1940s and 1950s Catholic social workers continued to make important contributions to professional associations. The previous chapter noted the contribution of Parker and Moffit in Melbourne in the 1930s. The women transferred their enthusiasm to NSW and joined Elvira Lyons, who became an executive member of the NSW Branch of the Australian Association of Social

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<sup>281</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>282</sup> Pittard to Wardell, October 1952, TWC, Series 4/2, Box 3, UMA.

<sup>283</sup> *ibid.*, 9 May 1953.

<sup>284</sup> Secretary, Victorian Child Welfare Department to Wardell, 12 May 1953, TMWC, Series 4/2, Box 3, UMA.

<sup>285</sup> Perkins, Letter of Introduction for Wardell, 23 December 1953, Series 1/1 Box 1, TMWC, UMA.

Workers (AASW) in May 1934.<sup>286</sup> In 1937, Lyons became the association's second NSW president, succeeded by Parker in 1940.<sup>287</sup> In 1948, following her work for UNRRA and with the National Association of Mental Health in England, Moffit returned to Australia and became president of the NSW Social Workers' Association.<sup>288</sup> In 1949 Davidson organised a United Nations Appeal for Children and in 1956 she was elected president of the NSW Branch of the Australian Association of Almoners.<sup>289</sup> Parker was secretary of the NSW Almoners Association in the late 1930s, and Moffit held the presidency from 1942-45, later being succeeded by Murphy.<sup>290</sup> In 1945 Margaret Lawlor, then at Lewisham Hospital, became the association's secretary. Four Catholic women - Lewis, Lyons, Margaret McHardy and Parker - contributed to the 1954 national study of single mothers.<sup>291</sup>

In South Australia, Buckley, after working at the ACSSB, made a large contribution to medical social work in terms of policy development and mentoring many students. In 1948 she joined Royal Adelaide Hospital, before working at the South Australian Tuberculosis Association. Her students included Moya Britten-Jones who would go on to work at the ACSSB in the 1960s. In 1959 Buckley joined the Queen Victoria Hospital, and over the next two decades she helped change the

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<sup>286</sup> Lyons joined the NSW Social Workers Association on 2 April 1933 and became an executive member a little more than a year later. Australian Association of Social Workers, NSW Social Workers Association, Executive Minute Book, 1932-1940, Box K53812, MLNSW.

<sup>287</sup> *ibid.*, 3 April 1940. Lyons continued to hold executive positions such as secretary of the NSW Branch in 1942 and 1942 and in 1947 she chaired the interstate conference that brought together the various state bodies into a national framework. See Executive Committee Minutes, Social Workers Association (NSW), 19 July 1945, April 1947, Box K53812, MLNSW.

<sup>288</sup> C. Moffit, 'The National Association for Mental Health', *Social Service*, April 1948, pp: 4-8.

<sup>289</sup> *Social Service* November-December 1948; Council of Social Service of NSW, *14<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, 1949-50* (MLNSW).

<sup>290</sup> AAHA, MLK 03473, MLNSW.

<sup>291</sup> *Unwed Mothers and their Children* (Australian Association of Social Workers, Sydney, 1953).

attitudes of some doctors who had been reticent about social work. In a history of the hospital, Dr Ian Forbes wrote of Buckley's 'devoted service and selfless generosity to people in need'.<sup>292</sup> Buckley also held an executive position on the AASW's South Australian Branch for many years.<sup>293</sup>

In the community welfare sector Davidson was instrumental in the development of the Good Neighbourhood Council. With Parker, Davidson spearheaded the re-establishment of the NSW Mental Hygiene Council of NSW as the NSW Association of Mental Health, with Davidson appointed its inaugural secretary.<sup>294</sup> Parker expressed her compassion for people in need through numerous organisations, such as the Prison Reform Council.<sup>295</sup>

The advent of rehabilitation programs in war-torn Europe and Asia attracted a considerable number of qualified Australian social workers. Moffit worked as a child welfare officer in the British Zone in Germany in 1946 and 1947. In 1949 she returned to work with the International Refugee Organisation (IRO).<sup>296</sup> Davidson joined the IRO and supported the resettlement of orphaned children. The German authorities thwarted the work of social workers by 'strenuously resisting efforts' to return displaced children to the countries of origin.<sup>297</sup> Davidson later commented on the 'harrowing years in relief work among Hitler's displaced persons'.<sup>298</sup> After returning to Australia in 1951, Davidson retained an interest in the IRO's efforts to

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<sup>292</sup> I.L.D. Forbes, *The Queen Victoria Hospital, Rose Park, South Australia, 1901-1987* (Adelaide Queen Victoria Hospital, 1988), p. 155.

<sup>293</sup> AASW, SA Branch, SRG 744, Series 1, MLSA.

<sup>294</sup> Davidson to Miss Margaret Whale of London, 20 February 1956, Mental Health File, Box K48911, CSSNSW, MLNSW; Steering Committee on Mental Hygiene, Minutes of Meeting held on 20 March 1956, NSW Association of Mental Health Files located in Box K48911, CSSNSW Collection, MLNSW.

<sup>295</sup> J. Ramsland, *With just but relentless discipline: A Social history of Corrective Services in NSW* (Kenthurst, NSW, Kangaroo Press, 1996), pp: 287-88.

<sup>296</sup> *Social Service*, November-December 1948, p. 7.

<sup>297</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>298</sup> E., Davidson, 'The National Catholic School of Social Service' in J.T. McMahon, *Cloister, College, Campus*, (Perth, University of Western Australia Press, 1969), p. 299.



identify displaced children and to see them returned to their natural families. In one case the IRO appealed a court decision that allowed German adoptee parents to keep a ten year old Yugoslav boy whose identity had been 'blotted out' by the Nazis.<sup>299</sup>

In the early 1950s Davidson moved to Thailand and worked for four years at the Maternal and Child Health Training and Demonstration project, organised by the United Nations' Children's Emergency Fund.<sup>300</sup> Davidson assisted in the establishment of social work training in Thailand and upon her return to Sydney, she established, with Parker's encouragement, a social work course for Asian students at Sydney University.

In 1946 Wardell joined the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in China. She impressed many and was dubbed the 'Pied Piper' because of her work for orphans in the sewers of Tsingtao Province.<sup>301</sup> In an article in *The Advocate*, Wardell described how 'we are engaged in the rehabilitation of an orphanage, reviving work in a settlement of 100 families in desperate need, visiting elementary schools to find undernourished children'.<sup>302</sup> After fifteen months in China, Wardell accepted a position in helping to establish child welfare programs in the Philippines.<sup>303</sup> She then travelled to the United States to appraise programs for delinquent teenage girls and residential care options offered by Catholic welfare bureaux.<sup>304</sup> In May 1948 Wardell accepted a social service post in Singapore.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> E. Davidson to A. Wheaton, 28 August 1951, with an attached clipping from *Stars and Stripes*, 30 July 1950, Amy Wheaton Collection, University of Adelaide Archives (UAA).

<sup>300</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> *The Advocate*, 12 May 1949, p 23; *ibid.*, 21 May 1947, p. 37.

<sup>302</sup> 'UNRRA Pied Piper', *The China Press*, 20 April 1947, p. 1; 'Catholics UNRRA worker writes from China', *ibid.*, 15 May 1946, p. 30.

<sup>303</sup> Wardell to Mannix, 2 June 1949, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>304</sup> Teresa Wardell Notes, 12 January 1981, p. 1, Box 14, TMWC, UMA .

## 4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the origins of Catholic diocesan welfare bureaux in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. Apart from their significance in the Catholic sector, these generic family welfare agencies were the first of their type in Australia. Each was staffed by trained lay women reporting to an untrained cleric. Their focus on children and family welfare revolved around institutional care. The development of the bureaux was a significant step for the Australian church, rooted in an Irish model. However, the church's small financial contribution to the bureaux restricted the growth of professional social work in Australia. In the case of Melbourne, Bishop Eric Perkins said 'force and circumstance have compelled the bureau to restrict its work so far in the field of child welfare'.<sup>306</sup>

One of the main challenges for professional social workers was the church's focus on institutional care and reluctance to use foster homes. The dominant position of religious orders impeded the work of social workers in all three cities. The welfare bureaux also experienced considerable resistance from other elements of charitable services notably the SVdP. Nevertheless, Catholic social workers made important inroads into professionalising welfare in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney in the 1940s. Moreover, the Catholic contribution to professionalising welfare, through the formation of generic family welfare agencies, measured favorably against the welfare programs established by government agencies and by other Christian denominations.

American influences were paramount in the early development of Australian Catholic welfare. Despite comprising a very small number of graduates from the NCSSS, women such as Norma Parker, Constance Moffit and Eileen Davidson, made a distinctive mark in Australian social welfare in not only its pioneering decade, but for many decades to come. As American historian, Loretta Lawler, commented, these three women 'created perhaps the most spectacular

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<sup>305</sup> *Social Service*, 1948.

<sup>306</sup> Perkins to Fox, *op. cit.*,

development of any of the school's alumnae group'.<sup>307</sup> Yet their task was made difficult because few Catholic clergy in the 1930s understood the merits of professional social work.

Catholic women attracted to social work, whilst religiously motivated, could operate comfortably in a secular as well as a denominational framework. Some, such as Lyons, Wardell and Blackall, brought business acumen and organisational skills, which gave them self confidence when negotiating with clerics and religious orders.<sup>308</sup> Catholic social workers saw a need and believed they could make a difference in terms of the cause of social inequity. Pioneer Catholic women recognised the church's dominant *modus operandi* and understood the importance of securing and retaining high level clerical support, for without it, welfare reform would have been slower, and impeded.

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<sup>307</sup> L.R. Lawler, *Full circle: the story of the National Catholic School of Social Service, 1918-1947* (Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 1951), p. 223.

<sup>308</sup> Noteworthy examples were Elvira Lyons, Teresa Wardell and Alice Blackall.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### The 1940s and 1950s

#### 5.1 Overview

In the 1940s and 1950s three Australian Catholic dioceses – Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide – developed welfare bureaux within the policies and authority provided by their respective bishops. Although founded by the same trained social workers and espousing similar philosophies, the bureaux forged different priorities. This chapter examines why different approaches and programs developed. The Sydney bureau, for example, evolved during this period into a ‘generic’ welfare organisation, providing casework and individual counselling, as well as entering into collaborative partnerships with other churches and non-government service providers. Melbourne focused on co-ordinating children’s admission into institutions and family counselling. While Bishop A.G.L. Thomas and Monsignor J.F. McCosker opposed child migrants in NSW, the situation was very different in South Australia and Western Australia, and, in the case of Adelaide, its bureau became responsible for what would be one of the most contentious child welfare programs in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

During these decades the bureaux struggled to gain acceptance from established church charities, which operated autonomously from both church and state. As McCosker noted in 1955:

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<sup>1</sup> For discussion on Sydney’s different attitude to child migrants see M. Fox, ‘British Child Migrants in New South Wales Catholic Orphanages’, *History of Education Review*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1996, p. 6; M. Fox, ‘Some aspects of the care of children in Catholic institutions in New South Wales’, *Journal of Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 18, 1997, p: 52-53. Alan Gill expressed a similar view in *Orphans of the Empire: the shocking story of child migration to Australia* (Milsons Point, NSW, Vintage, 1997), p. 65. Neither writer footnoted their views. See Section 5.4 for discussion of the approaches taken by various dioceses, including the contrast between Sydney and Adelaide.

Historically, our charitable organisations and institutions grew up in response to specific needs and consequently they are loosely bound together through the Ordinaries and the institutions themselves generally belong to religious congregations.<sup>2</sup>

Professional social workers' inroads into the fragmented Catholic welfare sector attracted varying responses. Some institutions allowed the assessment of children nominated for admission, while some religious orders objected to proposals that the bureaux would assess children and possibly reduce their number and length of stay. Tensions between charity workers and trained social workers were often eased by the work of lay female social workers.

Financial difficulties also characterised the bureaux, a reflection of the church's large investment in school education and its residual preference for charity rather than professional welfare. Outside institutions and the palliative aid provided by voluntary groups, such as the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP), the church's interest in social services ranked lowly. Diocesan bureaux were unable to attract the level of diocesan financial support or community profile of individual children's institutions or the expanding Catholic education sector. Paradoxically, social workers' reforms targeted organisations that the bureaux relied upon for funding. For their part, the institutions, without state aid in NSW and South Australia, and with only minimal government support in Victoria, struggled to make ends meet. The bureaux represented an additional administrative layer and financial impost on institutions, which were already short of funds. In the 1950s government funding provided some welcome relief to the struggling bureaux.<sup>3</sup>

During the two decades lay women remained essential to both the delivery of social services and bureaux management. Female social workers gained a high level of authority in the bureaux, but as unordained church members they did not receive wholesale acceptance from their employers, the clergy or the

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<sup>2</sup> Report on proposed National Catholic Welfare Committee and affiliation with the International Catholic Conference of Charities [1956 Report to Jan 1957 Bishops Conference (this annotation in handwriting), File 550001, NCWC Collection, Catholic Social Services Australia Archives (CSSAA).

<sup>3</sup> Fr John Usher to Mrs Norma Parker Brown, 12 March 1991, Usher Files, Centacare

organisations they aimed to reform. The appointment of priest directors helped raise the profile of bureaux, but did not translate into significant increases in church funding before the late 1970s. The advent of state aid in NSW – for marriage counselling – offered a new income stream for the cash-strapped Sydney bureau.

This chapter has several main themes: the ongoing growth of diocesan bureaux despite numerous obstacles within the Catholic sector; the significant role of lay-trained women in policy development and service delivery; the influence of Monsignor McCosker in shaping Catholic welfare in NSW; and, despite the era of professionalisation, ongoing failures in standards of care, including physical and sexual abuse, which occurred in both institutions and foster care programs.

#### 5.1.1 Australian social indicators

Following the turmoil of mass unemployment in the 1930s, Australian social life in the 1940s and 1950s was a mixed picture, influenced by World War Two, the reconstruction era and a population spurt caused by natural growth and increased migration. Whereas the 1930s Depression had acted as a population check, with a sharp fall in marriage rates,<sup>4</sup> the years immediately after the war recorded successive increases in marriage rates.<sup>5</sup> Conservative family values, says welfare historian, Elaine Martin, became the norm, with an emphasis on the family and domestic responsibilities of women.<sup>6</sup> Another sign of post-war reconstruction was a more buoyant public mood. Demographers, Carmichael, Webster and McDonald, argue that this mood combined with a discernible

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Sydney Archives (CSA).

<sup>4</sup> In NSW, for example, the rate of marriage per 1000 people was 7.14 in the early 1930s; a decade later it had risen to 12.25 in 1942 and immediately after the war it went higher. See the annual publication, *NSW Statistical Register* (Sydney, Government Printer).

<sup>5</sup> G. Carmichael, *With this Ring: First Marriage Patterns: Trends and Prospects in Australia* (Canberra, Department of Demography, ANU and Australian Institute of Family Studies, 1988), pp: 9, 11.

<sup>6</sup> E. Martin, 'Social Work, the Family and Women's Equality in Post-War Australia', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2003, p. 445.

decline in parental influence over 'mate selection and courtship', resulted in a lowering of the age at first marriage.<sup>7</sup>

Economic historians, Barry Dyster and David Meredith, argue that 'undercurrents of change' emerged in the late 1940s.<sup>8</sup> The war accentuated family dislocation and social upheaval, with many families experiencing new, and often, multiple difficulties. Kate Darian-Smith argues that women and children required emotional support while their husbands and fathers served overseas.<sup>9</sup> Stephen Garton says that the return of service personnel brought a 'short sharp intensification of personal conflict'.<sup>10</sup> The 'great dysfunction and alienation between spouses', led to family disharmony.<sup>11</sup> Crime, especially domestic violence, increased in the second half of the 1940s. War-time marriages were especially prone to vulnerability. Between 1940 and 1949, for example, the number of divorces granted in Victoria doubled from 822 to 1,780, whereas the population rose by only 15 per cent.<sup>12</sup> Divorce, Darian-Smith says, became more socially acceptable, despite social and religious pressures from traditional opponents, such as the Catholic Church.<sup>13</sup> By the 1950s, desertion had overtaken adultery as the main reason for divorce in South Australia, as the following table shows:

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<sup>7</sup> G. A. Carmichael, A. Webster and P. McDonald, *Divorce Australian Style: A Demographic Analysis*, *Working Papers in Demography*, No. 61, (Research School of Social Science, Australian National University), p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 447.

<sup>9</sup> K. Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939-1945* (South Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 120.

<sup>10</sup> S. Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians return* (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 197.

'John Usher', Chapter Two in D. Fox and N. Miller (eds.), *An Oral History of Marriage Counselling in Australia: From Managing Well to Doing Well* (Canberra, Les Harvey Foundation, 2000), p. 34; M. Gregory, 'From Refuge to Retreat to Community: The Social Work Ministry of the Good Samaritans at Pitt Street and Tempe/Arncliffe, 1857-1984', *Journal of Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 7, Part 4, 1984, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> *Victorian Year Book*, 1973, Centenary Edition, p. 30.

<sup>13</sup> Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, pp: 120-122.



**Table 5.1**

**Principal Reasons for Divorce, South Australia, 1944-53<sup>14</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Adultery</b>	<b>Desertion</b>	<b>Total</b>
1944	285	156	497
1945	371	179	604
1946	411	180	656
1947	408	217	690
1948	323	254	630
1949	252	262	592
1950	238	344	664
1951	234	304	641
1952	230	240	584
1953	240	255	636

The combined effects of government sponsored migration programs and increased fertility rates led to strong population growth after the war.<sup>15</sup> With an initial target net migrant inflow of one per cent of the country's population, Australia doubled this target in 1949-1952 and, again, in 1955.<sup>16</sup> Refugees and migrants crowded into cities, which accounted for 54 per cent of Australia's population by 1947.<sup>17</sup>

South Australia, a useful case study of this period, recorded the highest proportional increase in population between 1947 and 1961, resulting from the large numbers of people evacuated from the Northern Territory to South Australia 'owing to the threat of Japanese invasion' during the war.<sup>18</sup> Post-war migration

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<sup>14</sup> Extracted from the *Commonwealth of Australia Year Books*.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> E.A. Boehm, *Twentieth Century Economic Development in Australia* (Melbourne, Longman Australia, 1987), reprint, p. 53.

<sup>17</sup> B. Dyster and D. Meredith, *Australia in the International Economy in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp: 191, 195.

<sup>18</sup> Calculated from tables published in the *Commonwealth of Australia Year Book*, 1966, p. 193. M. Britten-Jones, History of the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, Adelaide, (n.d.) p. 1. MS. Adelaide Archdiocesan Archives (AAA).

created difficulties adjusting to a new homeland, which added pressure on welfare agencies, such as the Adelaide Catholic Social Service Bureau (ACSSB).<sup>19</sup> Rising demand for welfare assistance reflected increasing family break-ups, unemployment and a shortage of suitable accommodation in urban areas, such as Adelaide.<sup>20</sup>

## 5.2 Melbourne

This section reviews the development of Melbourne's Catholic Social Service Bureau (CSSB) and explains that despite episcopal support the organisation struggled because of high staff turnover, inadequate funding, and insufficient authority to make a real mark on Catholic welfare.

### 5.2.1 Lay social workers

During the 1940s medical social work remained the dominant welfare paradigm in Victoria. Protestant women from affluent backgrounds overwhelmingly comprised the profession, with few Catholics entering social work in Melbourne before the end of the 1950s.<sup>21</sup>

Teresa Wardell is an important starting point in the history of Melbourne Catholic social workers from World War Two. In early 1939 Wardell succeeded the CSSB foundation social worker, Constance Moffit, who had moved to Sydney to join Norma Parker. The Melbourne Archdiocese showed its confidence in Wardell by

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<sup>19</sup> L. Roberts, Catholic Social Service Bureau Report, 16 December 1954, Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (CFWB) Adelaide Files, 1943-1963, Box 83, AAA.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> A list of almoners trained in Melbourne before 1950 suggested very few had a Catholic background. See L. O'Brien and C. Turner, *Establishing Medical Social Work in Victoria* (Melbourne, School of Social Work, University of Melbourne, 1979). A Catholic Social Workers Guild, formed in Melbourne in 1956 attracted a membership base at its peak of about 20 social workers and almoners, including a couple of priests. See Teresa Mary Wardell Collection (TMWC), Catholic Social Workers Guild, Box 9, Series 6/2, Australian Association of Hospital Almoners and Australian Association of Social Workers – Victorian

appointing her before she had formally completed her social work studies. Several factors precipitated the appointment: Wardell had been associated with CSSB as a student since 1936, there was no other Catholic social worker available and she had an impressive family pedigree.<sup>22</sup>

Teresa was born into a well known Catholic family in 1899. Her grandfather, William Wilkinson Wardell, was an acclaimed architect, whose works included St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne.<sup>23</sup> A Londoner, William Wardell, converted to Catholicism before marrying in 1843 and changed the family motto from 'Think ye out the truth' to 'I have found that which I sought'.<sup>24</sup> His eldest son, Edward Stanfield Wardell (1850-1933) – Teresa's father – continued the family tradition of public service and in 1904 became the deputy master of Melbourne's Royal Mint. Edward's father-in-law was chief engineer of the Victorian Harbour Trust.<sup>25</sup>

Teresa's first career choice was nursing. After being educated at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Melbourne, Wardell studied nursing at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne (SVHM) and qualified in March 1921.<sup>26</sup> During the 1920s medical staff acknowledged her warmth and empathy for patients as well as the 'great deal of tact' she showed in sensitive situations.<sup>27</sup> This pastoral approach and concern for

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Branch Collection, Accession Number 90/24 (AAHA and AASWV), University of Melbourne Archives (UMA).

<sup>22</sup> Victorian Board of Social Studies (VBSS) *Annual Report 1936*, Box 30, AAHA and AASWV, UMA.

<sup>23</sup> 'William Wilkinson Wardell: Architect and Engineer', *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol. 41 No. 2 May 1970; B. Smith, 'The role of the Institute of Fine Arts in the University of Sydney', *Arts*, Vol. 6, 1969; *Cyclopedia of Victoria*, Vol. 1, (Melbourne, ca. 1903), p. 288.

<sup>24</sup> U.M. de Jong, *William Wilkinson Wardell: His Life and Work, 1823-1899* (Clayton, Victoria, Department of Visual Arts, Monash University, 1983) p. 11; U.M. de Jong, William Wilkinson Wardell, 1823 – 1899: An English Architect in the Antipodes, *Journal of Royal Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 21, 2000.

<sup>25</sup> Wardell Genealogical Files, Box 5, TMWC, Accession Number 86/123, UMA; Obituary, Edward Standfield Wardell, *The Advocate*, 16 November 1933.

<sup>26</sup> Wardell Genealogical Files, Box 1, Series 1/1, TMWC, UMA.

<sup>27</sup> For example, references from Dr H. B. Devine, 14 June 1929; the Hon Surgeon to the Inpatients Department, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, Box 1/1, TMWC, UMA.

people influenced her outlook on social welfare and her sense of civil duty. She was to note later that a newspaper advertisement for social work training in the mid 1930s 'struck me immediately as to what I should be doing'.<sup>28</sup>

Wardell's nursing experience appealed to the almoner program director, Dorothy Bethune, who invited her to train as an almoner. Wardell recalled: 'I felt that if I remained in medical work I would rather be a nurse'.<sup>29</sup> When Wardell commenced a two year course under the Victorian Board of Social Studies (VBSS) in 1934, she was the first Catholic to do so.<sup>30</sup> Initially, Wardell received positive reports following placements at Melbourne Hospital and the Protestant-based Charity Organisation Society (COS).<sup>31</sup> Her field placements also included the State Sustenance Department and the Ladies Benevolent Society (LBS).

A forthright and honest approach would pose some difficulties for Wardell. By 1935 she had upset educator, Alison Hyslop, who remarked that Wardell was 'unsatisfactory... very difficult' and with a 'mind that seem set... as she is an older student'.<sup>32</sup> Part of the tension may have arisen from Wardell's difficulties with one subject, modern political institutions, which she failed twice, jettisoning her graduation. Although subsequent appeals were dismissed, Wardell's employment as a social worker was not thwarted.<sup>33</sup> Non-Catholic social workers required endorsement from the VCSS or the VIHA before being employed, whereas in Wardell's case, the Catholic Women's Social Guild (CWSG) recognised her as a 'trained social worker who will think clearly and act forcefully and carefully' as

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<sup>28</sup> Teresa Wardell Notes, 12 January 1981, p. 1, Box 14, TMWC, UMA.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> This acknowledgement excludes Norma Parker and Constance Moffit whose post-graduate qualifications entitled them to undertake significantly abridged courses through the VIHA a couple of years earlier.

<sup>31</sup> VBSS records in AAHA and AASWV, Accession Number 90/24, UMA.

<sup>32</sup> VBSS, Minutes of the Executive Committee, 15 November 1935, AAHA and AASWV, UMA.

<sup>33</sup> VBSS, Minutes of the Executive Committee, 14 May 1937, AAHA and AASWV, UMA.

early as 1936.<sup>34</sup> In 1939 Wardell undertook a welfare survey for the Commonwealth Government. She also became a foundation member of the St Joan's Political Alliance in Melbourne.<sup>35</sup>

In early 1939, after three years part-time involvement at the CSSB, Wardell succeeded Moffit, who as executive secretary had been unable to secure a firm financial base. Wardell pleaded for extra staff, claiming some clients waited up to six months for their first appointment.<sup>36</sup> In correspondence to Monsignor (later Bishop<sup>37</sup>) Bernard Stewart, in 1940, Wardell said 'people are not receiving the consideration and assistance they had been led to believe the bureau would give them'.<sup>38</sup>

The CSSB attracted several young social workers in the 1940s, who after short appointments continued their careers elsewhere. Wardell's persuasiveness with senior clergy led Stewart to recommend the appointment of Viva Murphy – 'the only Catholic [social worker] available' – in 1940 to Monsignor (later Bishop) Patrick Lyons.<sup>39</sup> Murphy had been educated by the Loreto Sisters at Mary's Mount College, Ballarat and not unlike other pioneer Catholic social workers had some Protestant heritage.<sup>40</sup> She attended the University of Melbourne and graduated with an Arts Degree in 1928.<sup>41</sup> Murphy then taught at the Church of

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<sup>34</sup> 'How are the slums to be abolished', *The Horizon*, No. 10, Vol. 111, (New Series) 1 August 1936.

<sup>35</sup> St Joan's Alliance, Material for History of Victorian Section from the Minute Books, p. 1, n.d. TMWC, UMA; S. Kennedy, *Faith and Feminism: Studies in the Christian Movement* (Manly, Sydney, Blackburn Dove, 1986) pp: 99, 102.

<sup>36</sup> Wardell to Stewart, 20 March 1940, Catholic Social Service Bureau (CSSB) Files, Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission (MDHC).

<sup>37</sup> Bishop of Sandhurst, Victoria, 1950-79.

<sup>38</sup> Wardell to Stewart, 20 March 1940, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Violet Matilda Myrtle Murphy was born in 1904 at Yan Yean, Victoria, the daughter of David Murphy and Ctina Constable Mann, the latter may not have been a Catholic.

<sup>41</sup> Murphy's degree was conferred on 21 April 1928. See *Melbourne University*

England Grammar School Ballarat for a decade before considering the VIHA course.<sup>42</sup> In an interview in the early 1980s, as part of a Victorian social workers' oral history project, Murphy said she 'loathed teaching' and had been attracted to social work because it offered a stronger outreach to the community.<sup>43</sup> Murphy recalled she had heard of almonry from a friend at the Women's Hospital, who subsequently introduced her to the Anti-Cancer Council, which hoped to appoint a community worker. Another influence may have been Murphy's mother, who was a volunteer community worker.<sup>44</sup>

Reflecting a medical social work focus, the VIHA initially declined Murphy's application as it felt her interest lay more broadly in social welfare.<sup>45</sup> After assurances that she would focus on almoning and be Melbourne-based, the VIHA's education sub-committee approved the application. Murphy's graduate status allowed her to undertake a shortened, two-year course.<sup>46</sup> In April 1938 Murphy joined a cohort of female students, nearly all of whom had professional fathers and had attended Protestant schools.<sup>47</sup> Murphy's background was more humble. Her father lectured at the Ballarat School of Mines and was unable to support his daughter's desire to study medicine.<sup>48</sup>

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*Calendar 1929*, p. 1125.

<sup>42</sup> Box 31, AAHA and AASWV Collection, Accession Number 90/24, UMA.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Murphy by Laurie O'Brien and Cynthia Turner, 'History of Medical Social Work in Victoria', ca 1982, Box 31, AAHA and AASWV Collection, UMA. This oral history project does not appear to have been published.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Greig-Smith to Murphy, 25 February 1938, Victorian Institute of Hospital Almoners, Box 12, AAHA and AASWV Collection, Accession Number 90/24, UMA.

<sup>46</sup> Report of the VIHA Education Sub-Committee, 14 February 1938, VIHA Executive Committee Minutes, UMA.

<sup>47</sup> Information taken from an analysis contained in Students File, VIHA, Box 13, UMA. See also Report of the VIHA Education Sub-Committee, 20 April 1938, VIHA Executive Committee Minutes, UMA.

<sup>48</sup> Murphy had considered a career in medicine but it would be 'too expensive'. Box 31, AAHA and AASWV Collection, Accession Number 90/24, UMA.

Murphy received mixed reports in her studies. Her aptitude led Stanley Greig Smith of the COS to say that 'this is one of the most satisfactory of all students who have come to the COS... she would make a capable social worker in the branch of the family welfare field'.<sup>49</sup> Yet, in December 1939, Bethune reported that Murphy had not achieved as much as had been expected of her, which was 'probably due more to the distractions of certain private business interests than any lack of basic ability'.<sup>50</sup> Murphy's 'business interests' involved tutoring students in Melbourne to assist her to meet the costs of living away from home without a regular income.

As a result of Bethune's comments, Murphy was required to undertake extra practical experience at the CSSB. Moffit, supportive of Murphy, commented that her casework reports were 'well-phrased, but rather too brief and do not do justice to her work'.<sup>51</sup> In March 1940, before Murphy completed the VIHA certificate, she commenced at the CSSB.<sup>52</sup> In Bethune's view the Catholic sector had again appointed a social worker prior to certification.<sup>53</sup> Bethune urged the VIHA's sub-committee not to 'recommend an almoner student for a post for which she had not been properly trained'.<sup>54</sup> Following in the paths of Parker and Moffit, Murphy moved interstate a year later to take up an almoner's position at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney (SVHS).

Mary Watson – Murphy's successor at the CSSB – had similar characteristics to Protestant almoners. A doctor's daughter, Watson was educated by the Loreto Sisters at Manderville Hall, Toorak and completed an Arts Degree at Melbourne

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<sup>49</sup> Greg Smith, Review of Murphy, 8 February 1939, Box 20, AAHA and AASWV, UMA.

<sup>50</sup> VIHA, Minutes of the Education Sub-Committee, 20 December 1939, UMA

<sup>51</sup> Students' Files, Box 13, VIHA, UMA.

<sup>52</sup> Monsignor Lyons to Monsignor Stewart, 17 April 1940, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>53</sup> Bethune to Yeomans, 4 July 1940, Box 4, AAHA and AASWC, UMA. Murphy graduated from the VIHA in July 1940.

<sup>54</sup> VIHA, Minutes of the Education Sub-Committee, 20 December 1939, UMA.

University in 1938, before being accepted into a shortened almoner course.<sup>55</sup> Similar to other almoners, Watson received blunt feedback from Bethune, including a comment that her 'many deficiencies' would prevent her from being 'a good social worker'.<sup>56</sup> By 1941, Watson, according to Bethune 'had improved greatly in many respects, but still displayed an insufficient sense of complete responsibility'.<sup>57</sup>

Watson undertook more practical work at the CSSB under Wardell's mentoring. After graduating in April 1941 she became the bureau's assistant social worker.<sup>58</sup> Indicative of the staff being in a 'very unsettled state', Watson departed after twelve months to take up a more senior role at the Red Cross.<sup>59</sup> The appointment of Margaret Condon, formerly of the Lady Gowrie Centre, a specialist children's facility, temporarily eased the situation. But the archdiocese did not see fit to entrust the bureau's financial responsibility to competent women.<sup>60</sup> Wardell's correspondence and annual reports to Monsignor Lyons generated some positive feedback, but she felt he did not really understand the CSSB.<sup>61</sup>

### 5.2.2 Catholic repatriation

Repatriation of war service personnel was primarily a secular task across Australia. State or city councils provide social services to ex-service personnel

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<sup>55</sup> VIHA, Minutes of the Executive Committee, 21 December 1938, UMA.

<sup>56</sup> Students' File, Mary Watson, Box 13, AAHA and AASWV Collection, Accession Number 90/24, UMA. For an opposing view see Wardell to Lyons, 13 March 1941, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>57</sup> VIHA, Minutes of the Education Sub-Committee, 19 February 1941, UMA.

<sup>58</sup> VIHA, Minutes of the Executive Committee, 16 April 1941; 18 June 1941, UMA.

<sup>59</sup> Watson's married name was Hill and she is recorded as working at Mt Gambier Hospital, South Australia, in 1951.

<sup>60</sup> Lyons to O'Rourke, 19 August 1942, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>61</sup> For example, Lyons to Wardell, 17 October 1940, CSSB, Vicar General's (VG) Files, MDHC. Also, Wardell to Lyons 24 June 1941, attaching the third report of the CSSB, VG Files, MDHC. While this third report is not extant it formed the basis of an article in the Hospital Magazine, Vol. 11, No 1, 1938.



and their families. In 1942, the Commonwealth Government also established a Department of Post-War Reconstruction. The Catholic Church in Victoria, reflecting a somewhat insular view, established its own repatriation group, the Catholic Welfare Organisation (CWO), in September 1939.<sup>62</sup> This move raised questions of possible duplication of services, with secular charities, such as the Red Cross, the Australian Comforts Fund and the Lord Mayor's Appeal.<sup>63</sup> Following clarification that the CWO would focus on spiritual 'campaigns', supporting families and providing huts for Catholic recreation and entertainment, the Red Cross Victorian division's chairman, Dr Newman Morris, said in late 1939 that he did not think the CWO's work would overlap with his organisation's work.<sup>64</sup>

In 1940 Monsignor Stewart was appointed the CWO's executive officer.<sup>65</sup> Through well planned fundraising events in parishes, schools and the community, episcopal endorsement and solid promotion from *The Advocate*, the CWO grossed £250,000 in six years.<sup>66</sup> The CWO came to be held in high regard by the Federal and Victorian governments, who viewed it as a patriotic organisation 'working for country and Empire'.<sup>67</sup> But, in the Catholic sector, the CWO appeared to mark a lost opportunity for the CSSB to broaden its welfare services and increase its profile. While it is unlikely the thinly resourced CSSB would have

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<sup>62</sup> Lyons to Parish Priests, 27 September 1939, VG Files, 96/3/17, MDHC.

<sup>63</sup> Lyons to Parish Priests, Circular, 16 October 1939, VG Files, Catholic Welfare Organisation (CWO), 96/3/17, MDHC.

<sup>64</sup> Newman Morris to Dr A. L. Kenny, President, CWO, 3 November 1939, in response to Kenny's letter to Newman Morris, 24 October 1939, VG Files, CWO, 96/3/17, MDHC.

<sup>65</sup> Lyons to Bishop Foley of Ballarat, 3 September 1940, VG Files, CWO, 96/3/17, MDHC.

<sup>66</sup> Archbishop Mannix to Mr Hassett, Hon Secretary, CWO, 3 January 1940; Monsignor Lyons to Manager CBC Bank, 6 January 1940, VG Series, 96/3/17 MDHC. CWO Statement of Gross Receipts 1 January 1940 to 30 November 1946, VG Series, 96/3/17 MDHC.

<sup>67</sup> *Catholic Welfare Organisation: Its work for the Men and Women of the Services during World War Two, September 1939 to June 1948* (Melbourne, Catholic Church, ca 1948) National Library of Australia (NLA). *Argus*, 10 March 1943, p. 4.

been in a position to accept much more casework during the war years, the decision to establish the CWO reinforced the church's narrow view that the CSSB's purpose was to co-ordinate placements of children into institutions and to arrange adoptions.<sup>68</sup> In effect, the CSSB and CWO competed for similar resources and some fundraising that may otherwise have been directed to the official diocesan welfare body went to the CWO.<sup>69</sup> The CWO contributed to the CSSB remaining a child placement agency in the 1940s, rather than the generic welfare service envisaged by its founders.<sup>70</sup>

The Sydney Archdiocese established a Catholic United Services Auxiliary (CUSA) to undertake similar functions to the CWO.<sup>71</sup> Gilroy's biographer, John Luttrell, suggests CUSA may have been prompted by a similar organisation established by the Sydney Anglican Archdiocese in 1939.<sup>72</sup> A more immediate influence on Gilroy was probably the CWO. Gilroy, who had been in dialogue with Melbourne's Dr Mannix, established CUSA in response to Mannix's suggestions for the church to support service personnel and their families.<sup>73</sup> Indicative of the centralised nature of Gilroy's administration, CUSA operated differently from the CWO, being part of the Diocesan Secretariate of Lay Action, and working alongside the LCW and the diocesan welfare bureau. CUSA's integration with existing archdiocesan activities did not allow it to take on a life of its own, unlike the CWO.

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<sup>68</sup> *The Catholic Church in Melbourne, 1848-1948* (Melbourne, The Advocate Press, 1948), p. 89.

<sup>69</sup> An indirect link between the CWO and CSSB was that the church's senior chaplain to the Armed Forces, Monsignor Stewart who was nominally in charge of them both.

<sup>70</sup> E.G. Perkins, Memo for Mgr. Fox re Work of Catholic Social Service Bureau, n.d, CSSB File, MDHC.

<sup>71</sup> Catholic United Services Auxiliary, *CUSA NSW* (Sydney, 1940).

<sup>72</sup> J. J. Luttrell, 'Norman Thomas Cardinal Gilroy as Archbishop of Sydney', PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 1997, p. 128, fn. 35.

<sup>73</sup> Gilroy to Mannix, 7 October 1939, Vicar General Files, Catholic Welfare Organisation, MDHC.

A core recommendation by Moffit and Parker in their 1935 submission to Mannix had been the appointment of a priest social worker to head the CSSB.<sup>74</sup> Unlike the American bureaux, the CSSB operated without a clerical leader for many years. The lay women reported to the archdiocesan vicar-general, which was not ideal, given that clerics such as Lyons and Stewart showed little empathy for the bureau. In 1942 Wardell reignited the case for a trained priest to direct the bureaux. The archdiocese responded by appointing Fr Leo O'Rourke (1902-62) as the inaugural CSSB director and also director of the Pontifical Mission Aid Society.<sup>75</sup> O'Rourke, a teacher, had already shown administrative flair as assistant organiser of the Melbourne Archdiocese centenary celebrations in 1939, but he had no training in social work.<sup>76</sup> A combination of factors may have influenced the appointment. O'Rourke may have reflected belated recognition by Lyons of the need for a cleric, rather than a lay person, to lead the CSSB. Lyons' somewhat detached interaction with Moffit and Wardell gives some credence to this view.<sup>77</sup> Lyons extant correspondence reflects little appreciation of the nature of professional social welfare or the challenges of co-ordinating disparate Catholic charities. He did not elaborate on O'Rourke's tasks, except to say he would need to supervise two lay social workers.<sup>78</sup>

In the 1940s the CSSB had three main funding sources: archdiocesan grants, subsidies from institutions, and fundraising with a small supporter base. Combined, they were insufficient to operate the CSSB soundly. In 1942 O'Rourke brought together the superiors of Catholic children's institutions. In return for the CSSB assessing admissions to the orphanages and collecting maintenance from

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<sup>74</sup> C. Moffit and [N. Parker, (sic)], ca 1936, Proposed scheme for a Catholic Social Service or Catholic Welfare Bureau, n.d. Catholic Family Welfare Bureau Archives, MDHC. [See discussion in Chapter 4, Footnote 36, as to Parker's possible role in helping to compile this document.]

<sup>75</sup> *The Advocate*, 20 August 1942, p. 7.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> For example, Moffit to Parker, 24 February 1939, p. 1, A. John Parker Archives (AJPA).

<sup>78</sup> Lyons to O'Rourke, 5 November 1943, CSSB, MDHC.

parents, the orphanages each agreed to pay between £50 and £75 a year. Some institutions increased the amount to £100 in 1943, though this remained insufficient to adequately fund the CSSB.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, O'Rourke expressed the opinion to Lyons that the children's 'institutions cannot be expected to bear the whole burden'.<sup>80</sup>

These financial arrangements may have brought much needed income to the institutions, but this did not translate into a sustainable level of income for the CSSB. In 1942, for example, the CSSB received small payments from the families or guardians of only 66 of the 105 children it supported.<sup>81</sup> O'Rourke's part-time role limited his opportunity to consolidate the bureau's financial position. In 1943 Lyons advised Mannix that 'it was impossible to carry on the CSSB under the present arrangements' of an 'acute staff difficulty and unsatisfactory finances'.<sup>82</sup> Wardell, for example, had threatened to leave if a replacement was not forthcoming.<sup>83</sup>

In the remaining 18 months of his directorship O'Rourke focused on probation services. He appointed a new chief probation officer to reform the 'most unsatisfactory' probation situation at the Melbourne courts.<sup>84</sup> However, his plan for the CWSG to financially support the church's probation services did not eventuate and this exacerbated pressure on the CSSB to continue funding this service.

During the 1940s Wardell promoted the CSSB benefits of providing a broad range of services. The bureau's honorary treasurer, Gerard Heffey, a barrister,

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<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Perkins to Fox, 5 July 1951, p. 2. CSSB Files in Vicar General's Collection, held in the Archbishop of Melbourne's private archives located at Catholic Archdiocesan Offices, Melbourne.

<sup>82</sup> O'Rourke to Monsignor Lyons, 5 November 1943, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*

remarked, perhaps a little uncritically, that 'her work in adoption cases is very thorough and her word is accepted without the slightest question by the judges of the County Courts'.<sup>85</sup>

Meanwhile, Wardell's struggles with educational authorities continued. Her CSSB caseload left little time to complete her studies. A 1942 appeal to the Victorian Council for Social Training (VCST), which had succeeded the VBSS, led the VCST to comment that Wardell had displayed a 'particularly high standard' at the CSSB and she was asked to write a thesis to fulfill the course requirements.<sup>86</sup> A year later the VCST reported that a heavy workload had prevented Wardell from completing the thesis.<sup>87</sup> After Melbourne University assumed the VCST's training responsibilities, the university recognised Wardell's experience and appointed her to its inaugural Board of Social Studies. A few years later Wardell received a Diploma in Social Services for her academic studies and considerable experience as an almoner and social worker for the church, government and at the COS.<sup>88</sup>

After nearly a decade's service to the CSSB Wardell became restless and in 1946 she took 12 months leave, during which time Margaret Condon acted as executive secretary. Wardell left with the reassurance that Fr Eric Perkins would succeed O'Rourke as CSSB director.<sup>89</sup> Perkins had a similar resumé to O'Rourke: competent administrator, pastorally well-regarded, and untrained in social welfare.<sup>90</sup> One possible distinguishing feature was Perkins' outstanding academic record and meticulous level of attention to detail. Perkins, the son of a Clareman, had been dux of Christian Brothers' College, St Kilda, which earned

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<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Heffey to Mannix, 4 September 1945, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>86</sup> VCST Executive Committee Minutes, 11 November 1942, VIHA Collection, UMA.

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, 9 December 1943.

<sup>88</sup> TMWC, Box 14, UMA.

<sup>89</sup> An obituary for O'Rourke refers to the 'direction' he provided to the 'newly-erected Bureau of Social Service', See *The Advocate*, 5 April 1962, p. 9.

him a government scholarship to attend Melbourne University.<sup>91</sup> When Perkins asked the seminary rector if he should 'take advantage of the hard earned and highly prized scholarship', Fr Henry Johnston, Perkins says that Johnston replied 'not at all'.<sup>92</sup> Perkins studied for the priesthood and was ordained in August 1940.

Just after the end of World War Two, Archbishop Mannix appointed Perkins as director of the CSSB and the Pontifical Missions Aid Societies.<sup>93</sup> Perkins acknowledged the importance of being trained in social work and applied to study part-time at Melbourne University.<sup>94</sup> The university insisted on full time candidature, so Perkins relinquished the CSSB role to Fr Con Reis.<sup>95</sup> Parish duties, however, placed added pressure on Perkins and the university commented that although he was a 'well above average' student, his academic progress was 'not as good as it might be. Possibly affected by his calling... he was physically very tired... he found it difficult to concentrate'.<sup>96</sup>

Nevertheless, Perkins completed his studies in 1949. Some of his extant papers are testament to his commitment to the church's outreach to the poor. In a 1947 essay Perkins described professional social work as necessary because of the 'multitude of problems confronting the church today which were unknown a few generations ago'.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Perkins ministered in the Victorian parishes of Surrey Hills, Newport and Essendon.

<sup>91</sup> Curriculum Vitae, Eric Gerard Perkins, 1 January 1990, Perkins Personal Papers (PPP), MDHC.

<sup>92</sup> Occasional Address for Most Rev Eric Perkins, 'Corpus Christe and the M.C.G', at a luncheon given in his honour, 3 May 1993, p. 4, Melbourne, PPP, MDHC.

<sup>93</sup> *The Advocate*, 24 October 1945, p. 8.

<sup>94</sup> Perkins to Melbourne University, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>95</sup> Ruth Hoban, Director, Department of Social Studies, University of Melbourne to Archbishop Mannix, 6 March 1946, CSSB Files, MDHC; *The Advocate*, 24 April 1946, p. 8.

<sup>96</sup> Student File, Fr E. Perkins, AAHA and AASWV, Accession 90/24, Box 20, UMA.

<sup>97</sup> Perkins, A brief study of the history and philosophy of Catholic social work', student project, University of Melbourne, December 1947, PPP, MDHC.

### 5.2.3 'An archdiocesan disgrace'

In March 1949 Teresa Wardell returned to Australia and took up a social work position at the Return Servicemen League Family Welfare Bureau.<sup>98</sup> Her main interest, though, remained the ongoing professionalisation of Catholic social welfare in Victoria. Despite two decades of social work training, Catholic social workers remained under-represented in the Victorian profession. For the second time in her career, Wardell accepted the post of CSSB 'executive secretary'. She brought a renewed vision and the experience of having worked with Monsignor Weldon, the director of charities in New York Archdiocese, and Monsignor McClafferty, director of the National Catholic School of Social Service.<sup>99</sup>

Indicative of her forthright manner, Wardell expressed to Mannix her concerns about the state of Catholic welfare. She expressed alarm that the 'scope of the work... may have to be curtailed... owing to the depletion of staff' and financial issues.<sup>100</sup> In 1951 Wardell again addressed her concerns to the archbishop, saying that after fifteen years of operation the CSSB remained at the 'initial stage of the plan envisaged by the late Monsignor Lonergan'.<sup>101</sup> The bureau's location in *The Advocate* building, she said, was unsuitable, because of noise, lack of privacy and the necessity for clients, mainly pregnant or sick women, to walk up many stairs.<sup>102</sup>

Wardell believed Melbourne's hierarchy deferred too much to the children's institutions and paid too little attention to the advice of professional social workers. In her diaries, Wardell chastised the archdiocese's vicar-general, Monsignor (later Bishop) Arthur Fox (1905-97) for sending children to institutions in the early 1950s, usually without reference to the CSSB, and in some cases,

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<sup>98</sup> Series 1/1, Box 1, TMWC, UMA.

<sup>99</sup> Wardell to Mannix, 2 June 1949, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, 2 June 1949.

<sup>101</sup> Wardell to Mannix, 19 October 1951, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*

after the CSSB had specifically recommended that institutionalisation was unnecessary.<sup>103</sup> An exasperated Wardell said Fox 'does not grasp the real issue of the need for co-operation and inspection between the CSSB and the homes'.<sup>104</sup>

Perkins, although more circumspect, held similar concerns to Wardell. He described the CSSB as having a 'superfluous existence' because it lacked clout with the institutions.<sup>105</sup> He cited St Joseph's Orphanage at Abbotsford, which in 1951 accommodated nearly 200 girls, of whom less than 10 per cent had been assessed by the CSSB.<sup>106</sup> The by-passing of the CSSB annoyed Perkins; moreover, he felt Catholic institutions in Melbourne accepted the 'wrong type of child'.

Catholic orphans and neglected children ... have to be brought up in Salvation Army or non-Catholic orphanages, while many of the precious places in our orphanages are taken by children who could, and should, be brought up by their parents in their own homes.<sup>107</sup>

Wardell questioned whether the church's reluctance to embrace social welfare was due to her gender: 'I used to think that it was because I was a lay person and a woman that I was unable to obtain either understanding of or interest in the work that the bureau was trying to do'.<sup>108</sup> Wardell had come to recognise that the church's reluctance to embrace social work reflected unease with new ideas as well as the fact that she as a lay person worked in a highly clericalised environment.

The Melbourne bureau in the late 1940s and 1950s was hampered by financial constraints and a lack of tangible ownership by the archdiocese. Its struggle for

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<sup>103</sup> Wardell, General Notebook, Diary Entry 13 September 1950, Box 16, TMWC, UMA. Fox was Vicar General from 1944 to 1956.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Perkins to Fox, 5 July 1951, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*



recognition led Wardell to comment that the situation resembled an ‘archdiocesan disgrace’.<sup>109</sup> As early as 1945 Perkins had acknowledged the ‘difficulties retaining suitable social workers’ because the CSSB paid salaries below the award rate.<sup>110</sup> Perkins conceded the CSSB had not gained a high profile in the Catholic community, but he felt it had ‘established a reputation second to none among the family welfare agencies in Melbourne’.<sup>111</sup>

Wardell’s unhappiness lay with insufficient funding and the church’s apparent indifference to the CSSB. She was troubled by the bureau’s singular focus on child welfare programs, which, in her opinion, restricted opportunities for expansion into welfare programs. Concurrently she expressed concern at continuing poor standards of care in Catholic homes. At one institution, a nun who cooked evening meals for more than 150 children, also taught in a school during the day.<sup>112</sup> At another facility in South Melbourne, Wardell noted with alarm that corporal punishment to an orphan had left visible marks on her legs more than four days later.<sup>113</sup>

Wardell was prepared to challenge conventions in the provision of welfare services. In the case of a family with an ill mother, Wardell urged the chief almoner at Royal Melbourne Hospital to allow the older children to return home rather than placing them in an institution. Despite the mother’s incapacity and limited relatives’ support, Wardell considered it better to keep the family together.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Wardell to Mannix, 19 October 1951, *op. cit.*

<sup>109</sup> Wardell to Mannix, 2 June 1949, *op. cit.*

<sup>110</sup> Fr E.G. Perkins, Report on the Bureau’s Financial Position – November 1945, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>111</sup> Perkins to Fox, 3 April 1951, *op. cit.*

<sup>112</sup> Wardell, General Notebook, Diary Entry, TMWC, UMA.

<sup>113</sup> Case of J..... A....., date, *ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Case of Z.... family, Wardell to Chief Almoner, Royal Melbourne Hospital, 28 July 1950, Reference 5/69, Patient Case Files, Box 15, UMA.

Unlike Sydney, no full time cleric was appointed to the Melbourne bureau for many years. Wardell complimented Perkins' 'untiring and businesslike methods' but indicated little progress could be achieved while he had other diocesan responsibilities.<sup>115</sup> Perkins' part-time appointment and 'lack of authority', she claimed, impeded the CSSB progress. She successfully lobbied for him to be appointed full time from January 1950.<sup>116</sup> Wardell hoped this change would allow Perkins the necessary time to persuade a largely indifferent clergy about the benefits of professional welfare practices. In particular, Wardell hoped that Perkins could reduce the number of instances of priests sending children to institutions without seeking the advice of the CSSB.<sup>117</sup>

One of Perkins main efforts in the 1950s was to secure adequate funding for the CSSB. Cautious and polite, though not timid, the extant correspondence reflects Perkins' advocacy for appropriate diocesan financing of the CSSB. In 1951 Perkins agreed with Wardell's financial assessment and advised the vicar general that the bureau's work was 'becoming increasingly difficult due to lack of finance'.<sup>118</sup> Like his predecessor, Perkins argued the untenable nature of relying on the children's institutions to fund the CSSB. When Melbourne's Catholic children's institutions recorded a combined loss of £40,000 in 1951, Perkins' commented that 'the institutions therefore cannot be expected to bear the burden of the ever increasing cost of the Bureau caused by rising prices'.<sup>119</sup>

Perkins sought an increase in the archdiocese's contributions to offset the 'spiralling' costs, including a doubling in employee wages between 1945 and 1950. He asked the church to contribute another £700 per annum to meet the

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<sup>115</sup> Wardell, General Notebook, Diary Entry, 13 September 1950, Box 16, TMWC, UMA.

<sup>116</sup> *The Advocate*, 26 January 1950, p. 7.

<sup>117</sup> Wardell, General Notebook, Diary Entry, 2 October 1950, Box 16, TMWC, UMA.

<sup>118</sup> Perkins to Fox, 3 April 1951, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*

wages of staff and the ‘Catholic woman probation officer’.<sup>120</sup> The archdiocese’s slow response frustrated Wardell and himself.<sup>121</sup> An archdiocesan grant ‘removed the bureau’s overdraft’ of nearly £400.<sup>122</sup> In April 1951, Perkins, for example, candidly said the CSSB ‘cannot continue to exist unless it is further subsidised from the cathedral’, a reference to the archdiocese.<sup>123</sup> In July the same year Perkins remarked that ‘though it was anticipated that in time the scope of the bureau would expand, it has contracted instead’.<sup>124</sup>

While the CSSB made progress in reducing the numbers of children admitted to institutions, many religious orders during the 1950s remained unconvinced of the limitations of institutional care. Some institutions merely replaced orphans with higher socio-economic children to maintain the status quo. As Perkins noted several institutions had become de facto boarding schools ‘for children of middle class families’.<sup>125</sup> Wardell did not shy away from expressing similar sentiments. In a pessimistic letter to Mannix – which effectively signalled her resignation – in late 1951, Wardell said that the bureau was destined to ‘remain a mere token of what the service to our needy families should be’.<sup>126</sup>

### 5.3 Sydney

This section reviews the development of the Sydney bureau, focusing on the directorships of Thomas and McCosker.

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<sup>120</sup> Perkins to Fox, 20 December 1950, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>121</sup> Perkins expressed concern that Fox had not made ‘any comments on the suggestion’ made in previous correspondence to Fox on 2 February 1951, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>122</sup> Perkins to Fox, 3 April 1951, CSSB Files, MDHC.

<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Perkins to Fox, 5 July 1951, *op. cit.*,

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Wardell, 19 October 1951, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

### 5.3.1 Disaggregated welfare sector

In Sydney the development of Catholic social welfare in the 1940s was stymied due to financial difficulties and some clashes with existing service providers. Despite these tensions, Sydney's clerical directors gradually won extra church funding and support for the development of the Catholic Welfare Bureau (CWB). As with Melbourne's religious orders, the SVdP in Sydney was reluctant to embrace new welfare ideas, which, they felt, would lead to a diminution in their authority and management of the children's institutions.

State aid to the CWB during the 1940s was out of the question, with government funds scarce and the church anxious not to open up a debate on state aid. A small amount of government funding to Catholic hospitals in Sydney and Lismore had already raised the ire of militant groups such as the United Protestant Association. To seek state aid for Catholic orphanages was considered politically imprudent in the 1940s.<sup>127</sup>

With considerable enthusiasm Monsignor Thomas promoted the importance of understanding the underlying reasons for a person's situation. He viewed the social worker as someone who 'treats the causes rather than the symptoms... although some palliative treatment' in the short term was often necessary.<sup>128</sup> A focus on addressing the causes, rather than palliative response, was not the main interest of the SVdP, which provided material aid (food vouchers and clothing) and encouraged people to seek salvation through enriching their lives in personal prayer.

An early contentious matter between the CWB and the SVdP concerned a proposed index of child placements into Catholic orphanages. Thomas, drawing on the precedent of a state index managed by the Council of Social Service of

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<sup>127</sup> Hospital Commission of NSW, Correspondence 'G' files, 1915-1945, Box 10/43016, File No G10341, State Records of New South Wales (SRNSW).

<sup>128</sup> Thomas, Report on Catholic Welfare Bureau, n.d. E2735, SAA.

NSW (CSSNSW), proposed a Catholic equivalent.<sup>129</sup> A central index aimed to assist member agencies share clients' information, encourage more efficient use of scarce resources and minimise duplication.<sup>130</sup> Most Sydney charitable organisations, including St Vincent's and Lewisham hospitals, as well as the CWB, participated in the CSSNSW Index, which had been established in 1938.<sup>131</sup> The SVdP's Sydney archdiocesan council – Australia's largest and probably most influential – would not co-operate with either state or church-based indexes, citing client confidentiality and that almsgiving should remain secret.<sup>132</sup>

In his roles as a chaplain to the SVdP and as a member of the management committee of Westmead Boys' Home, Thomas may have thought he would be able to sway the loyal Vincentians.<sup>133</sup> However, its Sydney council had over many years steadfastly maintained a policy of client confidentiality. In the interwar period, for example, the SVdP had refused offers of state aid from major political parties in return for sharing client information.<sup>134</sup> One contemporary writer summed up the SVdP philosophy:

No name mentioned [at a meeting] must ever be mentioned outside. This is true charity, not to let the right hand know what the left hand does... friends must stay outside for this is the most secret society that exists.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> The COS established the first central index of clients in London in 1869.

<sup>130</sup> Council of Social Service of New South Wales (CSSNSW) to the South Australian Council of Social Service, 15 July 1947, South Australian Board of Social Studies and Training, Papers, Box 2, Special Collections, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide (BSLUSA).

<sup>131</sup> CSSNSW, *A Central Index for charitable bodies* (Sydney, Australasian Medical Publishing Company, 19--?), MLNSW. See also CSSNSW, *Annual Reports, 1938-1945*, MLNSW.

<sup>132</sup> Society of St Vincent de Paul, Minutes of the Particular Council of Sydney, 13 October 1941, Book 22, Box K15512, MLNSW.

<sup>133</sup> Thomas was appointed to the Westmead committee in 1943. G. Burns, *A Simple Story: History of St Vincent's Boys Home Westmead* (Westmead, Sydney, Marist Brothers, 1991), p. 152.

<sup>134</sup> D.J. Gleeson, 'Mass Unemployment and Unemployment Relief Policies in New South Wales during the 1930s Great Depression', Masters of Commerce Honours Thesis, School of Economics, University of New South Wales, 1994, p. 223.

<sup>135</sup> J.M. Cusack, 'Remember the Poor: The work of the St Vincent de Paul Society', *Austral Light*, No. 8, Vol. XX1, (New Series) August 1920.

In his 1944 report to Gilroy, Thomas said the 'necessity and usefulness' of the CWB had been 'amply proved', but he remained frustrated by the independence of the Catholic children's institutions.<sup>136</sup> Thomas sought advice from an archdiocesan consultor, Fr Patrick McCabe MSC, about the status and visiting rights of the Archbishop of Sydney and his welfare delegate to facilities. After considering the matter 'at various times', McCabe framed his answer around a 1920 Vatican precedent that confirmed the SVdP's independent status from the bishops, especially in terms of finance.<sup>137</sup> Thomas, outmanoeuvred, retreated.

This issue marked another stumbling point for the CWB. Its aim of co-ordinating church welfare services, especially among the larger institutions such as the Foundling Home at Waitara and Westmead, had experienced a setback. The CWB faced the difficulty of being a new player within a disaggregated welfare sector. It operated alongside existing players and had no direct authority to initiate major change. Thomas felt that by receiving a levy from the orphanages, this would make it more difficult for the CWB to ask for their co-operation.<sup>138</sup>

Although influential, Thomas realised he would need to lobby harder to convince many in the voluntary sector as well as his clerical colleagues of the disadvantages of relying on 'undirected charity'. In terms of the aim of interacting with children's institutions, the CWB's role in the 1940s was little more than a gatekeeper. Thomas' studies at Sydney University in the mid 1940s gave him more confidence to put the case for professionalising welfare services. In an article in the clerical journal, *Manly*, Thomas boldly confronted the 'sceptics' and 'critics' of professional welfare. He said diocesan welfare bureaux had been opposed by the 'timid, the suspicious, the unduly cautious and incurable conservative type of mind'.<sup>139</sup> Thomas described voluntary charitable groups as

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<sup>136</sup> Thomas, Catholic Missions Office and Secretariate of the Lay Apostolate, Director's Annual Report for 1944, p. 7, Catholic Action, B1418, SAA.

<sup>137</sup> McCabe to Thomas, 18 July 1944, Catholic Action Files, B1418, SAA.

<sup>138</sup> Thomas, Annual Report for 1944, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

‘spasmodic, indiscriminate, wasteful and often ineffective’.<sup>140</sup> These sharp words – although a fairly accurate description – would not have eased the somewhat difficult relations between the CWB and the SVdP. In an appeal for greater co-operation towards the bureaux Thomas described social work as the new name for what Catholics had long understood to be charitable aid. The distinguishing characteristics of professional social work, he said, included the employment of social workers and their specialised approach to case work.<sup>141</sup> Thomas’ pleas appeared to have had little immediate success and his approach may have hardened the resolve of some SVdP members, who remained concerned about issues of confidentiality and the employment of social workers.

In 1946 Thomas proposed a combined Catholic Charities association, similar in structure to the American Catholic Conference of Charities. He advised Gilroy that ‘priests should be appointed to the CCC as whole ... and then specific instructions given by you to the Director would ensure that the work you desire each priest to do, would be done by the priest you nominate.’<sup>142</sup> Gilroy, unenthusiastic about church central bodies, did not accept the proposal.<sup>143</sup>

Lay-trained women were crucial to the Sydney bureau’s provision of services. Following the departure of Alice Blackall, Thomas operated the CWB single-handed until January 1945, when he appointed Joan McPhee, a doctor’s daughter, whom he had met while studying at Sydney University.<sup>144</sup> In mid 1947 McPhee left and was succeeded by Jan Pringle.<sup>145</sup> Thomas complemented the

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<sup>139</sup> A.R.E. Thomas, ‘The Catholic Social Welfare Bureau: What it is and what it does’, *Manly*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1944.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>142</sup> Thomas to Gilroy, 6 July 1944, enclosing a Memorandum re Plans for Catholic Charities office, 1946, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>143</sup> J. Luttrell, ‘Norman Thomas Cardinal Gilroy’, p. 300.

<sup>144</sup> Thomas to Gilroy, 6 July 1944, enclosing a Memorandum re Plans for Catholic Charities office, 1946, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

CWB with two part-time psychologists, Eric Welsh and Pat Feenan, while a medical doctor was also available.<sup>146</sup>

By 1947 Thomas appeared to have tired of battles concerning funding and recognition. He had the distinction of being Australia's first Catholic priest to graduate as a social worker, and despite numerous obstacles he had steered the Sydney CWB during its initial years. With multiple senior roles in church administration, Thomas had other opportunities to use his not inconsiderable talents and persuasive fundraising skills. He looked forward to the arrival of Fr J.F. McCosker as his successor.

### 5.3.2 War Chaplain to social worker

One of the recurring names in Australian Catholic social welfare history is Frank McCosker. The eldest son of James McCosker, a baker, and Elizabeth Smith of Greta, NSW, Frank and his siblings, Lucy, Mary and Bernard received a pragmatic mix of religious observance and concern for one's neighbour.<sup>147</sup> Frank was educated by the Sisters of Mercy at Moree and the Marist Brothers at West Maitland. Monsignor Frank Lloyd, Parish Priest of Moree had considerable influence on him. Lloyd, well regarded as a 'patron of youth', was a driving force in expanding community facilities.<sup>148</sup> After completing high school McCosker followed in Lloyd's footsteps by studying part time and working in the Post Master General's Department.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> *The University of Sydney Graduates and Diploma Holders 1974* (Sydney University, 1974) Rare Books Collection, Fisher Library, University of Sydney

<sup>146</sup> J. F. McCosker, Memo for Most Rev P. Lyons, [ca 1952], McCosker Papers, CSA.

<sup>147</sup> Lucy McCosker (St Rosalie of the Lochinvar Josephite Sisters), Barnet (Fr T.B. McCosker of Maitland and Mary (Mrs Brien). Fr Barney was well known in the Maitland Diocese as a chaplain to the youth and the sick, See Fr T.B. McCosker, Obituary, *Manly*, Vol. 11, No. 1, December 1968, p. 47.

<sup>148</sup> *Manly*, Vol. 19, No. 5, December 1936, pp: 137-138.

<sup>149</sup> Monsignor James F McCosker – Honours A463/58, Item 859222, National Archives of Australia (NAA); *Borromeo*, Vol. 11, No. 2, February 1967, p. 1.



McCosker entered St Columba's College, Springwood in 1924 and later moved to what Fr Clem Kilby, the inaugural director of Centacare Tasmania, described as the 'austere regime' of the senior seminary at Manly.<sup>150</sup> McCosker was ordained a Sydney priest in November 1931, along with Algy Thomas (who would become Bishop of Bathurst) and James Carroll (who would become the only Auxiliary Archbishop of Sydney in the archdiocese's history.)<sup>151</sup>

As a young priest, McCosker recalled that the church viewed priests as a 'general practitioner'.<sup>152</sup> From 1931-34 he worked in the inner-city parish of Rozelle and met many families affected by unemployment, family dislocation and increasing poverty.<sup>153</sup> Despite unprecedented poverty and worsening economic conditions the Catholic Church retained its policy that, regardless of socio-economic factors, the impact on a woman's health and family stability, children were a unique gift from God that should be accepted lovingly and without question.<sup>154</sup> After only three weeks being ordained McCosker also became chaplain to Callan Park (now Rozelle Mental Health Service).<sup>155</sup> This work alerted him to the pressing needs of people with debilitating psychiatric illnesses.

In 1934 McCosker responded to a call for priests to assist in the new diocese of Rockhampton. After two years in Queensland McCosker returned to Sydney and was assigned to Woollahra Parish, before being posted to nearby Elizabeth Bay parish in 1939. Archbishop Gilroy and Monsignor O'Brien appeared impressed with McCosker's energetic style, and as part of the expansion of Catholic Action

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<sup>150</sup> C. Kilby, Eulogy at the Vigil Mass to celebrate the life of Monsignor J. F. McCosker, 1996, Centacare Sydney Archives (CSA). For the seminary see K. J. Walsh, *Yesterday's Seminary: A History of St Patrick's Manly* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1988).

<sup>151</sup> One tribute to Carroll was written by an American Professor, J.E. Coons, 'A remembrance of James Carroll', *Catholic Weekly*, 30 April 1995, p. 24.

<sup>152</sup> J.F. McCosker, Chaplaincy Services: Discussion Paper, p. 15. (March 1977), File 590002, Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, CSSAA.

<sup>153</sup> Originally called the parish of Balmain North. Rozelle parish is now unified with St Augustine's Parish, Balmain under the pastorship of Fr J.L. Camilleri.

<sup>154</sup> See Australian Bishops' 1930 statement on artificial birth control.

across the Sydney Archdiocese, asked McCosker to make plans for a youth movement, a forerunner to the Catholic Youth Organisation (CYO).<sup>156</sup> McCosker also joined the board of Catholic Action and became chaplain to the social services department of the Legion of Catholic Women (LCW), the successor organisation to the Catholic Women's Association (CWA), which Gilroy had disbanded.<sup>157</sup> Both of these roles would enable McCosker to gather support for the professionalisation of social work.

During World War Two McCosker entered the Army as a chaplain. In June 1943 he joined the 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade and served in Australia, New Guinea and Bougainville.<sup>158</sup> The *Catholic Weekly* reported that during combat duty McCosker displayed a 'rare understanding of human nature, a persuasive knack of engendering confidence and affection in others'.<sup>159</sup>

Australian soldiers reportedly regarded McCosker as a 'rugged, likeable chaplain, who led us – especially on his welfare projects in unpopular places like detention barracks and the V.D. hospitals'.<sup>160</sup> Fr John Usher, who regarded McCosker as 'a "father" in the truest sense of the title', says 'the soldiers, their plight, their human needs left an indelible mark in his [McCosker's] heart'.<sup>161</sup> McCosker's duties brought him into closer contact with other Christian chaplains, which would later influence his views on working across denominational boundaries. After the war, Gilroy appointed McCosker as Diocesan Director of the Propagation of the Faith

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<sup>155</sup> McCosker, Chaplaincy Services, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>156</sup> C.H. Jory, *The Champion Society and Catholic Social Militancy in Australia, 1929-1936* (Sydney, Harpham, 1986) p. 105.

<sup>157</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 14 April 1942, Box 2734, Catholic Welfare Bureau (CWB Collection), SAA; *Catholic Weekly*, 23 April 1942, p. 5.

<sup>158</sup> Biographical information included in the nomination of Monsignor McCosker for Commonwealth Government Award, A463/58 1961/6536, NAA.

<sup>159</sup> 'Catholic Agency Uses Latest Welfare Policy', *Catholic Weekly*, 11 September 1956.

<sup>160</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> J. Usher, Homily at the Requiem Mass of Monsignor James Frank McCosker, 13 February 1996, pp: 3, 5. CSA.

and assistant director of the CWB.<sup>162</sup> Under the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Training Scheme, ex-service personnel were eligible to study at university.<sup>163</sup> McCosker commenced social work at Sydney University: among the predominantly female cohort was a protestant minister, Winston O'Reilly.<sup>164</sup> McCosker's scholarly aptitude impressed colleagues and academics and his wit endeared him to many people.<sup>165</sup> McCosker made a strong impression on Parker, then the university's senior lecturer in social studies. More than half a century later she described him as 'the most important person in Catholic social welfare'.<sup>166</sup>

Consistent with the view that social workers should be trained, McCosker waited until he neared completion of his studies before taking formal responsibility for the CWB.<sup>167</sup> This was an important symbolic gesture in terms of developing the CWB's reputation.<sup>168</sup>

### 5.3.3 Financial issues

When McCosker became Sydney director in 1948 he claimed the organisation had a 'doubtful reputation' and operated in an 'atmosphere of ignorance,

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<sup>162</sup> McCosker, Memo for Most Rev P. Lyons, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>163</sup> Perkins to Kilby, 8 September 1993, p. 1, PPP, MDHC; Dyster and Meredith, *Australia in the International Economy*, p. 183.

<sup>164</sup> *ibid.* Perkins says that McCosker 'elected – or perhaps was chosen' to study social work. McCosker gives some credence to the later view when he remarked, 'I should also like to take this opportunity [of thanking you] for introducing me to Social Work against my "better" judgment', McCosker to Cardinal Gilroy, 23 December 1956, letter in response to Gilroy sending congratulations on McCosker's Golden Jubilee of the priesthood, B2734, SAA.

<sup>165</sup> Interview, Fr John Usher, St Patrick's Mortlake, 27 December 2004.

<sup>166</sup> Interview, Norma Parker, Brighton, Victoria, 24 March 2002.

<sup>167</sup> In 1940, for example, the Victorian Institute of Hospital Almoners had expressed concern that Viva Murphy would be appointed to a position at Melbourne's CSSB before completing her training. See VIHA Papers, Accession 90/24, Box 20, UMA.

<sup>168</sup> Sr Mary Hedwige's experiences at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne and the strong resistance by the almoner profession to people without formal training is a case in point.

suspicion and even ridicule'.<sup>169</sup> Was this view accurate? In respect to reputation, the CWB had received positive commendation from a senior magistrate when Thomas left the bureau.<sup>170</sup> Within the church, however, the bureau had failed to capture the active support of many priests, not least of whom was Archbishop Gilroy. On the financial front, McCosker inherited unresolved financial issues between his predecessor and the powerful archdiocesan secretariat. His initial posting to Castle Hill parish, then an outlying north-western Sydney suburb, was also unhelpful.

Through Thomas' perseverance McCosker inherited an organisation funded from three sources: the annual St Patrick's Day celebrations, the LCW and, to a lesser extent, the children's institutions.<sup>171</sup> But this was not a platform for sustainable service delivery. McCosker sought to consolidate the CWB's finances to ensure service provision to new groups in need. Like Thomas, McCosker encountered Monsignor Clark, a powerful Sydney cleric whose responsibilities included financial administration of the LCW. Clark's influence on archdiocesan activities was on par with Melbourne vicar generals, such as Lyons and Fox. While Clark's parishioners may have felt he could do no wrong, some of his clerical colleagues regarded his manner as somewhat brusque.<sup>172</sup>

Clark at first stymied McCosker's plans for the CWB, claiming McCosker had ignored due process and had not used 'the bank account provided for his transactions and even withdrew the publicity stamped on his correspondence indicating that the bureau was sponsored by the Legion of Catholic Women'.<sup>173</sup> McCosker countered by lobbying archdiocesan organisations and also Gilroy,

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<sup>169</sup> J.F. McCosker, Notes on the Beginning of Catholic Welfare, the Diocesan Agencies, the National Catholic Welfare Committee and the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, (May 1989) p. 1, MS. CSA. *Social Service*, August 1948, p. 2.

<sup>170</sup> Phillip McCreadie, Special Magistrate, Metropolitan Children's Court to Gilroy, 16 December 1947, CWB Collection, E2735, SAA.

<sup>171</sup> In the financial year ended December 1949 these sources contributed £1780.

<sup>172</sup> Obituary of Right Rev Mons William Clark, *Manly*, Vol. 9, No. 1, September 1957.

<sup>173</sup> Clark to Gilroy, 10 November 1948, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

which resulted in an archdiocesan grant of £1,436. This was McCosker's first hard fought win. Gilroy directed Clark to ensure the LCW funded the welfare bureau.<sup>174</sup> In her history of the CWL, which incorporated the activities of the LCW, Hilary Carey suggested the LCW's fundraising success was the primary reason for its financial support of the CWB.<sup>175</sup> Was there a broader context? The LCW, a 'department of Catholic Action', was largely under the direct control of the archdiocese. Secondly, the CWA and LCW had supported Norma Parker et al in petitioning for a bureau to be established, through, for example, editorial coverage of key appointments.<sup>176</sup> Therefore, the LCW was already sympathetic to the CWB.

By 1953 the LCW was not making financial contributions to the CWB.<sup>177</sup> Clark was reported to be 'glad to be relieved' of some of his financial responsibilities.<sup>178</sup> While Clark may have been reluctant to fund the CWB, the principal reason for the cessation in payments was the LCW's sharply rising debt. After Clark's sudden death in April 1953 the extent of LCW's financial crisis became apparent. Bishop Patrick Lyons, appointed interim administrator of CUSA House, uncovered a £95,000 debt. LCW accounts had been unaudited between 1946 and 1953 and the proceeds from the annual St Patrick's Day charity fundraiser had been placed into consolidated archdiocese accounts rather than being distributed to orphanages and the CWB.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Gilroy to McCosker, 12 November 1948, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>175</sup> H.M. Carey, *Truly Feminine Truly Catholic: A History of the Catholic Women's League* (Kensington, NSW, New South Wales University Press, 1987) p. 117.

<sup>176</sup> *Legion Review*, Vol 2. No 12, 1947, pp: 1, 7.

<sup>177</sup> Bishop James Carroll, Table A Re: Catholic Welfare Bureau Finances, attached to Bishop Lyons' review, 1954, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>178</sup> Lyons to Gilroy, 21 May 1953, CUSA and CUSA House, 1940-1989, C1312, SAA.

<sup>179</sup> Carey, *Truly Feminine Truly Catholic*, p. 119.

The LCW chaos exacerbated the CWB's debt, which blew out to £3,500.<sup>180</sup> McCosker appealed for financial assistance via a colleague, Bishop Carroll. In 1956 Gilroy provided a sizeable grant, the first of its kind during McCosker's directorship. More regular funding from the archdiocese did not commence until after McCosker's successor, Fr Peter Phibbs, took over the directorship in 1958.

#### 5.3.4 Clients and service provision

In his first CWB report McCosker indicated that about half the bureau's casework, including his own work, involved discharged service personnel or their dependents, quite dissimilar to the situation in Melbourne where the separately constituted CWO had primary responsibility for war veterans.<sup>181</sup> Indicative of being a referral centre, Sydney's CWB received up to ninety phone enquiries daily, as well as twenty interviews.<sup>182</sup> Clients ranged from, 'sub-normals', criminal girls, older women, families to war service personnel.

In the area of children's assessment, there was a large decline in children placed in institutions, with cases resolved in other ways, including family reconciliation, short-term fostering, and in some cases, adoption. This situation represented a major departure from the church's tradition before the advent of professional social work.<sup>183</sup> Social worker, Agnes Hegarty, concluded that nearly 75 per cent of applications for admission to children's homes in Sydney were unnecessary, because:

Full investigation clearly shows that placement is either not necessary because arrangements can be made with relatives, or is undesirable because it will lend itself to deepen or extend a more fundamental difficulty.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>181</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 1 September 1948, CWB Collection, Box 2734, SAA.

<sup>182</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> 'Catholic Agency uses latest welfare policy', *Catholic Weekly*, 11 September 1956.

<sup>184</sup> A. Hegarty, Report, ca 1948, p. 3, Box E2735, SAA.

Encouraged by McCosker's open approach to the needs of clients, the trained social workers attempted to look beyond the symptoms to remedy the causes.<sup>185</sup> McCosker encouraged them not to 'direct' clients. McCosker thought the social worker's job was to see that every available form of help is forthcoming to clients.<sup>186</sup> As McCosker noted, 'all the interviews are centered around assisting the client and not towards directing him'.<sup>187</sup>

Trained women remained the cornerstone of Sydney's CWB in the 1950s. At least half of the casework involved temporary or permanent placement of children or child guidance.<sup>188</sup> In 1947, Mary Lewis, a mature aged graduate of Sydney University's social work course joined the CWB.<sup>189</sup> She was joined by Pamela Riddle (1947), Dorothy O'Halloran (1950) and Margaret McHardy (1952).<sup>190</sup>

Various reports during this period indicate that the CWB diversified its services. Lewis' casework in 1953-54, for example, showed significant interaction with the orphanages, child guidance, support to unmarried mothers, marriage counselling, and general advice to people in distress.<sup>191</sup>

Increasingly the CWB assisted non-Catholic clients, especially unmarried mothers.<sup>192</sup> Lewis' colleague, Hegarty, said the range of issues and the nature of counselling placed 'mental and physical fatigue' on staff.<sup>193</sup> One of the challenges was securing sufficient homes for foster care and adoptions. The

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<sup>185</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> McCosker, Notes on the Beginning of Catholic Welfare, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>187</sup> McCosker, Memo for Most Rev P, Lyons, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>188</sup> 'All you need is a problem: we will help you fix it,' *Catholic Weekly*, 10 February 1949.

<sup>189</sup> *Legion Review*, Vol. 2, No. 12, July 1947, pp: 1, 7.

<sup>190</sup> *Social Service*, August 1948, p. 9.

<sup>191</sup> Mrs Lewis' Cases, Appendix attached to 1954 Report by Bishop Lyons, CSA.

<sup>192</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> Hegarty, Report, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

NSW Child Welfare Department (CWD) secretary, R.D. Hicks, reported in 1951 that Cardinal Gilroy's support enabled an appeal for foster homes in parishes and from pulpits.<sup>194</sup>

O'Halloran's work focused on child placement in archdiocesan institutions, adoptions, general counselling and liaison with the children's court. Indicative of the CWB's support – and increasing leadership role across NSW – O'Halloran undertook surveys of Catholic welfare services in Goulburn and Canberra, and Newcastle in 1952. Her subsequent reports led to the establishment of child welfare committees in each diocese, which paved the way for the later development of welfare bureaux in these dioceses.<sup>195</sup> Yet, the bureau did not gain complete control over Catholic child welfare in the 1950s. The 'sister in charge' of a girls' institution could refuse admissions on the basis of medical reasons and also had children removed without reference to the CWB.<sup>196</sup>

There were important differences in the directors' operating styles. McCosker, unlike Thomas, did not wear a white coat. McCosker, also, emphasised that the CWB was a generic service open to children and family members.<sup>197</sup> Lewis confirmed McCosker's flexible approach towards clients, when she commented, 'with Fr Mac the unorthodox act of kindness will always win out'.<sup>198</sup> McCosker lobbied Gilroy to appoint a social worker to minimise the 'undesirable' features of young girls attending court and to reduce reliance on volunteers whom the 'Court is not prepared to accept'.<sup>199</sup> In 1952 O'Halloran also became responsible for the Court Guild, which McCosker described as being a 'moribund' activity of the

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<sup>194</sup> NSW Child Welfare Department, *Annual Report 1951*, published in *NSW Parliamentary Papers*.

<sup>195</sup> Miss O'Halloran's Cases, Appendix attached to 1954 Report by Bishop Lyons, CSA.

<sup>196</sup> Thornhill, 1954 Report, CWB Collection, Box 2734, SAA.

<sup>197</sup> P. G. Lewis, (comp. and ed.), *Always Begin with a Story: Memoirs of Mary Lewis* (Glebe, NSW, Book House, 2001) p. 114.

<sup>198</sup> *ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>199</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 1 August 1949, CWB Collection, Box 2734, SAA



LCW.<sup>200</sup> McCosker supported the ongoing development of the religious sisters' caring for delinquent girls in institutions by conducting study groups. Through 'frank, critical and practical' discussions McCosker said the 'sisters are conscious of the defects in their system and work and they are most anxious to remedy them'.<sup>201</sup>

### 5.3.5 Marriage Counselling

Australian marriage counselling services evolved from the lead taken by Britain. In the late 1930s a group of concerned 'professional men and women' met in London to discuss ways of promoting family life. They were motivated by the 1937 Herbert Act, which had extended the grounds for divorce, a 'serious increase in the incidence of venereal disease' and the falling birth rate.<sup>202</sup> World War Two exacerbated strains on family life, but in 1942 the group, under the leadership of David Mace, formally established itself as the Marriage Guidance Council (MGC). Over the next decade, the London MGC, staffed by unpaid lay counsellors, assisted more than 10,000 couples through 'educational and remedial work'.<sup>203</sup> Mace liaised closely with the Catholic Church, but its different moral position on methods to limit family size, led to the formation of the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council (CMAC) in London to provide 'sympathetic guidance' to couples.<sup>204</sup>

In Australia, secular and Catholic MGCs generally worked together co-operatively. South Australia was the first state to establish a MGC in 1946,

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<sup>200</sup> J.F. McCosker, *Work for Delinquent Girls* Archdiocese – 1953, p. 1, CSA.

<sup>201</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>202</sup> D.R. Mace, 'Marriage Guidance in England', *Journal of Marriage and Family Life*, Vol. 111, No. 1, February 1945, p. 2; J. Moge, 'Marriage Counselling and Family Life Education in England', *Journal of Marriage and Family Life*, Vol. 23, No 2, May 1961, p. 149.

<sup>203</sup> Moge, *Marriage Counselling*, p. 150. D. Marsh, 'The use of volunteer lay counsellors in marriage guidance', *Forum*, Vol. 6. No. 3, September 1952, p. 29.

followed by Melbourne and Sydney in 1948.<sup>205</sup> Early MGCs had close linkages with Protestant churches. The Anglican Archbishop of Perth, for example, initiated that city's MGC in 1950.<sup>206</sup> Progressive Anglican minister, W.G. Coughlan, established Sydney's non-denominational council, which, according to Catholic bishop, Patrick Lyons, did not sit well amongst Sydney Anglicans, as it operated in opposition to the official Anglican MGC, based at St Andrew's Cathedral.<sup>207</sup> By the mid 1950s marriage guidance councils had integrated new psychological theories within a dominant clerical presence.<sup>208</sup>

Early marriage programs conducted by the Catholic Church have often been overlooked. McCosker, who wrote his final university paper on 'Marriage Reconciliation', established a specialised marriage counselling service at the CWB in 1948.<sup>209</sup> Australian Catholic marriage organisations opposed 'scientific contraception within marriage'. Adelaide's ecumenical spirit led other churches to offer an amendment that exempted the Catholics from contraception, but this did not appease Fr Joseph Russell, Director of Catholic Education, who established the church's own marriage guidance courses in 1949.<sup>210</sup>

In 1950 Sydney's CWB, together with the Fighting Forces Family Welfare Bureau, St Andrew's, and Coughlan's MGC, lobbied the state for funding. The

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<sup>204</sup> N. Timms and R. Timms, *Directory of Social Welfare* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982) p. 121; J.G. Frere, 'Catholic Marriage Guidance Council', *The Clergy Review* (London), Vol. 30, 1948.

<sup>205</sup> E.M.W. Martin, 'Social Work, the Family and Women's Equality in Post-war Australia', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2003, p. 447.

<sup>206</sup> *The Record*, 16 December 1971, p. 12.

<sup>207</sup> Lyons to Gilroy, 10 August 1953, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA. Marriage Guidance File, Australian Association of Social Workers (NSW Branch), Box H2286, MS 3025, MLNSW.

<sup>208</sup> N. Brown, *Governing Prosperity: Social Change and Analysis in Australian in the 1950s* (Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1995) p. 195.

<sup>209</sup> McCosker, Memo for Most Rev. P. Lyons, *op. cit.*, p. 1. Marriage Guidance File, Australian Association of Social Workers (NSW Branch), Box H2286, MS 3025, MLNSW. McCosker to Gilroy, 31 August 1953, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>210</sup> E.M.W. Martin, *Changing Relationships: Marriage Guidance Council to Relationships Australia – A South Australian History* (Adelaide, Relationships Australia, 1998) p. 9.

NSW Attorney General's Department provided up to £1,000 per annum for marital conciliation courses in 1951-52 to the agencies.<sup>211</sup> This funding was significant for several reasons: it marked the beginning of state aid for non-government organisations such as the CWB, at a time when the anti-state aid movement held pervasive influence over public policy. Secondly, it marked the first non-church income to the CWB, which up until that point had struggled to gain minimal support from the church's hierarchy. Thirdly, according to A.L. Harris, state aid came with a condition that the agencies themselves raise and expend £500 per annum on marriage counselling to qualify for the full subsidy of £1000.<sup>212</sup> Despite common conditions for their subsidies the NGOs operated in relative isolation, until 1961 when representatives of the FWB, CWB and the Red Cross began to share their experiences at marital workshops.<sup>213</sup>

#### 5.3.6 'A public service department'

In 1954 the Sydney bureau faced a serious threat from the hierarchy. The prelude to this event was unresolved tensions in style and personality between Gilroy and McCosker and the latter's absence to undertake further studies in America.<sup>214</sup> In 1947, Norma Parker of Sydney University, had recommended to Gilroy that a Sydney priest go to America for a 'year's intensive study of the

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<sup>211</sup> National Marriage Guidance Council of Australia *Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 1959* located in Marriage Guidance Files, Box 716 in Council of Social Service of New South Wales Papers, MLNSW. In 1951 and 1952 the CWB received £1000. In 1953 the amount was halved; but increased to £1000 again in 1954. See CWB, Statement of Receipts and Payments for the Years ended 1951-1954, excerpt from 1954 Review of CWB by Bishop Lyons, CSA.

<sup>212</sup> A.L. Harris, 'Marriage Guidance – With Special Reference to New South Wales', *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. XXV111, No. 4, December 1956, p. 52.

<sup>213</sup> Executive Committee File, Family Welfare Bureau Records, Minutes of the Marital Workshop held on 27 September 1966 at the Catholic Welfare Bureau. Box K21639, MLNSW.

<sup>214</sup> In 1952, for example, during a visit to Lewis, who was recovering from major Surgery, Gilroy expressed concerns about McCosker's style. Lewis later responded: 'During Your Eminence's visit you remarked that Fr Mac appears too tense. This tension is obvious to me too, on each occasion that he prepares to visit Your Eminence... he feels that he lacks those natural graces which makes interviewing for others more easy'. Lewis to Gilroy, 31 October 1952, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

problems facing Catholic social work to-day'.<sup>215</sup> Parker says it had been a 'great joy to have had five sisters and Thomas and McCosker study social work. The two priests had distinct but different gifts', and she recommended McCosker's 'qualities' would enable him to undertake further study.<sup>216</sup> Gilroy did not accept the need for either cleric to undertake further study.

In 1953, Parker supported a recommendation to the Federal Government for McCosker to be awarded a United Nations Fellowship in social work.<sup>217</sup> McCosker's overseas study in 1954 represented a welcome break for Gilroy and McCosker, and potentially an avenue to dilute McCosker's influence, albeit temporarily.<sup>218</sup> Gilroy, irritated by McCosker's questioning and upfront style, had previously had little success controlling the CWB. The two men also disagreed on promoting the church's welfare activities. When McCosker complained that the CWD's secretary, R.D. Hicks, 'skillfully concealed the work done by voluntary agencies', Gilroy countered:

There is no need to be concerned at the government representative ignoring our efforts. That attitude is characteristic. Their recognition of what is done would not help; hence it is better to say nothing about it.<sup>219</sup>

Notwithstanding McCosker's high profile, relations with Cardinal Gilroy were often difficult. The two men differed greatly in approach. In 1953 when Gilroy overlooked McCosker as the Catholic representative on the NSW Child Welfare Advisory Council, McCosker countered by saying that the cardinal's nominee, Fr T. Pierse, 'has no special knowledge of welfare matters, no influence in present welfare work, no means of making any contribution to its [advisory council]

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<sup>215</sup> Parker to Gilroy, 30 October 1947, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>216</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>217</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 27 November 1953, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA; S. McGrath, *These Women? Women religious in the history of Australia – The Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta, 1888-1988* (Kensington, Sydney, New South Wales University Press, 1989), p. 99.

<sup>218</sup> Gilroy to McCosker, 28 November 1953; O'Brien to Gilroy, 9 June 1953, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>219</sup> Gilroy to McCosker, 19 September 1953, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

development and who appears to be dissociated from those who have these qualifications'.<sup>220</sup> McCosker also complained to Monsignor Eris O'Brien, himself a former member of the advisory council. O'Brien advised Gilroy that McCosker has a 'phobia on the matter... [and while] he knows more about the Child Welfare subject than any other priest in his present disturbed mental state I would not ask for membership for him'.<sup>221</sup> Nevertheless, McCosker's carping criticism of Pierse led to the latter's resignation from the council within a short time.

In the same year, 1953, Gilroy said he knew the CWB's income amounted to several thousand pounds per annum, but in correspondence to Bishop Lyons, commented: 'I do not know how this is disbursed'.<sup>222</sup> Auxiliary bishops, such as Eris O'Brien and Carroll, were largely supportive of the CWB, though aware of McCosker's dogged style.<sup>223</sup> O'Brien commented that McCosker's first annual report in 1948 'omitted any references to finances' but he later advised Gilroy that McCosker 'knows more about the Child Welfare System than any other priest'.<sup>224</sup> Carroll, who came from a poor inner-Sydney family, gained his doctorate in canon law in Rome in 1933 and would become a formidable player in the Sydney's Archdiocese's opposition to the Catholic Social Studies Movement (CSSM) and in winning State Aid for Catholic schools in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>225</sup> In correspondence with McCosker, Carroll was characteristically brief, though encouraging.<sup>226</sup> Monsignor (later Cardinal) James Freeman, a classmate and a

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<sup>220</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 3 June 1953, CWB Collection; B2734, SAA.

<sup>221</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, 9 June 1953, CWB Collection; B2734, SAA.

<sup>222</sup> Gilroy to Lyons, 16 September 1953, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>223</sup> Bishop (later Cardinal) Freeman came from a poor inner-city family. From 1940-46 he was private secretary to Gilroy; in 1946 he became the first director of the Catholic Information Bureau. *Manly*, Vol. 9, No. 1, September 1957, p. 26.

<sup>224</sup> O'Brien to Gilroy, ca 1948; CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>225</sup> B. Croke, 'Politics and Prelates: The Carroll Style', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 22, 2001. For biographical details on Carroll, up until his consecration as a bishop, see *Manly* Vol. 9, No 1, September 1957, p. 24.

close friend of McCosker, on several occasions acted as broker between Gilroy and McCosker.<sup>227</sup>

McCosker's absence in 1954 paved the way for Thomas and Lyons to review the CWB. Lyons, senior auxiliary bishop to Gilroy since 1951, had been vicar-general to Archbishop Daniel Mannix in Melbourne. An insight into Lyons' personality suggests why he posed a threat to Sydney's CWB. In Melbourne Lyons had acted to block the work of the Co-Adjutor Archbishop, Justin Simonds, Mannix's successor.<sup>228</sup> In the words of B.A. Santamaria, Lyons 'idolized [sic] Mannix'.<sup>229</sup> After several years of intrigue the Papal Nunico broke the Mannix-Lyons nexus by promoting Lyons to the diocese of Christchurch, New Zealand in 1944.<sup>230</sup> But Lyons' 'over-demanding and abrasive' treatment of priests and religious in New Zealand, especially his intemperate interactions with the Marist Order, led to complaints to the Vatican, and he resigned in 1950.<sup>231</sup>

Lyons came to Sydney with a reputation of being an autocrat. Social workers, such as Constance Moffit and Teresa Wardell, had experienced his demanding style during their tenure at Melbourne's CSSB. Upon leaving Melbourne in 1939, Moffit remarked to Norma Parker that 'Lyons is not without brains... but he's biased and rigid. I suspect him of having secret [s]crouples [sic]. He is very

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<sup>226</sup> M.C. Hogan, *The Catholic Campaign for State Aid* Studies in the Christian Movement, No. 4 (Sydney, Catholic Theological Faculty, 1978). Hogan says that Carroll's charm 'sat strangely with his political reputation for devious subtlety'.

<sup>227</sup> Lewis, *Always Begin with a Story*, p. 123.

<sup>228</sup> G. Henderson, *Mr Santamaria and the Bishops* (Sydney, Studies in the Christian Movement, 1982), p. 106.

<sup>229</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *Against the Tide* (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 164.

<sup>230</sup> M. Gilchrist, *Daniel Mannix: Priest and Patriot* (Blackburn, Victoria, Dove Communications, 1992) p. 180.

<sup>231</sup> M. O'Meeghan, *Held Firm by Faith: A history of the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch 1840-1987* cited by B. Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy: Catholics and the anti-Communist Struggle in Australia* (Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2001), p. 169. Santamaria, *Mr Santamaria*, p. 164, refers to Lyons being 'demanding' and less than diplomatic in his relationships, especially with some priests.

inclined to interpret as criticisms of himself what was intended as general discussion about abstract problems'.<sup>232</sup>

As episcopal mentor of the CSSM, Lyons had little time to focus on other diocesan activities, such as the CWB.<sup>233</sup> His 'strong authoritarian streak' and little tolerance for other people's opinions attracted resentment from some Movement members.<sup>234</sup> The view that Sydney should replicate the Melbourne model of a highly politicised Catholic Action movement would bring him unstuck with Gilroy, who replaced Lyons with Bishop Carroll. Graham Williams', a biographer of the Gilroy era, describes Carroll as 'a staunch Labor man, and a canon lawyer with poise and charm'.<sup>235</sup>

From his appointment to Sydney, Lyons had official oversight of the CWB and McCosker pledged co-operation.<sup>236</sup> In 1952 McCosker candidly advised Lyons:

It appears that the bureau commenced without a very definite idea as to what services it should supply. It developed according to the needs of the community rather than at the explicit direction of the Archbishop.<sup>237</sup>

McCosker explained that the ad hoc establishment of the CWB had resulted in 'no complete Episcopal authority for what has been done and I doubt if there has been Episcopal knowledge of what has been done'.<sup>238</sup> Aggregate statistics of welfare cases can be misleading because they do not necessarily reflect the amount of time or the degree of support provided by social workers to clients.

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<sup>232</sup> Moffit, *Homes for Babies and Toddlers*, p. 2, *op. cit.*

<sup>233</sup> John Luttrell comments that 'It is difficult to interpret Gilroy's thinking in his appointing Lyons... [which] allowed for a stronger Melbourne and Santamaria influence in the Sydney leadership'. See Luttrell, 'Norman Thomas Cardinal Gilroy', p. 164.

<sup>234</sup> Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy*, pp: 180-181; Henderson, *Mr Santamaria*, p. 103.

<sup>235</sup> G. Williams, *Cardinal Sir Norman Gilroy* (Sydney, Alella Books, 1971) p. 55. Lyons left Sydney in 1957, to become Bishop of Sale.

<sup>236</sup> McCosker to Lyons, 10 May 1951, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>237</sup> McCosker, Memo to the Most Rev. P. Lyons, p. 7, *op. cit.*

<sup>238</sup> *ibid.*

Nevertheless, Thomas presented the following raw statistics in a report to Lyons:<sup>239</sup>

**Table 5.2:**

**Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, Sydney, 1946-1953**

Year	Total Number of cases
1946	1,620
1947	2,126
1948	1,652
1949	1,504
1950	1,495
1951	1,705
1952	2,280
1953	2,278

Thomas' report strengthened Lyons opportunity to curb the CWB. While generally favourable, Thomas commented that between 1947 and 1954 the CWB staff had doubled to four, yet the 'case load is no greater'. Statistics however may not explain the increasing complexity of cases and the CWB's community and public advocacy role. Thomas omitted reference to much of the CWB's progress during McCosker's tenure.

As noted earlier, Thomas' working relations with lay staff could be strained. He wrote that 'the bureau has a definite place in the Catholic life performing a marvellous role', but cautioned the role of lay people being the face of the bureau, so that 'the common accepted practice of other agencies cannot be the norm of this bureau'.<sup>240</sup> He argued 'that there should always be a staff member available and preferably a priest to interview at first appointments'.<sup>241</sup> Following a

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<sup>239</sup> Statistics – Catholic Welfare Bureau: 1946-31 July 1954, C19, Bishop Thomas Personal Papers, Diocese of Bathurst Archives (DBA).

<sup>240</sup> Thomas Report, *op. cit.*, p. 3, CSA.

<sup>241</sup> *ibid.*



minor administrative complaint against Dorothy O'Halloran, Thomas appeared to hastily conclude that a 'lack of thoroughness had occurred'.<sup>242</sup>

Lyons was confident he could make an objective review of the CWB, even though he had prior knowledge 'that the Bureau's methods resemble those of a Public Service Department more than those of a Catholic centre of charity'.<sup>243</sup> This claim would have rankled with McCosker, who regularly battled the vagaries of CWD bureaucrats whom he considered unsympathetic to the church's welfare system.<sup>244</sup> Lyons did not detail the complaints he had received about the CWB, though indicated he 'had personal knowledge'.<sup>245</sup> Lyons thought McCosker 'should make himself available to any priest and that he should send to that priest, promptly and personally the result of his handling of the case in hand'.<sup>246</sup> Priests had complained that they found it hard to get past the barriers of officialdom and Lyons felt 'the main purpose of the Bureau is not being achieved, which would be to radiate Christian charity'.<sup>247</sup>

Lyons conceded that high client demand made it difficult to contact the CWB by telephone, but he recommended it:

remodel itself into a charitable annex of the archdiocese, rather than his perception of a cold and official bureau of cases and statistics; that the LCW auxiliary should be directed to financially support it; and, that the policy of discrimination by the Bureau against the Good Shepherd Home, Ashfield should be changed.<sup>248</sup>

The subtext of Lyons' report was clericalism and criticism of McCosker. While generally impressed with lay staff, especially Mary Lewis, Lyons expressed

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<sup>242</sup> Thomas to Gilroy, 11 June 1954, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>243</sup> Lyons Review, *op. cit.*, p. 5, CSA.

<sup>244</sup> McCosker, Notes on the Beginning of Catholic Welfare, p. 2. *op. cit.*,

<sup>245</sup> Lyons Review, *op. cit.*, p. 5, CSA.

<sup>246</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>248</sup> Lyons to McCosker, 5 November 1954, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

concern that social workers were too inclined to speak about 'maladjustments, psychiatry, case histories and so on'.<sup>249</sup> He added:

Mrs Lewis is an excellent lady who has correct ideas... she is dignified, understanding and sympathetic to those in need. I feel that without her the Bureau would be a rather weak and ineffective body.<sup>250</sup>

The report 'worried and confused' McCosker, especially the request that McCosker seek to influence the magistrates at Darlinghurst Court. Lyons appeared to want the church to exert pressure on the court to ensure girls were equally allocated between the Good Samaritan Home at Tempe and the Good Shepherd Home at Ashfield. The intense competition between these two religious orders had preceded the CWB by two decades.<sup>251</sup>

McCosker perceived the report as over-bearing. True to form McCosker challenged Lyons and a tense meeting ensued. McCosker was later forced to apologise to Lyons, and advised Gilroy that Lyons 'ordered me to instruct the staff at the bureau to send girls to the home and to instruct the magistrates from the Children's Court to commit suitable girls over 15 to the home'.<sup>252</sup> McCosker continued:

Lyons endeavoured to avoid the issue but I was eventually forced to refuse to obey the order because I thought the order was at best unwise and because I had grave doubts that it represents Your Eminence's wish. I am in no way responsible for the attitude of the magistrates towards Ashfield. I have never discussed the subject with any magistrate.<sup>253</sup>

With characteristic tenacity McCosker rebuffed the thrust of Lyons' report and his assurances to Gilroy that the CWB did not require a fundamental shift in its modus operandi convinced Gilroy, temporarily, at least. Gilroy, although a stickler for protocol, did not immediately respond to Lyons' recommendations.

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<sup>249</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>250</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> See, for example, correspondence in SAA.

<sup>252</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 6 November 1954, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>253</sup> *ibid.*

But the matter did not rest there. In 1955, Bishop Carroll recommended the establishment of a Catholic Welfare Advisory Council to 'shape or re-shape broad outlines of policy'.<sup>254</sup> Gilroy supported the proposal: apart from Carroll as chair, the members would be McCosker, Frs Peter Phibbs and Leslie Bagot, and 'competent lay representatives' of the LCW and the SVdP.<sup>255</sup> Although the council would not involve itself in CWB operational matters McCosker felt it would cause him 'more worries' at a time when he already was overloaded, working, he said, past midnight to 'cope' with the many aspects of his position.<sup>256</sup> It does not appear that this group met officially, which would have pleased McCosker.

In 1956, when McCosker celebrated his silver jubilee of priesthood, Gilroy sent a letter of congratulations. McCosker took the opportunity to remind Gilroy of the difficulties in Catholic social welfare.

Your Eminence will never know how much has been involved in trying to keep our Social Welfare system moving ever so slowly forward to meet the minimum standards of principles long established elsewhere and still virtually unknown within the church.<sup>257</sup>

In implicit criticism of the archdiocese, McCosker commented that 'there was no support from any quarter in the church and I was forced to take calculated risks to establish something which would safeguard the church'<sup>258</sup>.

#### 5.4 Failures in standards of care

The advent of professional social work may have led to more awareness of the undesirability of long-term institutional care, but it did not necessarily lead to short

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<sup>254</sup> Carroll to Gilroy, 2 December 1955, p.1. Box C1312, CUSA and CUSA House, 1940-1989, SAA.

<sup>255</sup> Gilroy to Carroll, 7 December 1955, Box C1312, CUSA and CUSA House, 1940-1989, SAA.

<sup>256</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 23 November 1955, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>257</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 23 December 1956, p. 1, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>258</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

term improvements in standards of care. Institutional care, perhaps seen as more cost-effective than foster care, and more effective at saving the souls of children, had significant drawbacks, as the recent Australian Senate Report, *Forgotten Australians* confirmed.<sup>259</sup> The Senate Report documented allegations of abuse – physical, emotional and sexual – against most Christian denominations. The Catholic Church, as the largest provider of institutional care, has received the largest number of complaints from former ‘inmates’.<sup>260</sup>

#### 5.4.1 ‘Cruelty, lies and deceit’

Child migration schemes played an important role in the reconstruction era. Most children came from Britain, with a smaller number from Malta. Between 1947 and 1965, the Commonwealth Government sponsored more than 7,500 British child migrants to Australia.<sup>261</sup> In the Catholic sector, bishops, religious orders and lay bodies, such as the Knights of the Southern Cross, had a ‘deep commitment to the Catholic child migrant’.<sup>262</sup> Gilroy enthusiastically supported the Sydney Archdiocese sponsoring the national office of a Federal Catholic Immigration Committee.<sup>263</sup> This committee liaised with welfare bureaux in Perth, Adelaide, and Maitland-Newcastle, and more than 1,000 children were accepted by church institutions.<sup>264</sup>

A Christian Brother, Barry Coldrey, has written courageously and extensively on the church’s involvement in child migration and its subsequent failures in

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<sup>259</sup> *Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children* (Commonwealth of Australia, August 2004).

<sup>260</sup> *ibid.*, pp: 40-42. Specific allegations against Goodwood Home (Adelaide), St Anne Home (Liverpool, Sydney), Nazareth House (South Melbourne), St Catherine’s Orphanage (Geelong) and numerous institutions conducted by the Christian Brothers, especially in Western Australia.

<sup>261</sup> *Year Book of Australia 1966*, p. 216.

<sup>262</sup> D.H. Plowman, *Enduring Struggle: St Mary’s Tardun Farm House* (Broadway, Western Australia, 2003), p. 195.

<sup>263</sup> Luttrell, ‘Norman Thomas Cardinal Gilroy’, pp: 105-06.

<sup>264</sup> Fox, ‘British Child Migrants in NSW’, p. 1.

providing safe care, physically, emotionally and sexually.<sup>265</sup> He notes that the church did not accept any children in the 1920s and the 1930s depression delayed any plans. Just prior to World War Two, however, several dioceses expressed interest in British child migrants. In Sydney, Gilroy approved late adolescent male migrants being accepted by Westmead Boy's Home, even though it was already overcrowded.<sup>266</sup> The war interrupted these plans, but as it came to a close the impetus for child migrants was reignited by bishops such as Justin Simonds of Melbourne and Perth's Archbishop Prindiville.<sup>267</sup> The latter said he would happily receive an 'extraordinary large number' of British child migrants, despite limited facilities and at least one confirmed case of sexual abuse in a West Australian home conducted by the Christian Brothers.<sup>268</sup> Simonds negotiated on behalf of the Australian bishops to bring war orphans and immigrants to Australia.<sup>269</sup> The church's enthusiastic support for child migrants appeared contradictory when orphanages were already inadequately funded and overcrowded.<sup>270</sup> The Catholic archdiocese of Perth accepted three quarters of Australia's Catholic child migrants, and most boys came under the care of the Christian Brothers.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> His numerous works in this field include B. Coldrey, *Child Migration, the Australian Government and the Catholic Church, 1926-1966* (Melbourne, Tamanarik Press, 1992); B. Coldrey, 'The Child Migration Controversy: A Survey and Analysis of the Debate over Child Migration and Residential Care in Australia, 1987-2000', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 78, No. 1, January 2001.

<sup>266</sup> Fox, 'British Child Migrants in NSW', p. 1.

<sup>267</sup> Plowman, *Enduring Struggle*, pp: 205-207.

<sup>268</sup> For example, in 1920 a Christian Brother from the Clontarf Home was convicted of 'systematic sexual abuse', reported by B. M. Coldrey, *The Scheme: The Christian Brothers and Childcare in Western Australia* (Manning, Western Australia, 1993), pp: 385-386.

<sup>269</sup> *Manly*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1969, p. 41.

<sup>270</sup> Fox, 'British Child Migrants in NSW', p. 2.

<sup>271</sup> J. Ross, *Child Migration to Australia: Report of a Fact Finding Mission*, March 1956 (London, Commonwealth Relations Office), pp: 5, 12-14, cited in Fox, 'British Child Migrants', p. 2.

In Adelaide a Catholic Immigration Committee, also known as the 'New Australian Catholic Organisation', initially agreed to accept fifty children.<sup>272</sup> Forty-two children aged between seven and fifteen years arrived in 1949.<sup>273</sup> In total, seventy-five children from Britain and Dalmatia received placement with the Sisters of Mercy at Adelaide's Goodwood Orphanage.<sup>274</sup> After 1954 child migrants became the sole responsibility of the ACSSB.<sup>275</sup> Fr Luke Roberts, a trained social worker and the bureau's first director, remarked that the care, custody and control of these youths 'would be considered a complete load for one social worker' in the field of social work.<sup>276</sup> Although many other individuals and Catholic groups supported the children, Roberts had principal responsibility.<sup>277</sup> 'Accommodation difficulties' at Goodwood concerned Roberts, but the church at the time maintained that institutional care, rather than alternative care such as adoptions, was in the best interests of migrant children.<sup>278</sup>

Evidence presented to the 2005 Australian Senate Inquiry outlined the devastating experiences of some child migrants. Although the number of children accepted by Catholic homes represented less than half the total number of child

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<sup>272</sup> F. Mecham, *The Church and Migrants, 1946-1987* (Haberfield, NSW, St Joan of Arc Press, 1991), pp: 148-151.

<sup>273</sup> *Adelaide Advertiser*, 13 March 1951.

<sup>274</sup> *Year Book of Australia 1952*, p. 216; *Adelaide Advertiser*, 28 April 1950.

<sup>275</sup> Roberts, CSSB Report, p. 1.

<sup>276</sup> Roberts, South Australia's first priest to qualify in social work, had been ordained in 1938. He served in several parishes before being appointed Director of Catholic Action in July 1945. In 1946 he commenced social service studies at the University of Adelaide, and after graduation he became the Adelaide bureau's first [clerical] director in March 1948. See Roberts, CSSB Report, p. 1.

<sup>277</sup> Roberts and his successor, Fr Terry Holland provided material on the immigration schemes, which are cited by F. Mecham, *The Church and Migrants, 1946-1987* (Haberfield, NSW, St Joan of Arc Press, 1991), pp: 148-151.

<sup>278</sup> Board of Social Studies, University of Adelaide in association with the South Australian Council of Social Service, Child Migration Report to the Women's Group on Public Welfare, July 1949, AASW SA Collection, SRG 744/4/1, Mortlock Library, State Library of South Australia (MLSA).

migrants, Catholic religious orders operating the homes have received the largest share of public criticism.<sup>279</sup> Children in Catholic homes were often told their natural parents had died, that they were going on a short holiday, and, when their parents sent them letters, these were destroyed by their care supervisors, often nuns.<sup>280</sup> Fr John Usher, a NSW and national Catholic welfare administrator, admits that the church failed many child migrants.<sup>281</sup>

The 'appalling' treatment of some child migrants has led writers to describe child migration to Australia as a history of 'cruelty, lies and deceit'.<sup>282</sup> Communication to and from the children was not transparent. As Murray and Rock have expressed it: 'the greatest scar... was the loss of identity... their sense of dislocation and not belonging... a loss of family and of emptiness'.<sup>283</sup>

Church officials rarely acknowledged the inadequacies of the care afforded the children. In South Australia, for example, official reports cited the migrants' only difficulty as the 'heat'. In response to a questionnaire from an investigating British migration officer in the early 1950s, the ACSSB replied that the church had no intention of offering adoption as an option for the child migrants. The children would be reared in church orphanages until they were old enough to gain employment under supervision.<sup>284</sup> The ACSSB also remarked that it did not receive background information on the children, and that medical and school reports were 'so vague as to be useless'.<sup>285</sup> The experience led the Adelaide

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<sup>279</sup> Coldrey, 'The Child Migration Controversy', p. 67.

<sup>280</sup> A girl migrant at St John's, Thurgoona, Albury was told she was an orphan, when she was illegitimate. The girl 'remembers her mother's visits to an English orphanage'. Cited by Fox, 'British Child Migrants in NSW', pp: 12-13.

<sup>281</sup> Usher, Interview, 2004.

<sup>282</sup> P. Bean and J. Melville, *Lost Children of the Empire* (North Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1989), p. 114.

<sup>283</sup> A. Murray and M. Rock, 'Child Migration Schemes – Australia: A dark and hidden chapter of Australia's history revealed, *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 38, No. 2, May 2003. p. 151.

<sup>284</sup> Bean and Melville, *Lost Children*, p. 111.

Archdiocese, under advice from the bureau, to decline any more child migrants.<sup>286</sup>

#### 5.4.2 'Capricious, secularist and basically anti-Catholic'

During the 1940s and 1950s the Archdiocese of Sydney, under the advice of its bureau, adopted a different attitude to child migrant schemes. When Gilroy renewed interest in a scheme after World War Two, CWB director, Monsignor Thomas, advised that there were at least 100 local Catholic children who could not be housed in church-operated institutions, and he queried who would accept responsibility for the care and housing of child migrants.<sup>287</sup> Thomas' successor, McCosker, held even greater concerns. When the child migration plan was raised early in McCosker's tenure he was careful not to outwardly reject the idea. A shrewd McCosker sought advice from government officials in an attempt to persuade Gilroy that the archdiocese 'should not embrace the child migrant schemes'.<sup>288</sup> In correspondence to Gilroy in January 1949, McCosker, citing unnamed senior government officials, indicated that a plan to bring 120 child migrants to Sydney would face considerable obstacles, because of the demands created by 'locals', the difficulties of finding sponsor organisations to employ older boys and concerns about the children assimilating in a new culture.<sup>289</sup> Gill says McCosker used a 'degree of deception' to persuade Gilroy not to accept the bulk of the child migrants.<sup>290</sup>

Why did the NSW CWD officials, whose views on this aspect of welfare policy aligned with McCosker, hold such concerns? The CWD had a strong preference

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<sup>285</sup> Cited in Gill, *Orphans of the Empire*, p. 598.

<sup>286</sup> South Australian Board of Social Studies, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>287</sup> Thomas to Archbishop's secretary, Rev Harry Kennedy, 1 February 1946, CWB, Box 2734, SAA.

<sup>288</sup> Usher, Homily at the Requiem Mass of Monsignor McCosker, p. 5, *op. cit.*,

<sup>289</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 4 January 1949, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>290</sup> The Sydney Archdiocese appears to have accepted five young girls. See Gill,



for boarding-out, rather than institutionalisation.<sup>291</sup> As Marion Fox's research identified, the CWD deemed several Catholic orphanages as unsuitable to accept, and care for, child migrants. Officials 'insisted that voluntary agencies lacked the professionalism' to care for child migrants.<sup>292</sup> R.D. Hicks, the departmental secretary, was a Mason with little sympathy for the Catholic welfare sector. McCosker said that the CWD under Hicks' control was 'capricious, secularist and basically anti-Catholic'.<sup>293</sup> Hicks argued that voluntary agencies should provide a range of options of care, including foster care.<sup>294</sup>

While Hicks' view gained accord with McCosker, on this occasion at least, neither man was able to prevent Bishop Edmund Gleeson of Maitland-Newcastle accepting child migrants. A £10,000 government capital grant to upgrade Murray-Dwyer orphanage at Mayfield and Monte Pio, Mayfield was sufficient inducement for Gleeson to accept more than 60 British child migrants between 1949 and 1959.<sup>295</sup> St John's Home at Thurgoona in the Diocese of Albury, also received child migrants.<sup>296</sup>

Monsignor McCosker's strenuous efforts to curtail child migration resulted in the NSW Catholic sector accepting only four per cent of British child migrants, as the following table shows.

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*Orphans of the Empire*, p. 65.

<sup>291</sup> By the mid 1950s NSW claimed to have more than three quarters of its state wards in foster care, a much higher proportion than other states. Statistic cited in J. Penglase, *Orphans of the Living* (Fremantle, Curtin University Books, 2005), p. 231.

<sup>292</sup> Fox, 'British Child Migrants in NSW', p. 6; Fox, 'Some aspects of the care', p. 52.

<sup>293</sup> National Catholic Welfare Committee, Report - 1960, p. 4. [McCosker as NCWC Secretary prepared this Annual Report to the Australian Episcopal Conference], File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>294</sup> Fox, 'British Child Migrants in NSW', p. 6.

<sup>295</sup> J. Barnard and K. Twigg, *Holding on to Hope: A History of the Founding Agencies of MacKillop Family Services, 1854-1997* (Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing 2004), p. 115. Extracted from NSW Child Welfare Department, *Annual Reports, 1948-1960*, published in *NSW Parliamentary Papers*.

<sup>296</sup> NSW Child Welfare Department, *Annual Reports, 1948-1960*, published in *NSW Parliamentary Papers*.

**Table 5.3:**

**Placement of Child Migrants in NSW children's institutions, 1948-59**

Catholic	All other institutions	Catholic percentage
66	1663	4%

A survey in the early 1950s concluded that most Catholic institutions – for locals and migrants – ‘failed to provide community contact and aftercare programs’.<sup>297</sup> The Catholic sector’s role in caring for immigrant children remained small compared with other welfare agencies, such as the Big Brother Movement, Dr Barnardo’s and the Fairbridge Scheme, as depicted in the following chart.<sup>298</sup> By 1961 the Big Brother Movement was the only organisation still bringing child migrants to Australia.<sup>299</sup>

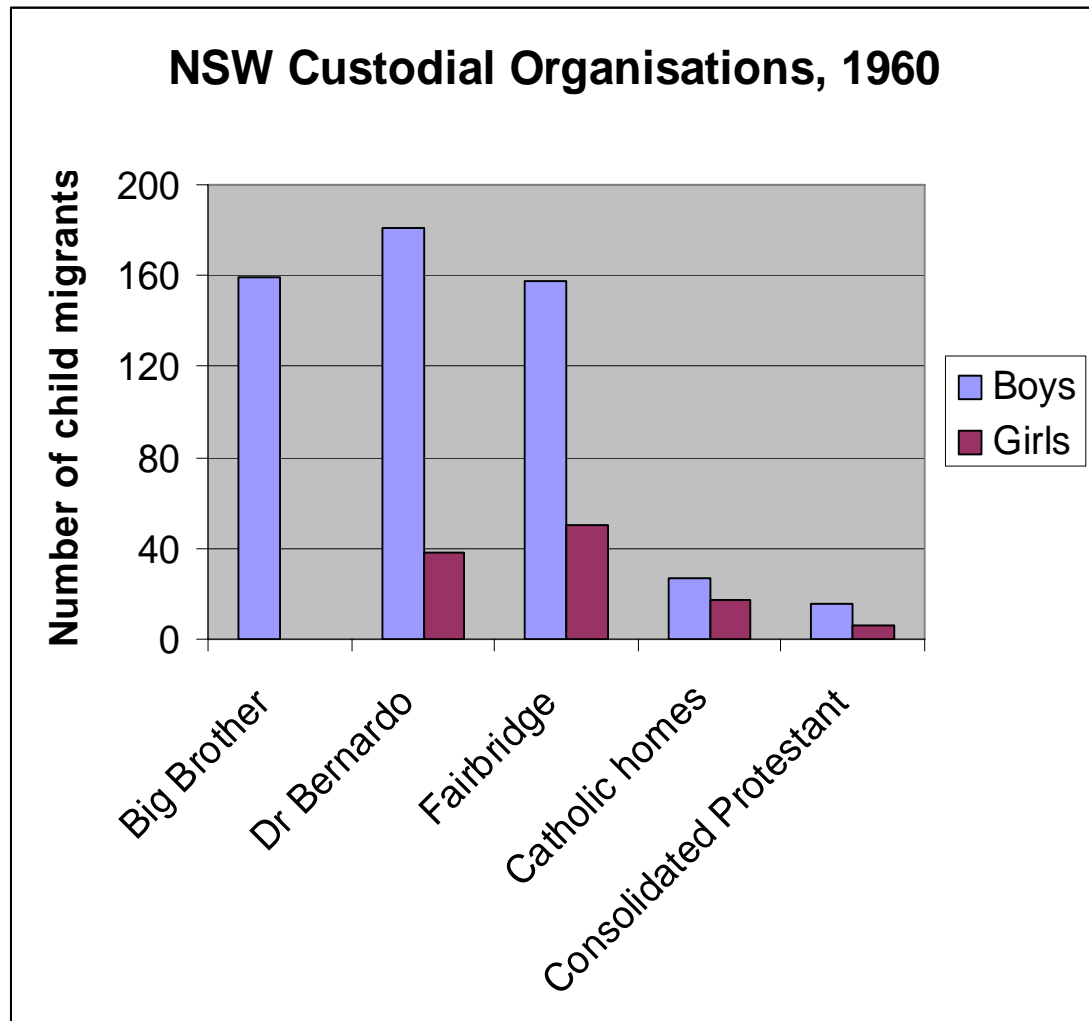
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<sup>297</sup> Cited in Fox, ‘British Child Migrants in NSW’, p. 8.

<sup>298</sup> Adapted from Table 13A – Immigrant Children, NSW Child Welfare Department, *Annual Reports, 1948-1960*, published in *NSW Parliamentary Papers*.

<sup>299</sup> NSW Child Welfare Department, *Annual Report 1961*, published in *NSW Parliamentary Papers*.

TABLE 5.4: NSW Custodial Organisations



#### 5.4.3 Systematic failures

From the early 20<sup>th</sup> century various churches and charitable organisations had provided holidays for necessitous children. Sydney City Mission and the Presbyterian Church, for example, organised 'seaside holidays for poor children'.<sup>300</sup> In 1924 the SVdP established an orphans' entertainment committee, which organised an annual picnic for children living in Sydney's orphanages.<sup>301</sup> In

<sup>300</sup> J. Owen, *The Heart of the City: the First 125 Years of Sydney City Mission* (Kenthurst, NSW, Kangaroo Press, 1987), p. 124; *The Advance* (Home Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church of NSW), No. 1, 1937, p. 8.

<sup>301</sup> *The Society of St Vincent de Paul in Australia – 1854-1954 – the first 100 years* (Sydney, 1981), p. 47.

the mid 1920s several orphanages in Melbourne and Sydney commenced holiday programs for their 'inmates'.<sup>302</sup> By the late 1930s, when social worker, Constance Moffit had some responsibility for the Melbourne program, the number of families volunteering to accept children had fallen.<sup>303</sup> Moffit attributed this situation to the Catholic sector being too reliant on institutional care:

our Catholic people are too "institution-minded"... that it may be possible to become too dependent on the various [religious] orders to supply the deficiencies that exist in our social system does not occur to many. But it is true, nevertheless.<sup>304</sup>

Holiday programs aimed to provide 'normal family living' for children and also a rare opportunity for religious working in institutions to have a holiday.<sup>305</sup> In both Melbourne and Sydney the Theresian Society established holiday homes for children either from poor backgrounds or as an after-care – or step-down – facility following medical treatment.<sup>306</sup> Although regular musical and social events provided the necessary funds for the upkeep of the homes, their drain on the Theresians' resources was symbolic of the difficulties that voluntary organisations faced, even in the more prosperous 1950s.

The development of a foster holiday program – whereby children from institutions spent Christmas with families - was one of 'two events', which McCosker says had a 'profound effect' on the Sydney bureau's interaction with child care institutions.<sup>307</sup> In 1949 Sydney's CWB sought to structure holiday programs

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<sup>302</sup> For example, Westmead Boys Home began a holiday foster program in the early 1920s. Burns, *A Simple Story*, p. 155.

<sup>303</sup> C. Moffit., Homes for Babies and Toddlers: Great Need for more Catholic Private Homes, ca 1938, St Anthony's Kew Archive Box (Historical Documents), MFS Glenroy, p. 1. This document was uncovered during research by Barnard and Twigg, *Holding on to Hope*. I am grateful to Karen Twigg for providing a copy of this document.

<sup>304</sup> Moffit, Homes for Babies and Toddlers, p. 2, *op. cit.*

<sup>305</sup> Barnard and Twigg, *Holding on to Hope*, p. 160.

<sup>306</sup> H. Farland, *The Theresians: Following the Little Way: Spreading the Faith, 1918-1998* (Chevallier Press, Sydney, 1998), pp: 55, 59-60.

<sup>307</sup> McCosker, Notes on the Beginning of Catholic Welfare, p. 2, *op cit.*,

across the archdiocese.<sup>308</sup> Under the program all child care institutions were closed for the Christmas vacation period. An appeal for families called on those who have a 'spare corner' in their house to 'erect a shakedown and invite the Christ-Child to occupy it'.<sup>309</sup> One of the impacts of the scheme was that families often 'maintained contact with their little protégée' during the year.<sup>310</sup> McCosker says the scheme was 'successful' and 'many children made new and occasionally permanent relationships, some leading to foster placement and even adoptions'.<sup>311</sup>

The SVdP established a committee to assist Catholic families to provide a holiday for children at Christmas. Yet it was acknowledged that children in orphanages 'lack experience of normal home life with mothers and fathers'.<sup>312</sup>

Home life is the normal milieu of the child, the most suitable climate for the development of character, and for the happiness of the child. Even a short holiday in a family home is of great value.<sup>313</sup>

Offsetting the program's benefits was systematic failures in terms of emotional, physical and, on occasion, sexual abuse. Insufficient resourcing led to inadequate assessment of host families. Adelaide's Fr Roberts was perhaps the first Catholic social worker to raise concerns, arguing he had insufficient resources to 'approve' homes for orphans to stay.<sup>314</sup> He felt an inadequate assessment of host families could set a dangerous precedent. In retrospect Roberts' fears were well founded. Coldrey's extensive research into British child migrants in Australia confirms the tragedy of the scheme. At St Joseph's

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<sup>308</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 4 January 1949, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>309</sup> *St Augustine's Monthly Chronicle*, Parish of Balmain, No. 212, November 1949, p. 3. St Joseph's Balmain Parish Archives (BPA).

<sup>310</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>311</sup> McCosker, Notes on the Beginning of Catholic Welfare, p. 3, *op. cit.*,

<sup>312</sup> *St Augustine's Monthly Chronicle*, November 1955, BPA.

<sup>313</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> Roberts, CSSB Report.

Orphanage, Largs Bay one orphan who was sexually abused by a host family, received punishment from the nuns for reporting the incident.<sup>315</sup>

In Victoria, Barnard and Twigg's interviews with former residents of Melbourne orphanages who attended similar holiday programs, identified a range of experiences, both satisfactory and unsatisfactory. In some cases, children performed unpaid work, domestic work or farm labour.<sup>316</sup> The researchers cite the case of a former orphan who 'hated going away on holidays' because of the sexual abuse he experienced during these vacations.<sup>317</sup> Similarly, Marion Fox in her unpublished study of NSW Catholic institutions, writes about a Mayfield orphan who was sexually assaulted during holidays at Newcastle.<sup>318</sup> While the number of reported cases of sexual abuse during holiday programs may have been small, the impact on those children's lives cannot be understated.<sup>319</sup>

## 5.5 Reforming children's institutions

In the 1950s all three bureaux continued to advocate less reliance on institutional care. Of the three bureaux, Sydney had most success in bringing about a change of attitudes amongst the religious orders that managed the orphanages and homes. As early as 1947 the Sisters of the Good Samaritan had engaged a sister who was trained in social work to start the reform process at its Tempe home.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> B. Coldrey, 'The devoted, the dull, the desperate and the deviant – the staff problems in traditional residential care', *Occasional Papers of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia* (Victorian Chapter), Vol. 2, No. 1, May 2003, pp: 275-276

<sup>316</sup> Barnard and Twigg, *Holding on to Hope*, p. 161.

<sup>317</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> M. Fox, *The Catholic System of Orphanages in NSW, 1881-1981*, PhD Thesis, Faculty of Education, University of Sydney, 1994, p. 285.

<sup>319</sup> *Forgotten Australians*.

<sup>320</sup> Gregory, 'From Refuge to Retreat to Community', p. 11.

### 5.5.1 'improvements... obtained by subtle subterfuge'

The Sydney bureau's interaction with children's institutions proved to be complex, and, at times, torrid. Professional social workers, led by McCosker, worked hard to gain the trust of religious orders that operated the children's institutions in an atmosphere where the CWB was viewed with varying degrees of unease because the traditional interface between institution and families had been complicated by a third party. Moreover, social workers' criticism that many nuns were old and unsuited to rearing children in homes would not have eased tensions.<sup>321</sup>

In terms of service delivery McCosker identified poor levels of care especially in the infants' homes, which were often staffed by untrained and elderly religious women. He was critical of the standards of care at Waitara home, where, for example:

a baby killed itself by strangulation; another child was discharged soon after in a dying condition. The care of the younger children was so ridiculously restrictive that they were not even allowed to talk.<sup>322</sup>

CWB staff also expressed alarm that Waitara children were put to bed in the early afternoon, in contrast to 'accepted methods of rearing children'.<sup>323</sup> At another home McCosker commented that the staff did not follow accepted methods of rearing children, which meant 'many children are left in pens unattended for long periods, with the result that they are listless and underdeveloped'.<sup>324</sup>

The degree of interaction between the CWB and the institutions on important issues of child placement and ongoing assessment varied considerably. Some homes appeared more open to the CWB and welcomed its input. Others felt the

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<sup>321</sup> The opinion of social workers in relation to the Waitara Home, for example, was cited in the Lyons Report, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>322</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 20 July 1953, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>323</sup> Lyons Report, *op. cit.*, p 4

<sup>324</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 23 December 1956, CWB Collection , B2734, SAA.

management of children's admissions and transfers were local decisions that did not require consultation with a centralised and clericalised office.

From the outset McCosker sought to exert authority over the orphanages. In 1949 he challenged the autonomy of the Sisters of Charity, who discharged nine girls from their Liverpool orphanage without consultation with the CWB. McCosker expressed concern that this decision may have posed difficulties for relations with the Children's Court, given it had placed the girls in the custody of the CWB.<sup>325</sup>

In the same year McCosker challenged the Marist Brothers at Westmead Boys' Home, who had accepted two sons of migrants. When the Westmead director, Br Xaverius, sought to place another two siblings at Lane Cove, the Sisters of Mercy advised Xaverius that they required McCosker's prior approval. Upon contacting McCosker, Xaverius was reportedly chastised for not allowing bureau 'officials' to 'interview' the family before the placement. Xaverius documented that McCosker's tone was as if he had committed a 'murder' or 'mortal sin', to which, McCosker allegedly replied, 'it was worse than that'.<sup>326</sup> Xaverius complained of McCosker's 'most dictatorial manner' and pledged not to co-operate with the CWB.

I made up my mind not to be beholden to Fr McCosker or anyone else in the Catholic Welfare Office [sic]. The lack of refinement shown to those in lower positions causes the religious attitude to degenerate into one of hopeless hostility or indifference.<sup>327</sup>

Xaverius' reference to 'lower positions' reflects the hierarchical nature of the church, wherein clergy held religious brothers and sisters to be of a lower status than ordained men. If correctly reported this incident suggests an over-zealous

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<sup>325</sup> McCosker to Mother General, Sisters of Charity, 1 June 1949, cited by Fox, 'British Child Migrants in New South Wales. p. 283.

<sup>326</sup> The C----- Case, p. 1, Papers of Brother Xaverius (Leslie Augustine Curran) Marist Brothers Archives, Hunter's Hill, NSW.

<sup>327</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.



McCosker, though as Gerald Burns says in his history of Westmead, Xaverius had a reputation for taking criticism personally and was easily offended.<sup>328</sup>

By the early 1950s most children's institutions allowed the CWB to process applications for admissions. Exceptions were the homes managed by the SVdP at Westmead and Morisset.<sup>329</sup> But ongoing assessment of the children proved more difficult. Children homes and the CWB had different expectations about the benefits of ongoing assessment, including the consequences of moving children from one home to another. The 'trained' approach suggested that full assessment occur before the transfer of children, whereas some of the homes gave consideration to more immediate matters such as another home which had available space. The CWB assessment process found that institutionalisation was often unnecessary. McCosker commented that:

In most cases a placement would be detrimental either to the child or parent or to both. Frequently all hope of real help is removed by the priest telling the parent to bring the child to [the] bureau to have it placed.<sup>330</sup>

Sometimes the CWB received support from the SVdP, but religious orders showed determination in holding on to their traditional ways. When the management of the Croydon infants' home was transferred from the SVdP to the Sisters of St Joseph in 1951, the previous 'harmonious relations' between the CWB and the SVdP in relation to the admission of unmarried mothers or adoption cases, was 'disrupted' by the nuns, who pursued independent methods of assessment.<sup>331</sup> In the late 1960s, St Martha's Home at Leichhardt, Sydney, continued to ignore the thrust of professional welfare practices.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Burns, *A Simple Story*, p. 146.

<sup>329</sup> McCosker, Memo to the Most Rev. P. Lyons, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>330</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>331</sup> J.B. Maher, President, Particular Council of Sydney, SVdP to Gilroy, 5 December 1951, L2628 2.22.1; McCosker to Gilroy, 20 July 1953, p. 3, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>332</sup> K.E. Burford, *Unforrowed Fields: A Josephite Story, 1872-1972* (North Sydney, St Joseph's Convent, 1991), pp: 165-66.

Strict rules governing religious orders made it difficult for 'local' religious to make changes without approval from their superiors. Historians, such as Sophie McGrath, have commented that many sisters working in children's institutions in the 1940s were 'greatly distressed' about the standards afforded to children but were prevented from changing the situation because of their superiors' attitudes.<sup>333</sup> Based on oral interviews four decades later, McGrath provides a broader historical context to the situation and says 'Reverend Mothers who were Irish were appalled that it was considered that orphanage children should receive the same fare as boarding school children'.<sup>334</sup>

After gaining respect from staff of the institutions, McCosker claimed the 'prejudice of superiors' was the main obstacle impeding change. The quality of institutional staff remained a concern, with government officials making complaints including that conditions in one institution were 'a scandal because of the superior'.<sup>335</sup> The lack of professionalism – or at least perceptions that institutions were ill-equipped in staffing and financial terms – grated on McCosker, who said 'it is most humiliating to have officers of the CWD investigating justifiable complaints about the institutions'.<sup>336</sup>

Moreover, McCosker admitted that improvements in state and other non-government children's facilities had occurred more quickly than at the infants' homes at Croydon and Waitara. He expressed alarm at some of the attitudes displayed to unmarried mothers, which he argued were due to the orders failing to appoint well-educated members, with a deep sense of charity and justice, to the homes.

What impact did professional social welfare have on religious organisations involved in such activities in the 1940s? The Good Samaritan Congregation,

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<sup>333</sup> McGrath, *These Women?*

<sup>334</sup> *ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>335</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, CWB Collection, Box 2735, SAA.

<sup>336</sup> *ibid.*

which operated the Tempe home, acknowledged the importance of professional training when it nominated two of its sisters to commence social work study at Sydney University in 1944.<sup>337</sup> When McCosker joined the CWB he found the Good Samaritan Sisters 'frustrated and disappointed' because of the postponement of a proposed Training Centre at Tempe; by contrast he described the Good Shepherd Sisters who managed the Ashfield home, as 'complacent and self satisfied'.<sup>338</sup>

Ensuring the institutions were financially well managed was an early goal of McCosker. By 1953 most children's homes in the greater Sydney region had become financially viable, except St Joseph's Kincumber.<sup>339</sup> McCosker was pleased with some other reforms:

Such improvements have been obtained by subtle subterfuge, repeated suggestions and patience and no show of authority. Most of the religious ... are now conscious of the needs for specialised knowledge and are anxious to learn.<sup>340</sup>

By the mid 1950s Gilroy appeared to be more aware of some of the negative aspects of institutional care. His fulsome public endorsement of the institutional care model no longer matched some of his private remarks. Gilroy acknowledged criticisms of institutional care and urged McCosker to persevere in efforts to make homes, such as Ashfield and Toongabbie, part of the 'diocesan welfare work'.<sup>341</sup>

From the beginning of his tenure McCosker candidly advised Gilroy of the differences in care offered by volunteers and social workers:

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<sup>337</sup> M. Walsh, *The Good Sams: Sisters of the Good Samaritan, 1857-1969*, (Mulgrave, Victoria, John Garratt, 2001) p. 185.

<sup>338</sup> J.F. McCosker, Work for Delinquent Girls in Archdiocese – 1953, CSA.

<sup>339</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 20 July 1953, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>340</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>341</sup> Gilroy to McCosker, 28 November 1953, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

A girl-mother could get much more assistance from Mrs Lewis of the Bureau than from a St Vincent de Paul brother. Mr Maher [President, SVdP] probably would admit this fact but he contends that the rules of the Society must be kept.<sup>342</sup>

In 1954 Gilroy wrote to McCosker asking him to ensure the homes are 'put on a solid footing', because 'it has been stated to me that very little, if any guidance is given and no supervision is exercised over the youths who live in the hostels conducted by the SVdP'.<sup>343</sup>

McCosker's diplomatic reply indicated one voluntary president was 'unsuitable and lax'.<sup>344</sup> The SVdP epitomised a model of well-intentioned volunteers lacking social welfare or management training. To counter the situation, McCosker recommended to Gilroy that a diocesan authority be established to ensure minimum and uniform standards across Catholic institutions.<sup>345</sup> Gilroy, reluctant to create a centralised body, decided the CWB should continue to work with each institution on a case-by-case basis. The decision had some merit in terms of individual relationships developed between social workers, such as Mary Lewis, with some staff in institutions.<sup>346</sup>

McCosker, Gilroy said, had 'the right' to examine the institutions and if changes did not occur he should make appropriate recommendations to the order's superior. McCosker, reluctantly appeared to realise that Gilroy's intervention provided support, in this instance at least. For his part Gilroy would not issue a general communiqué about the relationship between the bureau and the institutions, leaving CWB staff to interact and influence each institution on an individual basis. An important factor impeding change was the election of new

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<sup>342</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, ca 1948, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>343</sup> Gilroy to McCosker, 20 October 1954, CWB Collection B2734, SAA.

<sup>344</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 27 October 1954, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>345</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>346</sup> Lewis, *Always Begin with a Story*, p. 131.

heads of the orders, which could 'change the entire spirit and even the policy of the institutions every six years'.<sup>347</sup>

In 1954, McCosker expressed concern to Gilroy that the Sister of Mercy in charge at Waitara 'did not believe in adoptions and consequently a large number of children were abandoned in the home'.<sup>348</sup> Additionally, unmarried mothers were reluctant to go to the home because of what McCosker claimed was the 'punitive attitude adopted towards them'.<sup>349</sup> After receiving Gilroy's letter the order agreed to appoint a new superior to the home immediately. But symptomatic of inadequate planning, the order's superior general was 'genuinely disturbed' to report that there was no suitable candidate for the position.<sup>350</sup>

McCosker thought a way to improve standards was to develop training programs for the staff of the institutions. In 1953 the CWB organised the first training program for religious sisters working in children's institutions. Lewis noted the high attendance was in part due to the rule of some orders that nuns must travel in pairs.<sup>351</sup> The seminar brought together many NSW religious women working in child welfare for the first time. Similar seminars were held over the next few years. Several religious orders expressed gratitude to Gilroy for allowing the forum, which, in the case of the Mercy Sisters of Gunnedah, had benefited its members, who 'returned refreshed and equipped with new ideas'.<sup>352</sup> The 1956 summer school, which attracted seventy sisters, marked in McCosker's opinion, 'the first real beginnings of progress in our institutions'.<sup>353</sup> McCosker added that 'Everybody expects the Sisters to know all about this complicated and highly

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<sup>347</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 20 July 1953, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>348</sup> *ibid.*, 10 November 1954.

<sup>349</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>350</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>351</sup> Lewis, *Always Begin with a Story*, p. 128.

<sup>352</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 29 January 1955, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>353</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 18 January 1956, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

skilled work involving the formation and future of about 1,900 children without their ever having learned anything about it'.<sup>354</sup> Yet, McCosker also noted, in correspondence to Archbishop O'Brien, that despite the superior of the Lane Cove home attending two summer schools she remained uncommitted to modern social work.<sup>355</sup> While the Sydney bureau made progress, an exasperated Teresa Wardell remarked pessimistically about the Melbourne bureau in 1951, that 'the Melbourne bureau was set up years before that of Sydney but the latter has gone ahead and shown slow but steady development while we have retrogressed'.<sup>356</sup>

To what extent was Wardell's assessment accurate? The Sydney bureau faced similar challenges in terms of profile, financing, and interaction with the archdiocese and charitable organisations. Sydney, a larger diocese, had many more children in Catholic homes than Melbourne in the 1950s. Thomas and McCosker appeared to have shown more determination and tenacity than their Melbourne counterparts. By the time they became directors, each had considerable knowledge of the workings of their archdiocese and was adept at handling church politics. In Melbourne, Eric Perkins and Con Reis, and to a lesser extent, Leo O'Rourke, while equally conscientious, brought less experience to their roles. The Melbourne priests, also faced a more difficult task in convincing successive vicar-generals of the merits of the CSSB, whereas in Sydney, prior to Bishop Lyons 1954 review, auxiliary bishops were sympathetic to the CWB and trusting of its directors. During the 1950s the CSSB continued to expand its personal counseling service, though eased back on its commitment to reform admission and other policies to the institutions.

Meanwhile, the Adelaide bureau in the 1950s continued to support reforms to children's institutions, but little significant changes resulted. In 1959 Fr Terry Holland, succeeded Fr Luke Roberts as the ACSSB director. Holland may have

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<sup>354</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>355</sup> McCosker to O'Brien, 2 January 1957, National Catholic Welfare Committee Report, 1957, NCWC Papers, ACWSCA.

<sup>356</sup> Wardell to Mannix, 19 October 1951, *op. cit.*,

found himself in a compromising situation as both the chaplain to Goodwood boy's home and also as bureau director. In much the same way as Thomas had found it difficult to bring about changes to Westmead Boys Home in Sydney, Holland was unable to make any major changes at Goodwood, or other South Australian orphanages. Goodwood consisted of large dormitories of fifty to sixty children: the children's clothes stayed in a central locker room and they were separated from other children when they attended the local parish school.<sup>357</sup>

Adelaide adopted a different funding base for its children's homes. Soon after his arrival in Adelaide, Archbishop Beovich instituted a central fundraising fund for the diocesan orphanages, which replaced the previously independent fundraising committees of Goodwood, Largs Bay, Boys Town and Fullarton.<sup>358</sup> In 1941, its inaugural year, the Diocesan Catholic Charities Appeal (CCA), raised £2,200.<sup>359</sup> Proceeds from the annual appeal enabled an expansion of children's facilities, including a doubling of 'inmates' at Boy's Town, the Adelaide Advertiser reported in 1945.<sup>360</sup> By 1957 the CCA raised £17,000.<sup>361</sup> A very small portion of the appeal went to the ACSSB.

Centralised funding did not however lead to a centralised admissions system to Adelaide's homes in the 1950s. Religious orders continued to be responsible for their own admissions, which Holland says included decisions 'purely on the basis of whether they had room'.<sup>362</sup> It would not be until the arrival of a second trained social worker, Moya Britten-Jones in 1962, that admissions would be co-ordinated by the CFWB, and that genuine reforms in practices in institutions

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<sup>357</sup> R. Willis, Interview with Fr Terry Holland for the Goodwood Orphanage Oral History Project, 14 October 1993, p. 10, J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection, OH201/9, MLSA.

<sup>358</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>359</sup> The Story of the Diocesan Charities Appeal (n.a., n.d.), with an introduction by the Emeritus Archbishop of Adelaide, James W. Gleeson, CFWB, AAA.

<sup>360</sup> *Adelaide Advertiser*, 13 April 1945, p. 10.

<sup>361</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

would occur.<sup>363</sup> Britten-Jones, a Loreto graduate, came from a well-known Catholic family, which included her uncle Sir Edmund and another uncle with a Papal knighthood.<sup>364</sup> Moya, who had been mentored by Hannah Buckley at the Tuberculosis Association, would serve the CFWB for more than a decade.<sup>365</sup>

## 5.6 Conclusion

The key themes of this chapter have been the impact of uncertain levels of finances on the development of bureaux, resistance by traditional charity providers to social workers, a gradual expansion of services provided by the bureaux, and the emerging role of Monsignor McCosker. Financial difficulties played havoc with planning and in turn impacted on the quality of care that social workers could provide directly to clients and indirectly through institutions. McCosker faced multiple challenges, internally from religious orders and Gilroy, and externally, from unsympathetic government bureaucrats.

Up until the 1950s a discourse of protecting the faith of dependent children characterised Catholic welfare services, locally and internationally. From the establishment of America's first Catholic diocesan bureau in Boston in 1903, the church focused on protecting Catholic children from state welfare.<sup>366</sup> In Australia,

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<sup>362</sup> Willis, Interview with Fr Terry Holland, p. 10.

<sup>363</sup> Moya married Allan Shaw, a member of the Jewish faith. Interview with Moya Shaw, Glenside, Adelaide, 29 October 2005. See correspondence from Holland to Archbishop Beovich, 3 October 1967, CFWB, Box 83, AAA.

<sup>364</sup> Edmund-Britten Jones won a Rhodes Scholarship in 1912 and after a distinguished career, including services in both world wars, was knighted in 1953. See M. Press, *Colour and Shadow: South Australian Catholic 1906-1962* (Adelaide, Archdiocese of Adelaide, 1991), pp: 50-51.

<sup>365</sup> See Chapter Six for details of her contribution to the reforming of Catholic welfare in South Australia.

<sup>366</sup> See chapter five 'Separation of Cooperation? The Catholic Charitable Bureau, 1903-1930', in S.S. Walton, *To Preserve the Faith: Catholic Charities in Boston, 1870-1930* (New York, Garland Publishing, 1993).



diocesan bureaux began to transform the culture in institutions by gaining credibility with the religious orders that operated the facilities. Slowly the professional social workers persuaded religious and untrained charity workers to consider a range of options rather than a single policy of institutional care. Sydney's CWB also began to adopt a stronger outreach to the community and closer co-operation with the welfare services of other churches and non-government organisations.

Not dissimilar to their colleagues' experiences in other organisations, Catholic social workers met with resistance from advocates of charity-based welfare.<sup>367</sup> In 1960 Norma Parker remarked on the 'long hard struggle' for the Council of Social Service of New South Wales 'to gain acceptance; this description also had relevance to the difficulties that Catholic social workers experienced at the various bureaux during the same period.'<sup>368</sup>

During the 1940s trained lay women remained the cornerstone of the Catholic bureaux, providing the majority of direct service delivery. Clerics such as McCosker (Sydney), Perkins (Melbourne) and Holland and Roberts (Adelaide) guided the development of the bureaux. In the 1940s professional Catholic welfare in Victoria lost ground due to successive financial crises at the bureau, little support from a rigid clerical hierarchy and the emergence of the CWO, as a competitive welfare agency in the archdiocese. Melbourne's CSSB emerged more fully in the 1950s, during Perkins' leadership, though inadequate finances continued to constrain its range of services.

The situation was much the same in Adelaide, which struggled in its initial decades. Unlike Melbourne, the Adelaide bureau had a broad scope of welfare

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<sup>367</sup> For example Ruth Cleary the first trained social worker appointed to Legacy in 1940 experienced resistance from volunteers who did not like a paid employee. When Cleary left Legacy in 1943 she was replaced by two untrained women, 'whose lack of qualifications made them less threatening'. See M. Lyons, *Legacy: the first fifty years* (Melbourne, Legacy Co-Ordinating Council and Lothian Publishing Company, 1978), pp: 127-128.

<sup>368</sup> N. Parker, 'Professional Social Work and the Community', *Australian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. X111, No. 2, December 1960.

activities, including supporting adult migrants and child orphans. Acute finances in the Catholic welfare sector resembled other churches and non-government organisations. Joy MacLennan, the first professional social worker employed by the Anglican Church in Adelaide, for example, resigned in 1950 in protest at insufficient resources to maintain a basic welfare service.<sup>369</sup>

The Sydney bureau had more success in the 1940s and 1950s. The tenacity of its directors, Thomas and McCosker, shone through. While progress was made with the SVdP and some children's institutions, resistance to alternative models of care for dependent children remained. As American historian Cecilia McGovern commented in 1948, many Catholic institutions frowned upon professional social workers attached to diocesan welfare services, because they undertook 'a thorough study of the home situation and decided upon the need for placement'.<sup>370</sup> McGovern also says considerable confusion occurred when social workers were employed directly by institutions, because of the institutions longstanding independence.<sup>371</sup> In Australia, social workers would not be employed by institutions until the 1970s. Unlike America, which had a centralised Catholic welfare system, Australian bureaux functioned in parallel with existing charity providers.

The 1950s saw increasing co-operation between voluntary and professional models of welfare in the Australian church. Clerics, such as McCosker engaged with the SVdP, and by the early 1950s, McCosker said that senior SVdP members were 'more convinced that the food order can be the wrong way of assisting people'.<sup>372</sup> A tenacious McCosker made inroads into this difficult issue, which had largely eluded his predecessor. Nevertheless, institutional care remained a central part of the church's welfare activities in the 1950s, with twelve

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<sup>369</sup> B. Dickey, *Giving a Hand: A History of Anglicare South Australia since 1860* (Adelaide, Hyde Park Press, 2003), pp: 146-147.

<sup>370</sup> C. McGovern, *Services to Children in Institutions* (Washington, National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1948), p. 149.

<sup>371</sup> *ibid.*, p. 147.

orphanages in Sydney, alone. Moreover, the religious orders that conducted these institutions 'did not have a tradition of co-ordinating their welfare services... prior to the reforms of Vatican II there were very few trained social workers amongst the religious staff'.<sup>373</sup>

Professional social work in the Australian Catholic Church is not just a story of progress and achievements. 'Trained' social workers were unable to prevent reoccurrences of 'moral lapses' and abuse of power by certain religious and lay Catholics in the provision of care to 'dependent' children. Physical, emotional and sexual abuse of some Australian orphans and British child migrants has cast a long shadow over the Catholic welfare sector. Insufficient resources led to inadequate assessment of families accepting children during holiday periods, and religious orders continued to allocate inappropriately skilled staff to manage children's homes. In the words of one critic, Catholic homes were 'each very much a law unto themselves'.<sup>374</sup> One of the themes of the next chapter will be the factors that motivated religious orders to move away from the longstanding Catholic tradition of institutional care to smaller group homes and more comprehensive foster care and adoption programs.

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<sup>372</sup> McCosker, Notes for the Most, Rev P. Lyons, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>373</sup> Gregory, 'From Refuge to Retreat to Community', p. 12.

<sup>374</sup> Penglase, *Orphans of the Living*, p. 160.

## CHAPTER SIX:

### Expansion, reform and turmoil

### Catholic welfare in NSW, 1960-1985

#### 6.1 Introduction

The 1960s ushered in a new era. Controversial events, such as the Vietnam War, typified a rising tide of social turmoil and community protests, as the 'cultural revolution' led to a rejection of the 'affluent generation'.<sup>1</sup> Challenges to the 'powerful norm of the family unit... exploded into public debate with the women's movement of the early 1970s', says historian of social work, Elaine Martin.<sup>2</sup> Social work, which had originally been an acceptable occupation for the 'career aspirations of middle class women', was transformed by the protest movements and influence of feminist ideas to become an outlet to challenge the existing social order.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, a tradition of 'conforming' and lack of critical thinking in Australian social work, as R. J. Lawrence notes, was replaced by a 'radical approach'.<sup>4</sup> Some social workers, inspired by this more critical approach to social injustice, engaged in a harsher critique of society.<sup>5</sup> The 1972 election of the Whitlam Government gave added impetus to the social work profession, with large increases in welfare funding. The profession

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<sup>1</sup> S. Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, Revised Edition (Cambridge [England] Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp: 233-234.

<sup>2</sup> E.M.W. Martin, 'Social Work, the Family and Women's Equality in Post-war Australia', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2003, pp: 445-447.

<sup>3</sup> L.S. Abrams and L. Curran, 'Between Women: Gender and Social Work in Historical Perspective', *Social Service Review*, September 2004, Vol. 78, No. 3, p. 429.

<sup>4</sup> For an appraisal of the lack of a critical tradition in Australian social work pre the late 1960s see R.J. Lawrence, 'Has Australian Social Work a Critical Tradition' in *Papers Presented at meetings of the NSW Branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers, 1963* (Sydney, AASW, 1963); For a review of radical social work after this time period, see chapter one of J. Usher, 'Taking Control', Masters in Social Work, University of Sydney, 1989.

<sup>5</sup> Victorian social worker, Margaret Kelso, for example, played a role in the 1960s campaign against the White Australia Policy. For an introduction to social workers' activism, see P. Mendes, 'The history of social work in Australia: A critical literature review', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 58. No. 2, pp: 126-127.

– which by this time was attracting more male members – responded by moving into community development and social policy.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter examines this paradigm of community development in relation to the Catholic sector. The mood for change was expressed in the delivery and nature of Catholic welfare services. Residential services came under new scrutiny, in terms of the adequacy of their staffing and service provision, and to use Fr John Usher's description, 'great upheavals [occurred] in the field of residential care of children'.<sup>7</sup> This 1970s watershed also occurred in other countries, such as America, where historian, Marian Morton, in her study of Cleveland's Catholic orphanages, notes there was a period of redefining Catholic charity, especially the traditional role of large institutions.<sup>8</sup> In Australia, this transformation culminated in the closure of most large-scale facilities by 1980. Changes occurred in tandem with efforts by trained social workers – predominantly lay women and a handful of priests and religious sisters – to continue to introduce more personal care into institutions, to instill a culture of alternative care, and to enhance clients' self sufficiency.

Internationally, the church underwent significant change after the 1960s. Writing about the Australian church, Professor Patrick O'Farrell says it

Came under severe internal stress, subject to radical questioning as to its social status, role and function, modern relevance... the result was a sharp drop off in vocations, a marked increase in drop-outs during training, and – most unsettling of all – considerable and at times prominent withdrawals from the priesthood.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter also examines the dynamics of change, especially in relation to Catholic welfare in NSW between 1960 and the mid 1980s. A central question is whether changes arose from internal forces, such as the combined impact of declining numbers of 'vocations' and ageing membership of religious orders, or

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<sup>6</sup> W. Weeks, 'Reflections on Social Work and Human Service Theory and Practice with Families and Communities', in W. Weeks and M. Quinn, *Issues Facing Australian Families*, Third Edition (Melbourne, Longman Australia, 2000), p. 121.

<sup>7</sup> J. Usher, Centacare, 1940-1988, MS. 1991, Centacare Sydney Archives (CSA).

<sup>8</sup> M.J. Morton, 'The transformation of Catholic Orphanages: Cleveland, 1851-1996', *The Catholic Historical Record*, Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 1, February 2000, pp: 83-84.

<sup>9</sup> P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, (Kensington, NSW, University of New South Wales Press), Revised edition, 1992, p. 417.

whether the church responded to exogenous factors, such as revised community attitudes about the merits of institutional care. Further, what role did diocesan welfare bureaux play in this watershed?

Secondly, this chapter surveys the achievements and challenges of professional welfare bureaux, with an emphasis on Sydney's Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (CFWB)<sup>10</sup>, which served as a catalyst for the growth of other bureaux in western and south-western Sydney, Canberra and Goulburn, and Maitland-Newcastle. The Sydney bureau, after struggling in its first two decades, benefited from the injection of state aid, and gradually expanded its services during the directorships of Frs Peter Phibbs and John Davoren. State aid continued to underpin Catholic welfare growth in the later part of the 1970s and 1980s, as the church funds allocated increasing resources to the expanding Catholic schools' sector.<sup>11</sup> Social services, proportionately, received little diocesan financial support, despite an upsurge in demand. This situation constrained the CFWB, yet increasing amounts of state aid buffeted the agency.

During these decades the CFWB experienced some unique internal and external challenges, as trained social workers, essential for both service delivery and policy formulation, became more activist and less conformist. Staff discontent peaked during Davoren's directorship. Usher, who may well be the agency's last clerical director, had the dual aim of restoring stability to the organisation and expanding service provision.<sup>12</sup>

Thirdly, increased levels of co-operation occurred between trained and voluntary welfare workers. While pockets of resistance continued to exist, more so amongst some women's religious orders and older members of the St

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<sup>10</sup> The name changed from Catholic Welfare Bureau (CWB) to Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (CFWB) in line with the Adelaide and Victorian bureaux in 1958. See discussion in Chapter Seven.

<sup>11</sup> For discussion of the Sydney church's focus on education in the 1960s see 'The Schools Crisis' Chapter Six in J. J. Luttrell, 'Norman Thomas Cardinal Gilroy as Archbishop of Sydney', PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Usher held the position of Centacare Sydney director from 1983 to 2004. He was succeeded by a lay director, Bernard Boerma. See Section 6.6 for more details on Usher and the early years of his directorship at Centacare Sydney.

Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP), there was growing acceptance of the complexity of modern life and the benefit of involving social workers in complex client cases. Trained staff helped guarantee the longevity of the CFWB, though, on occasion, an intolerant attitude by professionals towards volunteers led to disenfranchisement of the latter group.

Fourthly, this chapter examines the leadership role of Monsignor J.F. McCosker in NSW, while Chapter Seven will focus on his national activities.. After nearly a decade leading the CFWB, McCosker became the first Australian priest appointed to a welfare policy and co-ordination position. In his role as Director of NSW Catholic Charities, McCosker yielded leverage in bringing together the disparate Catholic welfare sector, and also extending the church's influence in social policy matters across the government and non-government sectors.

## 6.2 A changing church

One writer has described the period 1940-60 as the 'age of optimism in the Australian church'.<sup>13</sup> In Fr John McMahon's view it was an era of flourishing vocations, expansion of churches, hospitals and orphanages, and 'the policy of an independent Catholic school system was vigorously pursued'.<sup>14</sup> Yet in this period the church entered uncharted waters. The scars of the Labor Party split of 1955 and the rise of Catholic Social Studies Movement (CSSM) and its political wing, the Democratic Labor Party (DLP), continued to fuel tensions, within, and across, diocesan boundaries.<sup>15</sup> Politics aside, other sweeping changes were engulfing the Catholic Church. Anne O'Brien in her most recent

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<sup>13</sup> J. McMahon msc, 'Religious Institutes in Australia: An Historian's view', in *Reflections on a Survey, Australian Religious Personnel, 1978*, (Sydney, National Assembly of Major Superiors of the Religious of Australia, 1978), p. 6. [This Fr John McMahon should not be confused with Monsignor John T. McMahon, the Westralian priest who provided significant support for the early professionalisation of Catholic social welfare].

<sup>14</sup> McMahon, 'Religious Institutes in Australia'.

<sup>15</sup> Accounts include P. Ormonde, *The Movement* (Melbourne, Thomas Nelson, 1972); R. Murray, *The Split: Australian Labor in the fifties* (Melbourne, Cheshire, 1970); J. Kane, *Exploding the Myths: the political memoirs of Jack Kane* (North Ryde, NSW, Angus and Robertson, 1989).

publication noted a worldwide decline in religious vocations began in the 1950s.<sup>16</sup> The effect was felt in Australia in the 1960s, when, for the first time since the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, religious orders experienced a decline in members.

In 1976 the heads of major Catholic orders commissioned a Dominican nun, Carmel Leavey to research the trends in Australian religious life and challenges facing religious orders. Her research appraised why the large growth in religious orders in the inter-war period was not repeated in following decades and shows a decline in the total number of religious, as reflected in the following chart.

**Table 6.1 Total Religious in Australia, 1901-76 [Selected Years]<sup>17</sup>**

Year	Number
1901	3,622
1926	8,141
1951	11,245
1966	14,622
1971	13,869
1976	12,469

Leavey's research confirmed a fall in membership of religious orders despite Catholics representing one-third of the total increase in Australia's population in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>18</sup> The number of new entrants to religious orders, for example, fell from 654 in 1966 to 254 in 1976.<sup>19</sup> The factors leading to a fall in religious included less 'vocations', deaths, and resignations which peaked after

<sup>16</sup> A. O'Brien, *God's Willing Workers: Women and Religion in Australia*, (Kensington, NSW, University of New South Wales Press, 2005), pp: 194-195.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in M.R. MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope: Institutes of Women Religious in Australia*, (Darlinghurst, NSW, Cross Press and ACU, 2002), p. 336.

<sup>18</sup> Between the 1954 and 1961 *Censuses* the number of Catholics rose by more than 550,000. Adherents of the Church of England rose by less than half that number. See *Yearbook of Australia 1966*, p. 207.

<sup>19</sup> C. Leavey, *Reflections on a Survey: Australian religious personnel, 1978* (National Assembly of Major Superiors of the Religious of Australia, 1978).



the Second Vatican Council (1962-66). Concurrently, there were rapidly increasing demands with post-war population growth. Marion Fox in her study of child care institutions notes that in the 1960s the numbers of brothers and sisters could 'not keep pace with the dramatic growth in primary enrolments and flow-on to secondary schools' resulting from immigration and the baby-boom.<sup>20</sup> Religious orders that traditionally had undertaken charitable works experienced a large outflow of members. O'Brien cites the increase in women leaving the large congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney from 15 per cent during the inter-war period, to 34 per cent between 1940 and 1959, and 66 per cent after the 1960s.<sup>21</sup> The effect of the downturn in religious was evidenced in Catholic schools; religious staffing of primary schools fell from 95 per cent in 1950 to 10 per cent in 1984.<sup>22</sup> The shortage of religious made it even more difficult for orders to release some members to study social work.

The impact of the Second Vatican Council was profound and far-reaching. The dominant historical view that the Australian bishops did not on the whole anticipate the council's reformist agenda is summed up by Michael Hogan, who says the bishops entered the council, 'cautiously and ideologically divided ... and still smarting from their divisions of the 1950s'.<sup>23</sup> Vatican Two introduced a range of reforms, notably in the liturgy, lay participation in church administration, rules governing religious orders, and ecumenical relations.<sup>24</sup> The Eucharist, for example, would now be celebrated in the native language of the country, English hymns replaced Latin hymns, and priests faced the people during Mass.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> M. Fox, 'The provision of care and education for children in Catholic charitable institutions in New South Wales, 1881-1981', PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 1994, p. 288.

<sup>21</sup> O'Brien, *God's Willing Workers*, p. 253.

<sup>22</sup> Research by M. Flynn cited in M.R. MacGinley, *A Dynamic of Hope*., p. 337.

<sup>23</sup> M. Hogan, *Australian Catholics: the Social Justice Tradition* (Melbourne, Collins Dove, 1993), p. 94.

<sup>24</sup> Luttrell, 'Norman Thomas Cardinal Gilroy', pp: 239-249.

<sup>25</sup> J. McGaughan, 'Vatican 11 and the laymen', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. L11, No. 4, October 1975. P. Moloney, 'Why change the Mass and Alter our Church', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. XLV11, No. 1, January 1971. A good outline of the

Vatican Two, however, accentuated the issue of artificial birth control. In 1930 the Papal Encyclical *Casti Connubi* declared birth control, other than by natural means, intrinsically immoral.<sup>26</sup> The advent of the oral contraceptive pill in 1960 intensified public debate and represented perhaps the single largest challenge for Catholic unity. In 1964 McCosker went overseas to 'examine the present state of social welfare theory and practice... with a view to evaluating social welfare in Australia as objectively as possible'.<sup>27</sup> He observed a lot of 'confusion' amongst American Catholic clergy about the pill. In correspondence to the head of welfare in Melbourne, Fr Eric Perkins, McCosker said 'a lot of priests already tell people they can use it [the pill] for regularising the rhythm'.<sup>28</sup>

In 1963 the Vatican appointed a high level group committee – which became known as the 'Papal Birth Control Commission' – to examine the church's teaching on artificial contraception. Fr Edmund Campion says 'expectations were high' for the Vatican to relax its stance.<sup>29</sup> Hogan observed that 'after the Vatican Council many Catholic parents were confident there would be a change in traditional Catholic doctrine, which condemned most forms of contraception'.<sup>30</sup>

Indicative of speculation about a change in policy, McCosker, as secretary of the National Catholic Welfare Committee (NCWC),<sup>31</sup> prepared a document for the bishops in 1966, which advocated the establishment of family life clinics.<sup>32</sup>

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impact of Vatican 11 is provided by Fr Edmund Campion, 'The Vatican Two Years', *Australian Catholics* (Ringwood, Victoria, Viking, 1987).

<sup>26</sup> E.G. Perkins, 'Moral Problems in Birth Control', *Forum* Vol. X, No. 2, 1957, p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> McCosker to Bishop Thomas McCabe, 23 October 1964, File 570001, National Catholic Welfare Committee (NCWC) Collection, Catholic Social Services Australia Archives (CSSAA).

<sup>28</sup> McCosker to Perkins, 30 October 1964, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>29</sup> Campion, *Australian Catholics*, p. 221.

<sup>30</sup> Hogan, *Australian Catholics*, p. 89.

<sup>31</sup> Chapter Seven focuses on the NCWC.

<sup>32</sup> NCWC Observations on Catholic Family Life Education, ca 1966, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

McCosker grounded his advice on American clinics which 'advise people on the use of a method of birth regulation which is acceptable to the church'.<sup>33</sup>

In 1968, against the majority advice of the expert panel, a papal encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, re-stated opposition to all artificial birth control devices.<sup>34</sup> The decision caused considerable angst in many western countries, including the United States, Britain and Australia.<sup>35</sup> Australia's 'strong, dynamic and pragmatic' culture led to the matter being hotly debated amongst priests and laity at parish meetings, at clergy forums, and in Catholic and secular media.<sup>36</sup> In Melbourne and Sydney especially, large numbers of clergy and laity openly rejected the Papal encyclical, at meetings held at universities and in some parishes.<sup>37</sup> By the late 1960s the NCWC reported that Australian doctors working in Catholic Family Planning Centres 'complain that an unknown percentage of priests advise parishioners that they may 'go on the pill' and that a smaller percentage advise parishioners that they should 'go on the pill'.<sup>38</sup>

### 6.3 Policy and community partnerships

In NSW, McCosker provided much of the catalyst for the church's wider welfare vision from the 1960s to the 1985. In his new position as Director of Catholic Charities, a title derived from American Catholic welfare, Archbishop Gilroy indicated that McCosker would continue to undertake those tasks 'that

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> A number of articles in *Australasian Catholic Record* are relevant to this matter, including W. Daniel, 'A Catholic Pill?'; 'Marriage after the Council 11', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. XLV111, No. 1, January 1971.

<sup>35</sup> A recent detailed account of the contraception debate in the American Catholic Church is L.W. Tentler, *Catholics and Contraception: An American History*, Cushwa Center Studies of Catholicism in Twentieth-Century America (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University, 2004).

<sup>36</sup> J.F. McCosker, Observations on Catholic Family Life Education, p. 3. Report to the NCWC, 1966, File 570004, NCWC Collection, CSSAA. *Catholic Weekly* 15 August 1968, *ibid.*, 24 August 1968.

<sup>37</sup> O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community*, pp: 413-414. See also P. O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic History, 1884-1968*, Volume 11 (Sydney).

<sup>38</sup> NCWC, 1969 Report, p. 2, File 570004, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

you have been fulfilling over the years outside the Catholic Welfare Bureau'.<sup>39</sup> Gilroy did not elaborate on these 'tasks' but presumably they related to McCosker's involvement in community welfare activities, state welfare initiatives and also the fledgling NCWC.

### 6.3.1 Mental Health

The mental health sector was one area for McCosker to work outside traditional church boundaries. The impetus for church advocacy on behalf of people living in psychiatric institutions had several influences. On a personal level McCosker had been interested in mental health issues, stemming from his chaplaincy work at Callan Park Mental Hospital in the 1940s with Norma Parker and Constance Moffit – the institution's first two psychiatric social workers. The women's training in America and their experiences at Rozelle contributed to McCosker's awareness of the pressing need for changes in psychiatric care. In advice to Archbishop O'Brien in 1957, McCosker expressed unambiguously the need to train chaplains because 'our present system is to appoint a Parish Priest who automatically becomes chaplain to an entire parish of psychotics'.<sup>40</sup>

Secondly, by the 1950s there was growing community awareness of unsatisfactory standards of care in psychiatric institutions. A Commonwealth Government study in 1955 - *The Stoller Report* - identified NSW psychiatric institutions as having the highest levels of over-crowding.<sup>41</sup> Heavy public criticism of the facilities and standards of care at Callan Park led to considerable debate in the NSW Parliament.<sup>42</sup> In 1959, the NSW Health Minister, W.F. Sheehan, in response to questions in parliament, candidly said

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<sup>39</sup> Gilroy to McCosker, 23 January 1958, McCosker Papers, CSA.

<sup>40</sup> McCosker to O'Brien, 2 January 1957, Annual Report of the National Catholic Welfare Committee (NCWC), File 550001, NCWC Collection, Catholic Social Services Australia Archives (CSSAA).

<sup>41</sup> Cited in NSW Association of Mental Health files, Box K48911, Council of Social Service of New South Wales Collection (CSSNSW), Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, (MLNSW).

<sup>42</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 August 1958; *ibid.*, 17 March 1959.

‘Ward Seven at Callan Park Mental Hospital is in a deplorable condition... it should have been demolished 20 or 30 years ago’.<sup>43</sup>

Over the next few years continuing allegations about unsatisfactory levels of care at Callan Park forced the NSW Government to establish a Royal Commission in 1961. The commissioner, in part, concluded that the facility ‘is too big, too overcrowded, its standards of accommodation low, its emphases mainly custodial owing to lack of staff and amenities... [and] there is little active treatment or rehabilitation’.<sup>44</sup>

A third influence on McCosker was the creation of a mental health co-ordinating body. In 1956 the Council of Social Service of NSW (CSSNSW) sought to re-establish the Mental Hygiene Council of NSW, which had been in abeyance for many years.<sup>45</sup> Two Catholic social workers, Norma Parker and Eileen Davidson, spearheaded the rejuvenation process that led to the formation of the NSW Mental Health Association (MHA) that year; Davidson became the association’s inaugural secretary.<sup>46</sup> Church representatives on the MHA included Methodist minister, Winston O’Reilly and McCosker, who had been students together at Sydney University a decade earlier and had represented their churches on other welfare matters, such as marriage guidance.<sup>47</sup>

Ministry to the sick, those in prisons and other institutions, had long been a primary concern of the churches. Since the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>43</sup> *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, Third Series, Session 1959-1960, Vol. 111, p. 2568.

<sup>44</sup> Parliament of New South Wales, *Royal Commission Report of the Hon Justice McClemens into Callan Park Mental Hospital* (Sydney, Government Printer, September 1961), p. 7; For correspondence and reports relating to Callan Park Mental Hospital, 1959-1961 which led to the 1961 Royal Commission see NSW Health Department, File 9/1095.5, State Records of New South Wales (SRNSW).

<sup>45</sup> The NSW Mental Hygiene Council, established in 1932, operated until 1939. An unsuccessful attempt was made in 1950 to re-establish the organisation, NSW Association of Mental Health files, Box K48911, CSSNSW, MLNSW.

<sup>46</sup> Steering Committee on Mental Hygiene, Minutes of Meeting held on 20 March 1956, NSW Association of Mental Health Files located in Box K48911 of CSSNSW, MLNSW.

<sup>47</sup> O’Reilly was Chairman of the Standing Committee of Marital Guidance established by the Council of Social Service of New South Wales in 1950; McCosker was the Catholic Church’s representative.

Anglican and Catholic ministers from local parishes had provided chaplaincy services to NSW mental hospitals and had received an annual state subsidy of between £40 and £75.<sup>48</sup> During the 1930s the Presbyterian Church appointed part-time chaplains to Royal Prince Alfred, Royal North Shore and Sydney Hospitals. The Anglican Diocese of Sydney prompted the question of 'official chaplains when it appointed Rev Allan Pain as its first full time chaplain to Royal North Shore Hospital in 1939.<sup>49</sup> Publicity surrounding this appointment led the NSW Hospitals Commission to re-assert its policy that the State would not fund hospital chaplains.<sup>50</sup>

In 1941, individual institutions no longer paid a subsidy to chaplains, after the merger of the NSW Department of Mental Hospitals and the Office of the Director-General of Public Health.<sup>51</sup> While this move led to a more uniform approach in terms of payments from a central office, the provision of chaplaincy services remained haphazard across NSW as health authorities declined to standardise policies and practices for chaplains.<sup>52</sup> Funding restrictions resulted in few permanent chaplains in psychiatric or general hospitals, prisons or other institutions.

These factors, therefore, led to advocacy for state-funded permanent chaplains and uniform professional standards. In November 1958 representatives from the state's four largest Christian denominations met to discuss ways of influencing mental health public policy: Bishop Kerle (Anglican), Rev Doug Cole (Presbyterian), O'Reilly and McCosker.<sup>53</sup> The Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals had twice ignored recommendations from the Medical

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<sup>48</sup> J.D. Rimes, Under-Secretary, NSW Department of Health to J. Kerry Secretary, CCAC, 17 April 1973, CCACA, Uniting Care New South Wales Archives (UCNSWA).

<sup>49</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 November 1939, p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> Hospitals Commission Meeting, 15 January 1940, Appointment of Chaplains to Public Hospitals File, G3566, Box 10/43006, SRNSW.

<sup>51</sup> Rimes to Kerry, *op. cit.*

<sup>52</sup> Secretary, Hospitals' Commission to Fr W. O'Flynn, Catholic priest, Windsor, 13 November 1941, Appointment of Chaplains to Public Hospitals File, G3566, Box 10/43006, SRNSW.

<sup>53</sup> Rev George Stewart, Chaplaincies in Schedule V Hospitals and Community Services. 21 May 1986, p 1, MS.CCACA, UCNSWA.

Superintendent of 'Mental Hospitals' for the appointment of full-time chaplains to psychiatric institutions. The clerics were also aware that a new Mental Health Act coming before State Parliament could lead to an increase in both the number of 'voluntary patients' in psychiatric hospitals and the numbers 'on leave' from these facilities.<sup>54</sup>

The ministers agreed to form the Standing Committee on Hospital Chaplains (SCHC) and to recommend to their churches and the NSW government that chaplains be appointed to Callan Park and Broughton Hall. From the beginning the ministers sought to exclude any conditions being attached to state aid. For example, they agreed that chaplains in state facilities would not come under the control of the NSW Public Service Board. McCosker, supportive of the process and aware that the training of chaplains had become a specialised role in the United States, recommended to Gilroy that the Catholic Church co-operate with the other denominations, something uncommon at that time.<sup>55</sup> Gilroy agreed to McCosker's recommendation for a 'united churches approach'.<sup>56</sup> However, Gilroy did not support the SCHC having delegated authority to liaise with government on the appointment of chaplains. Indicative of his authoritarian manner, Gilroy demanded that he alone decide which priests were appointed to chaplaincy positions.<sup>57</sup>

In mid December 1958 the ministers put their case to the Inspector General of Mental Hospitals.<sup>58</sup> Working behind the scenes McCosker lobbied senior government officials including the director general of public health, Dr Cyril Cummins, a Catholic, who had a 'keen interest in mental health'.<sup>59</sup> The Health

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<sup>54</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 4 December 1958, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>55</sup> For a useful discussion of the professionalisation of chaplains see J.F. McCosker, Chaplaincy Services: Discussion Paper, March 1977, Box D, Folder 2, CSSAA.

<sup>56</sup> The Minutes of the Standing Committee on Hospital Chaplains could not be located in the CCAC records. The earliest records date from February 1961.

<sup>57</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 31 August 1959, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA. Between 1958 and the mid 1960s there was considerable correspondence between McCosker and Gilroy as to the suitability of priests to hold chaplaincy positions.

<sup>58</sup> Under-Secretary, Department of Public Health to McCosker, 27 January 1959, CSA.

<sup>59</sup> K. Moore, 'Medic with a passion for public health: Cyril Joseph Cummins, 1914-2003',

Minister approved the Standing Committee, but insisted that the Inspector-General attend meetings, which commenced in February 1959.<sup>60</sup> It was not until July 1959 that Premier Cahill approved the appointment of four full time chaplains to Callan Park and Broughton Hall. The chaplains commenced in November 1959.<sup>61</sup>

The SCHC, influenced mostly by McCosker, had clear expectations of the qualities of people who would make suitable chaplains. McCosker advised Gilroy that a chaplain should be an ordained minister, about forty years old and capable of relating well to medical staff, social workers, patients and their families.<sup>62</sup> A government review of chaplaincy services in February 1960 confirmed considerable progress within the short period.<sup>63</sup>

On 14 April 1961 the SCHC was re-named the Hospital Chaplaincy Advisory Committee (HCAC).<sup>64</sup> In May 1961 Cummins, whose executive role had been extended to include psychiatric services, expressed satisfaction with the chaplaincy services and asked the churches to consider the appointment of chaplains to other hospitals.<sup>65</sup>

The momentum for chaplaincies spread to gaols. In mid 1962 the HCAC advised the NSW Minister for Justice, Mr Mannix, that one Anglican and one Catholic chaplain could be appointed to Long Bay Gaol, and a third chaplain to represent Protestant denominations.<sup>66</sup> McCosker nominated Fr P.J. McMaugh

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*Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 October 2003.

<sup>60</sup> Although the SCHC met in government offices the church representatives did not favour the attendance of government officials. The earliest extant records, 1961, make no mention of government officials attending the SCHC meetings.

<sup>61</sup> McCosker to Gilroy 10 September 1959, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA. Federal Minister Cameron to McCosker, 28 July 1959, McCosker Papers, CSA.

<sup>62</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 20 August 1959, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>63</sup> n.a., Report on Chaplaincy Service - Callan Park and Broughton Hall, 16 February 1960, CSA.

<sup>64</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Hospital Chaplaincy Committee, 14 April 1961, UCNA

<sup>65</sup> Chaplaincy Advisory Committee, Notes of meetings held on Thursday 12 May 1961, McCosker Papers, CSA.

<sup>66</sup> Rev Doug Cole, Secretary, CAC to Mr Mannix, Minister for Justice, 20 July 1962.



of Gladesville parish as the inaugural Catholic chaplain at Long Bay; Gilroy ignored McCosker's advice and appointed Rev Dr C. Keogh.<sup>67</sup> In 1972 the HCAC established a constitution and the new name Civil Chaplains Advisory Committee (CCAC), the word civil denoting they were not military chaplains. The financial arrangements concerning chaplains would remain a perennial problem during the 1970s. In 1978, for example, the CCAC despite receiving 'goodwill and courtesy' from the bureaucracy, was forced to lobby the Health Minister, Kevin Stewart, a prominent Catholic, for adequate funding for chaplains in government institutions.<sup>68</sup>

### 6.3.2 Co-ordination of child care agencies

During the 1940s and 1950s rising costs made it increasingly difficult for church-based children's homes to finance their operations. The Catholic sector as the largest residential care provider in NSW felt the financial pressure acutely. A plan by McCosker to create a Catholic association to monitor and support its own institutions and to lobby the state for adequate funding was rejected by Gilroy in the mid 1950s. McCosker then considered a broader grouping of non-government organisations. Initially, he approached the CSSNSW, the peak welfare body in NSW. CSSNSW established a committee under McCosker's chairmanship, but little progress occurred. McCosker had had an uneasy relationship with CSSNSW, stemming from policies to elect board members, which he felt put the Catholic sector at a disadvantage. In the early 1950s when invited to write an article about the CFWB, McCosker advised the CSSNSW that he was 'much too busy with our developments to write about them'.<sup>69</sup> The truth was probably that McCosker had little time for the CSSNSW, because of the sectarian politics that pervaded the organisation in the 1950s.

By 1958 the CSSNSW committee had been unable to advance the interests of residential care institutions. McCosker decided to act independently and

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<sup>67</sup> Gilroy to McCosker, 8 September 1962, B2734, SAA.

<sup>68</sup> Bishop J. R. Reid to Minister Stewart, 27 April 1978, CSA.

<sup>69</sup> McCosker to Halse Rogers, 9 May 1950, Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (Centacare File), CSSNSW, Box KH708, MLNSW.

encouraged a number of philanthropic and religious agencies to form the NSW Association of Child Care Agencies (ACCA), to advance the interests of children's homes operated by various denominations.<sup>70</sup> This association advocated increased government funding to children in NSW homes, which at that time was considerably less than state aid to similar institutions in Victoria. During 1959 McCosker and the association lobbied state officials to provide a subsidy to church homes. ACCA also amended its constitution so that 'more tolerant Anglican dioceses could be represented to counterbalance their more restrictive Sydney brethren'.<sup>71</sup>

At an ACCA meeting in September 1960 McCosker remarked that 'voluntary agencies have traditionally been relegated to the background and at no stage have they had any recognition'.<sup>72</sup> McCosker was referring to the practice of the NSW Child Welfare Department (CWD), to deny recognition of the churches' contribution in CWD annual reports to parliament. McCosker received unanimous support from the meeting to continue representations to government for a subsidy for children in church-operated homes.

Between 1958 and the early 1960s McCosker says he held 'long and difficult negotiations' on behalf of ACCA with Hawkins, Minister for Child Welfare and Social Welfare.<sup>73</sup> Further representations by McCosker and Cole of the Presbyterian Church resulted in the NSW Government amending the 1939 *Child Welfare Act*.<sup>74</sup> The 1961 *Child Welfare (Amendment) Act* resulted in the state paying between thirty and thirty-five shillings per week for 945 children living in church and non-government institutions. In a report to the bishops, McCosker noted that the Act represented a 'major change in government policy and in the relationship between statutory and voluntary agencies in child

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<sup>70</sup> E. Poulus, 'A Snap Shot History of the Association', NSW Association of Child Caring Agencies, MS. 1983, McCosker Papers, CSA.

<sup>71</sup> Orphanages Subsidy Committee, Annual Report, January 1961, p. 1, File 570001, NCWC Files, CSSAA.

<sup>72</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Child Caring Agencies held in the Ballroom, CUSA House, 16 September 1960, p. 2, McCosker Papers, CSSAA.

<sup>73</sup> J.F. McCosker to Religious Orders, 22 March 1961, CFWB, 1957-73, Box 8, Envelope 60, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle Diocesan Archives (DOMNA).

care'.<sup>75</sup> Orphanages became responsible for keeping more detailed records on the social history of each child, including 'the reasons for their admission and sufficient current information about their circumstances to be able to justify them continuing to remain in the institutions'.<sup>76</sup> In Maitland, Bishop Toohey advised Mother Thomas of the Bishop Murray Memorial Home for Girls, that the orphanage would have 'serious obligations and extra duties' in relation to children declared State Wards.

McCosker's broad range of non-Catholic contacts bolstered his profile and that of the Catholic sector. When the City of Sydney Council established the Meals on Wheels program in 1957, McCosker initiated the Catholic response. More than 100 Catholic women took charge of one geographic section of the program.<sup>77</sup>

In some respects McCosker was held in higher regard outside the church. In the early 1960s non-Catholics nominated McCosker for an imperial honour. The diversity of individuals and organisations recommending the Federal Government recognise McCosker reflected the broad respect in which he was held. Presbyterian minister, Douglas Cole, put forward McCosker's name after the child care agencies' association had passed a resolution:

Monsignor McCosker's activities in the field of social work generally have been prodigious, and his contribution in particular to child care matters has been invaluable to those of use in this field.<sup>78</sup>

McCosker's nomination received widespread support. John Cramer, Federal Minister for the Army, the NSW State Committee of the Australian Council of the World Council of Churches, Old Peoples Welfare Council of NSW, Anglican Family Services Centre; Department of Social Work, Sydney University, Principal Parole Officer, Department of Prisons, Member, and the

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<sup>74</sup> NSW Child Welfare Department, *Annual Report 1962*.

<sup>75</sup> Orphanages Subsidy Committee, Report of 1961, p. 2, *op. cit.*

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 2 September 1957, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>78</sup> Rev Doug Cole, Correspondence to Federal Government, 12 September 1961 in

Jewish Welfare Agency supported the nomination.<sup>79</sup> Psychiatrist, A.N. Jennings highlighted McCosker's 'long term point of view [and that] he has been a remarkable force for improved services and dependent children in NSW.' The Metropolitan Central Council of the SVDP submitted a brief letter.<sup>80</sup> After McCosker was made a member of the British Empire (OBE), Anglican Co-adjutor Bishop of Sydney, Bishop Kerle remarked to Gilroy that 'McCosker has certainly served the State as well as the Church with great enthusiasm and skill in social service matters'.<sup>81</sup> In 1984 McCosker was made a life member of the Association for Child Caring Agencies. He was congratulated by a colleague for 'the many things that you have done to push forward the contribution of the Catholic Church to welfare'.<sup>82</sup>

#### 6.4 Catholic Family Welfare Bureau Sydney

In the period 1960-85 Sydney's CFWB became the most prominent diocesan welfare bureau in Australia. Agencies in capital cities, such as Melbourne and Adelaide grew more slowly and did not have the strength or prestige of the Sydney CFWB.<sup>83</sup> Despite the financial and personal struggles of the 1940s and 1950s, the Sydney CFWB had emerged by 1960 as a generic welfare agency with an important role in the Archdiocese of Sydney and across NSW.

##### 6.4.1 'Forbidden to go into debt'

The opportunity for new leadership at the Sydney CFWB arose in February 1958 when Gilroy moved McCosker into the new position of Director of NSW

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Monsignor James F McCosker - Honours, A463/58, Item 859222, National Archives of Australia (NAA).

<sup>79</sup> Hon John Cramer to Prime Minister Menzies, 26 November 1961, Monsignor James F. McCosker - Honours, A463/58, Item 859222, NAA.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Kerle to Gilroy, 9 January 1962, CWB Collection; B2734, SAA.

<sup>82</sup> Ron Perry, psychologist, to McCosker, 6 August 1984, McCosker Collection, CSA.

<sup>83</sup> *25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet of the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, 1958-1983*, (Brisbane, ca 1984).

Catholic Charities.<sup>84</sup> McCosker's replacement, Fr Peter Phibbs (1922-93), had excelled in his academic studies at Sydney's Waverley College and was a gifted sportsman.<sup>85</sup> After completing his leaving certificate Phibbs worked in a bank before serving in the Australian Air Force during World War Two.<sup>86</sup>

In contrast to McCosker, Phibbs entered social work with less aptitude and a more conservative outlook. A 'late vocation', Phibbs had been ordained a priest in 1950.<sup>87</sup> In 1953 Bishop James Carroll approved Phibbs commencing social work studies at Sydney University.<sup>88</sup> Phibbs' nomination probably reflected two unrelated factors: first, a move by Carroll to try to broaden Phibbs' outlook; second, Gilroy sought a more compliant cleric at the bureau, because he found McCosker's forthright approach tiresome. Reflecting on his career, McCosker described the different attitudes to welfare held by Gilroy and himself, and many years later commented that Gilroy 'had learned that the monster had grown tame and useful but difficult. I thought so differently from him'.<sup>89</sup>

If Gilroy wanted a more obliging welfare director he chose an appropriate cleric in Phibbs. In late 1955 Carroll recommended Gilroy appoint Phibbs as McCosker's deputy, with the aim that he would 'eventually' succeed McCosker.<sup>90</sup> When Phibbs joined the CFWB as assistant director in the following year, the bureau's senior social worker, Mary Lewis, described him

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<sup>84</sup> Cardinal Norman Gilroy to Monsignor Frank McCosker, 23 January 1958, McCosker Papers, CSA. (This original letter was destroyed in a fire at Centacare Sydney in 1998. A few years earlier period Fr John Usher made a copy of the letter and provided it to the historian, P.G. Lewis, which ultimately ensured its survival.)

<sup>85</sup> Phibbs played first grade rugby union for Randwick and was also an excellent tennis player.

<sup>86</sup> Mass Booklet, Pontifical Concelebrated Christian Mass, Father Peter Phibbs, 1993, CSA.

<sup>87</sup> J. Dawes, 'Comforting the afflicted', *Catholic Weekly*, 5 August 1965, p. 15.

<sup>88</sup> Bishop James Carroll to Fr Peter Phibbs, 1953, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>89</sup> J. F. McCosker, Notes on the beginnings of Catholic Welfare, the Diocesan Agencies, the National Catholic Social Welfare Committee and the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, May 1989, p. 3.MS., CSA.

<sup>90</sup> Carroll to Gilroy 2 December 1955, p. 2, Box C1312 Catholic United Services Auxiliary (CUSA) and CUSA House, 1940-1989, SAA.

as having a 'conservative nature coupled with the disciplined training of ... Springwood ... and Manly [which] did not blend easily with the more democratic and personalised thinking of social work'.<sup>91</sup> Lewis also asserts that Phibbs at that time felt 'lost' in the social work field.<sup>92</sup>

Phibbs 'conservatism' can be understood in the context of the tussle between the Industrial Groups and Catholic Social Studies Movement (Movement) with the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in Sydney throughout the 1950s and 1960s. During this period the Melbourne push for the Movement to be officially recognised by the church was rejected by the Sydney bishops, who received support from the Vatican.<sup>93</sup> Gilroy and Carroll, regarded as sympathetic to the ALP State Government of Premier Joe Cahill, feared the Movement would split Labor in NSW, as it had done in Victoria.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, they were anxious to avoid any damage to the church's relationship with Cahill, and did not want to re-ignite sectarian issues.<sup>95</sup>

Some clergy, including Phibbs, ignored the views of the cardinal and his trusted bishop.<sup>96</sup> In his mainly working class inner-western suburb of Haberfield, Phibbs endorsed the Movement's objectives, and supported its political wing, the Democratic Labor Party (DLP). A notable parishioner, Jack Kane (1908-88), had become NSW ALP Assistant Secretary in 1953. Kane became leader of the Industrial Groups in NSW.<sup>97</sup> Beverley Kingston says

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<sup>91</sup> P. Lewis, (comp. and ed)., *Always begin with a Story: Memoirs of Mary Lewis* (Glebe, NSW, Book House, 2001) p. 165.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>93</sup> B. Duncan, 'The Puzzle of Santamaria's political and Catholic movements' in B. Costar, P. Love and P. Strangio (eds.), *The Great Labor Schism: A Retrospective* (Carlton North, Victoria, Scribe, 2005), p. 220.

<sup>94</sup> Gilroy to Archbishop Prendiville, Archbishop of Perth, 2 August 1956, cited by F. G. Clarke, 'Labour and the Catholic Social Studies Movement', *Labour History*, Vol. 20, May 1971.

<sup>95</sup> P. Reynolds, 'The Democratic Labor Party: a retrospective', p. 294 in Costar *et al*, *The Great Labor Schism*; G. Bolton, *The Oxford History of Australia: The Middle Way*, Volume 5 (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 144.

<sup>96</sup> G. Henderson, 'Lack of fame belied Archbishop's influence', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 January 1995, p. 13.

<sup>97</sup> J. Kane, *Exploding the myths: the political memoirs of Jack Kane* (North

Kane 'coined the phrase DLP' and became its foundation secretary in 1956.<sup>98</sup> An outspoken critic of the ALP, Kane took great comfort in his pastor's strong anti-communist views. In an interview with Fr John Usher, Phibbs acknowledged that in the 1961 state election he publicly urged parishioners to vote against an ALP candidate, despite him being a well respected parishioner.<sup>99</sup> Phibbs' controversial infusion of politics from the pulpit, regardless of its sincerity, created considerable resentment amongst parishioners, especially those with ALP sympathies.<sup>100</sup>

As the third CFWB director, Phibbs entered an organisation with similar financial problems to that which McCosker had inherited a decade earlier. A financial audit in August 1958, for example, showed the CFWB had a deficit of nearly £11,000, including £5,500 owing to the children's institutions and another £900 to some benevolent relatives of McCosker, who had been paying the interest on the CFWB's loan from the Catholic Church Trust Fund.<sup>101</sup> After Gilroy received this report, he authorised payment of all CFWB debts, but directed Bishop James Freeman that the 'bureau is explicitly forbidden to go into debt even though this may mean a reduction in its activities'.<sup>102</sup> Despite the stern language Phibbs received a financial start that had eluded his predecessors. In a eulogy for Phibbs in 1993, Margot Keaney, a parishioner, said his hard work enabled the CFWB to be financially self sufficient by 1961.<sup>103</sup> This view overlooks the CFWB's chronic funding problems, which

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Ryde, NSW, Angus and Robertson, 1989). In 1957 Kane became Federal Secretary of the DLP. See discussion in R. Fitzgerald, *The Pope's Battalion: Santamaria, Catholicism and the Labor Split* (St Lucia, Queensland, University of Queensland Press, 2003).

<sup>98</sup> B. Kingston, *A History of New South Wales* (Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 184).

<sup>99</sup> J. Usher, The political and social activism of Catholic priests in Australia: yesterday, today and tomorrow, Government 1E Project, University of Sydney, 1975, Part 3, p. 1. John Usher Archives (JUA).

<sup>100</sup> Some Catholics, including the writer's grandfather, Thomas James Gleeson (1897-1968), would not attend Mass at Haberfield parish in protest at Phibbs' pro-DLP stance. Interview with Gerald Gleeson, KCSG, AC, October 2006.

<sup>101</sup> Phibbs to Bishop James Freeman, 21 August 1958, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>102</sup> Gilroy to Freeman, 10 September 1958, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

caused much worry to Phibbs throughout his tenure. Apart from the initial grant, and another diocesan grant of £700 in 1962, the CFWB struggled during the 1960s to make ends meet.<sup>104</sup>

Sydney effectively had two clerics with responsibility for Catholic social welfare in the 1960s: McCosker at a policy and ecumenical level; Phibbs in terms of direct service delivery. The two priests differed in personalities and social views: McCosker, brash, though visionary and less inclined to be party political; Phibbs, socially shy, but outspoken, especially in matters concerning the DLP. The situation was noticed by staff. Lewis, sympathetic to Phibbs, says that McCosker's 'new responsibilities... did not appear to have been clarified' and 'a degree of confusion arose as to the relationship between the two positions'.<sup>105</sup> The blurring in boundaries led to tension. Following one incident in 1961, Gilroy advised McCosker that 'it is essential for you and Fr Phibbs to have a complete and harmonious understanding. You as the senior, must arrange this'.<sup>106</sup>

During the 1960s Phibbs' attitude to social welfare changed. He studied personal counselling in America and returned convinced of its value and the important role of social workers.<sup>107</sup> By the late 1960s an invigorated Phibbs expressed frustration about the church's difficulties in coming to terms with 'modern practices' such as psychotherapy.<sup>108</sup> As a result, Phibbs said the CFWB's goals were 'being blocked to some extent by a lack of acceptance on the part of church authorities'.<sup>109</sup> In the 1960s the church, especially in Sydney under Gilroy, remained very much focused on expanding the Catholic

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<sup>103</sup> M. Keaney, Obituary, Father Peter Phibbs, Parish Priest of Clifton Gardens, 1993, Phibbs Papers, CSA.

<sup>104</sup> Phibbs to Gilroy, 28 August 1962, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>105</sup> Lewis, *Always begin with a Story*, p. 165.

<sup>106</sup> Gilroy to McCosker 1 March 1961, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>107</sup> Usher, Centacare, 1940-1988, *op. cit.*,

<sup>108</sup> J. Egan, Agency Study: Catholic Family Welfare Bureau ca 1966, Phibbs Papers, CSA, p. 8.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.



education system. John Luttrell, in a biography of Gilroy, says the cardinal's 'responsibility, according to the established policy of the Australian bishops, was to continue to provide a place in a Catholic school for every Catholic child'.<sup>110</sup>

Phibbs displayed his new attitude by making a strong stand against the bureau's uncertain financial situation. In 1967, for example, he expressed concern that Catholic social services were 'being neglected' because of the church's large investment in education. Phibbs felt the CFWB's financial instability might be lessened if it received some proceeds from the church's overseas aid appeal, Project Compassion.<sup>111</sup> Phibbs gained McCosker's support for the NCWC to recommend to the bishops in 1967 that 'a not inconsiderable part of the money from Project Compassion be diverted to Catholic Charities in Australia'.<sup>112</sup> The bishops would have nothing of it. A year later, Phibbs presented a report to the Archdiocese's Senate of Priests that highlighted the extent of the CFWB's 'financial problems'. The 'taxing of orphanages' remained an inadequate source of funds. An anticipated budget deficit of \$10,000 had prevented the bureau from decentralising to areas of high population growth and social disadvantage, such as Mt Druitt, in Sydney's outer west.<sup>113</sup> In correspondence with Gilroy, Phibbs emphasised that 'if the CFWB is to fill a need in the lives of these people... it must decentralise as they cannot be expected to travel 20 miles to the city'.<sup>114</sup>

Phibbs also expressed frustration that a proposal to establish a CFWB office at Liverpool had become 'dormant because of a lack of finance. Moreover it is unsatisfactory that the CFWB should operate without any real financial

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<sup>110</sup> Luttrell, 'Norman Thomas Cardinal Gilroy', p.193.

<sup>111</sup> Phibbs to McCosker, 16 February 1967, NCWC Various Papers, CSSAA.

<sup>112</sup> National Catholic Welfare Committee, 1967, Report on Project Compassion, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>113</sup> Fr Phibbs presentation to Senate, Archdiocese of Sydney ca 1968, p. 1, Phibbs Papers, CSA.

<sup>114</sup> Phibbs to Gilroy, 5 April 1968, p. 1, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

security... if the bureau is to form an integral part of the diocesan set-up, then it should be placed on a sound financial footing'.<sup>115</sup>

Despite the pressures, the bureau continued to grow in the 1960s. Phibbs sought to have either Brian Byron or James Duck released to study social work, but Gilroy could spare neither priest from their 'parochial duties'.<sup>116</sup> In 1959 Phibbs received approval from Gilroy to form a Diocesan Social Welfare Committee, with representatives from the SVdP, the CFWB, and Monsignor McCosker.<sup>117</sup> By 1968 the CFWB employed fourteen professional staff, including two priests and two religious sisters, one of whom was Mary St Hugh, who held a masters degree in social work.<sup>118</sup> In addition, nine trained volunteer marriage counsellors worked at the bureau. The Catholic Women's League (CWL) continued to support the CFWB by paying its annual rent of £600. In the late 1960s the CFWB's financial situation, however, became more dire. Phibbs' call for an independent financial investigation in 1968 did not eventuate.<sup>119</sup> Despite an increase in staff, demand for services outstripped the number of social workers. By 1970 Phibbs complained of clients waiting up to three years for their first appointment with a social worker.<sup>120</sup>

#### 6.4.2 'Not properly understood by the clergy'

Gilroy's successor, Archbishop James Freeman, had a more open attitude to social welfare, which reflected his longstanding friendship with McCosker.<sup>121</sup> Freeman considered a number of priests who might be suitable to study social work, including John Davoren, Michael Hogan<sup>122</sup> and William Challenor.

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<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Gilroy to Phibbs, 24 December 1959, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>117</sup> Gilroy to Phibbs, 10 September 1959, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>118</sup> Phibbs to Gilroy, 5 April 1968, p. 2, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> Phibbs to Gilroy, 14 September 1970, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

<sup>121</sup> 'Long renowned as a defender of the poor and downtrodden, he blasted society on the way it treated the underprivileged', *Sunday Telegraph*, 17 March 1991, pp: 1, 3.

<sup>122</sup> Hogan resigned from the priesthood and became an academic. Michael Hogan's most

Phibbs, who knew Davoren well, recommended the Granville-based priest.<sup>123</sup> Davoren accepted the 'most congenial' offer and while he studied at Sydney University he worked part-time as a chaplain at St Joseph's College, Hunter's Hill.<sup>124</sup> Reuben F. Scarf, a devout Melkite Catholic who had built a successful retail business, paid Davoren's annual university fees of £100.<sup>125</sup>

After Davoren's graduation in 1967 Freeman appointed him as CFWB assistant director and in November 1971 Davoren succeeded Phibbs as director.<sup>126</sup> In his final years as CFWB director, Phibbs responded to a request for an education program to assist teachers, religious and clerics to communicate more effectively with young people, by establishing the Archdiocesan Institute of Counselling (AIC).<sup>127</sup> Phibbs chaired the AIC from its inception in 1969 to 1984.

During the 1960s the CFWB focused on family problems and endeavoured to 'forestall broken homes'.<sup>128</sup> Where families had already broken-up the bureau's role included caring for any children and placing them in 'approved private homes' or institutions.<sup>129</sup> The bureau's broader reform agenda, however, continued meeting resistance from the institutions. In the words of Usher 'the homes were constantly resisting the pressure to limit their intake, humanise their internal workings and modify their institutional settings'.<sup>130</sup>

Usher has described Davoren's directorship as representing 'innovation, professionalism and sound management'.<sup>131</sup> In one respect 'professionalism'

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recent Publication is *Local Labor: A History of the Labor Party in Glebe, 1891-2003* (Annandale, NSW, Federation Press, 2004).

<sup>123</sup> Phibbs to Gilroy, 31 January 1963, 8 September 1962, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>124</sup> Davoren to Gilroy, March 1963, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>125</sup> Phibbs to Gilroy, 11 March 1963, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>126</sup> Freeman to Davoren, 18 November 1971, CSA.

<sup>127</sup> Usher, *Centacare*, 1940-1988, p. 9.

<sup>128</sup> *St Augustine's Monthly Chronicle*, April 1964, p. 1, Balmain Parish Archives (BPA).

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*, June 1965, p. 2.

<sup>130</sup> Usher, *Centacare*, 1940-1988, p. 6.

had been the underlying rationale for the formation of the CFWB three decades earlier. During Davoren's era, however, major challenges arose. A new generation of social workers, again dominated by trained women, led the movement for major change in residential care. An example of innovation was the development of a foster care program led by Annette McInerney and Pam O'Neill, which opened up new links between a child, their natural parents and the foster family. Usher says that this program set professional standards across NSW and also enabled the CFWB 'at last... to offer families in crises a real alternative to institutional care for their children'.<sup>132</sup>

In the early 1970s the CFWB extended its services, mainly on the back of government funding for specialist programs.<sup>133</sup> Marriage guidance remained a core service with four full time staff, under the supervision of Mary Lewis, in 1972.<sup>134</sup> In the following year Davoren initiated a name change to Centacare because he felt the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau was a 'cumbersome title which smacked of bureaucracy'.<sup>135</sup> The new name, Usher says, aimed to 'capture the generic nature of the agency and to indicate that it was an agency established to serve the whole population and not just Roman Catholics'.<sup>136</sup>

By the mid 1970s Centacare although primarily an 'intervention agency' increasingly adopted a preventative role and worked more closely with schools, parents and pre-marriage groups.<sup>137</sup> The 1973 *Karmel Report*, which highlighted the pressing needs of children from disadvantaged circumstances, led to enhanced Commonwealth Government funding. Centacare entered the

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<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>133</sup> Observations on Centacare, Report by Frank Hayes and Leo Keegan, n.d. [ca 1977], CSA.

<sup>134</sup> Davoren to Freeman, 'Report of the activities of the CFWB for the Year ended 31 December 1972', 5 March 1973, CFWB, B2735, SAA.

<sup>135</sup> Centacare Staff Manual, [n.d.], p. 11, cited in W. J. Lomas, 'The Relationship between Evangelism and Welfare Services', Master of Arts, Department of Social Work and Social Policy, University of Sydney, November 1991, pp: 65-66.

<sup>136</sup> Usher, 'Taking Control', p. 17.

<sup>137</sup> The work of Centacare, p.2 .MS. [n.d. ca 1976], CSA.

sphere of its main internal competitor for finance, the Catholic education system, and responded to Karmel by establishing, in collaboration with the Catholic Education Office (CEO), a pastoral care support scheme for disadvantaged children attending Catholic schools.<sup>138</sup> The Good Samaritan Order, which a decade earlier had declined to release Sr Mary Gregory and Sr Marie Jones to work at the CFWB, agreed they could establish this program.<sup>139</sup> Centacare assisted teachers to set up after-school activity centres, to assess children before they saw remedial teachers, and to refer children with emotional difficulties to specialists.<sup>140</sup> By 1977, when the program had become well-established, it was transferred to the control of the increasingly powerful CEO.<sup>141</sup>

Rising demand, inadequate co-operation between the bureau and the voluntary-based SVdP, and insufficient funding continued to constrain the bureau during Davoren's directorship. In words similar in intent and expression to Monsignor Thomas' frustration in the 1940s, Davoren said publicly in 1975:

After thirty years the Bureaux are sometimes better known by those outside the Catholic community. The [bureaux] directors... have not been able to convince all of their fellow priests that this is a service provided by the Church both for the Church and for the larger community.<sup>142</sup>

Different approaches between professional bureaux and voluntary organisations continued into the 1970s. Dorothy O'Halloran, who had worked for the agency for nearly a quarter of a century, noted in 1976, that the SVdP's work in Green Valley, near Liverpool, relied on 'retired men who could visit during the day or women who were free to make daytime visits'.

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<sup>138</sup> Usher, Centacare, 1940-1988, p. 10.

<sup>139</sup> M. Walsh, *The Good Sams: Sisters of the Good Samaritan, 1857-1969* (Mulgrave, Victoria, John Garratt, 2001) pp: 190-91.

<sup>140</sup> The work of Centacare, p. 1, *op. cit.*,

<sup>141</sup> Davoren to Br Kelvin Canavan, Catholic Education Office, 9 December 1977; Gary Boyle to Sr Jeanette Conway, 24 November 1977, Boyle Papers, CSA.

<sup>142</sup> J. Davoren, 'The Church and the Dis-advantaged', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. L11, No. 2, April 1975, p. 148.

Unfortunately new housing areas by their very nature have few retired men in those ranks and it takes time before the families are sufficiently established for the women folk to look beyond their own settling in problems.<sup>143</sup>

Limited funding and high workloads left little time to promote Centacare. In a frank internal report in 1977 Davoren said: 'the bureau's role is 'not properly understood by the clergy... [evidenced] by their reluctance to support the organisation and to refer people for the kind of help that the Bureau is able to offer'.<sup>144</sup> In assessing options to counter the agency's increasing costs, Davoren disputed critics who claimed the agency was overstaffed. He also alluded to the competition from other Catholic organisations for the 'charity dollar' and said the 'bureau is in competition with other organisations in the diocese for limited money and the drawing power of each fluctuates without any apparent pattern or rationale.<sup>145</sup>

By the mid 1970s Davoren's interest lay with state and national church policy activities and ecumenical welfare groups.<sup>146</sup> Following a request from McCosker and Perkins, a reluctant Cardinal Freeman agreed that Davoren be appointed as the inaugural full time secretary of the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission (ACSWC).<sup>147</sup> Although based in Sydney the ACSWC role restricted Davoren's capacity to manage Centacare on a daily basis. In February 1974 Davoren appointed Mary Saxby as the first lay executive director.<sup>148</sup> Saxby, a medical social worker, came to the bureau from the Mater Hospital, North Sydney.<sup>149</sup> Her appointment coincided with reduced

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<sup>143</sup> D. O'Halloran, Report for the St Vincent de Paul Society on the role of the social worker in the Society, September 1976. SVdP Correspondence 1976-1986, File 880011, CSSAA. Fr John Davoren acknowledged Miss O'Halloran, saying 'Her work... has been an inspiration and she is known widely in her own right throughout the community of Greater Sydney' – see Davoren to Freeman, 5 March 1973, p. 4, *op. cit.*,

<sup>144</sup> J. Davoren, The Future of Social Services in the Archdiocese of Sydney, 9 December 1977, CSA.

<sup>145</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>146</sup> D.J. Gleeson, The foundation of the Civil Chaplaincies Advisory Committee, MS. 2005.

<sup>147</sup> Freeman to Perkins, 12 December 1974; Perkins to Davoren, 3 January 1975; Davoren to Perkins, 7 January 1975, Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission Archives. R.J. Lawrence (ed.), 'John Davoren', *A career in social work: seven personal accounts* (Kensington, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 1979).

<sup>148</sup> Davoren to Freeman, 18 February 1974, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

archdiocesan income and spiralling inflation, and as a result Centacare was in a 'difficult deficit position'.<sup>150</sup> An archdiocesan annual subsidy of \$70,000 amounted to about half the agency's request.<sup>151</sup> Financial strains and Saxby's firm leadership style created staff morale problems and Davoren terminated her appointment in 1975, an action not dissimilar to Bishop Thomas' sacking of Alice Blackall, the bureau's first female employee, more than three decades earlier.

Saxby's successor, Gary Boyle, taking up Phibbs' vision, decentralised the organisation, a move prompted by the archdiocese's sale of its administrative offices' building, CUSA House, and a one-off \$3,000 grant from Freeman.<sup>152</sup> Boyle established branches at Waitara in Sydney's north and Randwick in the east, with the aim of making 'professional counsellors more available to the people requiring assistance'.<sup>153</sup> Centacare's head office moved to Flemington, where large numbers of migrants from Lebanon, Spain and Turkey lived.<sup>154</sup> An efficient administrator, Boyle reduced Centacare's expenditure in 1977 and the deficit fell to just \$14,000.<sup>155</sup> But it was insufficient. Financial pressures remained Centacare's largest obstacle. In 1977 Davoren commented that a balanced budget could only be achieved by making 'savage cuts in staff numbers... [which] was not practical within the existing organisation'.<sup>156</sup> Davoren contemplated several options, such as closing a specialised division or the Flemington office. The latter, which incurred commercial rent, 'would create the least problems', Davoren thought.<sup>157</sup> Yet the closure of the

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<sup>149</sup> Mary Arnold married Chas. Saxby, the superintendent of the Mater Hospital. Saxby was a member of a family that operated a soft drink company. <http://www.saxbys.com.au/>

<sup>150</sup> Report on Centacare's finance, 1976, CSA.

<sup>151</sup> Davoren, *The future of social services*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>152</sup> Boyle commenced in early July 1975. See also Boyle to Freeman, 18 January 1977, CWB Collection, 1977-1980, B2735, SAA.

<sup>153</sup> Boyle to Federal Attorney General, Annual Report of the Marriage Guidance Section of Centacare for the 12 months ended 30 June 1977, p 1, Boyle Papers, SAA.

<sup>154</sup> Boyle to Department of Social Security 15 November 1977, Boyle Papers, CSA.

<sup>155</sup> Davoren, *The future of social services*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

Flemington office concerned at least one local doctor who felt the district's large migrant community would be disadvantaged.<sup>158</sup>

About this time another external report remarked on unclear areas of responsibility, such that 'all workers seem to be involved in institutional work'.<sup>159</sup> One revenue stream that the bureau had become dependent upon was state aid. The Federal government's 'policy of reducing' grants to marriage guidance agencies, resulted in the subsidy to Centacare Sydney being significantly less than what the agency required to operate its programs.<sup>160</sup>

Two important changes in service programs occurred in 1977. In a report to the Federal Attorney General, Boyle said that 'we are very concerned, in particular with the little knowledge we all have concerning effective marriage preparation courses', and the 'increasing disintegration of marriages'.<sup>161</sup> There is a 'lack of preparedness... of young couples entering marriages'.<sup>162</sup> In response, Centacare, which had not been involved in the Sydney Archdiocese's marriage education program, sent a social work student, Fr John Usher to Adelaide to study its marriage education programs.<sup>163</sup> Usher's subsequent report on the 'Adelaide model' influenced the decision to place Centacare in charge of marriage education programs in the Sydney Archdiocese.

#### 6.4.3. 'an old mother superior'

The late 1960s tide of radicalism led to calls for greater activism within, and by, the social work profession. Tensions within the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) concerned the extent to which it should implement industrial

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<sup>157</sup> *ibid.*, pp: 3-4.

<sup>158</sup> Dr N.L. Moloney to Davoren, 14 February 1978, Davoren Collection, CSA.

<sup>159</sup> Report of Mr R Sucgang, n.d. CSA.

<sup>160</sup> Davoren, The future of social services, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>161</sup> McCosker, Chaplaincy Services, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>162</sup> Report of the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (Centacare), Marriage Guidance Section for the 12 months ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 1977, Boyle Papers, CSA.

<sup>163</sup> Interview Fr John Usher, St Patrick's Mortlake, 27 December 2004.



action to achieve its goals.<sup>164</sup> By the mid 1970s the AASW had split into two bodies, with the formation of the Australian Social Welfare Union.<sup>165</sup> Another peak body, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), also shifted from being a representative of non-government organisations to taking a stronger advocacy position for low-income Australians.<sup>166</sup> A further sign of the momentum for change occurred at Sydney University, where students, including Fr Usher, went on strike, protesting against the social work curriculum.<sup>167</sup> A new paradigm advocated the involvement of clients in welfare policies. As Usher notes: 'It made good sense to keep people well informed of the decisions being made on their behalf. It was a big step to ultimately allow those people to make decisions on their own behalf'.<sup>168</sup>

Prior to Norma Parker's instigation of a social work course at the University of New South Wales in 1966, Sydney University had a monopoly in training social workers in metropolitan Sydney. By the mid 1970s most professional staff entered Centacare with an understanding of the theory and practice of community social work. Usher claims that as a result the traditional agency role to 'help marginal families to copy [sic] with difficult life situations' was replaced with concepts of 'liberation and empowerment'.<sup>169</sup>

In this climate it was little surprise that relations between Centacare staff and management erupted. Archbishop Freeman acknowledged the broader 'climate of social change' and financial constraints by appointing a committee to oversee Centacare in 1977.<sup>170</sup> McCosker and Davoren were joined by two well respected public servants: Leo Keegan, a NSW Education Department

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<sup>164</sup> See letter to the editor, AASW, *Federal Newsletter*, November 1974, AASW (WA) Collection, MN 19737, File 5261A/60 State Library of Western Australia (SLWA).

<sup>165</sup> Weeks, *Issues Facing Australian Families*, p. 126.

<sup>166</sup> P. Mendes, 'The ideology of the Australian Council of Social Service: from the charity model to welfarism to social justice', *Melbourne Journal of Politics*, Vol. 26, 1999.

<sup>167</sup> Mendes, *The history of social work in Australia*, pp: 124, 127. A. Horin, 'Clever Cleric targets MPs on jobless', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 May 1992, p. 8.

<sup>168</sup> Usher, 'Taking Control', 1989, p. 18.

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*, pp: 20-21.

<sup>170</sup> McCosker to Freeman, 8 November 1977, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

officer, and Frank Hayes (1921-98)<sup>171</sup>, a senior social worker in the NSW Prisons Department, and later a commissioner of the NSW Corrective Services Commission.<sup>172</sup> Their brief was to advise the bureau how it could best provide services in the 'present climate of social change and financial stringency'.<sup>173</sup> This committee identified a lack of 'clearly established policy lines setting out the objectives of Centacare', a comment that probably did not please Davoren.<sup>174</sup> It also confirmed that the bureau's operations had too often been reactive, with little long term planning.<sup>175</sup>

In January 1978 Roger Constable – a social worker based in Tasmania – joined Centacare as its third lay executive director in four years. He replaced Boyle who had resigned citing a desire to spend more time with his children.<sup>176</sup> Constable's early assessment was that the organisation operated too loosely and he felt the absence of a Sydney city office hampered relations with church and government organisations. In April that year Constable returned Centacare's administrative office to Polding House, the church's archdiocesan headquarters.<sup>177</sup>

Constable advocated a more traditional view of social welfare practice and before long described some staff as holding 'doctrinaire values in regard to welfare practice'.<sup>178</sup> He tightened internal processes, through, for example,

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<sup>171</sup> Hayes' writings include *Prison and Community Work*, Paper presented at the conference Partnerships in Crime Prevention, convened jointly by the Australian Institute of Criminology and the National Campaign Against Violence and Crime, Hobart, 25-27 February 1998. One of his earliest contributions, which reflected his progressive outlook, was F.D. Hayes and I.W. McAulay, 'Social Work in a Penal Setting', *Forum*, No. 2, 1954.

<sup>172</sup> In 1988 Hayes was a member of the Parole Board of NSW. His notable contributions included being Commissioner of the Corrective Services Commission of NSW, 1979-86; Foundation Director of the School of Community and Welfare Studies, Milperra College of Advanced Education, 1976-81. See entries in *Who's Who in Australia*.

<sup>173</sup> McCosker to Freeman, 8 November 1977, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

<sup>174</sup> Observations on Centacare, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> Boyle to heads of welfare organisations, 24 November 1977, Boyle Papers, CSA.

<sup>177</sup> Constable to S.J. Laing and Son Pty Ltd, 7 March 1978, Constable Papers, CSA.

<sup>178</sup> Constable to Clancy, 7 October 1983, CWB Collection, 2735, SAA.

restricting casework conferences between the agency's branches.<sup>179</sup> While Constable did not elaborate on this different approach, Usher says that the social workers believed conflicts within the organisation should be 'managed in a dialectical way' through analysis of how organisational arrangements were 'produced, maintained, evaluated and changed'.<sup>180</sup>

Despite Centacare's tight finances, staff development was an important aspect. In April 1978 the agency appointed Sr Jeanette Conway as senior social worker with responsibility for 'professional and personal staff development'.<sup>181</sup> Constable wrote that Conway had been 'given the task of finding out where everyone is at. That report should prove most interesting'.<sup>182</sup> Constable identified several areas that 'have to be surmounted before we can engage first gear ... or before Centacare can attain its former pristine glory'.<sup>183</sup> Firstly he felt that 'professional legitimacy and accountability' was lacking in terms of position descriptions, review of current procedures and insufficient number of experienced staff.<sup>184</sup> In terms of staff interaction, Constable chided some staff for their 'confrontational tactics' and urged them to operate on the basis of consensus, rather than conflict.<sup>185</sup> There is no doubt that considerable conflict existed. Usher says that the social workers 'endeavoured to critically evaluate and change' the agency's processes.<sup>186</sup> Whether Constable's style facilitated a consensus approach will now be examined.

Conway entered an invidious situation: new to an organisation under financial strain and staff tension, which had been exacerbated by repeated leadership changes, staff retrenchments and organisational restructures, and now, in the opinion of many staff, a somewhat abrasive leader. Constable acknowledged

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<sup>179</sup> Constable to Davoren, Davoren Papers, CSA.

<sup>180</sup> Usher, 'Taking Control', p. 18.

<sup>181</sup> Constable to staff, 27 April 1978, Constable Papers, CSA.

<sup>182</sup> Constable, Monthly Report, April 1978, Constable Papers, CSA.

<sup>183</sup> Constable, Monthly Report, May-June 1978, Constable Papers, CSA.

<sup>184</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *ibid.*

the existence of staff unhappiness in his early reports.<sup>187</sup> With Constable's endorsement Conway interviewed social workers and identified a 'degree of tension and hostility' amongst staff.<sup>188</sup> Conway found 'it necessary to share her concerns' directly with Davoren, who gave her permission to facilitate a staff protest meeting at Randwick.<sup>189</sup>

Staff claimed inadequate consultation as a key factor in their unhappiness. Concerns about staffing levels, policy implementation and agency reputation led to anonymous and formal protest letters to Davoren, including one which described Constable an 'old mother superior'.<sup>190</sup> Conway sought to ease the tensions and on at least one occasion urged some staff not to involve higher church authorities. Privately, she attempted to convey to Constable the impact of high levels of staff discontent.

The creation of a deputy executive director's role in August 1978 occurred during this period of unrest. Constable defended the appointment of a former public service colleague, Ray Reid, noting 'the need to go outside the organisation to recruit a sensible, intelligent, mature professional as my deputy'.<sup>191</sup> Constable said Reid's role would be 'to work with me to bring some sanity back into the agency'.<sup>192</sup> Three social workers, representing 'professional' staff, expressed concern that Reid had been appointed at a time when the 'staff have stated they have no confidence' in Centacare's management.<sup>193</sup> The executive director ably deflected such criticism.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Usher, 'Taking Control', p. 19.

<sup>187</sup> 'The staff appears very unsettled and held a meeting at Randwick on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1978', Constable's Monthly Report, April 1978, Executive Director's Papers, CSA.

<sup>188</sup> Conway, Report on involvement in Centacare', 3 April-30 June 1978, Davoren Papers, CSA.

<sup>189</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Memo to Davoren, 1 August 1978, Constable Papers, CSA.

<sup>191</sup> Constable to Davoren, 'Present Situation within Centacare', 28 July 1978, CSA.

<sup>192</sup> Constable to Reid, 10 July 1977, Constable Papers, CSA.

<sup>193</sup> M. Norsa, C. Webb and A.J. Gleeson, Social Workers of the Waitara Branch to Constable, 19 July 1978, Constable Papers, CSA.

During this period Conway found it increasingly difficult to be a conduit between Constable and the staff. She approached the task with 'a good deal of trust and confidentiality', but was 'shaken' to learn that her confidential briefings to Constable were subsequently 'used' against some staff.<sup>195</sup> In July 1978 Conway completed her appraisal of the bureau's turmoil.<sup>196</sup> It was a balanced report that focused on service provision and while she sought not to criticise anyone, she remarked 'the anti-administrator attitude seemed to have hardened because of the administrator's attempt to be the sole decision maker in Centacare'.<sup>197</sup>

Davoren, who had been ill during some of the turmoil, reacted defensively to Conway's report. He did not think it 'appropriate to discuss Roger's administrative style' and also cautioned Conway that she did not 'appreciate the seriousness of the problems facing Centacare' which had 'proved too difficult for previous administrators to rectify'.<sup>198</sup> (Whether Davoren included himself in the description of 'previous administrators' is unclear.) Those problems, Davoren said, included budget overruns in 1976-77, diminishing case-loads, unsatisfactory employment decisions and a 'deteriorating [agency] image among the priests'.<sup>199</sup> While not elaborating on Centacare's image problems with clergy, Davoren firmly supported Constable and said 'Roger... is determined to keep [the agency] alive and bring it out of the doldrums'.<sup>200</sup>

Conway's report brought matters to a head and Davoren immediately terminated her role as an 'intermediary'.<sup>201</sup> Conway's revised job description

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<sup>194</sup> Constable to Davoren, 28 July 1978, Constable Papers, CSA.

<sup>195</sup> Conway, Report on involvement in Centacare, April 3<sup>rd</sup> – June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1978, Davoren Papers, CSA.

<sup>196</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2

<sup>197</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>198</sup> Davoren to Conway, 14 July 1978, Davoren Papers, CSA.

<sup>199</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>200</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>201</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

precluded her from representing management at staff meetings.<sup>202</sup> Undeterred, Conway continued to document her 'attempts to apply conflict-resolution methods'.<sup>203</sup>

Turnover amongst professional and administrative staff was exceptionally high during Constable's first twelve months as executive director. In the second half of 1978 several senior staff resigned, including Alice O'Connor of the Parramatta branch, and Anna Noble of the CCHIS.<sup>204</sup> In O'Connor's view, a professional working relationship with Constable could not be achieved because of his personal style and 'frequent vulgar and insulting language'.<sup>205</sup> O'Connor added to the mounting pressure on Davoren by copying her resignation letter to the regional bishop, Edward Clancy.<sup>206</sup> When Clancy raised the matter, Davoren advised him that O'Connor 'has used her privilege as a Catholic to talk to you when as an employee of the organisation she was first responsible to me'.<sup>207</sup> O'Connor's unhappiness, Davoren said, reflected a 'personality clash' with Constable whose new workplace practices challenged staff attitudes that were 'not in real accord with the true purpose' of the bureau.<sup>208</sup> Davoren did not elaborate on the 'true purpose' but in the organisational climate they probably related to an autocratic view of following a superior's directions without question.

Despite the internal turmoil, Centacare Sydney claimed to assist a record number of 13,000 people in 1978.<sup>209</sup> Within a year many of Constable's detractors had left Centacare. Davoren's unswerving support ensured the continuation of Constable's position. Over the next few years Constable extended Centacare's services to the Central and South coasts of NSW. A

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<sup>202</sup> Constable to Conway, 8 August 1978, Davoren Papers, CSA.

<sup>203</sup> Conway to Davoren, 8 August 1978, Davoren Papers, CSA.

<sup>204</sup> Noble to Davoren, 28 June 1978, Davoren Papers, CSA.

<sup>205</sup> O'Connor to Davoren, 3 July 1978, Davoren Papers, CSA.

<sup>206</sup> Davoren to Clancy, 6 July 1978, Davoren Papers, CSA.

<sup>207</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>208</sup> *ibid.*

marriage counselling service established at Gosford would become part of the new Broken Bay Diocese's welfare activities. Social worker, Kathleen McCormack, joined the Macarthur Catholic Family Life Centre in Sydney's outer south-western suburbs, which had been established in 1973 to provide pre-marriage education programs and natural family planning.<sup>210</sup> In 1980 this family centre was transformed into a new organisation, Centacare Wollongong, with a priest initially at its head; McCormack's appointment as director of Centacare Wollongong in 1984 marked one of the first lay female directors of a diocesan welfare bureau in Australia.<sup>211</sup>

With staff detractors having left Centacare, Constable and Davoren turned their attention to the Centacare ladies' auxiliary. Formed in the 1973, this group of volunteers was led by Patricia Burke, Pat Morris and Marcia Rush.<sup>212</sup> The women gathered another forty volunteers and worked effectively with Saxby and Boyle, organising highly successful fundraising events at venues including NSW Government House.<sup>213</sup> At a time of financial pressure their fundraising efforts proved valuable and Davoren publicly acknowledged 'special thanks' to the women for 'raising much needed money for our work with families and children'.<sup>214</sup> Yet, reflecting a clericalised model and a misguided view that only trained social workers should be associated with the bureau, Davoren felt that volunteers 'however well intentioned may only do damage' in difficult situations.<sup>215</sup> Constable, also, felt uneasy with the women – at a time of considerable stress in Centacare – and their contact with clergy, especially Burke who was a member of the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission (ACSWC).

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<sup>209</sup> News Release: 13,000 people seek Centacare's help, December 1978, CSA.

<sup>210</sup> Constable to Freeman, 11 January 1982, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA. Centacare Catholic Family Welfare Services, Diocese of Wollongong, *1987 Report*, Other Dioceses Collection, CSA.

<sup>211</sup> 'Centacare: 25 years of care', *Catholic Weekly*, 28 August 2005, p. 21.

<sup>212</sup> Interview, Mrs Frances Gleeson, Cabarita, NSW, 26 December 2004.

<sup>213</sup> Interview, Mrs Patricia Burke, Balmain, NSW, 6 July 2006.

<sup>214</sup> *Centacare Annual Report 1978-79*. See Boyle to Freeman, 6 May 1977, B2735, SAA.

<sup>215</sup> Davoren to Kerry Murphy, SVdP, 21 December 1977, CSA.

In a sign of Davoren's uncritical assessment of Constable's advice, Davoren unexpectedly terminated the ladies' auxiliary in January 1980. Davoren initially told the women he had 'decided not to proceed with any organised fund raising' that year.<sup>216</sup> Privately, Davoren said that Centacare had staff capable and willing to undertake fundraising.<sup>217</sup> In correspondence to Burke, Davoren said he wanted 'to explore ways of developing regionally based [fundraising] groups' which would be co-ordinated by Centacare's head office.<sup>218</sup> The situation became more unfriendly when Davoren assumed that the women had agreed not to partake in any new fundraising plans. An aggrieved Burke, on behalf of the committee, reminded Davoren that the 'Auxiliary draws its support from Wollongong to Windsor, Narabeen to Narwee and is ideally positioned to participate in "more parochially based services'.'<sup>219</sup> Another auxiliary member, Pat Morris, who had been present at the January 1980 meeting with Davoren, expressed regret 'that you have misrepresented the attitude of the Auxiliary members... the executive is adamant that our recollection of that meeting does not coincide with yours.'<sup>220</sup> Davoren, as with other matters, did not appreciate Morris' letter and the committee's hope of undertaking any further charitable work for Centacare quickly receded.<sup>221</sup> Whatever plans Davoren had for fundraising it is hard to see how he could have included staff. There is no evidence that Centacare staff had the skills or time to fundraise and given low staff morale it is doubtful whether anyone would have been appropriate for such a specialised task.

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<sup>216</sup> Davoren to Burke, 29 February 1980, Patricia Burke Archives (PBA). Mrs Burke kindly made available a copy of this letter. This letter and other correspondence relating to the dismissal of the volunteers could not be located at CSA.

<sup>217</sup> A Report, *op. cit.*, Boyle to Burke, 11 November 1977, Boyle Papers, CSA. The women transferred their successful fundraising efforts to the National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

<sup>218</sup> Davoren to Burke, 29 February 1980, Patricia Burke Archives (PBA).

<sup>219</sup> Burke to Davoren, 7 March 1980, PBA.

<sup>220</sup> Morris to Davoren, 10 April 1980, PBA.

<sup>221</sup> Davoren to Morris, 24 April 1980, PBA.



The auxiliary's termination reinforced perceptions that the organisation's leadership was unsympathetic to the involvement of volunteers. McCosker as *de facto* chairman of Centacare, had long been suspicious of volunteers, an attitude he had demonstrated at the NCWC, when he opposed religious women and lay people joining the peak body in the early 1970s.<sup>222</sup> McCosker thought it was unhelpful to include volunteers who had 'created a nuisance' by involving senior clerics in Centacare's affairs.<sup>223</sup> While McCosker expected volunteers to be bound by the same accountability as staff, he was shrewd enough to know that it would be difficult to police. Apart from their fundraising prowess, the ladies auxiliary had been partly responsible for bolstering Centacare's reputation across the diocese. Women, such as Burke, had achieved a position on the ACSWC, something that McCosker and Davoren thought belonged to the clerical domain. Untrained, though articulate lay women represented a threat within Sydney's dominant clerical culture.

In the early 1980s Centacare continued to attract external attention. Constable's decision to close the Randwick branch in mid 1980 led the Episcopal Vicar of Sydney's Eastern Region, Fr (later Bishop) John Heaps, to call for an 'investigation into the management of Centacare'.<sup>224</sup> Heaps, widely respected for his integrity, and a protégé of Archbishop James Carroll, felt Centacare was becoming too centralised and out of touch with local needs.<sup>225</sup> The archdiocesan secretary Fr (now Bishop) Peter Ingham referred Heaps' complaints to McCosker, who upheld Constable's approach, though he acknowledged that the board had informed Constable that 'his manner may not be as polished as one might prefer'.<sup>226</sup>

Constable continued to pursue an aggressive strategy to cut costs. On Christmas Eve 1982, he introduced new restrictions on the purchase of

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<sup>222</sup> See discussion in Chapter Seven.

<sup>223</sup> McCosker to Ingham, ca 1980, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

<sup>224</sup> Heaps to Ingham, 4 August 1980, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

<sup>225</sup> Bishop Heaps' works include *A love that dares to question: a bishop challenges his church* (Richmond, Victoria, Aurora Books/David Lovell Publishing, 1998).

<sup>226</sup> McCosker to Ingham, 1 July 1980, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

biscuits.<sup>227</sup> Soon after he advised the archdiocese that 'Centacare is mindful of the grave financial situation facing not only the Charitable Work Fund (CWF), but Governments and the community at large'.<sup>228</sup> State aid was no panacea for Centacare's financial woes. Constable noted that Federal government funding increases of between 10 and 15 per cent for some programs, while welcomed, placed pressure on the church to ensure it matched the amounts. Constable said there was a risk 'if we lose our capacity to contribute financially ... then the Archdiocese may be in danger of having Federal funding curbed or even discontinued'.<sup>229</sup>

State aid directed to specific programs provided only short-term funding. Grant-in-aid schemes, which funded social workers to work with various ethnic communities, were entirely at the whim of bureaucratic policy. In 1985, for example, the Federal Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs 'no longer' required Centacare to provide a special service to Spanish speaking people, even though in Centacare's view there remained significant community demand for this service.<sup>230</sup>

## 6.5 Transformation of institutions

One challenge for Catholic welfare in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century was attracting qualified social workers. Even if church institutions had the resolve or finances to employ social workers, they would have been unable to attract sufficiently qualified Catholic social workers before the 1970s, and it is unlikely that non-Catholics would have been employed in Catholic institutions. In 1962 when Phibbs enquired if the Good Samaritan Order could release two of its trained social workers, including Sr Mary Gregory, the order replied no nuns could be spared because Catholic schools were 'bursting at the seams with migrant

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<sup>227</sup> Constable to staff, 22 April 1982; *ibid.*, 24 December 1982, Constable Papers, CSA.

<sup>228</sup> Constable to Rev E.J. Barry, Chairman, Charitable Works Fund, 17 January 1983, Constable Papers, CSA.

<sup>229</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> Proposal for Organisational Structure of Catholic Family Welfare (Centacare) in the Archdiocese of Sydney and the proposed two new Dioceses, man, n.d. [ca 1985], CSA.

children'.<sup>231</sup> In the same year Phibbs supported a Franciscan sisters' proposal to provide a temporary shelter for families and children.<sup>232</sup> The new work should commence immediately, Phibbs advised Gilroy, otherwise the order's mother general fears other dioceses, seeking religious, might 'snatch... surplus' nuns.<sup>233</sup> If new recruits to staff the homes were unavailable, the CFWB sought to provide development programs for existing religious staff.

Taking up from McCosker's pioneering work in training religious sisters, Phibbs organised a seminar in 1961 to provide 'professional training to the sisters'.<sup>234</sup> More than 80 religious working in institutions attended the seminar, which focused on issues of care and personal attention to children in 'residential' care. Social workers, such as Lewis, did not approach the seminar with an expectation of encouraging de-institutionalisation:

We didn't do much towards the structural change in the child care system, the move from institutional to group homes, but I think we helped many of the sisters to grow to value themselves.<sup>235</sup>

While education seminars helped the religious who staffed institutions the process of influencing the heads of religious orders took considerably longer. In 1964 an exasperated Phibbs wrote to the heads of religious congregations responsible for children's institutions expressing concern about the lack of qualified staff appointed to the homes.<sup>236</sup> He challenged the convention that religious orders appointed their best staff to schools and hospitals, leaving residual members, often older or unsuitable nuns or brothers, for social welfare. Phibbs said to the Major Superiors:

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<sup>231</sup> M. Walsh, *The Good Sams: Sisters of the Good Samaritan, 1857-1969* (Mulgrave, Victoria, John Garratt, 2001) pp: 190-91.

<sup>232</sup> Phibbs to Gilroy, 6 January 1962, CWB Collection, B2734, SAA.

<sup>233</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>234</sup> Lewis, *Always begin with a Story*, p. 176.

<sup>235</sup> *ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>236</sup> Phibbs, Circular to Major Superiors, October 9 1964, p. 1, located in Sisters of Mercy Parramatta Archives; cited by S.M. McGrath, *These Women? Women Religious in the history of the Sisters of Australia, Parramatta, 1888-1988* (Kensington, NSW, UNSW Press, 1988).

It is impossible and unjust, both for the Sisters in the Homes, and for the children, too, to try and operate with an inadequate number of personnel. We would want our homes and Orphanages to measure up at all times to the ideals and standards of modern thought.<sup>237</sup>

The 1960s and 1970s saw increasing pressures on Catholic institutions, in terms of finances, suitable staff and demand for service. Nationally, Catholic orphanages experienced a fall in children being institutionalised. In South Australia, for example, the Greenwood and Largs Bay orphanages recorded an average number of 63-99 children in 1970-71, well down from 145-167 children in 1960-1961.<sup>238</sup> Social worker, Moya Britten-Jones, said the importance of family life over the previous policy of institutionalisation, changing community views and the impact of social work principles had led institutionalisation to be resorted to only when 'home conditions cannot be rectified'.<sup>239</sup>

In NSW professional social workers also influenced the de-institutionalisation process. In the 1960s lay and clerical social workers identified several issues confronting children's homes. In advice to Bishop McCabe, chair of the NSW Episcopal Committee for Dependent Children (ECDC), McCosker said that homes at Albury and Goulburn were in financial difficulties, the Baulkam Hills home had declining numbers of children, and Waitara and Croydon duplicated services.<sup>240</sup> Bishop Toohey of the ECDC supported McCosker's call for the major religious orders to undertake a survey of their residential care institutions.<sup>241</sup> McCosker encouraged the various religious orders to look at the institutions 'as a total service', rather than as autonomous facilities.<sup>242</sup> He noted the declining numbers of brothers and sisters available to work in the

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<sup>237</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> T. Holland, 'New thinking on broken homes', *Southern Cross*, 26 November 1971, p. 1.

<sup>239</sup> *Southern Cross*, 3 November 1972. 'In an interview Britten-Jones described the Children's homes policy as 'a disaster' and some practices were 'archaic'. Britten-Jones wrote a detailed policy paper on the institutions for the archbishop. It was about 20 pages in length. Two research trips to Adelaide could not locate this paper. Interview, Telephone, 8 October 2002.

<sup>240</sup> McCosker to McCabe, 12 May 1967, NCWC Papers, CSSAA.

<sup>241</sup> Toohey to McCosker 22 June 1967, NCWC Papers, CSSAA.

<sup>242</sup> See, for example, McCosker to Rev. Mother Philomena, Secretary, Conference of Major Religious Superiors, 17 May 1967, NCWC Papers, CSSAA.

orphanages and also the interest of religious orders in converting orphanages to educational facilities.<sup>243</sup>

Clergy without social work training but pastoral responsibility for children's institutions began to express concern about standards of care. Fr Anthony Wilkinson in Goulburn, NSW, for example, reported only one of the four nuns employed at an orphanage was able-bodied in 1965.<sup>244</sup> The Catholic Child Welfare Bureau (CCWB) of the Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn claimed the Kenmore orphanage had become 'the refuge of the aged, sick, convalescing and less successful teaching sisters'.<sup>245</sup> It would not be until the mid 1970s that the nuns agreed to place some children in small cottages; the bulk remained in the South Goulburn building. Declining numbers of children, however, meant that conditions were not as cramped as previously.<sup>246</sup>

Conditions at children's homes in Maitland were also unsatisfactory.<sup>247</sup> The Murray-Dwyer home represented a good example of the dilemma facing religious orders in institutional care. In 1968-69 the Daughters of Charity made changes to its Murray-Dwyer home, by establishing two 'scattered homes conducted by foster-parents'.<sup>248</sup> However, the order's shortage of personnel placed in jeopardy a proposed child care centre in Newcastle that would receive and assess children before placing them in group homes.<sup>249</sup> Bishop Toohey encouraged other religious orders to take over the project, but could

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<sup>243</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 15 October 1965, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

<sup>244</sup> Fr A.G. Wilkinson, Addendum to the Recommendations re St John's Boys' Home, Goulburn, 31 March 1965, Archdiocese of Canberra Goulburn Archives (ACGA), cited by Fox, 'The provision of care', p. 350.

<sup>245</sup> CCWB to Archbishop T Cahill, 18 December 1967, CGAA, cited in Fox, 'The provision of care', p. 351.

<sup>246</sup> Fox, 'The provision of care', p. 314.

<sup>247</sup> Carson to CCWB, 28 September 1967, Centacare Newcastle Archives (CNA), cited in Fox, 'The provision of care', p. 351.

<sup>248</sup> Sr Benedict, Supervisor of Social Works, Daughters of Charity to Under-Secretary, Department of Child Welfare and Social Welfare, Sydney, 9 January 1969, Box 14, File No. 109, Orphanages 1969, DOMNA.

<sup>249</sup> Meeting with His Lordship, Bishop Toohey on 31 March 1970, Box 14, File No 109, Orphanages 1969, DOMNA. Bishop Toohey to Mother M. Clare *osf*, Provincial and

not attract interest and the project lapsed.<sup>250</sup> The Daughters of Charity continued to operate group homes in the early 1970s but a combination of staff shortages and inadequate finances placed considerable stress on them.<sup>251</sup>

While social workers universally held concerns about residential care facilities, not every social worker wished the institutions to close. In her memoirs Mary Lewis says: 'We at the bureau had no idea that this might happen, nor was it our intention'.<sup>252</sup> Lewis' view was not shared by McCosker, whose vision for orphanages to be replaced by small group homes was based on changes in Catholic residential care in America. By the early 1970s Centacare was encouraging institutions such as Westmead Boy's Home to employ a trained social worker.<sup>253</sup>

Slowly, religious orders recognised inherent problems in institutional care. In 1972 the NSW Conference of Major Superiors of Women's Religious Institutes agreed to a collaborative approach to plan for the care of the needy in Sydney.<sup>254</sup> The superiors established a family and child welfare advisory committee, with Davoren appointed its secretary.<sup>255</sup> This marked an important step in the congregations seeking 'inter-order' co-operation, something that had rarely happened in the welfare sector. The committee's brief was extended across NSW and the ACT. In 1973, the NCWC identified a shortage of religious sisters working in welfare, arising from demands in education and an

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Superioress, Kedron, Queensland, 17 April 1970, Box 14, File No 109, Orphanages 1969, DOMNA.

<sup>250</sup> Toohey to Clare, 17 April 1970, *op. cit.*,

<sup>251</sup> Sr Julia, Provincial Superior, Daughters of Charity to Toohey, 9 January 1973, Box 14, File No 109, Orphanages 1969, DOMNA.

<sup>252</sup> Lewis, *Always begin with a Story*, pp: 187-188.

<sup>253</sup> G. Burns, *A Simple Work: The Story of St Vincent's Boys Home Westmead 1881-1981* (Westmead, NSW, St Vincent's Home, 1991), p. 220.

<sup>254</sup> Submission by the NSW Conference of Major Religious Superiors to the Bishops of NSW regarding the present state of our child-care services [ca 1975], pp: 2-3. NSW Catholic Social Welfare Commission Collection (CSWCC), CSA.

<sup>255</sup> Davoren to Members, NSW Catholic Social Welfare Commission, 8 May 1975, NSW CSWCC, CSA.

ageing membership, as a 'significant national issue'.<sup>256</sup> Despite greater knowledge of the value of social work, the NCWC remarked that women religious orders were reluctant to 'release' sisters to study social work.<sup>257</sup>

In 1974 the religious superiors acknowledged 'increasing costs, lack of personnel and changing roles of personnel' in children's and other social welfare works, and sought advice from the NSW Bishops.<sup>258</sup> The bishops responded by establishing the NSW Catholic Social Welfare Commission (CSWC), with a mandate to appraise and make recommendations about the institutes' welfare services.<sup>259</sup> The appointments of McCosker as CSWC secretary and Davoren as secretary were important in recognising the lead the institutional church was taking over religious orders.

In a frank admission to the CSWC, the women's institutes acknowledged 'It is now a universally accepted principle of family and child care that caring for a child in an institutional setting is the last resort'.<sup>260</sup> Religious orders also acknowledged that large scale dormitory care was being replaced by cottage-style accommodation and foster care.<sup>261</sup> These remarks, although forty years after the first Australian Catholic social workers had made similar recommendations and ninety-five years after the state had introduced boarding out, marked a watershed. The heads of religious orders recognised the unsustainable nature of children's institutions and said the 'present crisis' concerned finances, staffing, underutilisation of facilities and poor remuneration to lay staff.<sup>262</sup> For sisters working in homes their 'morale... is significantly lower than among sisters in general [due to] age distribution,

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<sup>256</sup> NCWC, Report to the National Conference of Bishops, January 1973, NCWC Papers, CSSAA.

<sup>257</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> NSW Bishops' Commission on Social Welfare, Statement for the Meeting with the Major Superiors, 10 April 1975, NSW CSWCC, CSA.

<sup>259</sup> Davoren to Br Charles, Marist Provincial House, 14 March 1975, NSW Catholic Social Welfare Commission Archives, CSA.

<sup>260</sup> Submission by the NSW Conference of Major Religious Superiors, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>261</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>262</sup> *ibid.*, pp: 1-2.

inadequate training, fragmentary and make-shift staffing patterns, long hours and insufficient break from work'.<sup>263</sup>

Financially, the homes were stretched due to a meagre state subsidy and the added costs of employing lay staff, because of a shortage of younger religious. The orders' submission noted that at least half of their institutions did not pay lay staff according to the appropriate industrial award.<sup>264</sup>

In April 1975 representatives of the major congregations involved in social welfare met with the NSW Bishops' Committee for Social Welfare. Mother de Lourdes, head of the religious women's peak body, conceded that congregations no longer felt social welfare was a task for individual institutes.<sup>265</sup> The church, as a whole, she said had an important role to play. Soon after, the women's institutes agreed to disband their family and child welfare committee, with a view to greater dialogue with archdiocesan welfare services.<sup>266</sup> This decision marked the importance of a diocesan authority, such as Centacare, taking more responsibility for the co-ordination of welfare services. It also paved the way for the closure of most Catholic children's homes, including Bathurst (1975), Waitara and Kincumber (1977), Goulburn (1978), Croydon and Lane Cove (1979) and Ryde (1980).<sup>267</sup> In 1978 the Bishops of NSW and the ACT formally endorsed small group homes for children in need as the preferred model of care, stating that institutions should be advised that 'that such children will be placed in substitute residential care only as a last resort and then preferably in small group settings'.<sup>268</sup> The

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<sup>263</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>264</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>265</sup> Minutes of the NSW Bishops' Committee on Social Welfare Meeting with Major Superiors of Congregations involved in social welfare programmes, 10 April 1975, CSA.

<sup>266</sup> Sr de Lourdes sgs to Hon. Secretary, NSW Catholic Social Welfare Commission, 19 February 1976, NSW Catholic Social Welfare Commission Archives, CSA.

<sup>267</sup> See, for example, letter from Provincial Superior, St Michael's Novitiate, Goulburn to Bishop J.A. Morgan, Canberra, Catholic Welfare, 1971-1980, AGCA.

<sup>268</sup> Catholic Social Welfare, Report of Bishops of NSW and ACT, Meeting, Sydney, 26 January 1978, Catholic Welfare, 1971-1980, F12, AGCA.



bishops, influenced no doubt by McCosker, also agreed that foster care services should be 'supervised by professionally qualified people'.<sup>269</sup>

Centacare also established the Catholic Children's Homes Inquiry Service (CCHIS), which targeted families at risk and children most likely in need of residential care.<sup>270</sup> The CCHIS co-ordinated admissions to homes, including Westmead and Baulkham Hills. Nevertheless, as Fox reports, the bureaux had 'limited control' and 'no right to follow through with care for clients whose admission they arranged and these children could be transferred between institutions without reference to the Bureaux'.<sup>271</sup> The closure of the CCHIS in October 1982, replaced by the Children-in-Families program, was further recognition of the declining role of institutions in NSW, which by then numbered only four.<sup>272</sup>

## 6.6 Last clerical director

Fr John Usher, the fifth and perhaps last clerical director of Centacare Sydney, came to the position following his leadership of Catholic welfare programs in western Sydney. Centacare Sydney's decentralisation began in 1972 when Davoren re-examined earlier proposals to locate some services in western Sydney. The bureau recognised that the cost of transport and distance deterred many people seeking assistance at Centacare's Sydney office.<sup>273</sup> In early 1973 Centacare appointed Mark Conway to start a small office at Parramatta, which, in its first two months, assisted more than 300 people.<sup>274</sup> Davoren told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that 'we found there were even more

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<sup>269</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> Usher, Centacare 1940-1988, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>271</sup> Fox, 'The provision of care', p. 284.

<sup>272</sup> Constable to Director, Office of Child Care, Department of Social Security, September 1983, CSA.

<sup>273</sup> Davoren to Freeman, 30 November 1971, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

<sup>274</sup> Davoren to Freeman, 16 February 1973. CWB Collection, B2735, SAA

people who just didn't have the fares to travel into the city'.<sup>275</sup> Davoren felt the office would be more strategically placed at Blacktown to serve the [western] part of the Diocese'.<sup>276</sup> In 1977 Alice O'Connor started a 'limited counselling service' at Blacktown and was joined soon after by Reid.<sup>277</sup> However, the impetus for developing Catholic welfare at Blacktown would come following Usher's appointment.<sup>278</sup>

#### 6.6.1 'Charity stopped us from being hungry'

The fifth director of Centacare Sydney had charity stamped in his pedigree. John Usher was born in 1940 in the (then unfashionable) inner-western suburb of Rodd Point. He says his 19<sup>th</sup> century Irish ancestors had 'no surplus wealth and in times of hardship depended on the charity of the church'.<sup>279</sup> As members of the 'deserving poor', they received aid from the NSW Benevolent Society.<sup>280</sup> In family folklore, 'charity stopped us from being hungry, but is also stopped us from holding our heads up in public'.<sup>281</sup> This culture influenced Usher's formative years. His parents, who had delayed marriage until after the Great Depression because of limited financial means, 'taught me a lot about equity and fairness', Usher says.<sup>282</sup> In a recent media interview Usher confirmed his childhood experiences left him with a passion for social justice.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 2 April 1973, p. 9.

<sup>276</sup> Davoren, The future of social services, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>277</sup> Management Committee, Centacare Blacktown, 'Centacare West: A Report on the development of Centacare, the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau in the outer western Region of the Archdiocese of Sydney,' October 1979, Westcare Files, CSA.

<sup>278</sup> Rare Books Collection, Fisher Library, University of Sydney.

<sup>279</sup> J. Usher, Centacare's Challenges for the 90's, After Dinner Speech, Centacare NSW Conference, 21 February 1992, p. 1, CSA.

<sup>280</sup> For an account of some of Usher's maternal ancestors, see H.C. Maher, *Elizabeth*, (Joondalup, Western Australia 2003).

<sup>281</sup> Usher, Centacare, 1940-1988, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>282</sup> Interview with Fr John Usher, Rodd Point, NSW, 2 August 2001.

<sup>283</sup> V. Muzik, 'Honours for Centacare Director', *Western Suburbs Courier*, 26 January 2004, p. 3.

By the time Usher had completed his Leaving Certificate at St Patrick's College, Strathfield in 1957 he was the Haberfield branch president of the Catholic Youth Organisation (CYO).<sup>284</sup> He intended to become a teacher, but during his holidays he gained casual employment at the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics (CBCS).<sup>285</sup> He accepted a permanent job at the CBCS and commended a commerce degree at the University of New South Wales. After four years at the CBCS Usher moved to the Catholic sector, firstly as assistant secretary to the Knights of the Southern Cross, which Edmund Campion describes as a 'secret society of Catholic men, predominantly middle class, who acted as a counterweight to Masonic influence in the community'.<sup>286</sup> Usher's experience confirmed the organisation's 'insularity' and 'minimal interest in social justice'.<sup>287</sup> He then worked for the Paulian Association, which offered young Catholics a broader perspective on Catholic social teachings, and enabled him to participate in the first fundraising appeal by lay Catholics for overseas development projects in 1964.<sup>288</sup>

In the mid 1960s Usher's wide range of contacts attracted the attention of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). Usher declined an ASIO invitation to become an intelligence officer.<sup>289</sup> Instead he commenced studies for the priesthood in 1967. After being ordained in 1973 Usher's first parish ministry was at Mt Pritchard.

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<sup>284</sup> Haberfield Catholic Youth organisation, Black and White Revue – '64, pham. Usher was the production's compere, JUA.

<sup>285</sup> 'John Usher', Chapter Two in D. Fox and N. Miller (eds.), *An Oral History of Marriage Counselling in Australia: From Managing Well to Doing Well* (Canberra, Les Harvey Foundation, 2000), p. 29.

<sup>286</sup> E. Campion, *Rockchoppers: Growing up Catholic in Australia* (Ringwood, Victoria, Penguin, 1982), p. 167. 'Knights of the Southern Cross lift veil of secrecy', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 November 1987, p. 5.

<sup>287</sup> Usher, Interview, 2001.

<sup>288</sup> This appeal is known as Project Compassion under the auspices of Caritas Australia.

<sup>289</sup> Usher, Interview, 2001.

An opportunity for Usher to study social work occurred after the resignation of the archdiocese's nominated cleric, Kevin McCarthy. In 1970 Davoren indicated to Cardinal James Freeman that Usher might be 'a suitable' replacement.<sup>290</sup> When approached by Davoren, Usher recalls that he felt his interests at the time lay more in catechesis. He weighed up the offer, concerned that if he turned it down he may not get a later opportunity for post-graduate study.<sup>291</sup> Davoren's positive impressions of Usher led to a recommendation to Freeman that Usher commence social work studies at Sydney University. Freeman, a cautious decision-maker, preferred priests to have solid pastoral experience, often 10 years, before they moved into specialist roles. Unlike those priests who had entered the seminary straight after completing school, Usher's employment and worldly experiences gave him a good insight into personal relationships. Freeman, following the precedent set by his predecessors, agreed Usher could study social work on the proviso that he joined Centacare upon graduation.

#### 6.6.2 A student of Marxism

In contrast to the fairly narrow seminary training, Sydney University exposed Usher to major political and community issues such as the Vietnam War. He says he enjoyed studies in government, politics and sociology, and the links between Catholicism and public policy.<sup>292</sup> Usher says that like 'most pretenders... I became a student of Marxism... [but] I didn't become a Marxist... because I couldn't grow long hair and couldn't stand having a scruffy beard.'<sup>293</sup>

Davoren spoke of Usher's 'brilliant' studies – Australia's first Catholic priest to graduate with an honours degree in social work – and advised Freeman to appoint Usher into a generalist welfare role for two years to 'consolidate the

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<sup>290</sup> Phibbs to Gilroy, 24 September 1970, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA. Davoren to Freeman, 20 August 1974, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

<sup>291</sup> Usher, Interview, 2001.

<sup>292</sup> Usher, Interview, 2004.

<sup>293</sup> J. Usher, Community Welfare - Privatisation or Survival, Address on the Occasion of the Opening of the New Offices of Centacare in the Diocese of Lismore, (man, n.d.) CSA.

knowledge he has acquired and learn about the organisation at all levels to prepare better for the tasks that lie ahead'.<sup>294</sup> Although Davoren suggested Usher 'not be given any title or special responsibility', Freeman ignored this advice and appointed Usher to the new position of Director, Centacare Parramatta in January 1979.<sup>295</sup> Freeman's decision may have been influenced by the precedent of McCosker, Phibbs and Davoren each receiving formal titles on their appointment to the CFWB.<sup>296</sup> Further, Freeman's 'lifetime friend' and confidante, McCosker, aware of discontent at Parramatta, may have wanted Usher to try to improve relations between its ten social workers and head office. Usher recalls Davoren's 'anger' when he learned of his title.<sup>297</sup>

Soon after starting at Parramatta, Usher felt he could make a better contribution in a more grassroots setting.<sup>298</sup> Davoren supported the decision, stating the 'Parramatta [branch] would be more strategically placed at Blacktown to serve the Western part of the diocese'.<sup>299</sup> Bishop Bede Heather, recently appointed to Sydney's outer western region, facilitated Usher starting a counselling service in early 1979 in a parish property.<sup>300</sup>

Wendy Weeks has observed that the 1970s represented 'a new era for the welfare state in Australia', underpinned by the reformist principles of the Whitlam Government.<sup>301</sup> The development of the Catholic Welfare Outer Western Region (WestCare) reflected this new sentiment. The following

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<sup>294</sup> Davoren to Freeman, 22 March 1978, CWB Collection, B2735, CSA.

<sup>295</sup> According to official documents at CSA Usher officially commenced employment on 19 February 1979. J.J. Usher, Personal File, CSA.

<sup>296</sup> Both McCosker and Phibbs were appointed Deputy Directors before they studied social work; Similarly, Davoren was appointed Assistant Director.

<sup>297</sup> Usher, Interview, 2004.

<sup>298</sup> *ibid.*,

<sup>299</sup> Davoren, The future of social services, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>300</sup> Usher, Interview 2001.

<sup>301</sup> Weeks, *Issues Facing Australian Families*, p. 127.

comment by Usher in 1983 parallels the 1940 submission 'Needs in Catholic Social Work Field' to establish Centacare 40 years earlier<sup>302</sup>.

It seems to me that many well meaning and extremely benevolent welfare agencies, in giving help to people, in showing them how to cope make them more dependent, make them more powerless, destroy a little more of their dignity, their self esteem and their sense of control over the world.<sup>303</sup>

In the first month of operation Usher supported 60 client families, many of whom he described as being 'multi-problem families'.<sup>304</sup> Another 250 people went on a waiting list, indicative of the high level of unmet demand.<sup>305</sup> Westcare had little operating income, but received administrative, moral and financial support from a number of lay supporters, including Pat Patterson, Frances Crogan, Eunice and Fred Cutcliffe, and Patricia Burke. Fred Cutcliffe, a local businessman, founded a management committee to support Centacare's work.<sup>306</sup> Fr Paul Hanna, the Blacktown parish administrator, was caught a little unaware of Usher's new service, but Burke recalls 'Hanna being very helpful in setting up Westcare'.<sup>307</sup>

Within half a year the number of volunteers had risen to thirty-five and volunteer groups had spread to other parishes, including South Blacktown, Greystanes, Mt Druitt, and Richmond.<sup>308</sup> In June 1979, Bishops Murphy (Inner-Western Region) and Heather agreed that Usher could move permanently to Blacktown to consolidate the 'community based model' of welfare services. 'Westcare' offered support to what Usher described as 'multi-problem families'.<sup>309</sup> The 'symptoms' of these families included an alcoholic male head, substance abuse among children, domestic violence, truancy, and 'a

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<sup>302</sup> C. Moffit, E. Davidson, E. Lyons, N. Parker, 'Needs in the Catholic Social Work Field' (Sydney, 5 November 1940), CSA.

<sup>303</sup> 'A message for 1983 from Father John Usher', *Westcare Annual Report 1982-83*, Westacare Archives, CSA.

<sup>304</sup> Usher, *Taking Control*, p. 19.

<sup>305</sup> Fox and Miller, (eds.), *An Oral History*, p. 32.

<sup>306</sup> Interview with Mrs Frances Gleeson, Cabarita, Sydney, 24 October 2002.

<sup>307</sup> Interview, Mrs Patricia Burke, Balmain, NSW, 6 July 2006.

<sup>308</sup> Usher to Constable, ca July 1980, CSA.

thoroughgoing sense of hopelessness and despair'.<sup>310</sup> The model relied on trained social workers and volunteers working in partnership. Using voluntary workers, however, ran counter to the ideal of trained staff. Westacare provided training courses for the growing number of volunteers, both men and women in a departure from older voluntary models. Volunteers provided 'primary and secondary prevention', leaving social welfare professionals to respond to the rising number of 'tertiary or crisis cases'.<sup>311</sup>

Centacare's administrators were a little unnerved by the rapid development of Westcare. In a letter addressed to the 'Director, Parish Social Services - Blacktown', Constable expressed several reservations about Usher's *modus operandi*. Firstly, he claimed that Usher operated without a 'statement of duties', despite requests to furnish one.<sup>312</sup> Usher had, however, developed an 'official constitution' which indicated that WestCare 'acted under the auspices of the Catholic Regional Bishop'.<sup>313</sup> Secondly, there was ambiguity about Usher's employment status. Usher considered himself responsible only to the archbishop of Sydney. The archdiocese paid his salary from the pastoral revenue account of Dundas parish, while Centacare provided a car allowance and 'superannuation'.<sup>314</sup> While Constable perceived Usher as an employee, Usher said he was 'a Centacare counsellor under Fr Davoren's direction: I did not think it appropriate to consider myself an employee of the agency'.<sup>315</sup> Thirdly, Constable expressed concern that Usher had proceeded with an 'extension of Centacare services' when Usher's role was to develop a parish-based counselling service.<sup>316</sup> There is no evidence that Heather or Hanna

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<sup>309</sup> Usher, Centacare, 1940-1988, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>310</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>311</sup> Management Committee, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>312</sup> Executive Director, Centacare Sydney to Director, Parish Social Services – Blacktown, 15 November 1979, CSA.

<sup>313</sup> The Official Constitution of 'Westcare - Catholic Welfare Outer Western Region' n.d. [ca 1980], Westcare Files, CSA.

<sup>314</sup> Conway to Constable, 12 February 1979, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

<sup>315</sup> Usher to Freeman, 3 December 1982, WestCare File, CSA.

<sup>316</sup> Executive Director to Director Parish Services, *op. cit.*,

formally replied to Constable, which suggests they may have been comfortable with Usher's role as a Centacare member with a special mandate to develop welfare services 'for distressed families in the Outer Western Region'.<sup>317</sup> In an act of diplomacy, though, Usher relinquished the title of director, Centacare Parramatta and he also increased the frequency of meetings between Westcare and Centacare.<sup>318</sup> Usher continued to work in partnership with local volunteers and clergy to develop Westcare. After a year he advised Constable that it was appropriate for the volunteers 'to begin to develop their own identity and to operate as a separate voluntary agency'.<sup>319</sup> Usher added:

the spirit of co-operation and reciprocity which has been established between the Centacare administration and the staff, and the volunteer network and management committee ought to be seen as an important part of intra-Church welfare development and service in this part of Sydney.<sup>320</sup>

By the end of 1979 Westcare supported 140 families with 'chronic medical and psychological problems'.<sup>321</sup> Soon after, it extended its role to provide personal development groups, special seminars about alcoholism, community development skills, networking and fundraising. The agency recognised the influence of alcohol in many marital and relationship cases and appointed a second welfare worker.<sup>322</sup>

Looking back on this period, Usher described Westcare's early years as 'heady days', when 'community development' was a reality rather than a relic in a social worker's repertoire'.<sup>323</sup> Usher's finely tuned political skills and ability to overcome jealousies from within the social work profession had won through. Usher undertook a national study titled 'The role of the Christian Family in the Modern World', and with the support of the pastorally-minded Heather, initiated

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<sup>317</sup> Usher to Freeman, 3 December 1982, *op. cit.*,

<sup>318</sup> See for example, Usher to Constable, 8 November 1979, CSA.

<sup>319</sup> Usher to Constable, undated Westcare files, CSA.

<sup>320</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>321</sup> Usher, 'Taking Control', p. 21.

<sup>322</sup> A Report on the meeting held between the volunteer committee at Centacare Blacktown, Bishop Bede Heather and Mr Roger Constable and Mr Ray Reid of Centacare Staff', ca 1979, CSA.



a broad consultative study in Western Sydney with the aim of preparing a localised document.<sup>324</sup> By June 1983 Westcare employed five trained social workers, apart from Usher, and had come of age as a 'voluntary support network to which any person may belong'.<sup>325</sup> Usher was set to embark on leading a larger and more complex welfare organisation where he could fully utilise his clerical and political skills.

### 6.6.3 'a hands-on director'

When an opportunity for Usher to move to Centacare Sydney – Westcare's parent body – arose, Usher relished the opportunity. In late 1982 Davoren resigned from the priesthood and as Centacare's Sydney director.<sup>326</sup> In correspondence to Freeman, Usher outlined that 'my strong personal conviction [is] that the Church's welfare agency needs to have greater links with local people, pastors and regions'.<sup>327</sup> Usher indicated his willingness to accept a role on an interim committee, chaired by McCosker, to manage Centacare. Moreover if the cardinal was considering appointing another priest as director, Usher asked if he could be considered for the role.<sup>328</sup> Usher said he would 'operate very differently from the former director', and, if appointed, he would be a more hands-on director.<sup>329</sup> Unlike his predecessor who held several positions, including parish priest of Haberfield, Usher envisaged working full time of the bureau. The archdiocese's council of priests 'discussed at length' Usher's letter in January 1983.<sup>330</sup> Freeman, nearing the end of his tenure, appointed an interim advisory committee to manage the agency, which

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<sup>323</sup> Father John Usher - A Personal Report, man, n.d., CSA.

<sup>324</sup> *The Christian Family in the Outer Western Region of Sydney* (Blacktown, ca 1982), Westcare Files, CSA.

<sup>325</sup> Usher, *Westcare News*, August 1983, p. 4.

<sup>326</sup> Archbishop James Carroll to Davoren, 24 November 1982, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

<sup>327</sup> Usher to Freeman, 3 December 1982, p. 1. CSA.

<sup>328</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>329</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>330</sup> Freeman to Usher, 1 February 1983, CSA.

included McCosker, Usher, Fr Bill Challenor, Sr Mary Gregory, and the SVdP's Bernard Blackstock.<sup>331</sup> The committee's brief was to review Centacare's operations and to make recommendations about the regionalisation of Centacare.<sup>332</sup> Freeman regarded Centacare's work as 'most exacting and an important part of the social apostolate of the archdiocese'.<sup>333</sup> Nevertheless, the archdiocese reminded Centacare of the tight financial situation, but its 'special circumstances' guaranteed a higher budget.<sup>334</sup>

With Freeman's retirement the Centacare director's position remained vacant until the appointment of Archbishop Edward Clancy as his successor. In June 1983 Clancy appointed Usher as the fifth clerical director of Centacare Sydney.<sup>335</sup> Constable who had struggled with Usher's Westcare role resigned in October 1983.<sup>336</sup> Usher's initial focus was on finance and staff morale. In his first submission to the Archdiocesan CWF in December 1983, Usher highlighted the bureau's shortfall in finances and non-payment of items such as salaries, rent, superannuation, rent and tax totalling more than \$27,000.<sup>337</sup> However, he advised the CWF that despite wages and rental increases and the establishment of a service in Sydney's northern suburbs, Centacare would not be seeking large increases from the CWF because of a 'substantial increase in our Government funding'.<sup>338</sup> In January 1984 Centacare received an annual subsidy of \$260,000 from the Archdiocese.<sup>339</sup> In a discussion paper

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<sup>331</sup> Freeman to McCosker, 25 January 1983, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

<sup>332</sup> Freeman to Usher, 1 February 1983, Usher Collection, CSA.

<sup>333</sup> Freeman to McCosker, 25 January 1983, McCosker Collection, CSA.

<sup>334</sup> Rev. Peter Ingham, Archdiocesan Secretary to Roger Constable, 17 February 1983, Executive Director's File, CSA.

<sup>335</sup> Archbishop Clancy's appointment was announced in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 29 March 1983, p. 9. Clancy to Usher, 16 June 1983, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA. Freeman advised Constable on 17 June 1983, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

<sup>336</sup> Constable to Clancy, 7 October 1983; Usher to Clancy, 7 October 1983, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA. Constable's resignation was effective at 10 October 1983,

<sup>337</sup> Usher to Fr Barry, Chairman, Charitable Works Fund Committee, 12 December 1983, p. 1, CSA.

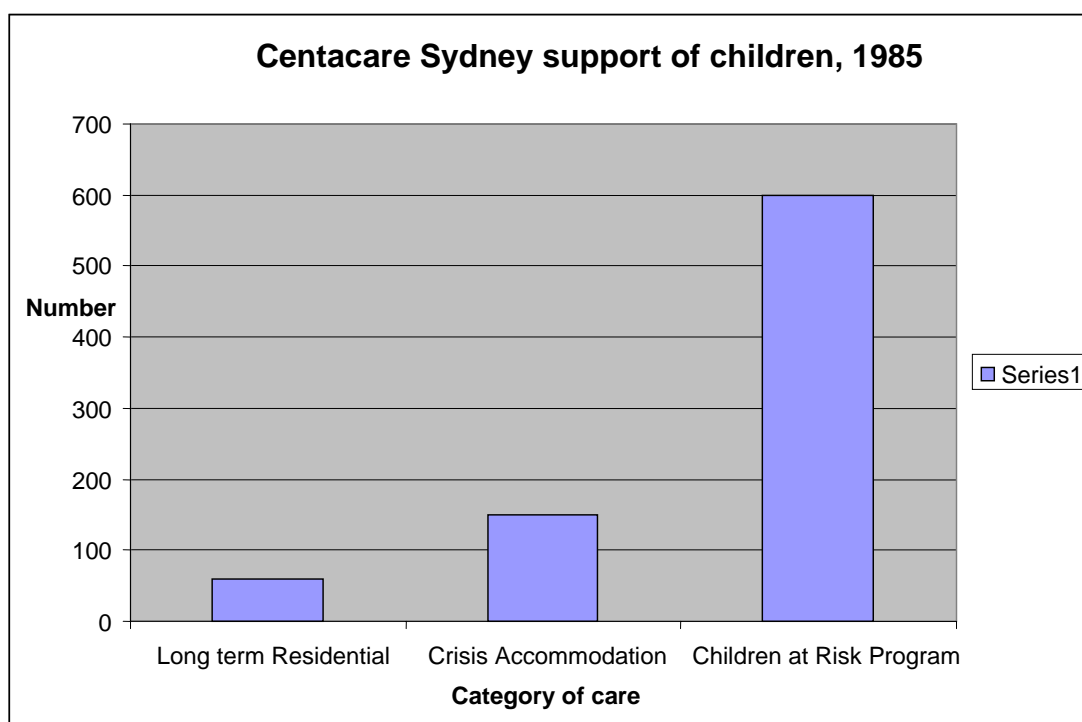
<sup>338</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>339</sup> Charitable Works Fund, Archdiocese of Sydney, Report to Priests, January 1984, CSA.

a year later, Usher remarked that ‘it is clear that the Counselling and Education Services are grossly understaffed if they are to provide the types of services being demanded by the community’.<sup>340</sup>

Another report by Usher confirmed that most religious orders had withdrawn from the work of caring for homeless children by the mid 1980s. The agency, he argued, had been responsible for a ‘number of significant interventions’, including providing programs for alternate care of children ‘based on the key principle of substitute family care, and, wherever possible, restitution to the child’s natural family’.<sup>341</sup> The following table illustrates the decline in long term residential care by 1985, the end point of this thesis.

**TABLE 6.2: CENTACARE SYDNEY: CARE OF CHILDREN, 1985**<sup>342</sup>



In the mid 1980s planning occurred for the new dioceses of Broken Bay and Parramatta. Usher prepared a position paper on how welfare services might operate in the two new dioceses.<sup>343</sup>

<sup>340</sup> J. Usher, Discussion Paper on the Administrative and Professional Structure of Centacare during 1988/89, p. 4.

<sup>341</sup> Usher, ‘Taking Control’, p. 17.

<sup>342</sup> Usher, Centacare Catholic Family Welfare, A Review of the Agency, 1985, CSA.

One example of Usher's concern was advice from some of his staff that referrals from a SVdP home to social workers 'were not being made early enough'.<sup>344</sup> In correspondence to Norma Parker Brown in 1991, Usher says that he did not wish the Sydney bureau to follow the same 'fate' as Melbourne, which in the 1960s and 1970s had narrowed its services to personal counselling.<sup>345</sup>

Financially, by the mid 1980s Centacare Sydney had the most solid financial base since its inception. How did an agency that had struggled so much in its first three decades become more financially secure? The answer lies in government aid. By 1985 more than forty per cent of the Sydney agency's funding came from government, as the following table shows:

**TABLE 6.3:**

**CENTACARE FUNDING, 1981-85<sup>346</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1981-82</b>	<b>1983-83</b>	<b>1983-84</b>	<b>1984-85</b>
Total Costs	\$575,101	\$585,632	\$683,341	\$859,614
Government Contribution	37.6 %	42.2%	46.8%	38.5%
CWF Contribution	50.3%	41.4%	39.2%	31.9%
Centacare Fundraising	11.6%	12.4%	13.1%	28.9%

In analysis of these figures, Usher noted that the government's contribution had fallen between 1983-84 and 1984-85 because of the 'gradual decrease in the Archdiocese contribution'.<sup>347</sup> In retrospect, Constable's advice a few years earlier, about the possible implications of not matching government, had proved to be correct.

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<sup>343</sup> J. Usher, Proposal for Organisational structure of Catholic Family Welfare (Centacare) in the Archdiocese of Sydney and the proposed two new Dioceses, May 1984.

<sup>344</sup> Usher to B. Blackstock, 12 October 1983, SVdP File, Chief Executive Officer's Box 12, CSA.

<sup>345</sup> Usher to Norma Parker Brown, 12 March 1991, CSA.

<sup>346</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

## 6.7 Regional Services

Centacare Sydney supported the development of diocesan welfare bureau in other dioceses. This section briefly reviews the two other large diocesan welfare services in NSW: Canberra-Goulburn and Maitland-Newcastle.

### 6.7.1 Canberra & Goulburn

The Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn moved into professional welfare services in the mid 1950s when its second archbishop, Eris O'Brien<sup>348</sup> - an important supporter of the establishment of Sydney's bureau - established a Diocesan Catholic Child Welfare Bureau (CCWB) and appointed Fr Anthony Wilkinson as inaugural director. The CCWB's main focus was to 'assist the Sisters of Mercy staff' at St Joseph's Girls Home and St John Boy's Home at Kenmore and 'to offer advice to parents or guardians seeking admission of children'.<sup>349</sup> This advice led to a large reduction in the number of children placed in the two institutions. By 1961 St John's cared for less than half its capacity of 120 boys; likewise, St Joseph's had only 42 out of a possible 106 inmates. These figures reflected, in part, the influence of the CCWB making recommendations about which children should be placed in residential care.<sup>350</sup> O'Brien described Wilkinson as 'progressive in outlook, well balanced in his judgement, manly, forthright but considerate'.<sup>351</sup> In 1964 Wilkinson became chaplain to Kenmore Mental Hospital and the Goulburn Training College in

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<sup>347</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>348</sup> Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn, 1953-1966. For more biographical and careers detail on O'Brien see B. Nairn, 'Eris Michael O'Brien (1895-1974) Obituary', *Journal of Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 12, 1990; E. Johnston, 'Eris O'Brien: historian and scholar', *Journal of Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 24. No. 2003.

<sup>349</sup> An introduction to St Joseph's Girls' Home, Kenmore (Goulburn), pham. n.d. Child Welfare Committee 1952-1967, QJ1 24 F19, ACGA.

<sup>350</sup> Catholic Child Welfare Bureau, Annual Report, 30 June 1961, Child Welfare Committee 1952-1967, QJ1 24 F19, ACGA.

<sup>351</sup> Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn to Rev Doug Cole, Secretary, CCAC, 25 November 1964, CCAC Files, SAA.

1964. A senior officer of the department of health complimented Wilkinson on his pastoral approach.<sup>352</sup>

The CCWB continued to operate separately and the archdiocese established a Catholic Marriage Guidance Bureau (CMGB) in Canberra in 1960. The first director, theologian and canon lawyer, Fr Kevin Barry-Cotter, found the role frustrating, because he was increasingly expected to provide general counselling and welfare services, which he considered outside his expertise.<sup>353</sup>

In 1966, Barry-Cotter, with the support of Bishop John Cullinane organised an unprecedented gathering of representatives of fifteen Catholic social welfare organisations working in the archdiocese to review the current situation. Barry-Cotter 'remarked that for too long, Catholic welfare had been given a back seat in the archdiocese' and that the church's spreading of the faith remained restricted to 'one channel – education'.<sup>354</sup> Wilkinson, representing Goulburn's children's homes, described financial support from a recent diocesan appeal for the homes as 'deplorable'.<sup>355</sup> The meeting carried a resolution, proposed by Wilkinson, that the archbishop appoint a full time priest director qualified in social work.<sup>356</sup> Following the meeting Barry-Cotter advised Archbishop O'Brien of the inadequacies of the CMGB being expected to function as a generic Catholic welfare bureau *in fieri*.<sup>357</sup> Barry-Cotter felt the establishment of a Catholic Welfare Organisation (CWO) 'would make its mark on the community in another field besides... education'.<sup>358</sup> The archdiocese agreed to the name

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<sup>352</sup> Dr David Morgan to Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn, 31 January 1968, Hospital NSW Kenmore, 1966-1974, QJI F4, ACGA.

<sup>353</sup> Barry-Cotter to O'Brien, 22 August 1966, p. 2 Catholic Family Welfare Bureau and Marriage Guidance Centre (CFWB and MGC), QJI 24, ACGA.

<sup>354</sup> Report of a General Meeting to assess the position of Catholic Welfare in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, 30 July 1966, p. 3, CFWB and MGC, QJI 24 ACGA.

<sup>355</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>357</sup> Barry-Cotter, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>358</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

change, but without a priest trained in social work, Barry-Cotter was re-appointed as CWO director.

In 1973 the CWO's second director, Fr Barney Lynch lamented the organisation's inefficient and diminishing services. Lynch reluctantly advised his bishop that 'steps must be taken urgently to put Catholic Social Welfare on a sound footing' and if the archdiocese could not provide funding for a full-time social worker and adequate secretarial staff, it would close its doors by year end.<sup>359</sup> In a supportive reply Cahill indicated he was seeking assistance and advice from Cardinal Freeman and Fr Davoren.<sup>360</sup> There was, however, no short term improvement. In 1975 an archdiocesan advisory welfare council was established, with Lynch as chairperson. In 1977, when asked to provide advice, Fr (now Archbishop) Barry Hickey of Perth, the founding director of Perth Centrecare suggested that the priest director of the Geelong bureau be considered to head up the proposed Canberra bureau.<sup>361</sup> Lynch, in contrast, recommended Phibbs, and following discussions with Sydney, Phibbs was appointed in July 1977. In the following month Phibbs opened the archdiocese's CFWB, with a half-time social worker.<sup>362</sup>

#### 6.7.2 Maitland-Newcastle

In 1958 the Diocese of Maitland commenced a diocesan welfare bureau, and a trained social worker, Fr John Carson, commenced at the agency in March 1961.<sup>363</sup> The Maitland bureau's statistics reflected its focus on marriage and youth. In June 1961, of a total of 167 interviews, 73 involved marital problems, 30 with troubled youth and 30 placing youth in orphanages.<sup>364</sup> Carson felt that

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<sup>359</sup> Lynch to Cullinane, 14 May 1973, CGWB and MGC, QJ1 78 F11, ACGA.

<sup>360</sup> Cahill to Lynch, 8 June 1973, CGWB and MGC, QJ1 78 F11, ACGA

<sup>361</sup> Hickey to Cahill 16 May 1977; Phibbs to Commonwealth Attorney General's Department, 15 November 1977, ACGA.

<sup>362</sup> Phibbs to Cahill, 25 August 1977, ACGA.

<sup>363</sup> The Diocese did not become known as Maitland-Newcastle until 1995. See letter from Julie Cox, DOMNA archivist to writer, 19 July 2006.

<sup>364</sup> Carson to Toohey, 3 July 1961, CFWB, Box 8, Envelope 60, DOMNA.

a general acceptance of the CFWB was reflected by 'persons for all classes of society seeking assistance'.<sup>365</sup>

By mid 1963 Carson reported on the bureau's increase in operations. Marital problems remained the largest number of interviews - at one third of the total. There were 146 interviews about adoption, leading to 71 adoptions.<sup>366</sup> Bishop Toohey also entrusted responsibility to Carson to work closely with the children's institutions and advised them that he had requested 'Fr Carson to accept the onus for the future admission to our orphanages, to make personal investigation of the back-ground of each case, to supervise all requests for the State'.<sup>367</sup> A shortage of diocesan funding was evident in the 1967 financial return. Of the income of £7,505, receipts from the two institutions - Monte Pio and Murray Dwyer contributed about 55 per cent; the bulk of the remainder came from 'sponsors collections and donations'.<sup>368</sup>

The Maitland CFWB continued to expand its service in the 1960s including marital guidance and support for unmarried mothers, court chaplaincy, placement of children into institutions. Carson took a particular interest in supporting the needs of unmarried mothers. In some cases these mothers agreed to adoptions through Catholic institutions, the Salvation Army Hospital at Merewether and Royal Newcastle Hospital.<sup>369</sup> In addition, Carson reported that a large number of other pregnant girls proceeded to marriage, despite the bureau's advice to the contrary.<sup>370</sup> In the area of court support, the CFWB contacted and offered support to the parents of more than 260 Catholic children who appeared before the Newcastle Children's Court.<sup>371</sup> The relevant parish priest was also contacted which promoted local support for families.

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<sup>365</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>366</sup> Carson to Toohey 12 August 1963, CFWB, Box 8, Envelope 60, DOMNA.

<sup>367</sup> Toohey to Mother Thomas, 13 April 1961, CFWB, Box 8, Envelope 60, DOMNA.

<sup>368</sup> CFWB, Statement of Receipts and Payments at 31/12/67, Box 8, Envelope 60, DOMNA.

<sup>369</sup> Carson to Toohey, 18 August 1966, p 2, Box 8, Envelope 60, DOMNA.

<sup>370</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>371</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.



A financial shortfall impacted on Maitland, as it had done on other bureaux. In 1968 Carson reported that 'lack of finance created the greatest problem as it makes expansion impossible' and the bureau was unable to appoint full time social workers.<sup>372</sup> Indicative of financial frustrations, Carson considered transferring the bureau to the care of the St Vincent de Paul Society. Bishop Toohey, undoubtedly sought advice from his close colleague, Monsignor McCosker and the idea remained dormant.<sup>373</sup>

## 6.8 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the Catholic welfare landscape in NSW between 1960 and 1985. It was a period of growth and turmoil as well as lost opportunities. While Catholic social work in NSW continued to professionalise, the path remained at times turbulent and unclear. Disputes within the Sydney bureaux between 1975 and 1983 reflected poor clerical leadership and an inability by the institutional church to recognise the changing nature of community values and the importance of engaging with lay social workers.

Centacare directors – McCosker, Phibbs and Davoren – were trained in the pre-Vatican II period, where the emphasis was solidly on clerical dominance of church matters. McCosker and Davoren's pastoral care approach reflected deep commitment for the disadvantaged, yet on an organisational level each had some difficulty working alongside religious sisters and lay people. Phibbs, regarded by colleagues as theologically conservative, showed a less clerical attitude and was one of the first diocesan welfare directors to recommend lay participation at senior policy levels. Supported by Peter Travers of Adelaide, Phibbs pushed for women to be included in Catholic social welfare peak bodies, and called for the church to decentralise services to outer suburban areas where needs were unmet.

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<sup>372</sup> Carson to Rev W.J. Foley of Perth, Western Australia, 22 August 1968, Box 131, File 3, Catholic Episcopal and Migration Welfare, Correspondence, Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Perth (ARCAP).

<sup>373</sup> *ibid.*

Usher, with the benefit of having observed the varying styles of his predecessors, displayed a more measured approach. A fine intellect, combined with a real interest in peoples' experiences, gave him a natural aptitude for social work. While benefiting from McCosker's mentoring and political antenna, Usher showed more diplomatic tendencies, and in doing so resembled somewhat the leadership style of another Catholic welfare leader, Bishop Perkins. Usher's studies – during the restless 1970s – gave him an insight into the growing non-conformity of social workers, which proved invaluable as he established Westcare and also embarked on the directorship of Centacare. The *Sydney Morning Herald* aptly described Usher as a 'shrewd political operator... [with] a fondness for the races, the trots, poker machines'.<sup>374</sup>

The late 1970s turmoil in Centacare reflected in part a new activism within the social work profession and society generally. Lay executive directors were appointed without clarity in terms of their authority and relationships with other staff. With McCosker's encouragement, Davoren focused on national issues – which will be reviewed in the next chapter – but in doing so Australia's largest diocesan bureau slipped in terms of service delivery and reputation. Davoren's flair for policy issues outweighed his operational effectiveness. In retrospect, Cardinal Freeman's concern about Davoren relinquishing operational control of Centacare proved correct. The tumultuous directorship of Constable, for example, replaced the teamwork approach that clerics such as McCosker and Phibbs had brought to the bureau.

In the broader Catholic welfare sector the major change in this period was the transformation from large children's institutions to small group homes. Historian, Margaret Walsh, refers to the difficulties experienced by younger nuns with social work qualifications working with older nuns who were 'doing compassion in a time honoured way'.<sup>375</sup> The combined influence of trained religious and lay women helped bring about unprecedented change in children's residential care. While professional social workers, such as

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<sup>374</sup> A. Horin, 'Clever Cleric'.

<sup>375</sup> Walsh, *The Good Sams*, p. 185.

McCosker, can claim credit for the diminution in institutions, religious orders, recognising declining membership and revised community views made the decision to dismantle large institutions. For the first time since the advent of professional welfare practices in the 1930s, religious orders recognised the benefit of change for both themselves and their clients. As a result the move to smaller group homes and community-based care experienced less tension and occurred more smoothly than may have been anticipated.

In the community sector, a new model of welfare service also occurred, which integrated professionals and volunteers in service delivery. Catholic agencies, such as Westcare, exemplified the notion of giving families a 'sense of control over their own lives... and the environment... in which they lived and worked', represented a departure from past Centacare practices.<sup>376</sup> In one respect Westcare represented a good case study of volunteers and professionals working well together. Yet, the termination of Centacare's ladies auxiliary – an important fundraising group – showed clerical short-sightedness and a harsh application of a policy that discriminated against volunteers.

By 1985 Catholic social welfare in NSW was better organised than at any time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But it was far from perfect. Co-ordination between religious orders and within Centacare occurred with considerably less bitterness than had occurred a few decades earlier. Yet, intolerance towards volunteers remained. The church's welfare services relied on both professional staff and state aid. Centacare Sydney had come of age as Australia's largest diocesan welfare agency, and had begun to settle down following implosions in the second half of the 1970s. Usher, the organisation's last director of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought an air of optimism with a consensus-based decision making model. His initial years would evolve into a directorship of more than twenty years, a story that is mostly outside the parameters of this thesis.

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<sup>376</sup> Usher, Centacare, 1940-1988, p. 19.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### National activities and policies

#### 7.1 Introduction

Social Welfare in Australia is at present in a state of active development and adolescent ambivalence... the activities, organisation and legislation in one state influence the planning in another... until recently [Catholics] had little or no representation at any level and consequently no voice in planning for the future.<sup>1</sup>

This advice by Sydney's Monsignor J.F. McCosker to the Australian Episcopal Conference (AEC)<sup>2</sup> in 1956 sets the tone for this chapter, which examines the role and influence of the Catholic welfare sector at a national level from the mid 1950s to 1985, a period that included McCosker's pivotal leadership role.<sup>3</sup> This phase in the professionalisation of Catholic social welfare is significant because it marks the church extending its welfare role into the national policy arena as well as engaging co-operatively with government, through state aid, to deliver social services.

During this period an expanding welfare sector enabled government subsidies to be made to voluntary organisations.<sup>4</sup> The 1972 election of the Whitlam government added new impetus to a growing community sector. Whitlam's

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<sup>1</sup> Report on proposed National Catholic Welfare Committee and affiliation with International Conference of Catholic Charities [1956 Report to Jan 1957 Australian Bishops Conference (this annotation in handwriting)], File 550001, NCWC Collection, Catholic Social Services Australia Archives (CSSAA).

<sup>2</sup> AEC is the traditional name for what is now known as the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC).

<sup>3</sup> Gilroy appointed McCosker as Director of NSW Catholic Charities in 1958; a decade later the title changed to NSW Director of Catholic Social Welfare. See Gilroy to McCosker, 22 March 1958, CWB Collection, B2735, Sydney Archdiocesan Archives (SAA).

<sup>4</sup> The voluntary sector is defined as those charitable organisations not under government control. The title non government organisation (NGO) is often used interchangeably with the voluntary sector. Leading Australian welfare historian, Brian Dickey, prefers the term non government welfare agency (NGWA).

investment in welfare and commitment to social equality was unparalleled since the Curtin and Chifley governments of the 1940s.<sup>5</sup> As Geoffrey Bolton summarised, 'Whitlam's energies were concentrated on forcing social reform on all fronts'.<sup>6</sup>

State aid enabled the formation of several Catholic marriage counselling services in the early 1960s but it did not bring about significant structural reform across the extensive Catholic welfare sector. As a result the church's social welfare services remained haphazard, operating often in isolation from one another up until at least the late 1970s. A review of Catholic diocesan bureaux in 1977, for example, confirmed 'the church, while not without influence, cannot be seen as influencing social change to any great extent'.<sup>7</sup> In the lead-up to Australia's first national Catholic conference on welfare in 1980, a confidential research report by Fr Paul Collins identified a range of systematic problems within church welfare.

The Church's attitude to welfare... is seen as paternalistic and 'band-aid' in its approach. There seems an unwillingness to face the consequences of structural change... individuals, groups and institutions resist critical analysis and evaluation... their power clearly being threatened by change.<sup>8</sup>

Following the lead taken by government and secular organisations, the church developed peak bodies such as the National Catholic Welfare Committee (NCWC) and the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission (ACSWC) to intersect with the state. Neither body has received adequate coverage in Catholic and secular historiography.<sup>9</sup> A dominance of politics over other

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<sup>5</sup> See 'Social Welfare under a Federal Labor Government, 1941-49', Chapter Six in B. Dickey, *No Charity There: A Short History of Social Welfare in Australia* (North Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1987). NGWAs benefited during Whitlam's tenure. The subsidy to the Marriage Guidance Council of Western Australia, for example, increased from \$63,200 in 1973 to \$86,700 in 1974 – see Western Australia MGC, *Annual Reports*, State Library of Western Australia (SLWA).

<sup>6</sup> G. Bolton, *The Oxford History of Australia, Vol. 5: 1942-1988: The Middle Way* (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1990), pp: 219-220.

<sup>7</sup> H. McLeish, A Study of the Problems of Catholic Family Welfare Bureaux in Australia, MS, Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, May 1977, p. 2, Centacare Sydney Archives (CSA).

<sup>8</sup> P. Collins, Report on National Consultation for First Catholic Welfare Conference, n.d. [ca 1980] p. 3, Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission (ACSWC) Collection CSSAA.

Catholic topics worthy of historical examination continues to be reflected in scholarship, such as the revival in interest in the Labor Party 'split' and the Catholic Social Studies Movement, popularly known as the Movement.<sup>10</sup>

McCosker, a consummate observer of social trends, inspired the development of the NCWC. In the mid 1950s he cited Vatican documents to urge the Australian bishops to adopt a national position on social welfare policy. Despite the church's social services being 'enormous... much of the work is unknown and there is no national organisation which is interested in presenting' its welfare activities', McCosker said.<sup>11</sup> Drawing on the American model of the Catholic Charities network, McCosker proposed to the AEC what would become known as the NCWC.<sup>12</sup>

This chapter focuses on the NCWC (1956-74) and will also make an assessment of the first decade of its successor, the ACSWC. Both organisations had an important bearing on Catholic and government social policies. The NCWC's formation and subsequent cohesiveness contrasted with

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<sup>9</sup> Fr Michael Linehan wrote briefly on the NCWC in 'From the National Catholic Welfare Committee to Centacare Australia: An Odyssey', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. LXXIV. No. 3, July 1997. Linehan acknowledged his article drew on Monsignor J.F. McCosker's unpublished account, Notes on the beginnings of Catholic Welfare, the Diocesan Agencies, the National Catholic Social Welfare Committee and the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, May 1989, MS., CSA. See also T. O'Connor, A Short Account of Catholic Welfare in Australia and the place of the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, June 1991, 'draft', MS. [updated several times with handwritten dates on front cover, the latest being 10 August 1995], CSSAA. The NCWC does not rate a mention in P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia: A History*, Fourth Edition (Kensington, NSW, University of New South Wales Press, 1992). The NCWC is briefly mentioned in D. Marr, *Barwick* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1990); J. Walter, 'Designing Families and Solid Citizens: The Dialectic of Modernity and the Matrimonial Causes Bill, 1959', *Australian Historical Studies*, No.116, April 2001; and, Dickey, *No Charity There*, p. 133.

<sup>10</sup> Some recent works, which have few of the polemic characteristics of earlier works by central players, include Fr Bruce Duncan's *Crusade or Conspiracy? Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia* (Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2001), and 'Santamaria and the Legacy of the Split: Fifty Years On', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 83, No. 2, April 2006; R. Fitzgerald, *The Pope's Battalions: Santamaria, Catholicism and the Labor Split* (Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1988); B. Costar, P. Love and P. Strangio (eds.), *The Great Labor Schism: A Retrospective*, (Melbourne, Scribe, 2005); G. Duffy, *Demons and Democrats: 1950s Labor at the Crossroads* (North Melbourne, Freedom Publishing, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> J.F. McCosker to Bishop John Toohey, 7 April 1955, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>12</sup> The American Conference of Catholic Charities was formed in 1910.

the unity sorely lacking amongst bishops, whose reluctance to issue social welfare statements reflected simmering tensions following the 'split'. Historian, Edmund Campion noted that the 'Santamaria imbroglio had weakened confidence in the hierarchy' while Michael Hogan comments that a lack of confidence that consensus could be reached paralysed the bishops.<sup>13</sup> Through the NCWC the bishops issued statements on core social policies, such as uniform divorce legislation, adoption reform and child endowment. In promoting 'Catholic' policies the NCWC also differentiated the church from the position of other Christian denominations.<sup>14</sup>

The NCWC inspired a transition in welfare policy from the domain of individual bishops to a national perspective and thus the story of professional Catholic welfare moves from diocesan-based activities to the national arena. The NCWC was a convenient fit: a small body loyal to the AEC, which did not seek to dissuade independently-minded – and at times cantankerous – bishops such as Sydney's Cardinal Norman Gilroy or Melbourne's Bishop Arthur Fox from making their own statements. Nevertheless, the activities of the NCWC gave comfort to the majority of bishops.

Traditional interpretations of the era have emphasised financial and ideological constraints on the church's welfare system. McCosker typifies this view by criticising the bishops for not properly funding the NCWC.<sup>15</sup> More recently, Paul Smyth, echoes this sentiment, claiming the 1960s was a period of 'lost opportunity' for the church's social welfare services because 'the Australian hierarchy appeared oblivious to the importance of the new directions occurring in Australian social policy'.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> E. Campion, *Australian Catholics: The Contribution of Catholics to the Development of Australian Society*, (Ringwood, Victoria, Penguin, 1987), p. 221. M. Hogan, *Australian Catholics: the Social Justice Tradition* (Melbourne, Collins Dove, 1993), p. 78.

<sup>14</sup> The Church of England at its 1930 Conference at Lambeth approved the use of contraception within marriage.

<sup>15</sup> McCosker, Notes on the beginnings of Catholic Welfare.

<sup>16</sup> P. Smyth, From Charity to the welfare state; Catholic welfare agencies 1940-1960, Conference Paper, Catholic Welfare Australia, 2000. [The author kindly provided a copy of this paper.]

Flagging episcopal support occurred ironically at a juncture in the church's history when there was greater emphasis on social justice. As Australia's bishops grappled with the reforms of Vatican II, they also struggled with the considerable – though often unspoken – resentment amongst large portions of Catholic laity towards the church's ongoing ban on artificial contraception.<sup>17</sup> A rising tide of clerical resignations and increasing disregard by the laity towards the institutional church exacerbated the situation. Ironically, the bishops' focus on creating and maintaining a separate education system had produced a generation of young Catholics who were more articulate and better informed than their parents and many clergy. As Anne O'Brien recently noted, Australian women in the 1960s and 1970s were more likely to 'openly reject Catholicism than earlier generations'.<sup>18</sup> These matters diverted the bishops' attention from other pressing social issues, and organisations such as the NCWC were unable to reach the potential that McCosker and his colleagues had envisaged. Yet, their agitation, primarily with the support of the bishops' committee for social welfare, led to the formation of a permanent peak secretariat, the ACSWC, in 1975.<sup>19</sup>

State aid to Catholic welfare is another key theme of this chapter. Through the NCWC, dioceses received government funding for marriage counselling, which created a precedent for further state aid in the 1970s and 1980s. Former Labor Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, described the state aid issue as 'the most intense political debate in Australia'.<sup>20</sup> While welfare received much less funding than education, state aid to welfare attracted little public opposition, because the government provided funding to many players through the 1959 *Matrimonial Causes Act*. Without the NCWC's persuasive influence it is

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<sup>17</sup> See extracts published by R. Ward & J. Robertson (eds.), *Such Was Life: Select Documents in Australian Social History*, Vol. 3: 1914-1983 (Chippendale, NSW, Alternative Publishing Cooperative Limited, 1986), pp: 311-313.

<sup>18</sup> A. O'Brien, *God's Willing Workers: Women and Religion in Australia*, (Kensington, NSW, University of New South Wales Press, 2005), p. 223.

<sup>19</sup> In September 1974 the AEC approved the 'establishment and funding of the National Catholic Social Welfare Secretariat to work in co-ordination with and under the direction of the NCWC'. In February 1975 the secretariat adopted the name ACSWC. See Davoren to Archbishop Cahill, 26 February 1975, ACSWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>20</sup> E.G. Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government, 1972-1975* (Ringwood, Victoria,



unlikely the Commonwealth Government would have allocated marriage counselling funding to the Catholic sector.

Another theme is the continuing influence of Catholic lay women on social welfare practice and policies. The inspirational work of first generation Catholic social workers, such as Norma Parker, Constance Moffit and Eileen Davidson, was repeated in diocesan bureaux by Mary Lewis in Sydney, Teresa Wardell (Melbourne) and Moya Britten-Jones (Adelaide).<sup>21</sup> Davidson and Moffit played a key role in introducing professional welfare services into their home state, through the establishment of Perth's diocesan bureaux, Centrecare<sup>22</sup>, in 1970. In the secular sector, Parker and Lyons continued to provide valuable advice and support to the church in terms of its relationships with government and other voluntary sector organisations. The clerical push for Catholic representation on peak bodies such as the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and the Australian Social Welfare Council (ASWC), owes much to the tenacity of Parker and Lyons, whose contribution has been largely unrecognised in secular and Catholic literature.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, the 1970s and 1980s were notable for the growing discord between diocesan bureaux and the ACSWC. The latter emphasised policy advice to the bishops and representations to government inquiries, whereas the bureaux focused on service delivery. What might be called an 'old guard', led by McCosker, perceived the national body gave insufficient emphasis to local matters. A separate national Catholic organisation – the National Catholic Marriage and Family Counselling Association (NCMFCA) – was formed in May 1984 to represent the interests of the bureaux.<sup>24</sup> McCosker, who had played a significant role in Catholic welfare, starting at a diocesan level and moving up

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Viking/Penguin Books, 1985), p. 291.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis' memoirs have been published by her son: P. G. Lewis, (comp. & ed.), *Always Begin with a Story: Memoirs of Mary Lewis* (Glebe, NSW, Book House, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Most dioceses use the spelling, Centacare. Western Australian uses Centrecare – see discussion on page 414-415 .

<sup>23</sup> The main exception is John Lawrence's publication of some documents written by Norma Parker. See R.J. Lawrence, (ed.), *Norma Parker's Record of Service* (Sydney, Australian Association of Social Workers, 1969).

to state and national levels, felt increasingly removed from the ACSWC, which, by the mid 1980s, included non-clerics and lay people, some of whom he felt lacked appropriate experience.

## 7.2 Secular and Catholic initiatives

After World War Two church and secular welfare leaders saw value in setting up national welfare bodies to advise the Federal Government. In the 1940s there was a successful attempt to form an Australian-wide organisation of social workers and early but unfulfilled attempts to create a national welfare peak body. In 1946 Norma Parker of Sydney University's Board of Social Studies noted the existence of national social work bodies in America and Canada and plans to establish an international social welfare organisation.<sup>25</sup> She worked with another pioneer colleague, Elvira Lyons, of the NSW Social Workers' Association, to establish the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW). As AASW foundation president, Parker drove an agenda based on three main planks: professionalisation of social work, the ongoing case work education of members, and support of other national approaches.<sup>26</sup> Parker inspired the first national social workers' conference in 1947, and other Catholic social workers, Vivienne Cliff and Mary Lewis, succeeded her on the AASW executive.<sup>27</sup>

Attempts to create a national association of welfare agencies were not as successful. In 1946, F.H. Rowe, the Director-General of the Commonwealth

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<sup>24</sup> NCMFCA, Chairman's Report, 1985-86, p. 1, ACSWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>25</sup> Parker to Lyons, Acting President, Social Workers' Association of NSW, 2 April 1946, reprinted as Item No 29 in Lawrence, *Norma Parker's Record of Service*, pp: 117-118.

<sup>26</sup> Lyons wrote to her interstate colleagues. For example, Lyons to Joy McClelland, President, South Australian Social Workers' Association, 10 May 1946, General File up until 1946, AASW (NSW Branch); Parker to Mrs D. Spark, President, AASW, 13 May 1949; Box H2298, MSS 3025, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales (MLNSW).

<sup>27</sup> *Proceedings of the First National Conference of Social Work* (Sydney, Australian Association of Social Workers, 1947). Parker to Rowe, 25 February 1947, reprinted as Item 31 in Lawrence, *Norma Parker's Record of Service*, pp: 120-122. In 1950 Cliffe held the vice-president's position. In 1951 Lewis replaced Parker as the NSW representative on the AASW Federal Council.

Department of Social Services (CDSS), invited welfare agencies and state councils of social service to form a national association of social service, which could offer 'wise counsel to governments at all levels'.<sup>28</sup> Parker, intimately involved in the discussions, advised Rowe of the 'considerable difficulties' in establishing a national committee. The dilemma was to be 'sufficiently small not to be unwieldy... and fully representative of all aspects of Australian social work'.<sup>29</sup> Parker also said the 'place of the churches' on a national body is a 'worry'.<sup>30</sup>

All [the churches] have large programmes of social work, but obviously could not all be represented. They would have an indirect interest... through the nominee of the State Councils of Social Service, with which most church agencies are affiliated and possibly that is sufficient.<sup>31</sup>

Indicative of the churches' marginal status in social welfare none were invited to the first meeting of an Australian National Committee (ANC) in March 1947.<sup>32</sup> Prime Minister Chifley urged state premiers to work collaboratively on social welfare, but some states, notably Victoria, opposed Chifley.<sup>33</sup> Parker commented on the 'suspicion of the Commonwealth intentions... political differences... and little spontaneous interest in international aspects of social work'.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> F. H. Rowe, Director-General, Commonwealth Department of Social Services to Elvira Lyons, Acting President, NSW Association of Social Workers, 31 August 1946, reprinted as Item 30 in Lawrence, *Norma Parker's Record of Service*, p. 119.

<sup>29</sup> Parker to Rowe, 25 February 1947, reprinted as Item 31 in Lawrence, *Norma Parker's Record of Service*, p. 120.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> N. Parker, Australian National Committee: Information concerning the formation of a National Committee for the Commonwealth, of the International Conference of Social Work, 19 June 1950, reprinted as Item 32 in Lawrence, *Norma Parker's Record of Service*, p. 123.

<sup>33</sup> Chifley to Premiers, 22 January 1948; Reply by T.T. Hollway to Chifley, 9 February 1948, National Social (Advisory) Committee File, 1031, 1145/2 296/48, Child Welfare Department (CWD), State Records Office of Western Australia (SROWA). Minutes of meeting, 18 June 1949, Federal Council Minutes, 1949-1962, AASW (NSW), Box H2298, MSS. 3025, MLNSW.

<sup>34</sup> Victorian Premier, T.T. Hollway to Chifley, 9 February 1948, National Social (Advisory) Committee File, 1031, 1145/2 296/48, CWD, SROWA. Parker, Australian National Committee, pp: 124-26.

### 7.2.1 Australian Social Welfare Council

Plans in the early 1950s for a national welfare body attracted Catholic interest. Norma Parker and Rev Winston O'Reilly, a Methodist minister, vice-presidents of the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) – a federation of councils of social service – proposed an Australian Social Welfare Council (ASWC).<sup>35</sup> McCosker, realising the importance of church participation, lobbied Parker, and another Catholic, Viva Murphy, senior social worker at Commonwealth Department of Immigration, to gain Catholic representation.<sup>36</sup>

A 'self-appointed steering committee' was divided over Catholic representation. The absence of a national Catholic welfare group was one reason to exclude the Catholics; anti-Catholic sentiment, led by O'Reilly, also contributed.<sup>37</sup> McCosker acknowledged the Catholic cause was 'handicapped by the absence of any National Catholic Committee except the St Vincent de Paul', and urged the Catholic sector to organise itself better to strengthen its claim for membership.<sup>38</sup> Margaret McHardy of Sydney's welfare bureau responded by urging her Melbourne colleague, Teresa Wardell, to help bring together Catholic social workers' associations in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide to form an Australian-wide group. The aim, McHardy said, would be to place the church in a better position to be considered a 'Commonwealth body' and to increase eligibility for ASWC membership.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> N. Parker & W.D. O'Reilly, Statement of Concern: Proposed National Social Welfare Advisory Committee, 1956, reprinted as Item 34 in Lawrence, *Norma Parker's Record of Service*, pp: 127-133.

<sup>36</sup> Another Catholic social worker employed at the Immigration Department was Margaret Burns (later McDonald), who would become a prominent figure in adoption, including holding the position of Principal Officer of the Catholic Adoption Agency from 1973-85. Her knowledge on adoption is reflected in A. Marshall & M. McDonald, *The Many-Sided Triangle: Adoption in Australia* (Carlton South Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2001).

<sup>37</sup> Untitled manuscript about the formation of the NCWC, NCWC Collection, File 550001, CSSAA. McCosker to Bishop Carroll, 11 July 1955, Cited by Perkins in correspondence to McCosker, 14 February 1956, p. 1. File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>38</sup> McCosker to O'Brien, 20 December 1955, p. 1, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>39</sup> McHardy to Wardell, 26 July 1955, CSA. There is no evidence that a national association of Catholic social workers eventuated, though a loose affiliation,

In his campaign for Catholic representation on the ASWC, McCosker drew support from Archbishop Eris O'Brien of Canberra-Goulburn.<sup>40</sup> O'Brien, aware of McCosker's potential for being forceful, advised him to 'deal cautiously and not too threateningly with the Minister'.<sup>41</sup> O'Brien also urged McCosker to be careful to 'not affirm complaints against the proposed [ASWC] committee that you cannot substantiate'.<sup>42</sup>

McCosker also received support from Perkins, who although quieter in personality, had a sharp attention to detail. Perkins proposed the formation of a separate national advisory committee for voluntary welfare groups, with the aim of breaking O'Reilly's monopoly. Adelaide's Catholic Welfare Bureau (CWB) director, Fr Luke Roberts, who had been an AASW vice-president, added support, though cautioned McCosker that 'there is a danger that the issue might be regarded as a personal issue between you and O'Reilly'.<sup>43</sup> Roberts suggested McCosker 'play for time' and try to have the matter referred back to the various state councils of social service. In his position as a vice-president of the South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS), Roberts felt he could try to influence his local representative and added 'They can't help but follow the pattern accepted by the U.N. the defence services, the Immigration Department and in every area where the situation is similar'.<sup>44</sup>

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especially between lay trained women working at the Melbourne and Sydney bureaux, existed up until the late 1960s.

<sup>40</sup> McCosker to O'Reilly, 8 March 1956, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA. O'Brien to McCosker, 28 March 1956, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA. A possible insight into part of McCosker's personality was communicated a few years earlier by O'Brien to Gilroy in relation to McCosker's response to Gilroy appointing another priest to the NSW Child Welfare Advisory Council. 'I was disturbed to find that McCosker showed extraordinary signs of mental imbalance... and said strange things... he has a phobia on the matter, so much so that he talks irrationally.' See O'Brien to Gilroy, 9 June 1953, CWB, B2734, SAA. Nevertheless, O'Brien acknowledged McCosker's significant role. For example, 'You can rest assured that everyone has a high regard for the devoted and scientific work which you have done for so many years at the Catholic Welfare Bureau', O'Brien to McCosker, 16 December 1956, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Roberts to McCosker, 8 April 1956, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

O'Reilly realised the potential for ongoing difficulties with the Catholic sector and in March 1956 the ASWC invited McCosker to be a representative of 'Catholic Charities in Australia'.<sup>45</sup> McCosker welcomed the invitation but commented that he had not seen the draft ASWC constitution.<sup>46</sup> His suspicion was validated when it became known that O'Reilly proposed the ASWC have two rotating church representatives on its executive.<sup>47</sup> McCosker would not agree to dissenting Protestants, such as the Salvation Army and the Churches of Christ, representing Catholic interests.<sup>48</sup> O'Reilly's hope that the Catholics would not create too much fuss was thwarted by Perkins arranging for the Victorian Council of Social Service delegate to the ASWC putting forward motions that supported voluntary groups' inclusion. By May 1957, when the ASWC was 'officially' launched, twenty two 'voluntary agencies' were represented.<sup>49</sup> Apart from McCosker, other Catholics on the body were Parker and Constance Moffit.<sup>50</sup>

Tensions between the Catholic sector and the ASWC further eased after the appointment of Eileen Davidson as ASWC executive officer.<sup>51</sup> Davidson, probably recommended by Parker, had recently returned to Australia after five years work as a senior social welfare adviser to the United Nations (UN) in Bangkok.<sup>52</sup> In the UN's maternal and child health training project and also the establishment of the first social work training program in Thailand, Davidson had played key roles.<sup>53</sup> Her ASWC appointment reflected the respect in which

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<sup>45</sup> O'Reilly to McCosker, 1 March 1956, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>46</sup> McCosker to O'Reilly, 8 March 1956, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>47</sup> McCosker to Perkins, 5 April 1956, p. 1, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Memo on NCWC, n.d; O'Reilly to McCosker, 1 March 1956, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 May 1957, p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> *Newsletter*, ASWC, No. 1, July 1958, p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Australian Social Welfare Council (ASWC), *Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 1956-1957*; *Newsletter*, ASWC, No. 1, July 1958, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> *Newsletter*, AASW, July 1956.

<sup>53</sup> E. Davidson, 'The National Catholic School of Social Service', in J.T. McMahon, *College, Campus, Cloister*, (Perth, University of Western Australia Press, 1969), p.

she was held. Davidson, a devout Catholic, displayed professionalism working in this Protestant environment.

### 7.2.2 National Catholic Welfare Committee

The contentious ASWC membership issue helped strengthen the case for a Catholic peak welfare body.<sup>54</sup> But it was not the only factor influencing the church. McCosker, during a United Nations Fellowship in Social Welfare in 1954, had seen similar peak bodies in action in America, and returned to Australia ‘convinced’ of the benefits of setting up a national organisation.<sup>55</sup> By this time Australian Catholic welfare, according to McCosker, had ‘established credibility, first with governments and public servants who had somebody with whom they could discuss matters intelligently, and then with the bishops generally’.<sup>56</sup> The seeds for collaborative efforts between the bureaux had begun in the late 1940s when McCosker convinced Gilroy to allow Perkins and Roberts to complete the fieldwork part of their social work degrees in Sydney.<sup>57</sup> Looking back on the experience, Perkins said this collegiate approach laid the basis for what would become a significant coalition amongst Catholic diocesan welfare leaders over the following decades, expressed through the NCWC and ACSWC.<sup>58</sup>

Another step in the push towards a national framework was a common name. Perkins argued that Melbourne’s Catholic Social Service Bureau (CSSB) should be replaced with a more contemporary title that reflected a ‘social case work service’.<sup>59</sup> In advice to the Commonwealth Attorney General, Sir Garfield Barwick, Perkins said ‘social services’ gave rise to the misconception that it

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<sup>54</sup> ‘The NCWC was formed to enable the Catholic Church to be represented on this National Council – and for other purposes’. Untitled manuscript, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>55</sup> McCosker to John E. Ryan, National Catholic Welfare Conference (United States), 12 November 1958, p. 1, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>56</sup> McCosker to Toohey, 7 April 1955, File 550001, p. 4, NCWC, CSSAA.

<sup>57</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 9 January 1948, CFWB, B2734, SAA.

<sup>58</sup> Perkins to Kilby, 8 September 1993, p.1. Perkins Personal Papers, Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission (MDHC).

was a relief giving agency, similar to the CDSS.<sup>60</sup> Roberts held similar concerns and urged Archbishop James Gleeson, to clarify that the bureau's main roles in Adelaide were child placement, assistance with broken families, marital reconciliation, and immigration.<sup>61</sup> At a meeting in 1958 the directors agreed to a proposal from Sydney's Fr Peter Phibbs for the bureaux to be renamed Catholic Family Guidance Centres.<sup>62</sup> Later, Perkins and Roberts had second thoughts.<sup>63</sup> Roberts said that 'guidance suggests direction and the normal implication of the words Guidance Centre in the Social Welfare field implies an agency well staffed, with a team of experts'.<sup>64</sup> While the Sydney bureau may have reached an appropriate stage to be called a guidance centre, Roberts thought this was only partially true in Melbourne's case, and, in terms of Adelaide, 'I cannot foresee a time when this agency is likely to be able to live up to that title'.<sup>65</sup> Perkins, anxious to gain uniformity, suggested the title, Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (CFWB), which he said would avoid confusion with the Catholic Welfare Organisation in Melbourne and cause least disruption to Sydney's CWB.<sup>66</sup> McCosker supported the proposal and the three bureaux agreed to be called CFWB from late 1958.<sup>67</sup>

In 1956 the three bureaux directors began working on national policies. The Victorian and Adelaide directors brought clout to the national arena.<sup>68</sup> Perkins, for example, had been a strong critic of the standard of child care in Victoria.

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<sup>59</sup> Perkins to Roberts, 12 November 1958, CSSB Collection, MDHC.

<sup>60</sup> Perkins to Barwick, 19 February 1960, Matrimonial Causes - Marriage Guidance Organisations - Application for approval - Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, Series A432, File 1960/2589, National Archives of Australia (NAA).

<sup>61</sup> Roberts to Gleeson, 29 February 1960, CFWB, Adelaide, 1943-1963, Box 83, Archdiocese of Adelaide Archives (AAA).

<sup>62</sup> NCWC, Minutes of first official meeting, Melbourne, 25 June 1958, File 570004, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>63</sup> Perkins to Roberts, 12 November 1958, File 570001, NCWC Collection CSSAA.

<sup>64</sup> Roberts to McCosker, 13 November 1958, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Perkins to Roberts, 12 November 1958, File 570001, CSSB Collection, MDHC.

<sup>67</sup> McCosker to Roberts, 24 November 1958, File 570001, CSSB Collection, MDHC.



In the past no two departments have been more shamefully neglected than the Children's Welfare and Mental Hygiene departments. It has been a constant source of reproach that the worst parent in Victoria is the State, when it places its wards in institutions.<sup>69</sup>

Perkins, aided by Wardell, had brought considerable pressure on the Victorian government, when he published a detailed critique of its proposed *1954 Children's Welfare Bill*. With methodological precision, Perkins detailed 'certain fatal weaknesses' and offered 'constructive' suggestions'.<sup>70</sup> In Adelaide, where relations between church and state were closer, Roberts did not need to publicly critique the state's welfare policies, though he maintained an astute watch on government policy and its implication for the church.

In April 1955, when McCosker presented a proposal for a national episcopal committee for welfare to Bishop John Toohey of Maitland, he knew he could count on Perkins and Roberts' support.<sup>71</sup> McCosker said the three priests agreed to a national committee which 'would be most beneficial to the social mission of the church and absolutely necessary soon'.<sup>72</sup> The influence of other national organisations, such as the Anglican Church and World Council of Churches, contrasted, McCosker said, with:

The Catholic Church [which] has no National Committee to advise the hierarchy or to define trends and formulate a common policy... in several [states] there is a considerable amount of movement towards new legislation... I suggest that it is extremely difficult for all the Ordinaries to be kept informed.

<sup>73</sup>

But the clerics' vision faced a larger challenge. Their proposal for a national body occurred at a time of considerable disharmony amongst Catholic bishops about the Movement.<sup>74</sup> The bishops, in Hogan's view, 'were unable to agree on

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<sup>68</sup> There has been a tendency to understate the South Australian contribution. See for examples, J. Usher, 'Check, Check-Mate! Stalemate!', Masters of Social Studies Thesis, University of Sydney, 1980;

<sup>69</sup> *The Advocate*, 27 August 1953, p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> E.G. Perkins, *The Children's Welfare Bill, 1954: A Critical Analysis* (Melbourne, 1954)

<sup>71</sup> McCosker to Toohey, 7 April 1955, NCWC, CSSAA. For background on Toohey see article in *Manly*, Vol. 8, No. 1. 1948.

<sup>72</sup> McCosker to O'Brien, 20 December 1955, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

anything significant in the social justice area other than the dangers of communism'.<sup>75</sup> The hemorrhaging relationship between Sydney and Melbourne did not facilitate inter-diocesan co-operation, exemplified by Gilroy's refusal to sign the 1955 Social Justice Statement.

McCosker shrewdly invoked the Vatican's name to try to win over the bishops. It is probable that through his international contacts McCosker arranged an invitation for Australia to join the International Conference of Catholic Charities (ICCC), which had been established in 1951.<sup>76</sup> In 1955 the ICCC invited Gilroy to appoint a correspondent until such time as a national welfare co-ordinating body was established.<sup>77</sup> McCosker, although recognising there would be few tangible benefits from membership, supported the ICCC approach as a means of bringing together Australia's Catholic charities.<sup>78</sup> McCosker emphatically said 'the public has no knowledge of the extent and value to the community of Catholic Charities. One wonders how much information the average Catholic or even the average priest has about the Church's mission of charity'.<sup>79</sup>

After further reflection McCosker suggested the bishops appoint an episcopal committee for social welfare or a NCWC, the latter including the bureaux directors. Gilroy, however, saw no need for either. The experiences of the Movement had taught him to steer clear of national co-ordination. While he respected McCosker's work, he had little time for his questioning attitude. Perkins recalled that 'McCosker finally obtained the somewhat reluctant permission of his Archbishop to be part of it'.<sup>80</sup> In a sign of McCosker's persuasive ability, the bishops approved the formation of the NCWC in January

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<sup>74</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 April 1956, p. 4; *ibid.*, 16 April 1956.

<sup>75</sup> Hogan, *Australian Catholics*, p. 78.

<sup>76</sup> O'Brien to McCosker, 13 December 1955, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>77</sup> Cited by McCosker to Toohey, 7 April 1955, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>78</sup> McCosker to O'Brien, 20 December 1955, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>79</sup> 1956 Report on proposed NCWC and affiliation with ICCC, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>80</sup> Perkins to Kilby, 8 September 1993, Correspondence Files, Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission Collection, CSSAA.

1956.<sup>81</sup> Canberra-Goulburn's vicar-general congratulated McCosker on being appointed the committee's convenor and secretary and hoped he would 'miraculously find the time necessary to devote to... [being] Chief [sic] of the new National Welfare Committee'.<sup>82</sup> In the absence of any other nominee, O'Brien, chair of the AEC hospitals' committee, became interim NCWC chair.<sup>83</sup> Its early efforts involved representations to the Commonwealth, principally in relation to the ASWC.<sup>84</sup>

From its inception NCWC membership was a topical issue. O'Brien felt that lay charitable bodies, such as the SVdP, should be represented, but the three bureaux directors insisted on the NCWC remaining a clerical body.<sup>85</sup> With so few priests trained in social work, the NCWC relaxed the rule that university study was a pre-requisite for appointment.<sup>86</sup> In the case of Perth, Archbishop Prendiville advised McCabe that distance and the scarcity of priests posed obstacles to appointing someone to the NCWC, but he hoped that 'when circumstances permit, to have a priest specifically trained in social work'.<sup>87</sup> There is no evidence that Canberra-Goulburn's nomination, Monsignor Favier, took up the post.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Archbishop Eris O'Brien to Monsignor McCosker, 22 March 1956, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>82</sup> Monsignor Favier to McCosker, 1 February 1956, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>83</sup> O'Brien to McCosker, 22 March 1956, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>84</sup> Most writers mistakenly put the formation date at 1957. See, for example, A. Rogers, Report to Episcopal Committee for Social and Charitable Works on the Review of the functions and tasks of the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, p. 14, November 1983; also reply to Rogers' report by C. Kilby, Report to Episcopal Committee for Social and Charitable Works on Review of the function and tasks of the ACSWCA, 1975-1983, 1984, ACSWC Correspondence Files, CSSAA.

<sup>85</sup> O'Brien to McCosker, 28 March 1956, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>86</sup> For example, McCabe to Archbishop Prendiville, 27 May 1958, NCWC, Box 119, File 1, Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Perth, (ARCAP).

<sup>87</sup> Prendiville to McCabe, 5 June 1958, NCWC, Box 119, File 1, ARCAP.

<sup>88</sup> Archbishop of Canberra-Goulburn to McCabe, 3 June 1958, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

The NCWC mandate was to take an interest in state and federal legislation relating to the family.<sup>89</sup> O'Brien said it was not to be a 'governing body' or to hold itself in an 'exaggerated importance', but to 'allow Catholic social work and charities to speak with a national voice when that is desirable, and for the interchange of ideas amongst the organisers of Social [original capitalisation] works'.<sup>90</sup> McCosker commented that while the NCWC was a peak body modelled on the American National Conference of Catholic Charities, it did not have the structure – nor resources – of the prestigious US National Catholic Welfare Conference.<sup>91</sup> The NCWC received no funds in its initial years, relying on McCosker and Perkins to self-fund it.<sup>92</sup> While the bishops had agreed the NCWC could join the ICCC, they did not authorise 'any large membership fee to the international body'.<sup>93</sup> In 1959 the AEC agreed that the NCWC would be funded annually on a pro-rata basis from dioceses: Sydney and Melbourne £20; Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth £10 and £5 from some smaller dioceses.<sup>94</sup>

In January 1957, just prior to the annual AEC meeting, McCosker suggested to O'Brien that, as he was based in Goulburn, NSW, he may prefer another bishop to take over the chairman's role.<sup>95</sup> O'Brien supported the move and the AEC elected Bishop Thomas McCabe of Wollongong as bishop deputy in 1957, a position he held until 1970. The appointments of McCabe, and Perkins as Dr Daniel Mannix's delegate to the NCWC in April 1957, have led many writers to regard it as the NCWC's foundation year.<sup>96</sup> The evidence is clear, however, that the NCWC commenced in 1956, when, for example, Roberts,

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<sup>89</sup> NCWC, Minutes of first official meeting, Melbourne, 25 June 1958, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>90</sup> O'Brien to McCosker, 28 March 1956, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>91</sup> McCosker to Ryan, 12 November 1958, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>92</sup> Perkins to McCosker, 24 July 1958, p. 3, CSSB Collection, MDHC.

<sup>93</sup> O'Brien to McCosker, 7 March 1957, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>94</sup> McCabe to McCosker, 2 February 1959, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>95</sup> McCosker to O'Brien, 21 January 1957, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>96</sup> Fr Moran, Administrator, St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne to McCosker, 17 April 1957, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA. Linehan, From the National Catholic Welfare Committee. O'Connor, A Short Account of Catholic Welfare, p. 11.

urged the NCWC to study the 'incidence of crime among Catholics – far beyond their proportion in the population'.<sup>97</sup>

### 7.3 Uniform Divorce Legislation

The push towards uniform divorce legislation occurred against a backdrop of growing secularisation in Australian society. Religious historian, David Hilliard, says the post-war reconstruction era included a 'major ideological offensive... to encourage women to move back from wartime occupations to their natural place in the home'.<sup>98</sup> Many women continued to work, mainly part-time, however. 'A perception that morals, especially sexual morals, were in decline' underpinned much religious discourse' in the 1950s and beyond.<sup>99</sup> Yet a rising divorce rate and increasing levels of juvenile delinquency did little to mitigate such concerns and there were calls for uniform divorce laws.<sup>100</sup> The 1957 *Joske Bill*, which advocated a single uniform divorce law to replace the ten different codes of divorce across the country, became the NCWC's first major policy issue.

For half a century attempts had been made to achieve uniformity in Australia's divorce laws.<sup>101</sup> In 1949 the Federal Attorney-General Dr Evatt sponsored a uniform bill, but the Chifley Labor Government was defeated before it could be introduced. The architects of Evatt's bill, South Australian Catholic, H.G. Alderman, and Victorian, Percy Joske, continued the push for a uniform divorce bill.<sup>102</sup> Yet, as Hilliard notes, Menzies won government on a platform of

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<sup>97</sup> Roberts to McCosker, 8 April 1956, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA. O'Brien also asked for a report on the NCWC's activities see O'Brien to McCosker, 9 November 1956, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA. McCosker confused the matter by referring to different foundation years, including 1955, 1956 and 1957; For confirmation of 1956 being the foundation of the NCWC see also McCabe to McCosker, 23 December 1957, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>98</sup> D. Hilliard, 'Church, Family and Sexuality in Australia in the 1950s', in J. Murphy & J. Smart (eds.), *The Forgotten Fifties, Australian Historical Studies*, No. 116, p. 143.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>100</sup> E.M.W. Martin, 'Social Work, the Family and Women's Equality in Post-war Australia', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2003.

<sup>101</sup> D.M. Selby, 'The Federal Matrimonial Causes Bill', *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. XXX1, No. 3, September 1959, p. 13.

<sup>102</sup> The third person involved in the Evatt Bill was S.V. Toose, who became a judge. For

family values and 'divorce was distasteful to him'.<sup>103</sup> David Marr adds that both major political parties were aware that to 'touch the diverse laws threatened a rain of sectarian abuse'.<sup>104</sup>

In 1955, Alderman, then Law Council of Australia (LCA) president, chaired a group to draft a uniform divorce bill.<sup>105</sup> Alderman's motivation was that 'divorce laws of Australia are in a mess, they should be uniform (if there are to be any), and the uniform divorce laws should not be the most radical nor the most conservative'.<sup>106</sup> Alderman said the bill did not attract government support, because they are 'afraid of us R.C.s'.<sup>107</sup> Joske, a Victorian Federal Liberal MP, regarded the LCA bill as too 'liberal' and potentially divisive, and he therefore proposed a compromise in the form of a private member's bill.<sup>108</sup>

### 7.3.1 'Pressure groups with selfish interests'

In April 1957 the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that 'both sides' of parliament would 'pass' Joske's bill.<sup>109</sup> Perkins raised the church's alarm and advised McCosker that 'the community at large has not had an opportunity of discussing it adequately or expressing their opinions about it'.<sup>110</sup> The speed of the bill being introduced into the House of Representatives, had also not allowed MPs to consider the 'implications of the Bill... or to be informed of the views of various [Christian] denominations'.<sup>111</sup> The NCWC quickly showed its

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discussion of the early phase of uniform divorce legislation in Australia, see Cabinet paper by J.A. Spicer, Attorney General, Submission No 53, 23 July 1954, 'Mr JOSKE [sic] Proposed draft Marriage and Divorce Bill 1953, Attorney's General's Department File C883 Part 1, Series A4940 (A4940/1), NAA.

<sup>103</sup> Hilliard, Church, Family and Sexuality, p. 46.

<sup>104</sup> Marr, *Barwick*, p. 141.

<sup>105</sup> Alderman to McCosker, 20 June 1957, File 570002, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>107</sup> Alderman to McCosker, 8 July 1957, p. 1, File 570002, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>108</sup> NCWC, Annual Report, January 1958, p. 1, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>109</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 April, 1957, p. 4.

<sup>110</sup> Cited by McCosker in correspondence to Gilroy, 26 April 1957, p. 1, 'Divorce Legislation File', File 570002, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*

preparedness to take action against the bill. Perkins' thrust was not to stop the bill per se, rather to make 'positive recommendations' about the need for marriage conciliation and Federal Government subsidies for marriage guidance.<sup>112</sup> Perkins and McCosker set about persuading Harold Holt, Minister in charge of business to put the bill well down the list, which might enable the church to issue a statement and to lobby parliamentarians. While the bill was delayed and debate occurred in the press, Perkins crafted a response.

Catholic agitation attracted criticism from some other churches. Ill-feeling between the Catholic and Methodist churches re-surfaced when Professor G. Calvert Barber strongly criticised comments from an unnamed Catholic archbishop, which Calvert Barber said implied that all Christians opposed Joske. Calvert Barber declared that 'the Roman Catholic Church has no right to speak for us. We must be increasingly on our guard against the power of the Roman church'.<sup>113</sup> In the same month the Methodist General Conference of Australia became the first – and only Christian denomination – not to solidly support Joske's bill.<sup>114</sup> Meanwhile, Labor frontbencher, E.G. Whitlam, proposed an amendment for the bill to be sent to a select committee for further consideration. O'Brien hoped this intervention would cause the bill to be delayed or shelved.<sup>115</sup> Whitlam urged the select committee to also consult with marriage guidance organisations and the churches.<sup>116</sup> Another Labor member, Leslie Haylen, advised McCosker that he did not think Menzies would allow such an 'extremely important measure... to go through as a private member's bill'.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 May 1957, p. 4.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, 22 May 1957, p. 4.

<sup>115</sup> O'Brien to McCabe, 4 May 1957, p. 3, File 570002, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>116</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 May 1957, p. 8.

<sup>117</sup> Haylen to McCosker, 23 May 1957, File 570002, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

Alderman did not lend support to Joske: 'I disclaim all responsibility for the grounds of divorce set out in the Joske Bill'.<sup>118</sup> Well regarded by Archbishop Beovich, Alderman liaised with the Attorney-General, Senator O'Sullivan and the Solicitor General, Professor Bailey, and so secured access for McCosker and Perkins to liaise directly with government.<sup>119</sup> An advocate for the Commonwealth providing 'large sums for marriage guidance', Alderman said the Joske Bill's grounds for divorce were far too narrow and that it was not a reconciliation bill.<sup>120</sup>

When Perkins sent his draft commentary on Joske's Bill to the metropolitan bishops, Gilroy's response was typically bland. Apart from press reports he knew little about it and would not 'pass judgment' until McCosker furnished details.<sup>121</sup> Bishops O'Brien, Norton, McCabe and Toohey showed most interest in the matter, and, together with McCosker, provided comments. The urgency of the situation made 'it impossible... to circularise all the bishops and to get a majority decision'.<sup>122</sup> Nevertheless, the bishops' response was encouraging. O'Brien, for example, said the document gave him much satisfaction:

Because I have been apprehensive that the Church has been too silent on the issues involved in Joske's recent Bill. The public could have a wrong impression that we tolerate it [divorce] easily... we have a right and a duty to criticise the bill chiefly from the religious point of view... because the bill is a non-party matter, Catholic members of parliament will expect such a statement.<sup>123</sup>

O'Brien also cautioned the NCWC to state the church's position briefly and accurately, otherwise it will not be understood by 'ordinary people whom we want to inform'.<sup>124</sup> An NCWC statement would be 'authoritative, as representing the Hierarchy', O'Brien advised McCabe.<sup>125</sup> McCabe replied that

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<sup>118</sup> Alderman to McCosker, 20 June 1957, p. 1, File 570002, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>119</sup> NCWC Annual Report, January 1958, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>120</sup> Alderman to McCosker, 20 June 1957, p. 1, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>121</sup> Gilroy to McCosker, 1 May 1957, File 570002, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>122</sup> NCWC Annual Report, January 1958, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>123</sup> O'Brien to McCabe, 4 May 1957, File 570002, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*



the statement 'would not embroil the Hierarchy in any controversy'.<sup>126</sup> In addition, the church felt a private member's bill did not require an official statement from the bishops.<sup>127</sup> McCosker added 'The press and the public could work out for themselves who are the members of this committee and what authority it carries. The Most Rev Ordinaries can repudiate it [the NCWC statement] wholly or in part, if they wish'.<sup>128</sup>

Catholic and secular print media gave coverage to the NCWC's first public statement, *An Analysis of the Matrimonial Bill, 1957*.<sup>129</sup> There was no public scrutiny of the mandate or membership of the NCWC. Three aspects of the statement had broad appeal: the moral and social aspects of marriage that the Joske bill overlooked; the importance of marital conciliation; and welfare concern for children of divorcees.<sup>130</sup> As opposition grew, Joske reacted angrily, claiming that 'it is only a few pressure groups with selfish interests who are not desirous of obtaining uniformity in divorce laws'.<sup>131</sup> The NCWC statement, in Perkins' view, 'made a profound impression' and the NSW Law Institute and the NSW Liberal Party also publicly opposed the bill.<sup>132</sup> In September 1957, after the bill had been 'amended beyond recognition', McCosker advised Gilroy that it faced an uncertain future.<sup>133</sup> Attorney General, Neil O'Sullivan, acknowledged criticisms from the churches and other non government organisations in a Cabinet submission in early 1958:

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<sup>125</sup> O'Brien to McCabe, 4 May 1957, File 570002, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>126</sup> McCabe to O'Brien, 7 May 1957, File 570002, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>127</sup> NCWC, Annual Report, January 1958, File 59002, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>128</sup> McCosker to O'Brien, 10 May 1957, File 570002, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>129</sup> NCWC, Annual Report, January 1958, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>130</sup> 'Roman Catholic attack on Divorce Bill', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 May 1957, p. 5.

<sup>131</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 1957, p. 1.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, 1 August 1957, p. 1. Marr, *Barwick*, p. 141. E.G. Perkins, Catholic Family Welfare Bureau: Its work and functions, 9 November 1968, Perkins Personal Collection, Centacare Melbourne Archives (CMA).

<sup>133</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, September 1957, File 570002, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

I think it would be a grave mistake to sponsor a Bill limited exclusively to divorce machinery. I am convinced that a limited provision for the support of marriage guidance organisations, along the lines suggested in the Report of the recent UK Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce should be included in the bill.<sup>134</sup>

O'Sullivan, who had been lobbied by McCosker and Perkins, recommended state aid for voluntary organisations involved in marriage counselling.<sup>135</sup> The scene was set, mainly due to the NCWC's work, for the government to grant state aid to NGOs, such as the Catholic Church. The NCWC, however, still had to convince the federal government of the value of professionals providing marriage counselling.

### 7.3.2 'the basis of our fight'

The NCWC statement, publicly endorsed by only Mannix, represented the church's views to the Federal Government.<sup>136</sup> Community pressure, including the NCWC's critique, had led the Joske Bill to lapse, but momentum for a national divorce bill remained. Menzies, anxious to keep the churches on side, took control of the situation and placed new Attorney General, Sir Garfield Barwick, in charge of another divorce bill. In May 1958 McCosker wrote to Menzies offering NCWC advice in relation to marital conciliation and the care of children affected by divorce.<sup>137</sup>

When the NCWC officially met for the first time in June 1958 it resolved to communicate to Menzies that it opposed any legislation which would increase the incidence of divorce; provision should be made for marital conciliation by approved organisations; there should be no divorce in the first three years of marriage; and, that provision for legal separation should be included in any divorce legislation.<sup>138</sup> The NCWC felt encouraged by the Prime Minister's

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<sup>134</sup> Cabinet Submission No 1075, 11 March 1958, 'Mr JOSKE [sic] Proposed draft Marriage and Divorce Bill 1953, Attorney's General's Department, File C883, Part 1, Series A4940 (A4940/1), NAA.

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> Perkins to McCosker, 31 July 1959, File Matrimonial Causes Bill 1959, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>137</sup> McCosker to Menzies, 7 May 1958, File Matrimonial Causes Bill 1959, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

Department's positive response and Roberts and McCosker were engaged to prepare statements on the two areas they had proposed to Menzies.<sup>139</sup> Meanwhile Barwick appointed a barrister in each state to help draft the bill and to foster consultation with interested parties.

The question of clerics liaising directly with senior government officials ruffled some episcopal feathers. Daniel Mannix's protégé, Monsignor Arthur Fox, who became a bishop in 1956, adopted some of his mentor's passionate political profile.<sup>140</sup> Fox appeared uncomfortable with the NCWC making representation and any perception that it might be construed as condoning divorce.<sup>141</sup> Gilroy, never keen on McCosker's style, also held reservations. The bishops, Perkins said, did not want the NCWC 'to engage in any negotiations' as this may have given the appearance that the 'church was approving of divorce in any shape or form'.<sup>142</sup> As a result, McCabe asked McCosker to 'avoid any further discussion' with Barwick until the AEC meeting of January 1959.<sup>143</sup>

In May 1959 when Barwick introduced the *Matrimonial Causes Bill* into the House of Representatives, he hoped it would 'receive calm and serious study and consideration'.<sup>144</sup> The 'constructive' and 'good' sections of the bill, included the earlier NCWC suggestions for marriage guidance, marital conciliation, maintenance and care of the children.<sup>145</sup> The main difference with the Joske

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<sup>138</sup> NCWC, Minutes of first official meeting held in Melbourne on 25 June 1958, NCWC, Minutes and Correspondence, CSSAA; NCWC, Annual Report – January 1959, p. 1, File 570004, NCWC Collection, CSSAA. Those in attendance were Bishop McCabe, Monsignor McCosker, and Frs Perkins and Roberts. The Western Australian representative, Fr McKeon was overseas at the time; Tasmania could not 'spare a priest' to attend, and the Canberra-Goulburn nominee, Monsignor Favier, was 'detained on business in Goulburn'.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Arthur Fox (1904-97) was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne in 1956, and Bishop of Sale in 1967.

<sup>141</sup> Toohey arranged to meet Fox and McCosker to quell Fox's concerns. See reference in correspondence from Toohey to McCosker, 12 January 1957, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>142</sup> Perkins to McCosker, 10 September 1959, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>143</sup> McCabe to McCosker, 2 February 1959, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>144</sup> *Hansard*, 1959.

Bill, in the words of Selby, was that 'Joske chose grounds which were recognised by the majority of states', whereas Barwick chose grounds for divorce on the 'basis of their merit'.<sup>146</sup>

After internal debate the bishops authorised the NCWC to draft an Analysis, 'calculated to win the respect of all and to sway the thinking of as many as possible'.<sup>147</sup> Bishop John Cullinane of Canberra urged the NCWC to 'strongly oppose the doctrine of the breakdown of marriage as a principle of divorce law'.<sup>148</sup> Beovich's proposed joint response by Catholics and Anglicans – and possibly other Protestant denominations – would not have pleased Gilroy, whom the historian, T.P. Boland, describes as 'eirenic rather than ecumenical'.<sup>149</sup> There is no evidence that the NCWC attempted to secure the support of other Christian churches, which at the time would have reflected a somewhat radical approach by the Catholics to inter-denominational relations.

Mannix, who had confidence in Perkins, said the statement was 'perfect'.<sup>150</sup> Archbishop Gleeson suggested the statement mention that the bishops had already covered the theological and pastoral aspects of divorce. Norton said he was 'disturbed' that 'insanity and unlikely recovery' might be a cause for divorce, claiming recent advances in the care of people with mental illness overcame the need for this clause.<sup>151</sup> He added that 'as a check to hasty marriage I would like to see three weeks notice of forthcoming marriage given to the clergyman'.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> NCWC, Annual Report – Report 1960, p. 1, File 570004, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>146</sup> Selby, 'The Federal Matrimonial Causes Bill', p. 14.

<sup>147</sup> NCWC, Annual Report – Report 1960, p. 1, File 570004, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>148</sup> Bishop John Cullinane, Correspondence, n.d. File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>149</sup> McCabe to McCosker, 30 July 1959, McCosker Papers, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA. T.P. Boland, 'Gilroy, Sir Norman Thomas (1896-1977)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 14, 1996, p. 278.

<sup>150</sup> Cited by McCabe in letter to McCosker, 30 July 1959, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>151</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.*

O'Brien, a keen communicator, suggested a four-page centre feature in Catholic newspapers. In mid 1959 McCosker felt pressure from the Sydney hierarchy, and as a result asked Perkins to change a key heading in the *Analysis* from 'undesirable' to 'objectionable'. In considerable detail, Perkins explained why he thought Sydney's view was too strong and contrary to the document's tone. Perkins concluded that 'undesirable' is not 'objectionable', but the word 'objectionable' is 'most undesirable'.<sup>153</sup> Nevertheless, Perkins recognised the cardinal's influence and urged McCosker to ensure McCabe approved the final document and any proposed media statements.<sup>154</sup>

By late 1959 the government was in direct negotiation with Gilroy. Barwick wrote to Gilroy saying he 'had taken each ground and weighed it against what I feel is the right thing to do in the interest of the social and moral welfare of the community as a whole'.<sup>155</sup> McCosker advised Perkins that Barwick's letter 'contains no clues' as to whether the government would include the NCWC recommendations.<sup>156</sup>

Most bishops supported the NCWC's 1959 *Analysis*. Fox, however, went further and said Catholic MPs 'must vote against' it.<sup>157</sup> He made no reference to the NCWC and the secular media did not pick up on his more political statement. Mannix remained supportive of the NCWC statement, though expressed concern at statements by the Sydney church spokesman, Dr Rumble, which appeared to have been misinterpreted in the secular press. Mannix's angst concerned Sydney taking a different line, a reminder that relations between the church's two most powerful archdioceses remained tense.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Perkins to McCosker, 31 July 1959, p. 2, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>154</sup> Perkins to McCosker, 10 September 1959, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>155</sup> Barwick to Gilroy, 21 October 1959, File 590001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>156</sup> McCosker to Perkins, 1959, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>157</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 October 1959, p. 4; *ibid.*, 2 November 1959, p. 2.

<sup>158</sup> For a detailed discussion see correspondence from Perkins to Senator F. P. McManus, 16 November 1959, File 590001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

Unlike the Joske bill, more churches, including the Anglican bishops and the Presbyterians, publicly opposed the 1959 bill.<sup>159</sup> The Methodists held an 'equivocal position', though prominent minister, Sir Allan Walker, personally 'deplored' the bill.<sup>160</sup> Perkins and McCosker felt the *Analysis* had not been used by the AEC to its 'maximum benefit' and as the 'basis of our fight'.<sup>161</sup> McCosker conceded that 'it was not easy to see how this could have been given',<sup>162</sup> given the squabbling between Sydney and Melbourne. Nevertheless, the Apostolic Delegate congratulated McCosker, because 'careful and calm studies of this nature cannot but bring increased prestige and influence in the Church in Australia'.<sup>163</sup> McCosker viewed the bill as representing a 'coming of age' for the NCWC, which had established its position with government as the 'peak Catholic body'.<sup>164</sup> Roberts congratulated McCosker on a 'tremendous job in making the best of the divorce legislation'.<sup>165</sup>

### 7.3.3 Volunteers or professionals

In her broad study of the voluntary sector, Melanie Oppenheimer comments that 'marriage guidance was a new and radical innovation for the Commonwealth Government in the 1960s'.<sup>166</sup> What Oppenheimer and other writers fail to note is the influence of the NCWC in successfully lobbying for this 'radical innovation'. In late 1959 McCosker challenged Barwick to confirm that funding would be extended to church agencies as well as marriage counselling councils.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Marr, *Barwick*, p. 144.

<sup>160</sup> Hilliard, Church, Family and Sexuality, p. 50.

<sup>161</sup> Memo re NCWC, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>162</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> Apostolic Delegate to McCosker, 10 August 1959, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA

<sup>164</sup> McCosker, Notes on the beginnings of Catholic Welfare, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>165</sup> Roberston to McCosker, 16 February 1960, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>166</sup> M. Oppenheimer, 'Voluntary Action and Welfare in Post-1945 Australia', *History Australia*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 2005.

<sup>167</sup> McCosker to Barwick, 1 December 1959, File 590001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

A key aspect of *Matrimonial Causes Act* was the provision of state aid to approved agencies to provide marriage counselling. Under the Act, approved voluntary organisations, such as the Catholic Church, were eligible to receive funding. Having secured in-principle agreement for state aid for the church's marriage counselling service, Perkins and McCosker turned to the question of the use of professional staff to provide counselling.<sup>168</sup> In February 1960 they attended a meeting of MGCs with Barwick to confirm the requirements for 'approved marriage guidance organisations'.<sup>169</sup> Prior to the conference Perkins had pressed Barwick on the need for trained paid staff to undertake marriage counselling, and had received an assurance from Barwick that:

My remarks about volunteer workers have been taken far too literally... I expect there will be full-time trained personnel. I had hoped, and still hope, that the central core of full-time paid personnel will always be supplemented by trained but voluntary workers.<sup>170</sup>

In 1960 Perkins and McCosker represented the church at a national conference called by Barwick to discuss the requirements for 'approved marriage guidance organisations'.<sup>171</sup> The meeting confirmed funding for approved voluntary agencies, but did not resolve the question of the use of voluntary counsellors. The government was keen for 'national voluntary organisations' to be intimately involved in the training of counsellors and providing the provision of services.<sup>172</sup> McCosker, Perkins and Fr Phibbs continued to negotiate with Barwick to secure the best arrangements for the Catholic sector. Barwick sought assurances from the clerics that despite the 'autonomy' of Catholic dioceses, the NCWC would be responsible for setting

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<sup>168</sup> Perkins to McCosker, 8 February 1960, File 590001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>169</sup> The other representatives were Marriage Guidance Council of Australia, Australian Red Cross, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Citizens' Welfare Service, Melbourne; Family Welfare Bureau, Sydney, St Andrew's Cathedral Marriage Guidance Centre, Sydney.

<sup>170</sup> Barwick to Perkins, 16 November 1959, File 590001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>171</sup> Barwick to McCosker, 28 January 1960, p. 1, Perkins to McCosker, 8 February 1960, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>172</sup> *Matrimonial Causes Act*: Statement by the Attorney-General, Sir Garfield Barwick, 1 June 1960, p. 2, NCWC Correspondence, 1958-1969, Box 119, File 1, ARCAP.

national standards covering the selection and training of counsellors and the 'conduct' of the Catholic agencies undertaking marriage counselling.<sup>173</sup>

From the beginning of Commonwealth-funded marriage counselling, the Catholic Church adopted a fairly unique policy. Based on the American model of 'specialised care', McCosker and Perkins argued that Catholic bureaux use trained social workers to counsel couples, whereas other voluntary organisations were satisfied using volunteers.<sup>174</sup> Methodist minister, John Robson, recalls the NCWC's 'firm stand' contrasted with that of other churches and secular marriage councils who adopted the British approach of using trained volunteers.<sup>175</sup> The absence of social work trained personnel outside major cities created a dilemma for Catholics, however, and Fr Phibbs, together with Norma Parker, suggested lay counsellors may need to be used in such situations.<sup>176</sup> The NCWC, though, expressed reservations about how counsellors in rural areas would be supervised.<sup>177</sup> Parker's recommendation to Barwick that the government establish a policy for training counsellors became a central aspect of the work of psychologist, Les Harvey, who Barwick appointed as marriage guidance officer in the Federal Attorney General's Department.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Report of meeting between McCosker and Phibbs, cited in correspondence from McCosker to Bishop James Carroll, 13 July 1960; See also advice from Carroll to McCosker, based on Carroll's discussions with Cardinal Gilroy, Carroll to McCosker, 4 July 1960, File 590001, NCWC Correspondence, Series 8, CSSAA.

<sup>174</sup> This point was noted, by among others, Rev. Coughlan of the NSW MGC. See G. Coughlan, 'Marriage Counselling in Australia: Developments especially theoretical and therapeutic, 1965-1975', in P.J. Boas. & J. Crawley (eds.), *Social Work in Australia*, (Melbourne, Australian International Press Publications, 1976), p. 82. See also, V. Yule, 'Group Differences in Problems presented by Marriage Counselling Clients', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Autumn 1965, p. 53.

<sup>175</sup> 'John Robson', Chapter One in D. Fox & N. Miller, (eds.), *An Oral History of Marriage Counselling in Australia: From Meaning Well to Doing Well* (Canberra, Les Harvey Foundation, 2000), p. 19. P.A. O'Connor, 'A study of attitudes of applicants for training as voluntary marriage counsellors', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 25, No 1, March 1972, p. 7.

<sup>176</sup> Cited in a letter from Miss M. Mills, President, AASW (NSW) to Miss E. Ward, President, AASW (Federal Council), 14 February 1960, Matrimonial Causes Act, AASW (NSW Branch), MSS 3025, Box H2289, MLNSW.

<sup>177</sup> NCWC, Minutes of Meeting, 20 September 1962, p 1, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>178</sup> Parker to Barwick, 8 September 1960, Matrimonial Causes - Marriage Guidance



When Barwick announced initial subsidies of £2,000 for each of thirteen approved Marriage Guidance Organisations (MGOs), including the Sydney and Melbourne CFWB, Canberra's Catholic Welfare Organisation and the Catholic MGC of Brisbane in 1960, he entered the contentious issue of state aid.<sup>179</sup> While state aid for welfare did not attract the level of sectarianism or public debate that accompanied state aid for education, there were tensions amongst welfare players. Some players questioned the appropriateness of a non-secular organisation receiving state aid. McCosker's description of some Marriage Guidance Councils being 'anti-Catholic' had some merit in Western Australia and Tasmania, which refused to train Catholic counsellors. In other states, such as Queensland and Tasmania, McCosker said Catholics 'would have no part of the State MGCs'.<sup>180</sup>

Relations between the Federal government and the Catholic sector had some rocky patches in the early 1960s over two issues: the use of trained social workers and a limit on funding to Catholic organisations. McCosker recalls that in 1961 Perkins and he had to 'fight' Harvey for marriage counsellors to be trained social workers.<sup>181</sup>

McCosker and Perkins' view that marriage counselling and family therapy were intertwined did not accord with Harvey. The clerics argued that marriage counselling should come within generic agencies that provided therapy to both children and parents. In this way some of the state aid for marriage counselling could help offset other costs of operating the bureaux. Harvey, reflecting a more bureaucratic position, believed the two should be separated, if for no other reason than to preserve an appropriate use of government funds. By the

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Organisations - Application for approval - Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (Melbourne), Series A432 (A432/79), File 1960/2589, Attorney's General Department's Files, NAA. McCosker to Fr Russell, Western Australia, 19 January 1961, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>179</sup> *Newsletter*, Marriage Guidance Council of NSW, Vol. X1, No. 5, January 1961; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 May 1960, p. 6.

<sup>180</sup> McCosker to Toohey, 22 June 1965, Bishop Toohey Papers, Box 11, No. 7, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle Diocesan Archives (DOMNA).

<sup>181</sup> ACSCW, Transcript of tape on background of ACSWC, [Interview with Monsignor McCosker and, Fr Kilby, n.d.] p. 7, History File, ACSWC Collection, CSSAA.

mid 1960s Harvey had been convinced by Perkins and McCosker of the church's provision of marriage counselling within diocesan agencies.

Harvey may have conceded the importance of social workers as counsellors, but he retained the British preference for peak bodies in each state. Phibbs expressed concern at Harvey's push for secular peak bodies and 'discrimination against church organisations' in a 'desire to promote the MGC in each state'.<sup>182</sup> McCosker, keen to reaffirm his seniority over Phibbs, took control of the situation, and smoothed relations with Harvey, while not conceding any of his points.

Funding was another contentious issue. In 1962 Harvey proposed that the subsidy to voluntary organisations represent only fifty per cent of their operating costs.<sup>183</sup> McCosker, representing the NCWC, responded directly to Barwick and challenged the apparent lack of uniformity in federal government subsidies.<sup>184</sup> Though wary of the Conference of Marriage Guidance Organisations (COMGO) gaining authority over church organisations, McCosker, on this occasion, argued for unity:

If a discrimination in subsidy is made between organisations on the basis of Church or non-Church backing, then it will make it very difficult for organisations to meet together on an equal footing...[this] could easily put an early end to the Conference of approved marriage guidance organisations.<sup>185</sup>

Notwithstanding this approach to government, McCosker sought the NCWC's resolution to remain independent of the secular MGCs so as to 'preserve its [NCWC] identity in negotiations with the Attorney General's Department... [and] the right to negotiate directly with AG'.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Phibbs to McCosker, 5 February 1964, McCosker Papers, CSA. Phibbs to Russell, 6 February 1964, NCWC Correspondence 1958-69, Box 119, File 1, ARCAP.

<sup>183</sup> Harvey to Phibbs, 7 June 1962, NCWC Correspondence, 1958-69, Box 119, File 1, ARCAP.

<sup>184</sup> McCosker to Barwick, 23 July 1962, NCWC Correspondence, 1958-69, Box 119, File 1, ARCAP.

<sup>185</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> NCWC Meeting, 20 September 1962, held at Archbishop's House, West Terrace, Adelaide, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

State funding provided some impetus for the Catholic Marriage Guidance Centres (CMGC), a precursor to the second spurt in the development of diocesan welfare bureaux in Perth and several rural dioceses. In its 1960 report to the bishops, the NCWC said it was 'highly desirable that CMGCs be established so that they can be approved by the government in all capital cities and perhaps in some provincial towns'.<sup>187</sup> Perth which traditionally had shown least interest in professionalising its Catholic welfare services, appointed Fr Joseph Francis Russell (1927-90)<sup>188</sup>, a military chaplain, as director of a new marriage guidance service in 1960.<sup>189</sup> Russell advised McCosker that he would only be able to work part-time until 'I am out of the Army'.<sup>190</sup> In January 1961 Russell, with a small archdiocesan subsidy, commenced marriage counselling 'without advertisement' and trained lay counsellors commenced mid year.<sup>191</sup> Russell 'trying to raise a panel of lectures... received good co-operation from the existing MGC... and I have unearthed two women (now married) who were qualified social workers (and Catholics). Their children may exclude them from doing much though'.<sup>192</sup> Co-operation from the secular MGC was shortlived, when a bigoted Methodist minister barred Catholics from attending its course.<sup>193</sup> A conciliatory Russell pressed on and in February 1962 the Attorney General's department approved the CMGC. When funding flowed by year's end, Russell established a more detailed training program for volunteer

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<sup>187</sup> Report 1960 – National Catholic Welfare Committee, p. 2, File 570004, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>188</sup> Fr J. R. Russell was ordained on 4 December 1949. See *The Record*, 4 December 1949. This is a different Fr Russell to the South Australian director of education, who had responsibility for the Catholic Social Service Bureau in Adelaide in the 1940s.

<sup>189</sup> 'How the CMGC came into being', *The Record*, 16 December 1971, p. 6.

<sup>190</sup> Russell to McCosker, 16 June 1960, File 570003, NCWC Collection, CSSAA. B.J. Hickey, 'The development of Catholic Welfare Services in Western Australia, 1846-1970', Master of Social Work Thesis, Department of Social Work, University of Western Australia, 1971, p. 111.

<sup>191</sup> In 1962, for example, the Federal Government gave a £500 subsidy and the Archdiocese contributed £300. 'Guidance Centre Report', *The Record*, 11 October 1962, p. 9.

<sup>192</sup> Russell to McCosker, 16 June 1960, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>193</sup> NCWC, Minutes of Meeting, 20 September 1962, pp: 1-2, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

counsellors.<sup>194</sup> Russell led the CMGC until 1967, when he was appointed to a rural parish.<sup>195</sup> An obituary in *The Record* noted his 'dogged attention to detail and homegrown attraction to drama which found him writing and recording case histories for counselling studies'.<sup>196</sup>

Other Catholic dioceses also bolstered their marriage guidance services in the 1960s. Melbourne's CSSB with several priests and trained lay women extended its marriage counselling services.<sup>197</sup> Yet, indicative of mixed marriages and the low profile of Melbourne's CFWB's, some sixteen per cent of Catholic couples attended counselling at the state service.<sup>198</sup> By the early 1970s a high demand for marriage counselling led to volunteer counsellors, including priests and religious sisters, being trained by the bureau.<sup>199</sup>

In Adelaide, a rising workload led Roberts to suggest another priest study social work. After repeated requests Beovich accepted Roberts' advice and appointed Fr Terry Holland as his assistant in late 1956. Holland seemed 'very suitable for the work' and commenced social work at Adelaide University in 1957.<sup>200</sup> In 1960, when Holland had succeeded Roberts, he reported that seventy-five per cent of his time was spent on 'marital problems'.<sup>201</sup> Holland expressed frustration at the difficulty of attracting a qualified social worker to co-ordinate marriage counselling.<sup>202</sup> After advertising widely, Moya Britten-Jones, an experienced nurse and social worker, who had studied at university

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<sup>194</sup> First Annual Report of Catholic Marriage Guidance Council (Western Australia), CSSAA; Hickey, *The development of Catholic Welfare Services*, p. 111. Russell to McCosker, 28 February 1962, McCosker Papers, CSSAA.

<sup>195</sup> Russell to McCosker, 1967, File 570001, NCWC, CSSAA.

<sup>196</sup> *The Record*, 14 June 1990, p. 12.

<sup>197</sup> Centacare Melbourne history, <http://www.centacaremelbourne.org/history.htm>

<sup>198</sup> Yule, 'Group Differences in Problems', p. 39.

<sup>199</sup> R. Cotter, *A brief history of the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, Melbourne, 1935-1988*, man, CMA, p. 9.

<sup>200</sup> Roberts to Beovich, 4 December 1956; Beovich to Holland, 7 December 1956, Fr Terrence Holland File, Box 598, Series 3, AAA.

<sup>201</sup> Roberts to McCosker, 16 February 1960, CSSAA.

<sup>202</sup> Holland to Perkins, 4 July 1961, p. 4, Fr Terrence Holland File, Box 598, Series 3, AAA.

with Holland and been mentored by the bureau's first staff member, Hannah Buckley, joined the bureau.<sup>203</sup> Britten-Jones' twelve months' appointment – which extended to eleven years - enabled the bureau, which had 'long' offered marriage counselling, to expand 'it's [sic] work in the field' and in 1961 it received its first Federal government subsidy of £1,000.<sup>204</sup> With Holland's endorsement, Britten-Jones also co-ordinated admissions to the archdiocese's Goodwin and Largs Bay homes, something the institutions had strongly resisted during Buckley's tenure.<sup>205</sup>

Adelaide also differed from Sydney and Melbourne in terms of its closer relations with other voluntary agencies. This situation enabled a number of lay Catholic counsellors to be trained by the secular MGC.<sup>206</sup> Holland reported to McCosker that the MGC is 'quite keen' to train Catholic counsellors.<sup>207</sup> The positive relationship was also reflected in invitations to the Catholic bureaux to give lectures, such as 'The Ethics of Sex and Marriage – The Catholic View Point'.<sup>208</sup> Adelaide perhaps reflected the best example of co-operation between Catholic and secular marriage counselling bodies.

In Tasmania, Archbishop Gilford Young appointed Fr Clem Kilby as director of the diocesan lay institute in 1958.<sup>209</sup> In the following year Kilby commenced a two year course in social welfare at Hobart Technical College, then the state's only tertiary provider of social work.<sup>210</sup> Upon completing his studies Kilby established a CFWB with a focus on marriage counselling. In 1962 the Federal

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<sup>203</sup> M. Press, *Colour and Shadow; South Australian Catholics, 1906-1962* (Adelaide, Archdiocese of Adelaide, 1991), pp: 50-51.

<sup>204</sup> M. Britten-Jones, History of Adelaide CFWB, p. 2, MS. AAA. Holland to McCosker, 7 August 1958, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>205</sup> Interview with Associate Professor Peter D. Travers, 28 October 2005, Adelaide.

<sup>206</sup> Holland to McCosker, 29 March 1961, File 570003, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>207</sup> Holland to McCosker, 17 January 1962, File 570003, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>208</sup> Holland to Perkins, 4 July 1961, File 570003, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>209</sup> 'The founding of Centacare', *ReachOut*, August 1994.

<sup>210</sup> C. Kilby, *Brief History of Centacare, 1960-1985* (1985, CSA).

Government approved the Tasmanian CFWB as a marriage counselling organisation.<sup>211</sup>

What influence did state aid have on the development of new Catholic diocesan bureaux in the 1960s? The conventional view, expressed by Toby O'Connor, a former executive director of Centacare Australia, in his unpublished survey of Australian Catholic social welfare, is that:

The provision of counselling services for couples contemplating separation or divorce by Catholic welfare agencies is, without question, the single most important factor to the development of official diocesan welfare agencies in Australia.<sup>212</sup>

In terms of the development of Catholic marriage counselling services O'Connor's view, which is supported by Camilleri and Winkworth, has some merit.<sup>213</sup> But in terms of the growth of fully fledged diocesan welfare agencies the argument has a number of weaknesses. Firstly, many dioceses in the third quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century still held ambivalent views about state aid and feared governments would attach conditions that might compromise the church's independence. Unlike Catholic education, the quest for state aid for the welfare sector was uncharted territory. The church was also anxious not to engage in public debate for fear of raising sectarian tensions, and education, not welfare, remained the church's dominant focus. In Sydney, for example, Archbishop James Carroll, who led the church's campaign for state aid for education operated on the basis of 'quiet and moderate negotiation'.<sup>214</sup>

Secondly, the interpretation that state aid alone created the impetus for Catholic welfare bureaux ignores the influence of the NCWC. Before the *Matrimonial Causes Act*, the NCWC had urged other dioceses to allow priests to study social work as a precursor to setting up welfare bureaux. By 1960, also, the NCWC had demonstrated its influence on both church and state. It is

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<sup>211</sup> Barwick to Kilby, CFWB, 20 February 1962, File 590001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>212</sup> O'Connor, *A Short Account of Catholic Welfare*, p. 2.

<sup>213</sup> P. Camilleri and G. Winkworth, 'Catholic Social Services in Australia: a short history', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 58, No. 1, March 2005, p. 82.

<sup>214</sup> J. J. Luttrell, 'Norman Thomas Cardinal Gilroy as Archbishop of Sydney', PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 1997, p. 201.

unlikely that the combined influence of the archbishops of Sydney and Melbourne would have had as much effect on government social welfare policy as the NCWC's meticulous research and lobbying activities. The NCWC vision, rooted in diocesan bureaux, often influenced the bishops, independently of state aid. As McCosker noted, 'we strongly advocated the approval of generic diocesan agencies and the employment of professional social workers as marriage counsellors'.<sup>215</sup> Commonwealth funding may have assisted CMGCs, but, with few Catholics trained in social work, the church had little motivation to establish broad-based family welfare services. Adelaide was a case in point. Its inability to attract a qualified lay Catholic social worker was a major obstacle during the 1950s, not funding *per se*.

Finally, a number of diocesan bureaux were not formed until the 1970s and 1980s, unrelated to the introduction of state aid. Perth, home of Australia's first three trained social workers, but the last capital city to inaugurate a bureau, provides a number of important contrasts. The impetus in Perth was several-fold: the efforts of female social workers, recognition by children's institutions of the value in a central admissions process, and the leadership provided by Frs James Petry, Joe Russell and William (later Archbishop) Foley. From the mid 1940s an Episcopal Migration and Welfare Association (EMWA) had supported post-war child immigration programs and services and liaised between some orphanages and government.<sup>216</sup> For several decades the combined functions of the EMWA restricted the introduction of professionalism. As Petry noted in 1969, 'migration and welfare are combined... which means that neither job is done properly'.<sup>217</sup>

The decline in child institutionalisation and the emergence of other social issues led to consideration of a new archdiocesan welfare service.<sup>218</sup> Russell, as CMGC head, recognised the importance of a professional child welfare and

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<sup>215</sup> McCosker to Russell, 16 June 1960, p. 5, File 570003, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>216</sup> Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (CFWB), Catholic Marriage Guidance Council (CMGC), *First Combined Annual Report, 1971-72*, pp: 5-6; Presented at the Annual General Meeting, 21 August 1972, Perth, CSA.

<sup>217</sup> Petry to Holland, 20 August 1969, Centacare Adelaide Collection (CAA).

<sup>218</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.

family services bureau and advised his colleagues, including Foley, to press the archbishop to allow a priest to study social work.<sup>219</sup> In 1962 Foley visited diocesan bureaux in Sydney and Melbourne and returned home committed to the need for a local bureau.<sup>220</sup> In 1964 Foley gained the archbishop's agreement to explore a priest studying social work in Adelaide, as Perth did not have a university course.<sup>221</sup> The matter lapsed for a few years. On the eve of leaving the CMGC, Russell said that the bishops needed to be aware that 'priests in social work should be highly trained no matter what the costs'.<sup>222</sup>

Meanwhile, Perth's religious orders had begun to recognise the changing face of institutional care.<sup>223</sup> Representatives of the children's homes and several social workers met at St Joseph's Orphanage in 1967 to 'elicit problems, to discuss ways and means for an improved child care programme, including the recommendation that intake be centralized [sic] and handled by the CWB'.<sup>224</sup> Eileen Davidson, who also attended the meeting, would become central in establishing professional welfare in Perth. She recommended a trained senior social worker should be appointed to ensure the archdiocese 'provided a modern casework service to families and children in trouble', that a proper case record system be established and that all further admissions to the institutions be assessed by the centralised body. Davidson also commented 'As the children's institutions are in need of urgent help, the programme undertaken by the Social Worker [sic] should be directed to a study of the 300 children listed by them'.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> Foley to McCosker, 9 March 1963, File 570003, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>221</sup> Foley to Holland, 17 September 1964, File 570003, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>222</sup> Russell to McCosker, 22 February 1967, File 570003, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>223</sup> In 1969, for example, the Christian Brothers established a Child Care Committee to co-ordinate its children's institutions. See Christian Brothers to Archbishop Goody, 21 July 1969, CFWB, Box 131, File 3, ARCAP.

<sup>224</sup> The reference to Catholic Welfare Bureau in the 1960s was a shortened, but unofficial name, for the EMWA. See Catholic Welfare Bureau, Perth, W.A. Updating Service to the Children's Institutions, Summary of meeting held 23 November 1967 at St Joseph's Orphanage, Subiaco, p. 1. CFWB, Box 31, File 5, ARCAP.

<sup>225</sup> *ibid.*, 'Recommendations of Miss Eileen Davidson, Social Worker', pp: 4-5.



Unlike the situation which Davidson and her colleagues had experienced in other states several decades earlier, Perth children's institutions realised the value of a co-ordinating welfare body. At a meeting in mid 1968, representatives of the children's institutions, including the Christian Brothers which operated the controversial Clontarf and Casteldare orphanages, gave strong support for a CFWB.<sup>226</sup> The meeting resolved to form itself into a committee, in the words of Davidson, 'to study the situation and to press for action'.<sup>227</sup> In addition to Davidson, Constance Moffit, another pioneer Australian social worker, lent support. Four other Catholic social workers, employed in various government bodies, were also instrumental. Led by Barbara Kinna, the women drafted a memorandum, which dovetailed with the sentiments of Davidson and Moffit.

As Catholic social workers, we are most concerned about the coordination and improvement of our own welfare facilities. In our day to day work we see many families who would be most appropriately helped in a general family welfare setting.<sup>228</sup>

The report also highlighted:

Lack of co-ordination among the various Catholic institutions and the absence of any evaluation of the type of child they were best equipped to help ... stressed the need for adequate screening of applicants and follow-up work with their families.<sup>229</sup>

Foley's research of other diocesan bureaux helped to provide a base for establishing the Perth bureau.<sup>230</sup> He acknowledged that the 'impetus has come mainly from the Brothers and the Nuns of the children's institutions for a centralised intake policy for admitting children. The State Department of Child

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<sup>226</sup> 'The future function of the Catholic Welfare Office', Summary of meeting held on 25 July 1968, CFWB, Box 31, File 5, ARCAP.

<sup>227</sup> E. Davidson, A Catholic Family Welfare Bureau for Western Australia, man, n.d. [ca 1969], CFWB, Box 31, File 3, ARCAP.

<sup>228</sup> Mrs B. Kinna (Child Welfare Department), Miss J. Taylor, Neville facility, Mrs E. Hannan, Commonwealth Department of Social Services and Miss P. Hansen, Royal Perth Hospital, Catholic Welfare in Western Australia [June 1969], CFWB, Box 31, File 3, ARCAP.

<sup>229</sup> CFWB, CMGC (1971-72), *First Combined Annual Report*, p. 7.

<sup>230</sup> For example, Foley to Phibbs, 14 August 1968, CFWB, Box 31, File 3, ARCAP.

Welfare is also much interested'.<sup>231</sup> Despite several years of planning and an initial archdiocesan grant of \$2,000, the bureau opened in April 1970 without a full-time social worker.<sup>232</sup> Archbishop Goody, supportive of the project, had little success recruiting a social worker, despite having sought one as far afield as Great Britain.<sup>233</sup> As a result, one of the bureau's founders, Barbara Kinna, and two other trained women worked part-time at the bureau in its initial years.<sup>234</sup> The resignation of the three women in April 1971 – due to the demands of their full time positions – led Petry to advise Goody that it is a 'grim picture... whether we can survive until Fr Hickey takes over is a serious thought for all'.<sup>235</sup> The recruitment of Mrs Beatrice MacFarlane as another part-time social worker, partly eased the situation, though it was not until January 1972, when Hickey completed his social work course that the bureau gained its first full time employee.<sup>236</sup> In 1972 Kinna returned to the bureau when it received federal funding for a migrant grant-in-aid social worker.<sup>237</sup>

In non-capital cities lay women and religious sisters instigated several bureaux. In 1967 Mrs Joan Whetton commenced a bureau in the Northern Territory. When Darwin Bishop John O'Loughlin sought a qualified social worker to replace Whetton he wrote to McCosker indicating 'you are my mentor in these matters'.<sup>238</sup> Religious women also played a key role. In 1974 the Rockhampton Diocese appointed an honours graduate in social work, Sr Anne Marie Kinnane, to establish a Christian Life Centre.<sup>239</sup> In Cairns, a Sister of Mercy,

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<sup>231</sup> Foley to McCosker, 4 September 1968, McCosker Papers, CSSAA.

<sup>232</sup> Petry to Archbishop Goody, 11 December 1969; *ibid.*, 9 December 1970, CFWB, Box 131, File 2, ARCAP.

<sup>233</sup> E. Davidson, Brief Report on Progress, CFW and Migration Bureau, August-December 1969, CFWB, Box 131, File 6, ARCAP.

<sup>234</sup> CEMWA, Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Provisional Executive, 24 March 1970, Box 131, File 3, ARCAP.

<sup>235</sup> Petry to Goody, 30 April 1971, CFWB, Box 131, File 7, ARCAP.

<sup>236</sup> B. Hickey, 'Catholic Welfare New Plans', *The Record*, 2 March 1972, p. 9.

<sup>237</sup> For discussion of Barbara Kinna's career, see *West Australian Social Worker*, June 2000.

<sup>238</sup> O'Loughlin to McCosker, 8 October 1969, McCosker Papers, CSSAA.

Nadia Del Popol was appointed director of its CFWB in 1982, following in the footsteps of a non-trained cleric.<sup>240</sup> In 1990 she was killed in an air crash.<sup>241</sup> In Ballarat, Victoria, Michael Linehan was appointed to establish a Diocesan Family Service in 1977. Linehan said the service's primary aims were 'developmental, rehabilitative, preventative and remedial social work services, mainly with married couples, families and unmarried mothers-to-be'.<sup>242</sup> State aid had little influence on the formation of these bureaux.

Amongst non-government agencies, state aid, however, remained an influencing factor in their development. The following table shows the increase in state aid to MGCs in the first half of the 1960s.

**Table 7.1**

**Commonwealth Funding to Marriage Guidance Councils under the Matrimonial Causes Act, 1960-65<sup>243</sup>**

	<b>1960</b>	<b>1965</b>
Subsidy	£36,500	£73,250
Cases	4,854	7,983
Interviews	13,568	27,570

Reflective of this increase Melbourne's CFWB received a £5,000 Federal government subsidy for marriage counselling in 1965, which enabled it to employ extra lay and clerical social workers.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Centacare, Diocese of Rockhampton, *Annual Report*, August 1989, CSA.

<sup>240</sup> Cairns CFWB, *Annual Report*, 1984, Other Dioceses file, CSA.

<sup>241</sup> 'Tribute to Sr Nada Giovanna Del Popolo (1949-1990)', *10 Year Report*, Cairns CFWB, Other Dioceses File, CSA.

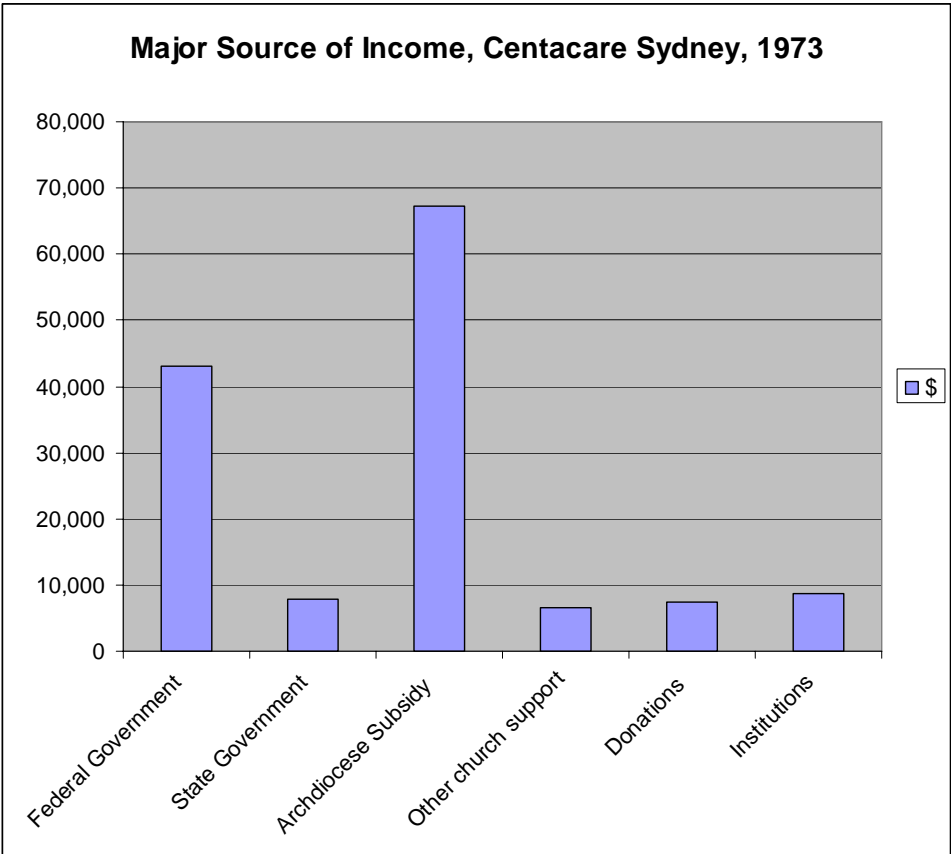
<sup>242</sup> Linehan to Davoren, 24 February 1977, CFWB – General Files, 750007, CSSAA.

<sup>243</sup> Extracted from Table 1, L.V. Harvey, 'The Federal Government and Voluntary Agencies working together in Marriage Guidance', in R.J. Lawrence, *Community Service: Papers presented at the fourth National Conference of ACOSS* (Melbourne, F.W. Cheshire, 1966), p. 98.

<sup>244</sup> Matrimonial Causes - Marriage Guidance Organisations - Application for approval – Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, Series A432, File 1960/2589, Attorney General's Department, NAA.

At this time, Sydney's CFWB had three full time lay social workers and two trained priests providing marriage counselling. In 1966 Sydney received a Commonwealth subsidy of \$11,000 for marital conciliation, and the combination of an archdiocesan grant and donations added another \$6,200.<sup>245</sup> By 1973 the Sydney CFWB received a Commonwealth subsidy of \$37,000 – or nearly a quarter of the agency's total income – for marriage guidance.<sup>246</sup> Table 7.2 shows the division between church, community and government funding for Sydney's CFWB in 1973. The archdiocesan subsidy includes an advance for the following year, a recognition that despite increasing state aid – predominantly from the Commonwealth – the agency still relied heavily on the church for its financial survival in a period of increasing demand for services.

**Table 7.2: Major Sources of Income, Centacare Sydney, 1973**



<sup>245</sup> CFWB (Sydney), Marriage Guidance Section Sydney, Report on Activities for 1965-1966, CSA.

<sup>246</sup> CFWB (Sydney), Receipts, 1 July 1972 to 30 June 1973, CSA.

#### 7.3.4 Brisbane 'goes it alone'

State-funded marriage counselling services, in Oppenheimer's view, involved government and the voluntary sector developing shared aims that benefited both parties.<sup>247</sup> An essential element of this partnership was appropriate allocation of resources and adequate training for counsellors. As Usher noted, agencies such as the CFWB, had a responsibility to use state aid 'wisely and judiciously'.<sup>248</sup>

In the first half of the 1960s the Queensland Catholic Marriage Advisory Council (CMAC) threatened to derail church-state relationships. Lay people had co-ordinated pre-marriage education programs in Brisbane since the late 1940s and in 1957 the Archdiocese formed the CMAC, with Fr Cyril Shand as its head.<sup>249</sup> Shand modelled the CMAC and its training program on the London CMAC, which relied mainly on volunteer counsellors. Candidates for the Brisbane program were assessed carefully, some being rejected on 'the grounds of youth, temperamental unsuitability, and one was found not to be a practising Catholic'.<sup>250</sup> After eight months training the volunteers began counselling. To fit in with the counsellors' work and family schedules, counselling occurred at lunchtime, after work and in clients' homes.<sup>251</sup> Shand says that Brisbane adopted the British model because it had no diocesan welfare bureau, trained social workers or any priest able to work full time in the

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<sup>247</sup> Oppenheimer, *Voluntary Action and Welfare*, p. 82.

<sup>248</sup> 'John Usher', Chapter Two p. 34.

<sup>249</sup> CFWB, *25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet of the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, 1958-1983*, CSA.

<sup>250</sup> Shand to McCosker, 13 February 1960, p. 1, File 570003, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>251</sup> CFWB, *25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet* [no page numbers]. While Shand may have been resistant to the setting up of a Catholic Welfare Bureau, some other welfare leaders were more positively inclined. 'State welfare up here is very much behind the times. Catholic welfare, as such, does not exist... we are wanting a CCWB', Br Alban, Boys Town, Beaudesert to McCosker, 13 March 1962, File 620001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

area of marriage guidance.<sup>252</sup> McCosker reluctantly agreed to the use of non social workers.<sup>253</sup>

Through affiliation with the NCWC the CMAC became an approved marriage guidance organisation in 1961 and received an initial subsidy of £2,000. Before long, however, Harvey expressed concern about counsellors' training standards and Shand's defensive attitude when discussing policy matters.<sup>254</sup> The Queenslanders, for their part, had some reason for resisting the state's approach. Fr B.J. Wallace, who attended the Brisbane MGC course, reported its 'purely secular approach to the whole question of marriage' reflected in the 'advocacy or acceptance of immoral doctrines, such as contraception'.<sup>255</sup>

McCosker, realising he could not alter Shand's approach, shrewdly sought to distance the NCWC from Brisbane. He advised McCabe that 'it might be better for us not to know anything about it for the time being'.<sup>256</sup> Later that year McCabe advised McCosker that 'it is better to allow them to get into their own difficulties since they have been so reluctant to accept advice. When the difficulties arise, particularly the financial loss, they may be more co-operative'.<sup>257</sup> McCabe added that 'it is difficult to know what to do for the best with people when they think they know everything and yet know nothing'.<sup>258</sup> In 1962 the Federal government declined to allocate more funds to Brisbane because of these concerns.<sup>259</sup> In 1965, again, the Commonwealth threatened

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<sup>252</sup> Shand to McCosker, 8 June 1960, NCWC, 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>253</sup> McCosker to Shand, 10 June 1960, NCWC, 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>254</sup> McCosker to McCabe, 4 April 1961, p. 1; McCosker to Fr Joe Russell, Archdiocese of Perth, 19 January 1961, NCWC Collection, CSSAA; McCosker, [sic] Report of conversations with Mr L. Harvey, Marriage Guidance Officer, Attorney-General's Department, Canberra, 13 April 1965, File 5900031 NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>255</sup> Fr. B.J. Wallace, marriage counsellor, Memo on his observations on the non-denominational training course, attached to correspondence from Shand to McCosker, 13 February 1960, NCWC, CSSAA.

<sup>256</sup> McCosker to McCabe, 4 April 1961, p. 1, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>257</sup> McCabe to McCosker, 6 April 1961, File 570003, NCWC, CSSAA.

<sup>258</sup> McCabe to McCosker, 25 November 1961, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>259</sup> McCosker to McCabe, 24 April 1961, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

to withdraw Queensland's CMGC's funding.<sup>260</sup> In the government's eyes, the NCWC had distanced itself from Brisbane, but McCosker and McCabe discreetly lobbied Archbishop Duhig for change. Duhig, 'realising the limitation of lay counsellors', agreed that Fr Kevin Caldwell take over from Shand and establish a professional CFWB.<sup>261</sup> Thereafter Brisbane showed greater co-operation towards the NCWC and the Federal Government.<sup>262</sup> The Brisbane CMAC is an example of state aid supporting the establishment of a professional bureau in conjunction with other factors, notably the NCWC's influence.

Nevertheless, state aid became a formidable element of funding for diocesan welfare bureau. By 1985 the fourteen Centacare diocesan agencies attracted a total of approximately \$3m from the Commonwealth Government for marriage counselling, as well as \$3.5m for other programs from state governments, and some \$2m in church subsidies and donations.<sup>263</sup>

#### 7.4 Other policies

Historian, Paul Smyth, has suggested that in the 1960s Australian Catholic welfare worked closely with the state in a 'new mixed economy of welfare' but it was still an era of 'lost opportunity' for the development of the NCWC.<sup>264</sup> While the NCWC struggled to gain tacit recognition from the bishops in the

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<sup>260</sup> McCosker to Caldwell, 6 July 1965, File 570003, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>261</sup> L.V. Harvey to Mr Bannerman re: CFWB, Melbourne, Matrimonial Causes - Marriage Guidance Organisations - Application for approval - Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, Series A432, File 1960/2589, NAA. Shand to McCosker, 5 December 1962, File 570001, NCWC, Collection; CSSAA. Caldwell to McCosker, 15 June 1965; McCosker to Caldwell, 6 July 1965, File 570003, NCWC Papers, CSSAA.

<sup>262</sup> Fr F.H. Douglas, Archbishop of Brisbane's secretary to McCabe, 12 June 1965, File 570003, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>263</sup> John Usher, Chairman's Report, National Catholic Marriage and Family Counselling Association, 4 July 1986, p. 1, CSSAA.

<sup>264</sup> P. Smyth, 'Reclaiming Community? From Welfare Society to Welfare State in Australian Catholic Social Thought', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 49, No. 1, March 2003, p. 27.

1960s, it did make representations to governments on uniform adoption legislation and child endowment, which are reviewed in this section.<sup>265</sup>

#### 7.4.1 Child Endowment

The NSW Holman National government first proposed child endowment in 1919, but it was not until 1927, during the Lang Government's first term, that a child endowment scheme began.<sup>266</sup> The rate paid for children rose only slowly during the depression decade, and, in 1942 the Commonwealth introduced legislation that subsumed the NSW scheme.<sup>267</sup>

In the late 1950s the NCWC expressed concern at the paucity of the payment to low income families. In July 1958 the NCWC published *A Case for Graded Child Endowment and Increased Maternity Allowances*.<sup>268</sup> Prepared by Perkins, the NCWC proposed increases in child endowment based on the number of children in a family, and a rise in the maternity allowance, which had last been adjusted in 1943.<sup>269</sup> Although the NCWC statement followed principles enunciated in the Papal Encyclical, *Quadragesimo anno*, and the Australian bishops' social justice statements of 1940-41, the NCWC did not quote directly from these documents, because it wanted to 'inform public opinion and influence legislation'.<sup>270</sup> The NCWC noted that endowment rates for second and subsequent children had remained unchanged for a decade.

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<sup>265</sup> Bishop McCabe's acknowledgement to McCosker that 'it must be over five years since I attended a meeting of the NCWC' should not be interpreted as McCabe's diminishing personal support for the NCWC; McCabe to McCosker, 6 January 1968, NCWC Correspondence, Series 8, CSSA. This letter, and other McCabe correspondence, such as McCabe to McCosker, 20 February 1965, reveal a strong warmth towards McCosker, personally, and in his professional capacity as NCWC Secretary.

<sup>266</sup> A.H. Charteris, 'Family Endowment in New South Wales', in J. Roe (ed.), *Social Policy in Australia: Some Perspectives, 1901-1975* (Stanmore, NSW, Cassell Australia Limited, 1976).

<sup>267</sup> Dickey, *No Charity There*, pp: 112-113; 132-133.

<sup>268</sup> Published in Melbourne in July 1958.

<sup>269</sup> NCWC Report – January 1962, File 570003, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>270</sup> McCosker to Gilroy, 1 July 1958; Bishop T. McCabe, NCWC Annual Report – January 1959, p. 2, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.



Perkins and McCosker used the statement to lobby federal MPs for improvements in child endowment. Inflation, they claimed, had halved the purchasing power of child endowment over the past decade.<sup>271</sup> Dickey confirms that successive governments in the late 1940s and 1950s 'ignored its depreciating real value, making it seem in the face of information and rising real wages a derisory payment and so discounting the logic of the universalist theory'.<sup>272</sup>

While the Anglican Church supported the NCWC statement, Methodist minister, Rev. Alan Walker, claimed the proposal would 'encourage undesirable social trends', such as large families.<sup>273</sup> In support of the case for child endowment, Sydney's *Catholic Weekly*, under Gilroy's firm control, editorialised the importance of Australia's local population.

Australia to-day [sic] needs strong and healthy families in a physical and spiritual sense, and it also needs large ones... we should... develop and sustain large families of local origin.<sup>274</sup>

The bishops endorsed the NCWC statement. Prendiville of Perth hoped the statement would 'force the hand of the Government' and O'Brien complimented the statement for being 'well argued and based on scientific research'.<sup>275</sup> Bishop James Carroll provided an insightful comment, saying 'the case has been so well propounded... that it would be advantageous to stress the positive character of the plan, rather than allow it to appear simply as a preferable alternative'.<sup>276</sup> A disappointed McCabe reported the government 'ignored' the NCWC recommendations.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> McCosker to Federal Minister for Social Services, Hon. H. Robertson, 30 June 1958, p. 1, NCWC, CSSAA.

<sup>272</sup> Dickey, *No Charity There*, p.133.

<sup>273</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 July 1958, p. 13.

<sup>274</sup> *Catholic Weekly*, 17 July 1958.

<sup>275</sup> Prendiville to McCosker, 14 July 1958; O'Brien to McCosker, 7 July 1958, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>276</sup> Bishop James Carroll to McCosker, 8 July 1958, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>277</sup> McCabe, NCWC Report, 1959, p. 2, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

In 1962 the NCWC updated its Child Endowment statement and commented 'that living costs have more than doubled' and that inflation over the previous 14 years had led to a 'halving in the real value for second and subsequent children'.<sup>278</sup> The NCWC statement reflected a strong social justice perspective and attracted considerable praise from the Federal Labor Party.<sup>279</sup> The advantages of a graduated scale of child endowment the NCWC argued would include:

a partial fulfilment by the Government of the debt which is owed in social justice to the family man who has more than the average number of children... it would serve to lessen the disability under which the medium and large size family lives in Australia.<sup>280</sup>

Maternity allowances, also, had remained unchanged for nearly two decades. Despite NCWC representation the 1963 Federal Budget did not increase overall child endowment, though exceptions were made to children in 'special circumstances', such as those living in institutions.<sup>281</sup> In 1964 the government increased endowment for third and subsequent children from 10 shillings to 15 shillings per week.<sup>282</sup> While the government did not endorse all of the NCWC recommendations, the increases were testimony to the peak body's lobbying efforts in this important policy arena.

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<sup>278</sup> NCWC, *A Case for Graded Child Endowment and Increased Maternity Allowances* (Melbourne, 1962), p. 6.

<sup>279</sup> For example, E.G. Whitlam expressed to McCosker that 'The pamphlet is strongly documented and cogently argued. I shall draw on it greatly'; Whitlam [written on Qantas notepaper as he was embarking on a visit to the 'Common Market'] to McCosker, 3 June 1962, File 550001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>280</sup> *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>281</sup> Minutes of NCWC Meeting, 28 August 1963, p. 3, File 570003, NCWC Collection, CSSAA. Fr Clem Kiby, an NCWC member, says that 'With much publicity gained in each state for the case, the Menzies Government introduced the principle of graded child endowment into the Parliament in 1962'. See also Fr. C. Kilby, Eulogy give at the Vigil Mass, St Charles Church, Ryde, NSW, 13 February 1996 for Monsignor James Francis McCosker, PC, OBE, Dip Soc Studs, p. 3, CSA.

<sup>282</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *Twenty-Third Report of the Director General of Social Services, 1963-64*, p. 9. Report 1964 – National Catholic Welfare Committee, p. 3, File 570003, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

#### 7.4.2 'Matter of shame and regret'

This section review the NCWC's mixed success in influencing new adoption legislation across Australia in the 1960s. Adoption was a major part of 20<sup>th</sup> century social policy undertaken by state and private organisations. In NSW, 58,000 adoptions occurred between 1923, the state's first adoption legislation, and the mid 1960s.<sup>283</sup> A significant trend in this period was the six-fold rise in private adoptions arranged by hospitals, families, clergyman and lawyers. Thompson's research that the number of private adoptions in NSW increased from 8 to 47 per cent in the period 1947-61 contrasts with claims from the NSW Child Welfare Department (CWD) that it continued to arrange two-thirds of adoptions.<sup>284</sup> In Victoria, voluntary agencies arranged 80 per cent of adoptions by 1960.<sup>285</sup> One of Melbourne's largest agencies, the CFWB, worked in conjunction with St Joseph's Broadmeadows Babies Home, and placed more than 1,400 children with adoptee families between 1959 and 1965.<sup>286</sup>

Catholic organisations, such as St Anthony's Home, Croydon, Waitara Babies' Home and St Margaret's Hospital, Darlinghurst, were heavily involved in private adoptions. In their detailed history of adoption practices in Australia, Audrey Marshall and Margaret McDonald said that past adoption practices by voluntary organisations were a 'matter of shame and regret'.<sup>287</sup> Some of those practices included little consideration of the emotional needs of birth mothers, such as not allowing them to see their child, to know its gender or to breastfeed. Women who had suffered a series of miscarriages or still-birth sometimes received a newborn baby placed for adoption without consideration of the psychological needs of the baby, its natural mother or the adopting

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<sup>283</sup> Marshall & McDonald, *The Many-Sided Triangle*, p. 6.

<sup>284</sup> E. Thompson, 'The role of the Private Adoption Agency in New South Wales', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 6, No.1, 1971, p. 59. R.H. Hicks, 'Public and Voluntary Child Welfare Services in New South Wales', *International Child Welfare Review*, Vol. XIV, 1960, p. 51.

<sup>285</sup> McCosker to O'Brien, 23 November 1961, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>286</sup> M. O'Collins, 'Some aspects of research in the field of adoption', *Australian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 19, No. 1, February 1966, p. 2.

mother.<sup>288</sup> Fr John Usher, a former director of Centacare Sydney, has confirmed the prevalence of these practices in the Catholic sector. If a mother miscarried or had a still-birth, for example, the nuns at St Margaret's could take a recently born child from a single mother and give it to the first woman.<sup>289</sup> Usher confirms that in such situations there was little assessment – physical or psychological – of the needs of either woman.<sup>290</sup>

Contemporary social workers, too, held reservations about private adoption processes, with some describing the process as 'haphazard'.<sup>291</sup> 'Lying-in homes' and hospitals arranged adoptions with private parties with relatively few checks and balances. The system, especially in NSW, was shrouded in hasty decisions and little consideration was given to assessing potential adoptee families. As early as 1955 McCosker advised Bishop Toohey of possible changes in the state's adoption law.<sup>292</sup> Some members of the hierarchy held a different perspective. Bishop Patrick Lyons perceived the greatest problem as the large number of Catholic children adopted to Protestants' parents. He attributed blame to the two largest Catholic hospitals, Lewisham and St Margaret's, which employed non-Catholic almoners. Lyons further claimed:

Catholic girls are often victims of undue pressure in having their babies adopted... if they wait for Catholic adopting parents they may have to wait at least two weeks; whereas if they sign an 'open' surrender adoption could be arranged at once.<sup>293</sup>

In the early 1960s the Commonwealth initiated discussions with the states, which had legislative power, about a uniform approach to adoption. The NCWC responded to the Commonwealth's interest by submitting

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<sup>287</sup> *ibid.*, pp: 4-5

<sup>288</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5; P. Farrar, 'What we did to those Poor Girls': The Hospital Culture that promoted adoption, in *Separation, Reunion, Reconciliation: Proceedings of the Sixth Australian Conference of Adoption* (Brisbane, 1997), p. 123.

<sup>289</sup> Interview, Rev. J. Usher, 16 December 2001.

<sup>290</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> McCosker to Toohey, 7 April 1955, p. 2, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>292</sup> *ibid.*

recommendations to the Attorney General.<sup>294</sup> Again the network of Holland, McCosker and Perkins played a pivotal role in securing the church's interests. Bishop McCabe delegated Perkins to research the material and prepare a national submission.<sup>295</sup>

In early 1961 McCosker wrote to Barwick offering assistance to his departmental officers in the framing of adoption legislation.<sup>296</sup> McCosker's interest was also fuelled by a perception that a 'majority of the states would like to see a complete centralisation of adoptions in the hands of the State CWD and that voluntary agencies should have no power to arrange adoptions'.<sup>297</sup> The NCWC would argue that the Victorian Catholic model – proposed by Perkins – of a central adoption agency should be established in each state.<sup>298</sup>

The NSW Bishops, encouraged by McCosker's other welfare contributions, appointed him to advise them on the forthcoming adoption legislation. The NSW CWD sought to take sole responsibility, a move that McCosker regarded as divisive. While the churches gained support from state councils of social service, state governments, excepting Victoria, and the Commonwealth, felt that only government agencies should be given responsibility for arranging adoptions. In 1964 the NCWC reported that governments 'propose to introduce legislation which will exclude all voluntary organisations from arranging adoptions... this means that the Church will be excluded from this work'.<sup>299</sup>

In NSW, the Association of Child Care Agencies, which had already demonstrated its influence in gaining much needed state aid for children in

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<sup>293</sup> Bishop Lyons, 1954 Report, CFWB, B2734, SAA.

<sup>294</sup> Recommendations concerning proposed uniform Adoption Legislation from the National Catholic Welfare Committee, n.d., File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>295</sup> McCosker to Holland, 28 April 1961, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>296</sup> McCosker to Barwick, 22 February 1961, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>297</sup> McCosker to O'Brien, 23 November 1961, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>298</sup> NCWC Report, January 1962, p. 2, File 570004, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>299</sup> Report 1964 – National Catholic Welfare Committee, p. 3, NCWC Collection, File 570004, CSSAA.

institutions, lobbied the government on behalf of voluntary agencies.<sup>300</sup> McCosker, as a key member of this association, led the lobbying efforts with state and federal politicians, including Billy Snedden who replaced Barwick as Attorney General in 1964.<sup>301</sup> Snedden sought to separate the question of licenced agencies and uniform adoption laws.<sup>302</sup> McCosker, by contrast, saw the two as intimately linked. For McCosker the Catholic sector would not support the new laws unless its agencies were authorised as licensed agencies. In NSW, McCosker's lobbying paid off and the government's position was 'thwarted'.<sup>303</sup> The tussle between church and state did not end there, though. When the NSW government proposed a 'Master List of Approved Parents', with each child allocated to the 'next most suitable' set of parents on the list,<sup>304</sup> all denominations engaged in child care, notably Anglicans and Catholics, raised opposition.<sup>305</sup> The CWD argued the proposal was not aimed at bureaucratic control, but to prevent prospective parents 'shopping around'.<sup>306</sup> The matter was debated for some time before the churches won the day.

The proposed changes in adoption legislation coincided with moves by professional social workers to improve adoption practices within the Catholic sector. After researching the issue McCosker advised McCabe that 'NSW has an unenviable record... many adoptions are patently bad, others are suspect and standards overall are low'.<sup>307</sup> In one case McCosker says he was asked to use his 'good services' after 'the Crown Law Office had recommended the

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<sup>300</sup> NSW Episcopal Committee for Dependent Children, April 1965 Report, McCosker Papers, CSSAA.

<sup>301</sup> See for example McCosker to Federal Attorney-General, B.M. Snedden, 23 March 1964, CFWB, Box 119, File 1, NCWC Correspondence 1958-1969, ARCAP. Snedden to McCosker, 13 May 1964, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>302</sup> Snedden to McCosker, 13 May 1964, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>303</sup> McCosker to McCabe, 24 January 1966, File 570001, p. 1, CSA.

<sup>304</sup> NSW Episcopal Committee for Dependent Children (ECDC), June 1963, p. 2. McCosker Papers, CSSAA.

<sup>305</sup> Memorandum on Uniform Adoption Legislation n.d. NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>306</sup> NSW ECDC, 1963 Report, *op. cit.*, pp: 2-3. CSSAA.

<sup>307</sup> McCosker to McCabe, 24 January 1966, CSA.

prosecution of a religious sister' because of her 'neglect'.<sup>308</sup> Working with McCabe, McCosker sought to influence both church and state.<sup>309</sup> McCosker convinced the NSW Episcopal Committee for Dependent Children (ECDC) – Bishops Toohey, Freeman and McCabe – of the need to establish a professional church agency to curtail the 'serious malpractices' that existed in Catholic adoptions.<sup>310</sup> The question of a voluntary charity model versus a professional approach to adoption, represented a re-run of the battles that McCosker and Perkins had fought with institutions over the care of children. McCosker said Catholic solicitors and matrons 'cannot understand that the new legislation is designed to abolish the abuses that were inherent in their methods and to enforce quite different standards'.<sup>311</sup>

Victoria was the first state to introduce new adoption legislation in 1964.<sup>312</sup> The CFWB, under Perkins' lead, 'dominated' the legislation, which the NCWC hoped would serve as a model for other states, because it provided for the child's religion and registration of a Catholic adoption agency.<sup>313</sup> But other states did not have the benefit of Perkins' quiet, though steely, determination. In Tasmania, the bureaucracy exhibited 'great opposition' against the suggestion of a Catholic adoption agency, while those states without professional welfare bureaux, lacked the clout to influence public policy, resulting in new adoption legislation having no provision by church agencies.<sup>314</sup> Western Australia is a case in point. While there were some informal representations between church and state and an understanding that the

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<sup>308</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>309</sup> McCosker to McCabe, 24 January 1966, Adoption File, No 452, Box 44. DOMNA; Minutes of Meeting held on 18 February 1966 between McCabe, McCosker, the NSW Under-Secretary of Welfare, A.C. Thomas and the Assistant Undersecretary, Bill Langshaw, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>310</sup> McCosker to McCabe, 24 January 1966, p. 2, CSA.

<sup>311</sup> Episcopal Committee for Dependent Children, 1966 Report, p 3, CSA.

<sup>312</sup> E. Phillips, 'The Victorian Adoption of Children Act', *Australian Journal of Social Work* Vol. 18, No.3, November 1965.

<sup>313</sup> Report of the National Catholic Welfare Committee, March 1965, pp: 1-2, File 570004, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>314</sup> National Catholic Welfare Committee, 1966, p. 1, File 570004, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

government would consider any submission from the church, there is no evidence the church followed up or sought to sway the state's full control on adoptions.<sup>315</sup> In other states, while the NCWC regretted a state-run system, it recognised the disadvantages of private adoptions, which are 'open to abuse, even where facilities for the care of unmarried mothers are adequate'.<sup>316</sup>

A different situation existed in Adelaide where Fr Roberts reported the CWD 'accept any suggestions and recommendations from us, and consult with us regarding the adoption of Catholic children'.<sup>317</sup> In such circumstances and without the staff to provide an adoption program, Roberts advised McCosker in 1959 that he had 'no ambition to try to enter the field of adoption'.<sup>318</sup> Roberts also felt comfortable in the knowledge that the social worker at the large Queen Victoria Maternity Hospital was Hannah Buckley, his predecessor. By the mid 1960s, at the urging of McCosker and Perkins, Roberts' successor, Holland, took a different approach.<sup>319</sup> In 1965 Holland joined forces with other churches, notably Joy MacLennan, director of the Church of England diocesan welfare agency, to press the South Australian government to ensure that 'competent voluntary organisations' be allowed to operate their own adoption services.<sup>320</sup> The NCWC reported that Holland had 'secured sufficient assurances in principle to guarantee that the proposed legislation will permit the Church to function freely'.<sup>321</sup>

The NSW situation was complicated by different agendas within the church. Gilroy preferred an institution, such as St Margaret's Hospital or St Anthony's

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<sup>315</sup> NCWC, Minutes of Meeting, 19 June 1964, p. 3, File 570004, NCWC Collection, CSSAA. Western Australia, Child Welfare Department, Uniform Adoptions File, A323/62. Vol. 1, SROWA.

<sup>316</sup> NCWC, 1967 Report, p. 3, File 570004, NCWC Collection, CSSAA,

<sup>317</sup> Roberts to McCosker, 22 December 1959, NCWC Correspondence, CAA.

<sup>318</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>319</sup> Perkins to Holland, 9 June 1961; Perkins to Holland, 16 April 1964; File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSA.

<sup>320</sup> Fr Holland, Miss Joy MacLennan, Deaconess P.E. Bonython, Superintendent, Women's Welfare Department, Matron D.J. Childs of McBride Maternity Hospital to the Hon D.A. Dunstan, Minister of Social Welfare, Adelaide, 30 September 1965, CAA.

<sup>321</sup> NCWC, 1966 Report, p. 1. File 57004, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.



Home, to take the lead role in representing the church, whereas McCosker advocated a centralised organisation under the auspices of the CFWB. McCosker advised McCabe that the Sisters of St Joseph did not have anyone with the skills or training to lead an adoption agency and cautioned against St Margaret's being involved, because of what he claimed was its poor reputation in adoption practices.<sup>322</sup>

In a show of defiance McCosker countered Gilroy's proposal by lobbying church and senior government officials. With support from McCabe, McCosker proposed a centralised adoption agency, which would operate independently of existing Catholic institutions. During a break in proceedings at the Second Vatican Council in Rome in 1966, the NSW Bishops discussed and ratified McCosker's proposal. The NSW Episcopal Committee for Charities was given responsibility for the Catholic Adoption Agency.<sup>323</sup> Despite the decision, Gilroy remained unsympathetic to the 'venture'. McCosker advised McCabe that Gilroy would prefer the CWD to manage adoptions, providing it could 'safeguard' the religion of children.<sup>324</sup> This view ran counter to the Melbourne and Adelaide archdioceses, which feared allowing the state too much power. Perkins, for example, questioned whether a 'state monopoly does protect sufficiently the rights of the natural parents or of the child',<sup>325</sup> while Bishop Brian Gallagher of Port Pirie urged the powers of the South Australian CWD be kept to a minimum.<sup>326</sup>

In February 1966 McCabe and McCosker met with two senior CWD officers to further understand the details of the *NSW Adoption of Children Act 1965*. The clerics were advised that an approved agency required a principal officer to head its operations.<sup>327</sup> McCosker used this information to support his case that

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<sup>322</sup> McCosker to McCabe, 6 January 1962, p. 3, CWB, B2734, SAA.

<sup>323</sup> The NSW bishops met on 26 October 1965 in Rome. See document, Constitution of the proposed Catholic Adoption Agency, CSA.

<sup>324</sup> McCosker to McCabe, 11 June 1966, p. 2, CSA.

<sup>325</sup> Perkins to Holland, 28 December 1966, CSSB Collection, MDHC.

<sup>326</sup> Gallagher to Roberts, 29 July 1959, CAA.

<sup>327</sup> Notes on a meeting held on 18 February 1966 between McCabe and McCosker and

representatives from Catholic hospitals and children's institutions, although experienced in adoptions, were not qualified to be the principal officer under the new Act.<sup>328</sup> A professional social worker, such as Fr Phibbs, would be a suitable principal officer. Phibbs, however, was contending with difficult financial issues at the CFWB, so McCosker became the acting principal officer in August 1966.<sup>329</sup>

The passing of the NSW legislation made 'private adoptions' by matrons, religious sisters and brothers and solicitors, illegal. All adoptions had to be undertaken by either the state or an approved agency, such as a Catholic Adoption Agency (CAA). The new legislation, McCosker says, 'rejects the popular view of "experience" in favour of the view that a person's experience should be disciplined'.<sup>330</sup> In its first year the NSW CAA placed 200 children.<sup>331</sup> Given the volume of work McCosker and Bishop James Freeman arranged for the CAA to become a 'special work' of the SVdP. The SVdP agreed to be involved provided its members could visit the homes of prospective adopting parents.<sup>332</sup> This role and the extent of volunteer involvement became a source of tension between social workers and the SVdP. Margaret McDonald, who worked at the CAA in various capacities between 1966 and 1985, recalls how the inclusion of volunteers went against the principles of professional social work.<sup>333</sup> In April 1969 the SVdP reacted sharply to an article in the *Catholic Weekly*, which it felt overlooked the work of its voluntary members in visiting prospective adopting families.<sup>334</sup> The SVdP objected to a comment that the

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A.C. Thomas and W. Langshaw of the Child Welfare and Social Welfare Department, File 452, Adoptions, Box 44, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle Diocesan Archives (DOMNA).

<sup>328</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>329</sup> McCosker to McCabe, 11 June 1966, pp:1-2, CSA.

<sup>330</sup> Memorandum on Adoption, CSA.

<sup>331</sup> Adoptions, MS. n.d., p. 1, CSA.

<sup>332</sup> Carey Tobin, President, SVdP Metropolitan Central Council of NSW to Bishop Thomas McCabe, 1 September 1967, CSA.

<sup>333</sup> Interview, Margaret McDonald, Sydney, 30 August 2006.

<sup>334</sup> *Catholic Weekly*, 19 April 1969.

CAA would only involve 'qualified social workers'.<sup>335</sup> McCosker responded with equal force and threatened to resign as Principal Officer unless he was 'convinced that the Agency is conducted legally and ethically'.<sup>336</sup> Part of the reason for emphasising trained social workers, McCosker said, was because 'to attract them it was necessary to emphasise that the standard of work of the Agency was of a high professional standard'.<sup>337</sup> The matter settled down though the underlying views remained entrenched: McCosker wanted professionals involved in all aspect of the adoption process; the SVdP felt that volunteers had a vital role to play. In 1969, the CAA provided 'suitable adoption for 297 children'.<sup>338</sup> For two decades the CAA was managed as a Special Work of the SVdP.

The new Act led to a sharp fall in adoptions undertaken by NGWAs. The following table shows the dominance of the NSW CWD over an 18 month period ending December 1968.

**Table 7.3**

**Adoption Orders in NSW, 1 July 1967 to 31 December 1968<sup>339</sup>**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Number of Adoptions</b>
Child Welfare Department	3,049
Catholic	224
Presbyterian	117
Anglican	114
Salvation Army	50
Methodist	30
Total	3,564

By the end of the 1960s CAAs operated in Victoria, NSW and South Australia.. The NCWC, acutely aware of the difficulty of attracting 'suitable adoptive

<sup>335</sup> Tobin to McCosker, 17 April 1969, CSA.

<sup>336</sup> McCosker to Brother Campbell, SVdP, 20 May 1969, CSA.

<sup>337</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>338</sup> Catholic Adoption Agency, *Annual Report 1969*, located in Council of Social Service of New South Wales, St Vincent de Paul Society File, KH707.

parents', cautioned other dioceses to 'exercise vigilance otherwise the shortage of Catholic adoptive parents will force State welfare organisations to adopt Catholic babies to non-Catholic parents'.<sup>340</sup> Some Catholic operators found it difficult to forego tradition. In 1975, for example, Davoren expressed concern to the president of the Australian Conference of Major Superiors that a small number of Catholic hospitals 'retained the old arrangements' of preventing a mother from seeing its baby before adoption and restricting contact between the unmarried father and his girlfriend and their child.<sup>341</sup>

## 7.5 Diminishing church concern for welfare

The growth of diocesan welfare bureaux in the early 1960s led to a more representative national flavour on the NCWC via Frs Barry Lynch (Canberra-Goulburn), Clem Kilby (Tasmania), Peter Phibbs (Sydney), Joe Russell (Perth) and Cyril Shand (Brisbane).<sup>342</sup> In Adelaide, Fr Holland swapped roles with Archbishop Beovich's trusted secretary, Fr Peter Travers. Holland also became Director of Catholic Social Welfare, wherein he continued negotiations with the state government about the creation of 'cottage homes' to replace large scale institutions.<sup>343</sup>

In 1967 Phibbs urged McCosker to push for a properly funded permanent NCWC secretariat. The 'possible gains' could be a stronger image for the Church in terms of social welfare issues; a co-ordinating body for the church's welfare activities; the promotion by bishops of the bureaux and marriage guidance organisations; establishment of diocesan social welfare committees with lay representatives; and bureaux financing.<sup>344</sup> Phibbs' suggestions

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<sup>339</sup> Cited in Thompson, *The role of the Private Adoption Agency*, p. 60.

<sup>340</sup> NCWC Report – April, 1968, pp: 1-2, File 57004 NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>341</sup> Davoren to Mother de Lourdes, 10 August 1975, NSW Standing Committee on Adoptions File, 800006, ACSWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>342</sup> NCWC Annual Report, January 1961, p 1. File 570004, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>343</sup> Archbishop Gleeson to Holland, 25 October 1971, Fr Terrence Holland File, Box 598, Series 3, CAA. R. Willis, Interview with Fr Terry Holland for the Goodwood Orphanage Oral History Project, 14 October 1993, p. 10, J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection, OH201/9, Mortlock Library of South Australia.

<sup>344</sup> Phibbs to McCosker, 16 February 1967, File 550001, NCWC, CSSAA.

reflected concern by other NCWC members, such as McCosker, that it 'received no support from the Bishops [sic] Conferences'.<sup>345</sup> It would not be until 1974 that the ACSWC succeeded the NCWC along the lines of Phibbs' proposal.

Two episcopal upheavals impacted the NCWC in 1970. Firstly, the stability provided by its chair, Bishop McCabe ended, with his abrupt resignation. Turmoil about the role of the Episcopal Committee for Social and Charitable Works (ECSCW) which McCabe chaired, contributed to his resignation. The AEC's central commission – dominated by its successive presidents, Archbishop Cahill and Gilroy – allocated significant funds from Australian Catholic Relief (ACR) to a Port Moresby seminary, without consulting the ECSCW, which had responsibility for ACR.<sup>346</sup> ACR raised funds to support communities experiencing natural and man-made disasters. When the ECSCW learned of the decision, McCabe is reported to have said to the ECSCW secretary, Archbishop Gleeson, that he was 'so disgusted' that 'I do not want to be associated with it any longer'.<sup>347</sup> While Gleeson was aware that McCabe's health problems may have influenced his resignation, he too, reacted angrily at the lack of due process. Gleeson advised Cahill of his 'embarrassment at the manner in which the decision... was made. At no stage was the Committee consulted, even on the practical point as to whether the money was available... it was only because of the increase in income from Project Compassion in 1970... that the money was available'.<sup>348</sup>

At the same time tensions arose in relation to the Joint Secretariat on Action for World Development (AWD), a recently established body between the Australian Council of Churches and the Catholic Church. AWD received solid endorsement from Gleeson, who following the spirit of the Vatican Council, had instigated a diocesan pastoral council comprising mainly lay people in his

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<sup>345</sup> McCosker, Notes on the beginnings of Catholic Welfare, p. 6.

<sup>346</sup> Gleeson to Toohey, 2 November 1970, File 57001 NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>347</sup> Reported by Gleeson to another ECSWC member, Bishop Toohey, 2 November 1970, Bishop Toohey Papers, Box 11, No. 7, DOMNA.

<sup>348</sup> Archbishop James Gleeson of Adelaide to Archbishop Cahill, President, AEC, 7 December 1970, Bishop Toohey Papers, Box 11, No. 7, DOMNA.

Adelaide diocese.<sup>349</sup> Gleeson received the highest number of votes from the metropolitan bishops, save Gilroy, to be one of four Catholic representatives on AWD's ecumenical management committee. Gilroy and Archbishops Cahill and Knox refused to accept the nominations, believing a separate episcopal committee should oversee ACR and AWD, and because 'Adelaide is too heavily represented' on the bodies and the justice and peace commission.<sup>350</sup> This matter concerned clerical control. Gilroy and Cahill wanted a separate committee of clerics, rather than the four lay people who had been nominated. An angered Gleeson also threatened to resign as the bishop responsible for the three organisations, but was guided by a supportive Bishop Toohey, who suggested that he 'not be discouraged... the main thing is that the ship is being launched and adjustments can always be made. Do not be perturbed by any criticism but go ahead bravely in continuing the job that you are doing so well'.<sup>351</sup>

Meanwhile, ECSWC members expressed alarm at McCabe's resignation. The departure coincided with increasing concerns by the NCWC about the church's diminished focus on contemporary social welfare issues. In 1970, McCosker, on behalf of the NCWC, expressed:

concern at the decrease in the Church's apparent concern about, and involvement in, Australia's social problems. Among the issues which demand a national policy are Poverty [sic] in all its forms and the general breakdown of marriage and family life.<sup>352</sup>

The NCWC continued:

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<sup>349</sup> Gleeson, Memo to all members of the Episcopal Committee for Social and Charitable Works re Joint Secretariat on Action for World Development, 16 September 1970, Bishop Toohey Papers, Box 11, No. 7, DOMNA. See discussion by Campion, *Australian Catholics*, p. 226.

<sup>350</sup> Not surprisingly, Gleeson suggested a number of lay people from his home state of South Australia to join the committee. See Archbishop Cahill to Archbishop Gleeson, 12 October 1970; and, Cardinal Gilroy to Archbishop Gleeson, 13 October 1970, Bishop Toohey Papers, Box 11, No. 7, DOMNA.

<sup>351</sup> Toohey to Gleeson, 29 October 1970, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>352</sup> NCWC, Statement to the Bishops, 1971, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

Little or no constructive planning in these areas is offered by the Commonwealth or State governments and there is little incentive for them to do so in the absence of positive Church policy and well presented representations.<sup>353</sup>

Toohey seized on the document and arranged for the bishops to hear from two NCWC representatives at its next annual meeting.<sup>354</sup> Toohey wanted to avoid an ad hoc bishops' committee presenting its own, possibly jaundiced, view.<sup>355</sup> Meanwhile, the ambitious Bishop Algy Thomas succeeded McCabe as NCWC chair.<sup>356</sup> Just as he had done at the Sydney CFWB in the 1940s, Thomas moved to separate social justice from the delivery of social welfare services because the former 'had a tendency to crowd out all else'.<sup>357</sup> As a result the AEC approved a new Commission for Development and Peace, under Gleeson's chairmanship.

In terms of the NCWC, Thomas regarded McCosker and Kilby's presentation to the 1971 bishops' meeting as 'excellent', but he thought he should co-ordinate the activities of Catholic social workers, and implicitly become the conduit of communication to the AEC.<sup>358</sup> Thomas proceeded to host a two day meeting for all priests 'qualified in the field of social work' at Bathurst in March 1971. At this meeting different opinions were expressed about the structure of national welfare activities. Thomas argued that the 'bishops' confidence had yet to be won' and that the priest social workers should present material to the bishops, who would issue statements.<sup>359</sup> Such a stance angered McCosker who pointed out that the NCWC had issued statements under its own name for more than a decade. McCosker later told Perkins he 'was astounded at Algy's

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<sup>353</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>354</sup> Thomas to McCosker, 14 September 1970, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>355</sup> Minutes of Episcopal Committee for Social and Charitable Works, 20 January 1971, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>356</sup> Thomas to McCosker, 11 March 1971, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>357</sup> Thomas to McCosker, 26 January 1971, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>358</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>359</sup> Minutes of Meeting on Catholic Social Welfare (Formerly, the National Catholic Welfare Committee), 30-31 March 1971, File 570001, NCWC Collection,

lack of appreciation of the social mission of the Church... there was no mention of the NCWC'.<sup>360</sup>

Thomas pushed for the formation of a National Catholic Social Welfare Conference, and Phibbs suggested lay women join the committee, a realistic proposal given the majority of bureaux staff – as well as clients – were women.<sup>361</sup> Phibbs, however, did not enjoy majority support, and in an unusual sign of unity Thomas and McCosker combined to defeat the proposal. McCosker though remained sceptical of Thomas' motives and the need for an organisation other than the NCWC. With characteristic frankness, McCosker expressed to Perkins, who had been unable to attend, that 'Algy wanted the organisation to create a name for himself at home and abroad'.<sup>362</sup> 'If Clem [Kilby, the NCWC secretary] gets anything out of the [minutes] he will get an Oscar'.<sup>363</sup> At a second meeting in June 1971 the priests expressed the view that the NCWC 'may be described as the "Priest Advisory Council" to the bishops'.<sup>364</sup> Unconvinced, Kilby and McCosker raised concerns with Fr John Davoren, the assistant director of Sydney's CFWB, who was sympathetic to their position.<sup>365</sup>

During 1972 the NCWC's founding members sought to reassert control over the NCWC. They gained support from the articulate Peters Travers of Adelaide, who advised Davoren that NCWC meetings should not be 'dependent on the initiative of the Episcopal Deputy', a reference to Thomas.<sup>366</sup> Travers subtly referred to the difficulties of Thomas' involvement and 'whether there is some way of having the very real advantage of an official Episcopal representative and at the same time having a structure that enables us to meet

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<sup>360</sup> McCosker to Perkins, 21 April 1971, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>361</sup> Draft Minutes, Bathurst Meeting, June 1971, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>362</sup> McCosker to Perkins, 21 April 1971, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>363</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>364</sup> Edited Minutes of First Day of Meeting at Bathurst, June 1971 as Agenda for the Final Day of NCWC Conference, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>365</sup> McCosker, Notes on the beginnings of Catholic Welfare, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>366</sup> Travers to Davoren, 31 May 1972, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.



when we see fit.<sup>367</sup> Kilby also remained concerned at Thomas' approach, and, with Davoren, met with Archbishop Young of Hobart, who supported their concept of a bishops-financed Catholic social welfare commission.<sup>368</sup> Thomas' suggestion to 'recast' the NCWC was rejected by the majority of NCWC members.<sup>369</sup> Meanwhile the AEC at a meeting in September 1972 approved the NCWC constitution. The NCWC's main features were to be:

Advisory to the Conference in the field of welfare and empowered to establish its own secretary for the purpose of collecting and disbursing information of national significance, to represent the church on national community welfare bodies and to prepare public comment on matters pertaining to social welfare.<sup>370</sup>

Thomas advised Kilby that the AEC approved membership being open to those 'who hold senior administrative responsibility for general welfare', a reference to the fact that not all future directors of CFWB might be clerics.<sup>371</sup> Broadening the NCWC's membership created consternation for McCosker and Davoren, his successor as secretary. The issue came to a head when the Rockhampton diocese appointed a religious sister to lead its welfare services. Davoren and McCosker initially balked at inviting her to join the committee.<sup>372</sup> Reluctantly, the clerics extended membership to involve religious sisters, because they saw potential to make inroads into policies governing children's homes. As noted in the 1973 NCWC annual report to the AEC:

The work of religious sisters... who work in co-ordination with the CFWB... is suffering because of the overall shortage of religious and the tendency to place a greater emphasis on the school... at a time when more specialised knowledge and training is required fewer sisters are being released for this work.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>368</sup> Davoren to CWB directors, 29 May 1972, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>369</sup> Linehan, *From the National Catholic Welfare Committee*, p. 261.

<sup>370</sup> Summaries by Davoren in correspondence to Archbishop T. Cahill, Secretary, AEC, 26 February 1975, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>371</sup> Thomas to Kilby, 4 September 1972, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>372</sup> NCWC, *Minutes of Meeting*, 6-8 November, 1972, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>373</sup> NCWC Report to National Conference of Bishops, January 1973, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

Force of circumstances and the views of some younger clerics resulted in three qualified social workers, Sisters Margaret Gargan, Borromeo McGovern and Aileen Maguire, being co-opted to the NCWC.<sup>374</sup> But the NCWC remained divided on 'broadening membership', and at its July 1973 meeting, 'fears were expressed ... that too many more members could hinder rather than help the work of the Committee'.<sup>375</sup> While not stated the reference to a wider membership related not only to religious order representatives, but also to lay people. Toby O'Connor notes that by the end of 1974 'there were no religious sisters who held senior administrative positions in religious institutes' social welfare initiatives attending the NCWC meetings'.<sup>376</sup>

#### 7.5.1 Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission

At this time the NCWC continued to make representations to government, though with less public coverage. In 1973 Fr Holland led an NCWC delegation in making a submission to the Henderson Committee on Poverty. Internally, the NCWC recommended greater co-ordination and co-operation between existing welfare services. By the end of 1973 the NCWC recognised that a:

full-time secretary is now required in light of the increasing volume of work, particularly as a result of the vast welfare legislation planned or already introduced in Canberra and the number of Government enquiries demanding submissions.<sup>377</sup>

During 1974 the NCWC lobbied the bishops for a proper funding base. The Bishops' Committee for Social and Charitable Works – especially Toohey (chairman) and Thomas – provided support in the transition to a permanent secretariat.<sup>378</sup> Perkins, who had been made an auxiliary bishop of Melbourne

<sup>374</sup> NCWC, Minutes of Meeting, Melbourne, 24 February 1973, p. 1, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA. Davoren to Sr Borromeo McGovern, 8 March 1973, ACSWC Membership Files, CSSAA.

<sup>375</sup> NCWC, Minutes of Meeting, Adelaide, 24 July 1973, p. 6, File 570001, NCWC Collection, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>376</sup> O'Connor, A Short Account of Catholic Welfare; Correspondence from Davoren to Sr Aileen Maguire, 7 July 1975, following her resignation from the ACSWC, ACSWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>377</sup> NCWC, Minutes of Meeting, Hobart, 3-7 December 1973, p. 5, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>378</sup> Report of Committee for Social and Charitable Works to the AEC, August 1973, p. 4,

in 1972, became NCWC president, which gave added impetus to the proposal for a National Catholic Social Welfare Secretariat.<sup>379</sup>

In March 1975 the AEC's central commission approved a name change from the NCWC to the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission (ACSWC).<sup>380</sup> Fr Holland was appointed its first chairman.<sup>381</sup> The AEC also agreed in principle to finance the new organisation's secretariat. When Davoren was suggested as the ACSWC secretary, Cardinal Freeman expressed reluctance, because he had no other priest to relieve Davoren of his role as director of Sydney's CFWB.<sup>382</sup> Perkins and McCosker lobbied Freeman, who agreed to release Davoren on the proviso that the national secretariat be based in Sydney.<sup>383</sup> One of Davoren's first tasks was overcoming the 'degree of confusion between the functions of the Commission's Secretariat and the Diocesan Bureau'.<sup>384</sup>

The ACSWC continued the NCWC's work by making submissions to national inquiries, such as the Royal Commission on Human Relationships (1975). In 1977 Davoren proposed a name change for diocesan welfare bureaux to Centacare, in line with the Sydney's bureau's name.<sup>385</sup> The proposal sparked debate and also raised the question of autonomy for diocesan bureaux. Fr Hickey of Perth said uniformity was desirable but did not think it could be

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File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>379</sup> See for example, Minutes of the Executive Members of NCWC, held at Blackburn Presbytery, Victoria, 25 and 27 August 1974, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>380</sup> Secretary, Australian Episcopal Conference to Davoren, 17 March 1975, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>381</sup> Little has been written about Holland's large contribution to Catholic welfare, both in his home state and nationally. A useful start is an eulogy by David Shinnick, delivered at Holland's funeral on 11 February 2000, which is located in Fr Holland's file in Box 598, Series 3, AAA.

<sup>382</sup> Freeman to Perkins, 27 March 1974, CWB Collection, B2735, SAA.

<sup>383</sup> Perkins to Davoren, 17 December 1974; 7 January 1975, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>384</sup> ACSWC Secretariat Report for the Period January 1, 1975 to June 30, 1975, ACSWSC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>385</sup> Davoren to Directors, CFWB, 7 June 1977, ACSWC Collection, CSSAA.

achieved in the short term.<sup>386</sup> Hickey disagreed with both the proposed logo, a family, preferring a fish, and as he was 'pigheaded' about spelling, urged his colleagues to spell the name 'correctly', i.e. Centrecare.<sup>387</sup> The Rockhampton bureau questioned the benefits of a national approach and whether the proposed changes represented centralisation.<sup>388</sup> Davoren argued two reasons for Centacare being adopted as the national name: firstly, it would send an important message 'at official levels of the comprehensiveness of the church's involvement in the welfare field', and, secondly, it would 'show positive evidence of a co-operative linkage between the various welfare organisations'.<sup>389</sup> Davoren's proposal gained the majority vote and resulted in Centacare becoming the dominant, but not exclusive, national brand name.

#### 7.5.2 'On paths... to the wilderness'

One of the underlying aims for creating a new national body was to ensure an adequate funding base from the AEC, rather than the diocesan agencies funding the peak body. The conversion from the NCWC to the ACSWC did not however result in a swift resolution of financial issues.<sup>390</sup> The AEC provided an initial \$30,000, but Davoren relied on Sydney's CFWB and a portion of the Australian Government's Family Planning grant to fund the new national body.<sup>391</sup>

Other early issues for the ACSWC included its purpose and membership. Diocesan bureaux directors found it difficult to accept that they no longer had automatic membership, as had been the case with the NCWC.<sup>392</sup> McCosker,

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<sup>386</sup> Hickey to Director, Catholic Social Welfare Office, ACT, 29 June 1977, Catholic Welfare, 1971-1980, F12, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Archives (ACGA).

<sup>387</sup> Hickey to Davoren, 27 June 1977, CFWB General Files, 750007, CSSAA. See also Hickey to Archbishop Goody, 10 June 1977, Centrecare Correspondence 1977-80, Box 131, File 11, 1977, ARCAP.

<sup>388</sup> Sr Anne Marie, Rockhampton Bureau to Davoren, 14 June 1977, ACSWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>389</sup> Davoren to Sr Anne Marie, Queensland, 17 June, 1971, ACSWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>390</sup> ACSWC Secretariat Report for the Period January 1, 1975 to June 30, 1975, p. 1, ACSWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>391</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

for example, expressed unease at the inclusion of non-clerics and lay people and the commission's shift away from diocesan matters.

The Commission met and the agenda was arranged by the Commission staff ... and no time was available for the diocesan agencies to meet. The Commission apparently could not see the need for them to meet. All ties had apparently been broken between the Committee [NCWC] and the Commission.<sup>393</sup>

During the late 1970s and early 1980s the gulf between the commission and the bureaux intensified. One positive move was the appointment of a Mercy sister, Agatha Rogers, as the ACSWC executive director in 1980, replacing the founding director, Davoren.<sup>394</sup>

As the Catholic welfare sector approached the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Melbourne bureau, Catholic welfare appeared to be splitting between the bureaucrats and service delivery organisations. In a 1977 study of diocesan bureaux and their relationships with the ACSWC, Helen McLeish of the Melbourne bureau questioned whether the ACSWC was an 'advisory body' to the bishops or an 'umbrella organisation to Catholic organisations'.<sup>395</sup> McLeish captured the essence of the challenges of bureaux directors who 'have indicated a need for support, for information gathering and for greater opportunities to discuss Bureau to Bureau [sic] the planning of Service delivery programs'.<sup>396</sup>

Many bureaux directors felt the peak body no longer represented their interests. O'Connor, who had risen through the ranks of the Sydney bureau, has argued that the ACSWC 'left a vacuum in Catholic welfare structures at the diocesan level... which lead to an alienation of the Bureaux [sic] from the Commission'.<sup>397</sup> One example of the discord concerned a revamp of the 1960s

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<sup>392</sup> Preamble: Information to the Australian Episcopal Conference on the establishment of the Conference of Diocesan Family Agencies and the constituted subsidiary Association, n.d. (ca 1974), CSSAA.

<sup>393</sup> McCosker, Notes on the beginnings of Catholic Welfare *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>394</sup> Perkins to Freeman, 2 April 1980, ACSWC Papers, CSSAA.

<sup>395</sup> McLeish, A Study of the Problems, p. 2.

<sup>396</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1.

adoption laws. In late 1980 Rogers issued a press release expressing the commission's 'serious concerns' about the proposed adoption legislation in Victoria. The ACSWC argued that there should be no change to legislation governing confidentiality without the consent of the 'natural mother'.<sup>398</sup> Margaret McDonald, principal officer of Sydney's Catholic Adoption Agency, expressed concern that 'a significant segment of informed Catholic opinion may be in conflict with the view expressed by the Commission'.<sup>399</sup> She added 'the view of the CAA (NSW) is that adopted persons after the age of 18 years should have access to their original birth record and that this right should be retrospective'.<sup>400</sup>

In the same year a national conference raised further questions about the nature and future directions of Catholic social welfare. Fr Hickey of Perth proposed the appointment of the energetic Mrs Patricia Burke, the commission's first lay member, as the conference's convenor.<sup>401</sup> Burke recalls her experience on the commission as being 'over-powering'. She felt trepidation at being appointed to organise the national conference, which did not enjoy the full confidence of the ACSWC 'professional' secretariat.<sup>402</sup> Burke, without social work training, though highly motivated, secured a government grant for Fr Paul Collins to undertake research into the Catholic welfare sector.<sup>403</sup> Collins' extensive research provided a valuable snapshot of the church's involvement in welfare activities. One 'central issue' surrounded the role of volunteers 'to deal with community problems... [which] is seen as movement away from excessive professionalisation'.<sup>404</sup> While sympathetic to

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<sup>397</sup> O'Connor, *A Short Account of Catholic Welfare*, p. 13.

<sup>398</sup> ACSWC, Press Release, 23 October 1980, ACSWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>399</sup> Mrs M. McDonald to Sr Agatha Rogers, 29 October 1980, ACSWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>400</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>401</sup> Secretary, ECSCW to Mrs Burke of Strathfield, NSW, 17 March 1976, ACSWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>402</sup> Interview with Mrs Patricia Burke, Balmain, NSW, 6 July 2006.

<sup>403</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>404</sup> Collins, *Report on National Consultation*, pp: 4, 8 & 9.

the work of volunteers in organisations such as the St Vincent de Paul Society, Collins also reported that:

Quite a number of professionals are concerned about enthusiastic “do gooders” who often do more harm than good by over-involvement in complex situations. Some of this may be mere professional jealousy, but the validity of the need for the further training of volunteers cannot be avoided. Real balance is clearly needed in this whole issue.<sup>405</sup>

The balance between professional social workers and voluntary charity workers became a source of considerable tension during and in the conference aftermath.<sup>406</sup> The conference did little to appease the concerns of bureaux directors about the growing gap between the ACSWC and diocesan activities. In 1983 an unhappy group of bureaux directors agreed to formalise their group into the Conference of Diocesan Family Agencies.<sup>407</sup> They felt that the ACSWC was ‘not the appropriate body to represent the diocesan agencies nationally’ since it had no role in the provision of services, such as marriage counselling.<sup>408</sup> At Hobart in May 1984 the CFWB directors formally constituted themselves as the National Catholic Marriage and Family Counselling Association (NCMFCA) within the conference of Diocesan Family Agencies. Noteworthy amongst the association’s executive was its chairman, Sydney’s Fr John Usher, who was building his profile within Catholic social welfare, and Fr Kilby, an early NCWC member. The new association pleased McCosker, who saw it as ‘revitalising the organisation of diocesan agencies – the old NCWC’.<sup>409</sup> McCosker was pleased when Burke completed her third ASWCS term in 1985, and his protégé, Fr Usher, replaced her.<sup>410</sup> There was sense in appointing Usher – he was the Centacare Sydney director and chairman of the NCMFCA, the rival peak body. But by not replacing Burke with a woman the ACSWC showed signs, again, of being a clerical club. The situation was not

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<sup>405</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>406</sup> See for example Rogers to Hickey, 27 August 1980, p. 2, ACSWC, CSSAA.

<sup>407</sup> Preamble, (n.d.) *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>408</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>409</sup> McCosker, Notes on the beginnings of Catholic Welfare, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>410</sup> Fr K. J. Caldwell, National Director, ACSWC to Most Reverend Bishop G.J. Robinson, Sydney, 20 November 1985, ACSWC, CSSAA.

lost on Bishop Perkins, who in the following year, argued that the Victorian bishops desired to have more than one representative on the ACSWC, ideally 'a suitable married Catholic women'.<sup>411</sup>

Looking back on the changes in both direction and people, McCosker viewed the ACSWC as having transgressed from its purpose. He remarked somewhat pessimistically in 1989:

In recent years we have witnessed two phenomena, which, in my view, will lead Catholic Welfare in Australia on paths that lead to the wilderness. One is the appointment of Directors with specialist training other than in Social Work [sic] and the second is the growth of Social Welfare Commissions [sic] whose members are not skilled and involved in the delivery of service'.<sup>412</sup>

## **7.6 Conclusion**

Several main themes emerge from this chapter. Firstly, the activities of the NCWC in the 1960s confirm the accuracy of McCosker's 1989 statement that the NCWC became 'clearly regarded as the peak [welfare] Catholic body'.<sup>413</sup> The NCWC's work at state and federal levels raised the profile of diocesan bureaux, and more generally the church's social welfare mission. Significantly, the NCWC was one of the few unified national Catholic bodies in the 1960s. Despite few resources, it contributed greatly to public policy during a period when the church's hierarchy sought to avoid (further) public controversy. The NCWC's success in NSW, South Australia and Victoria, reflected those states where the church operated professional welfare bureaux and had clerical leaders willing to promote social reform. The church's negligible influence on social welfare policy in other states, notably Western Australia, reflected the absence of a professional welfare agency.

The NCWC exerted considerable influence in the areas of uniform divorce legislation and marriage counselling, but had mixed success in securing family support measures and adoption legislation. While some bishops, such as

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<sup>411</sup> Perkins to Davoren, 19 July 1974, ACSWC Collection, CSSAA.

<sup>412</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>413</sup> McCosker, Notes on the beginnings of Catholic Welfare, p. 4.



Arthur Fox, expressed reluctance at delegating social policy to the NCWC, most bishops enthusiastically endorsed the peak body's work – at least, in private.<sup>414</sup> Through promoting Catholic policies, peak bodies attracted some criticism from other churches and welfare providers, which gave them more impetus to articulate the Catholic position on moral and social issues. Yet, insufficient funding curtailed the activities of the NCWC and its successor, the ACSWC, with neither reaching the potential McCosker would have liked.

Secondly, the NCWC was a rare example of inter-diocesan Catholic unity in the 1950s and 1960s, when episcopal relations, especially between the dominant Melbourne and Sydney groups, were testy. McCosker and Perkins forged an extraordinary and unique partnership that spread to other states, notably South Australia and Tasmania. The clerics channelled their ideas and energy into the NCWC, which provided the church with an important voice in public policy debates. The NCWC's response to the 1957 and 1959 divorce bills and other social policies brought Perkins and McCosker together. Both were prolific writers and advocates of the disadvantaged. While different in personality, they forged a shared vision and their relationship was similar to that which may exist between a solicitor and a barrister: Perkins meticulously detailed in his research and his long discussions with McCosker, while the latter, in his flamboyant and, at times, combative style, shaped the message depending on the audience. McCosker, more than any other Australian Catholic welfare leader in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, showed a deft hand in political gamesmanship with church and state. In negotiating for marriage counselling funding, for example, McCosker showed political acumen: he outfoxed public servants by appealing to Barwick's desire for national unity. McCosker knew how to work the system to neutralise bureaucrats, while ensuring the church gained state funding and he retained a

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Evidenced by the considerable correspondence from bishops across Australia to the NCWC secretary, Monsignor McCosker. See NCWC Collection, CSSAA. For example, the conservative Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney, Thomas Muldoon, Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney, expressed to McCosker that the NCWC's submission of child endowment and increased maternity allowances 'is magnificently presented. This is really bringing the influence of the Church to bear on social matters in the most practical way. Your committee is outstanding in this field and your efforts are greatly appreciated'; Muldoon to McCosker, 10 June 1962, File 570001, NCWC Collection, CSSAA.

high degree of independence from government in operating its marriage guidance services.

Thirdly, the NCWC and the ACSWC facilitated much needed state aid, in a period of considerable controversy – and continuing though muted sectarianism – surrounding government funding to Catholic education. In the welfare sector, by contrast, the NCWC secured federal government funding with virtually no public opposition. Opposition within the welfare sector to the NCWC may have been motivated by sectarianism. The government's growing faith in diocesan bureaux extended to other social services and increasingly government agencies turned to the NCWC for advice.

Fourthly, McCosker had a tremendous influence on Catholic social welfare policy and practices at both state and national levels. In his home state, McCosker held the position of Director of Catholic Charities for nearly three decades, wielding enormous influence, and only relinquishing the title, most reluctantly, in March 1987.<sup>415</sup> McCosker's work is all the more significant, given a general lack of enthusiasm – and at times opposition – from Gilroy. McCosker's political skills shone through and he usually got what he wanted. In the area of new adoption legislation, for example, McCosker ensured that the state's legislation reflected his – and not – Gilroy's preference.<sup>416</sup>

Gilroy's replacement, James Freeman, a close friend of McCosker, relied heavily on the monsignor's advice, which benefited the Catholic welfare sector. In collaboration with Perkins, McCosker dominated the NCWC and only in the 1980s, when the ACSWC had moved away from the vision of the two pioneering clerics, did their influence on a national level start to wane. Within

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<sup>415</sup> Archdiocese of Sydney, Secular Clergy Personal Information Form, McCosker, James Francis, Copy, McCosker Papers, CSA.

<sup>416</sup> O'Brien to McCosker, 22 March 1956, *op. cit.* McCosker's many episcopal allies extended beyond Sydney. They included Bishops Norton (Bathurst), Toohey (Maitland-Newcastle), McCabe (Wollongong). Although not always agreeing with McCosker's *modus operandi* Archbishop O'Brien of Canberra-Goulburn had significant respect for McCosker. For some supporting letters from Toohey and McCabe see File Box A, Folder 1, CSSAA. Outside NSW, McCosker enjoyed support from bishops in most states. McCosker allocated probably least time to Victoria, because his close friend and colleague, Bishop Perkins, had considerable sway on welfare matters.

their respective states, however, the two clerics remained influential in social welfare policy until the last years of their long lives.<sup>417</sup>

Finally, the themes of volunteers and women in Catholic welfare are interwoven in this chapter. Some welfare clerics struggled with the spirit of Vatican II in relation to the inclusion of women and lay church members. The long divide between religious sisters and trained social workers underpinned much of the tension associated with reforms to institutional care and adoption practices. At the peak level, McCosker and Davoren steadfastly maintained control of the agenda. The inclusion of three religious sisters to the NCWC was fraught with tension; so, too, the appointment of an untrained lay woman to the ACSWC disappointed McCosker. He felt his career focus on trained welfare workers was losing ground. At times, McCosker's zeal and intolerance towards charity workers grated with the voluntary sector.

By 1985 the Australian Catholic welfare sector had improved its services and outreach to the marginalised and dispossessed. Peak bodies, such as the NCWC and the ACSWC had given the sector an important voice with government. Within the sector, though, there were unresolved tensions about the autonomy of diocesan initiatives and how effective the national body was in understanding challenges and making appropriate representations to state and national governments. Professional Catholic welfare had come of age, but it still lacked the degree of cohesiveness that its founders had envisaged.

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<sup>417</sup> McCosker died in 1996; Perkins died in 1998. For Perkins see obituary in *Kairos*, 28 June - 5 July 1998, pp: 10-11; Also *Herald Sun* 23 May 1998. A good insight into Perkins' personal style and career is his speech, 'Corpus Christi Priesthood and the M.C.G. Occasional Address by Most Rev. Eric Perkins, DD, VG at the Luncheon given in his honour Melbourne Cricket Ground – May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1993, Perkins Personal Papers, MDHC.



## **CHAPTER EIGHT:**

### **Catholic welfare professionalism in retrospect**

This thesis has examined the origins, development and influence of professional Catholic social welfare in Australia from the 1920s to the mid 1980s. The importance of this topic was demonstrated in the literature review, which showed the neglect of Catholic social welfare in the historiographies of social work, feminism, and Catholicism.<sup>1</sup> The underlying aims of this thesis have been to outline the growth of professional social work practices across the Australian Catholic Church, principally through diocesan welfare agencies (Centacare<sup>2</sup>), and to demonstrate the influence of peak Catholic welfare bodies on government social policy.

A central finding of this thesis is the appropriateness of referring to an Australian Catholic professional welfare sector, which comprised trained workers, predominantly lay women, and a small number of priests. Academic training in social welfare was a fundamental entry point. Professional Catholic social welfare began with three Westralian women studying social work in America, and returning home to establish social work in Catholic hospitals and diocesan welfare agencies. Catholic welfare subsequently developed in each state and culminated in peak bodies, such as the National Catholic Welfare Committee (NCWC) and the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission (ACSWC).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>2</sup> In some dioceses, such as Perth, Western Australia, the spelling is Centrecare.

<sup>3</sup> In 2006 the peak welfare sector's name changed to Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA).

With the exception of Laurie O'Brien and Cynthia Turner's brief reference to Catholics forming a separate group in inter-war Melbourne, few historians have considered the size or scope of the Catholic welfare sector, nor its influential personnel on the professionalisation of Australian welfare.<sup>4</sup> In the foundation decade of social work, lay Catholic social workers confronted the obstacles of the Great Depression and elements of sectarianism. Contrary to O'Brien and Turner's thesis however, Catholic women integrated with their non-Catholic peers in the social services sector and helped establish training and professional bodies in Victoria and NSW. Their important contributions to Catholic social welfare were repeated many times over in the government and community welfare sectors, a factor significantly understated in the literature.<sup>5</sup>

The unique characteristics of Australian Catholic social work were three-fold. Firstly, Australian Catholic social work drew its inspiration largely from America and not from the British paradigm of hospital-based almoner services, which was adopted by most other Australian welfare agencies in the inter-war period. Pioneer Catholic social workers, such as Norma Parker, Constance Moffit and Eileen Davidson, brought a new dimension to Australian welfare services, based on their American training and having worked at diocesan welfare bureaux in several American cities. Having gained post-graduate qualifications from the National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS) in Washington DC, the women inspired the first phase of Australian Catholic diocesan welfare bureaux – dissimilar in structure and intent to British almoning – beginning in Melbourne in 1935. Yet, when Catholic social workers participated in central clients' indexes on the premise of utilising scarce resources efficiently, they partly reflected the Charity Organisation Society philosophy of separating the

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<sup>4</sup> L. O'Brien and C. Turner, *Establishing Medical Social Work in Victoria* (Melbourne, University of Melbourne, 1979). An exception and more contemporarily-based study is P. Camilleri and G. Winkworth, 'Catholic Social Services in Australia: a short history', *Australian Social Work*, Vol. 58, No. 1, March 2005.

<sup>5</sup> One exception is J. Lawrence (ed.), *Norma Parker's Record of Service* (The Australian Association of Social Workers, The Department of Social Work, University of Sydney, The School of Social Work, University of New South Wales, 1969).

deserving from the undeserving. In the 1950s, Australian Catholics again turned to America for welfare training and guidance to respond to pressing social issues. Second generation social workers, such as Viva Murphy, Majorie Awbuyn and Monsignor Frank McCosker, studied in America, and the latter introduced peak bodies based on American models.<sup>6</sup> America attracted Australian Catholics for several reasons: it had developed an extensive diocesan welfare system, which encompassed the activities of professional social workers and voluntary organisations, such as the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP); its welfare model embraced a social justice paradigm more in parallel with Australian egalitarianism; and, although many Australian clergy and lay people had an Irish heritage, the paucity of professional developments in Ireland, meant that the Australian welfare leaders turned to the United States, whose bishops solidly promoted social work.

The second characteristic was the dominant role played by lay women in convincing the archdioceses of Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide to establish bureaux, which, as Fr John Usher notes, 'were the first special works under the direct control of Diocesan Bishops. Diocesan controlled Catholic Education Offices, Tribunals, Development Funds were to come much later'.<sup>7</sup> As employees of welfare bureaux, social workers represented the first lay professional staff working directly for Catholic bishops in Australia. The bureaux are also notable for being Australia's first professionally staffed family

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<sup>6</sup> Marjorie Awbuyn, an almoner at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne and also Victorian President of the Australian Association of Social Workers, undertook study through St Vincent's Hospital, New York, in 1957. Box 11/15 H2296, Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

<sup>7</sup> J. Usher, The McCosker Oration, Delivered at the Annual Conference of Catholic Welfare Australia, September 2002, Usher Files, Centacare Sydney Archives (CSA), p. 5. 'For Private use only and not for publication'. [Cited with the author's permission.]

welfare agencies and providing a welfare services model for other Christian denominations.<sup>8</sup>

Thirdly, Catholic social work pioneers recognised the church's dominant *modus operandi*, that is the centralised power held by the church's male hierarchy and the independence of religious orders. Female social workers understood the importance of securing and retaining high level clerical support, for without it, their welfare reforms would have been more difficult to achieve. But suspicion towards this new profession and a power imbalance between priests and lay women, led many Catholic social workers to pursue their careers outside church organisations. Hannah Buckley, Constance Moffit and Norma Parker, are cases in point. In Sydney, Alice Blackall and Alice O'Connor were treated poorly by clerics, who were unaccustomed to articulate and qualified women working within diocesan organisations. While some women, such as Mary Lewis and Margaret McHardy (Sydney), and Teresa Wardell (Melbourne) spent most of their careers within diocesan bureaux, they experienced frustrations and mixed fortunes working for different clerical directors.

## **8.1 Main Findings**

An assessment of the main findings of this thesis starts with the influence of American policies on the development of Australian Catholic social work. In the absence of an Irish tradition in professional social welfare and Catholic reservations about the ideals and cultural basis of the Protestant COS, Australia turned to America. Australia's early social workers inherited a tradition for social reform and justice that was not articulated by the dominant British model of almoning. America inspired the Australian women to play a major role in changing the attitudes and culture of the Australian Catholic Church.

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<sup>8</sup> The Anglican Church established diocesan bureaux in Adelaide and Sydney during the 1940s, which resembled Catholic bureaux.



Lay women were essential to professionalising Australian Catholic welfare. In doing so they challenged the entrenched attitudes of traditional charity providers. Efforts to modernise welfare services and to focus on the individual needs of children were often thwarted by the ignorance of religious orders intent on upholding traditions, especially the institutional care of children. Most religious orders, which played such a crucial role in the history of the Australian church, especially in education and institutional care of dependent children, felt threatened by new welfare ideas.

At the start of this survey period, residential care was the dominant form of Catholic welfare. Prior to the advent of professionalisation, the church steadfastly refused government suggestions to modify welfare services, through, for example, the introduction of foster-care programs. Reforms in the 1950s and 1960s in the provision of Catholic care for children occurred neither quickly nor without tensions between religious brothers and sisters and professionals. While there was no overt showdown between the infusion of new ideas from skilled professionals and the Catholic children's homes, underlying tensions were evident. Institutions resented, to varying degrees, a new player – or tier of welfare bureaucracy – entering their domain. Through perseverance and tenacity, Catholic social workers overcame suspicion towards them. Working within the church, social workers had an advantage over government bureaucrats in bringing about reforms. The diminishing importance of institutions coincided with professionals' attempts to change admission and other policies. Changing community attitudes, the declining membership of religious orders and the 1960s' cultural revolution also contributed to the decline of children's institutions. The transition to small group homes was arduous, especially for those members of religious orders who had worked for long periods in large institutions. It would not be until the 1970s that religious orders began to relax their tight control over their homes and to consider welfare models unreliant on large-scale institutional care.

The central role of bureaux in the professionalisation of Catholic social work affords a comparative assessment. The early years of diocesan bureaux were difficult and intense. Difficulties ranged from inadequate finance, lack of tangible episcopal support, and the usual scepticism associated with a new organisation embodying a new perspective. Trained lay social workers experienced pressures from within the church, via volunteers and religious women, and, externally, from unsympathetic government bureaucrats. Finance was a perennial problem for bureaux, both those formed in the early phase (1935-1942) and those established after the advent of state aid for welfare (post-1960). Organised welfare did not rank highly in the priorities of influential bishops, such as Dr Mannix of Melbourne or Sydney's Cardinal Gilroy.

Notwithstanding the significant role of lay women, clerical leadership was essential for the ongoing development of diocesan bureaux. In the 1940s and 1950s the bureaux made small gains in reforming some practices, such as admission procedures to children's institutions. Usher observed:

What was disappointing for McCosker was the neglect of Catholic leaders, in diocese and religious congregations, in acknowledging the centrality of Catholic social welfare to the life of the Australian Catholic Church and the significant role of lay people, especially lay women, in Catholic welfare.<sup>9</sup>

In Melbourne, Wardell and Perkins toiled to bring about much-needed reforms to the children's institutions. They encountered considerable resistance from operators of children's institutions. Wardell's time in America, working in diocesan bureaux, reinvigorated her dedication to professionalising Australian Catholic welfare. Yet, the 1940s and 1950s marked a lost opportunity for Catholic welfare in Victoria due to successive financial difficulties, little support from a rigid clerical hierarchy and the emergence of the Catholic Welfare Organisation, an unintended competitive agency. Perkins adopted a non-confrontational approach with church institutions, which may have delayed the

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<sup>9</sup> Usher, *The McCosker Oration*, *op. cit.*,

introduction of social work principles. Melbourne's sluggish growth also reflected the bureau's low level of visibility within the Catholic community.

In Sydney, Algy Thomas, Australia's first Catholic priest to graduate in social work, held a range of church portfolios. Thomas' clinical approach to social work reflected a less than deep intellectual understanding of social welfare. Yet he correctly observed in 1954 that the bureau had 'to grow by merit of its service rather than by any authoritative decision'.<sup>10</sup> An expertise in marriage guidance, family counselling and the dramatic improvement in the co-ordination and care of children drew high levels of respect from outside the church. Thomas may have thought his clerical collar would be sufficient to induce change, but the 'loyal' SVdP rejected his efforts to modernise social welfare. Later, as a bishop, Thomas continued to struggle to gain acceptance from the bureaux. In 1970, for example, his overtures to re-structure national Catholic social welfare, were solidly rejected by most clerical diocesan directors and his brother bishops.

The view by Thomas' successor, McCosker, that the Sydney bureau was born into an 'uncongenial and frequently overtly hostile environment' has some accuracy.<sup>11</sup> McCosker had a singular focus on welfare. More so than Thomas, McCosker thrived on politicking and mixing widely across church and state. Through McCosker's passion and the diligence of his successor, Fr Peter Phibbs, the Sydney bureau consolidated itself by the early 1970s, and lay women such as Lewis and McHardy, remained the cornerstone of the bureau. Phibbs' leadership style embodied consensus decision-making whereas his successor, Fr John Davoren, adopted a more autocratic approach. The

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<sup>10</sup> A. Thomas, Report on Catholic Welfare Bureau, ca 1954, Catholic Welfare Bureau files, Centacare Sydney Archives.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2. A more complete assessment of the difficulties encountered by the Bureau and confirmation of Cardinal Gilroy's attitude and role will not be possible until the Archdiocese of Sydney allows access to Gilroy's papers, which is 50 years after his death, i.e. 2027.

infusion of critical thinking in the late 1960s and 1970s especially struck a chord with Catholic social workers. Turmoil within Centacare Sydney in the second half of the 1970s reflected in part this new activism. Inadequate planning and poor organisational structures led to a sharp decline in employee morale and an unprecedented number of staff resignations. Davoren's focus on national policy issues allowed Australia's largest diocesan welfare bureau to slip in terms of service delivery and reputation during that period.

Usher's appointment to the Sydney bureau in 1983 began a process of reconciliation within the bureau. By 1985 Centacare Sydney appeared to be re-emerging as the country's most influential bureau. Yet, Usher and his interstate colleagues realised that the bureaux continued to function in parallel with existing charity providers, which contrasted the vision of Parker and her colleagues. As Usher noted, a little pessimistically, 'Instead of becoming a BUREAU [sic] of Catholic Welfare, Centacare has become another welfare service organisation standing along the others. Yet Centacare is the official Welfare BUREAU [sic] of the Church'.<sup>12</sup>

Adelaide represents a different story in so far as the bureau's work prior to the 1970s was marked by a high caseload of migrants and responsibility for British child migrants. At a time when other dioceses, notably Sydney, were seeking to downsize institutions and strongly opposed child migration schemes, Adelaide reinforced the institutional model by accepting increased numbers of local and international children.

Unlike Melbourne and Sydney, the Adelaide bureau was established with enthusiastic episcopal support. Yet, the religious orders that operated children's homes insisted on their independence. Like her colleagues in Melbourne and Sydney, Hannah Buckley, South Australia's first Catholic social worker, was constrained by the autonomy of religious orders, which rejected

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<sup>12</sup> Centacare Catholic Family Welfare, A review of the Agency, 1985, Usher Collection, CSA.

her efforts to co-ordinate admissions and to set new benchmarks in standards of care. Despite having only one trained social worker during its initial decades, the Adelaide bureau made a solid contribution as a generic agency and established fruitful bonds with other welfare agencies. Frs Luke Roberts, Terry Holland and Peters Travers displayed committed service, and while their reforms may not always have been appreciated by their immediate peers, they made valuable contributions to the development of national Catholic welfare policies.

Perth, home of Australia's first three trained social workers, was slow to embrace professional welfare practices. The Archdiocese of Perth began planning its professional services three decades after the formation of the Melbourne bureau. By the late 1960s Perth's religious orders had begun to recognise some limitations of large-scale institutional care. Picking up on this sentiment, clerics, with the aid of Davidson and Moffit, engaged co-operatively with the once fiercely independent religious orders. Nevertheless, after being formed in 1970, the Perth bureau experienced staff and financial shortages, and it was not until the appointment of a clerical director, Barry Hickey, that stability occurred.

In Tasmania, the Hobart-based Catholic welfare bureau struggled in the 1960s and 1970s to meet demand for its services, notwithstanding the conscientious work of its foundation director, Fr Clem Kilby. In Brisbane, Catholic social welfare practices came to fruition following the appointment of Fr Kevin Caldwell, a trained social worker. Religious sisters trained in social work precipitated the formation of other diocesan welfare bureaux in non-metropolitan dioceses in NSW and Queensland, especially.

Professional Catholic social welfare in Australia grew slowly up until the 1960s, due to both church disinterest and the profession being dominated by Protestants. When the church advertised for social workers in Adelaide, Hobart and Perth, they received little response. Melbourne and Sydney attracted more

Catholic social workers, though even in these large cities, Catholic social workers represented a relatively small proportion of the profession until the before 1970. The difficulty of attracting sufficient Catholic social workers also reflected the general demand for social workers in other government and community sector roles, which usually offered more job security and higher remuneration.

Within diocesan structures, priest directors represented the best opportunity for bureaux to grow. Clerics may have provided stronger appeal but their task was not easy, for they were also constrained by inadequate funding and little tangible episcopal support to develop welfare along the same lines as the professionalisation of Catholic education. Diocesan bureaux were hampered by inadequate finances, despite the advent of state aid. McCosker and Phibbs in Sydney, Perkins (Melbourne), and Roberts and Holland (Adelaide) consolidated the bureaux at a juncture when they may have closed, because of funding and poor levels of understanding from the Catholic community.

McCosker is perhaps the best known 20<sup>th</sup> century Australian Catholic social worker. He was a great networker who mixed freely with clergy, lay people, politicians, welfare workers, and representatives of other denominations. His tenacious commitment to social welfare spanned half a century from the late 1940s, and his influence resonated across church and state. McCosker's insatiable appetite for professionalising the church's welfare services displayed itself in many expressions, and through diverse community and ecumenical organisations. McCosker had a tremendous influence on Catholic social welfare at both state and national levels. In NSW he held the position of Director of Catholic Charities for nearly three decades, wielding enormous influence in church and state policy, and only relinquishing the title, somewhat reluctantly, due to ill health, in March 1987.<sup>13</sup> McCosker's work is all the more

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<sup>13</sup> Archdiocese of Sydney, Secular Clergy Personal Information Form, McCosker, James Francis, Copy, McCosker Collection, CSA.

significant, given a general lack of enthusiasm from Gilroy. Clever, shrewd, and at times, brusque and undiplomatic, McCosker led the welfare sector's battles on numerous fronts, especially with Gilroy, religious orders, and government bureaucrats. McCosker's political skills usually shone through and he generally got what he wanted, something that would have annoyed the autocratic cardinal.

Tensions between volunteer charity workers and trained, paid staff, has been another theme of this thesis. Diocesan welfare structures, which employed social workers, represented a change from the primacy of local welfare service provision, where a parish priest, often in conjunction with SVdP volunteers, managed the needs of the poor. The SVdP, more so than clerics, resented new models of welfare articulated by social workers. In the 1930s and 1940s, relations were especially difficult between lay professionals and volunteers, though by the 1950s there were increasing signs of co-operation. McCosker, for example, engaged with the SVdP, and commented that it had become 'more convinced that the food order can be the wrong way of assisting people'.<sup>14</sup> As the debate in NSW between the SVdP and McCosker over the role of volunteers in adoption processes in the late 1960s showed, professionals exercised considerable influence, notwithstanding the numerical strength of volunteers and the hierarchy's continuing ambivalence to centralise welfare.

The careers of three welfare leaders, Thomas (Sydney), Perkins (Melbourne) and Hickey (Perth) led to episcopal elevation.<sup>15</sup> In Sydney, McCosker became a monsignor in 1955, and while he had a strong intellect and a fine reputation for pastoral care, his clashes with Gilroy effectively ended the prospect of becoming a bishop. Talented diocesan directors, such as Frs Peter Travers (Adelaide) and John Carson (Maitland-Newcastle), opted to continue their

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<sup>14</sup> McCosker, Notes for the Most, Rev P. Lyons, p. 4, McCosker Collection, CSA.

<sup>15</sup> *Cathedral Chronicle*, Vol. 59, No. 4, April 1984.

careers outside the priesthood, as did less able directors, such as John Davoren. Fr Peter Phibbs may have dashed his chance for promotion by his overt endorsement of the Movement in the 1950s and the DLP in the 1960s. Outside Sydney, Phibbs' uncompromising convictions may have held him in better sway for episcopal promotion.

Moving from local and state activities, this thesis has also demonstrated the development and influence of national Catholic welfare bodies. Peak bodies such as the American Conference of Catholic Charities provided a template for the establishment of similar bodies in Australia, starting with the NCWC, and succeeded by the ACSWC. Again, the combined influence of McCosker and Perkins, paved the way for the NCWC, which was a rare example of inter-diocesan Catholic unity in the 1950s and 1960s. In an era of testy relationships between the bishops, especially the dominant Melbourne and Sydney groupings, McCosker and Perkins forged a unique partnership that spread to other states, notably South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania. With minimal episcopal funding, these bodies made significant inroads in terms of both influencing government policy and, significantly, attracted state aid at a time of bitter sectarianism.

The advent of state aid helped stabilise and ultimately would underpin the extension in services provided by diocesan bureaux. Centacare's priorities focused more on the family unit. Nevertheless, bureaux were careful to ensure that regardless of state aid they maintained their autonomy. In the period up to 1985, it could not be said that the Centacare network was 'doing the government's work'. Centacare's services were motivated by the church's mission to assist the marginalised. Government funding assisted but was not the main reason for the second spurt in welfare bureaux in the 1960s and 1970s. The credit for that development belongs with the NCWC, notably McCosker's persuasive abilities. The NCWC cut across traditional diocesan boundaries to present a national – though not always appreciated – approach



in its representations to state and federal governments. Perkins and McCosker dominated the NCWC and only in the 1980s, when its successor, the ACSWC had moved away from their vision did their influence on a national level start to wane.

Did Catholic social work develop a distinct paradigm and how might the social workers be described? In a landmark article in the inaugural issue of the *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Norma Parker assessed different child care policies of service providers.<sup>16</sup> In a critique of Parker's article, Deborah Brennan says that 'although clearly concerned about the work of the voluntary agencies in mid-twentieth century Australia... [Parker] adopted a more moderate and conciliatory approach' aimed at bringing about co-operative change between the voluntary and statutory welfare sectors.<sup>17</sup> The evidence presented in this thesis is that Catholic social workers were both reformers and pragmatists. Parker and her colleagues worked with diocesan authorities and religious organisations, which were dominated by powerful clerics or religious women. In an interview a few years before her death, Parker summed up her attitude by saying 'when there was something to be done, we did it. We were, to some extent, feminists'.<sup>18</sup> A more vivid characteristic was her modesty.

Catholic social workers worked in a sector that was resistant to change. As professionally trained women working in the inter-war period, Catholic social workers did not neatly fit into traditional groupings of women. They were not deaconesses or religious sisters. Nor were they housewives or women of affluence who enjoyed social functions with a touch of charity. Most Catholic social workers did not marry and worked tirelessly throughout their long

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<sup>16</sup> N. Parker, 'Differential Policies in Child Care', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 1, 1961.

<sup>17</sup> B. Brennan, 'Children and families: forty years of analysis and commentary in the Australian Journal of Social Issues', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 40, No. 1, Autumn 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Parker, Interview, 2002.

careers for the betterment of society. Whereas the social work profession had high attrition rates, especially up until the 1970s – rates usually associated with women marrying and discontinuing employment – early Catholic social workers such as Buckley, Davidson, Murphy, and Wardell, did not marry. A smaller number, such as Parker and Britten-Jones married latter in life. On a socio-political level social workers were removed from political parties and the growing women's movement.

The influence of Catholic welfare professionals was far-reaching in the community and on government policies. This thesis has demonstrated that their contribution extended well beyond church activities. Well after they had established professional Catholic social welfare, Davidson, Moffit and Parker, for example, continued to support the church's engagement with the government sector.

## **8.2 Conclusion**

By the late 1970s and early 1980s Australian Catholic social work had grown to form a major, if still unco-ordinated, non-government sector. State aid underpinned the diversity and extensive range of Catholic welfare services in the last decade surveyed in this thesis.

The replacement of institutions by small group homes stands out as one major change. Religious orders had come to realise the benefits of alternative models of care, yet, the creation of group homes remained an individual domain, with few orders prepared to integrate their welfare services before 1985. Co-operation with diocesan bureaux had improved markedly over the half century of professional social work, though a desire for individualism continued to prevail amongst both voluntary and professional Catholic welfare bodies. Bitterness between volunteers and paid staff, a hallmark of earlier

decades, had dissipated, but both parties remained a little hesitant towards one another, which was exacerbated, more often than not, by the professionals' untactful actions. The church had nevertheless come to rely on a two tier system of welfare, both of which increasingly relied on state aid to help deliver their social services.

This thesis has demonstrated the transition in Catholic welfare from well-meaning volunteers to professional social workers. A small number of trained social workers made an extraordinary contribution to reforming the church's welfare services and influencing the course of state and federal government welfare policies. In the early period, 1930-60, the Catholic welfare sector established its basis within the church. From 1960-85, under the leadership of McCosker and Perkins, the Catholic sector made significant inroads into government policy, and despite tussles, more often with bureaucrats than elected officials, the Catholic viewpoint was often accepted. Through the NCWC and then ACSWC, determined and skilled clerical welfare leaders contributed to Australian welfare policy and secured state aid at a time when it was unfashionable.

Australian Catholic social welfare is a fruitful area for more historical research. Research, however, is becoming increasingly constrained by the policies of record repositories. During the six years research for this thesis several archdioceses significantly tightened access conditions to *bona fide* researchers. The motivation for changing access policies, privately conceded by church officials, has been the church's embarrassment about the appalling mishandling of sexual allegations about physical and sexual abuse of children in residential homes.<sup>19</sup>

Professional Catholic social work in the Australia is not just a story of progress and achievements. 'Trained' social workers were unable to prevent 'moral

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<sup>19</sup> For example, L. Morris, 'Hidden sins of the Father', *Sydney Morning Herald*, Weekend edition, 17-18 June 2006, p. 13.

lapses' and abuse of power by certain religious and lay Catholics in the provision of care to 'dependent' children. Barry Coldrey's studies of Catholic child migration schemes and Christian Brothers' institutions in Western Australia, have exposed shameful episodes in 20<sup>th</sup> century Australian church history.<sup>20</sup> An important counterfactual question is to what extent abuses perpetuated against children in Catholic homes may have been identified earlier – and perhaps prevented – had religious orders allowed social workers to work within their children's institutions in the 1940s and 1950s? A more positive attitude to social workers in those crucial decades of increasing numbers of children in dependent care and child migration programs may have led to fewer problems than those that have emerged publicly in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>20</sup> B. Coldrey, *Child Migration, the Australian Government and the Catholic Church, 1926-1966* (Melbourne, Tamarik Press, 1992); B. Coldrey, 'The Child Migration Controversy: A Survey and Analysis of the Debate over Child Migration and Residential Care in Australia, 1987-2000', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 78, No. 1, January 2001.

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