# Fated to be Orphans: The Consequences of Australia's Post-War Resettlement Policy on Refugee Children

Karen Agutter
*Department of History, University of Adelaide, South Australia*

Between 1947 and 1953, Australia received over 170,000 Displaced People from Europe including widows and unmarried mothers. These refugees were expected to conform to the policies and expectations of the State, in particular the adherence to a 2-year work contract. This was an impossibility for many mothers who could not find work or accommodation outside of the government supplied migrant accommodation centres, and who, as a consequence, resorted to placing their children, either temporarily or permanently, in institutions or for adoption. Through an examination of archival documents, this paper examines the policies that resulted in migrant child placement and adoption and considers the role played by Department of Immigration social workers. It asks why, when migrant children were considered amongst the most desirable of new arrivals, were many fated to become orphans?

■ **Keywords:** displaced persons, migrant children, adoption, child placement, migrant hostels

Migrant women and their children who arrived in Australia as widows and unmarried mothers under the Displaced Persons (DPs) Scheme following the Second World War entered a society that was deeply invested in the nuclear family, in the ideal of the home and woman's place within it, caring for the family and raising children (Murphy, 2000).[1] For women with children who fell outside of this ideal, there was little financial or other assistance and working mothers, even if day care had been readily available, were generally frowned upon. As Howe and Swain (1993) explain, the term widow 'had been traditionally used loosely in welfare circles to cover deserted wives, women living in de facto relationships and single mothers as well as married women whose husband had died' (p. 44). However, following the war, the anger expressed by some community groups at the inclusion of de facto wives and other women not considered to be 'genuine' widows resulted in the use of the term 'dependent female' (Howe & Swain, 1993, p. 44). Whatever term was used, and despite the increase in the number of widows post-war, as Aitken-Swan (1962) contends, even within the wider community: '[t]he widow is called apathetic if she stays at home and she is blamed if she goes to work' (p. 3).

Australian mothers were entitled to some government assistance through child endowment and from 1942 there was also the option of a Widow's Pension.[2] Benefits paid under either scheme, however, were very low and difficult, if not impossible, to live on (Curthoys, 1987). For DP women and their children, the social and economic situation was even more difficult. To be eligible for the widow's pension a recipient had to be an Australian citizen and under the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948* naturalisation was impossible unless the individual had been a resident in Australia for five years. Furthermore, as historian Damousi (2001) explains in her study of Australian war widows, the 'psychological impact of war remains long after the event, not just for soldiers, but also for those around them who also have to absorb the legacy of war' (p. 5). For refugee women and children, there were additional issues of displacement and isolation. Far from the countries of their birth and without English or knowledge of Australia, many had already spent years in camps in Europe and, as one social worker report states, they had lost all hope and initiative, and were fearful of moving into the wider community (National Archives Australia [NAA], A446, 1962/65241).

There were further issues to contend with in the case of unmarried mothers. Single mothers, as Howe and Swain (1993) explain, challenged the patriarchal state and posed a

---

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Karen Agutter, Department of History, Napier Building, University of Adelaide, Adelaide 5005, South Australia.
E-mail: karen.agutter@adelaide.edu.au

threat to the ideal of the family, which was at its economic and social base. In the years leading up to World War Two, the single mother was considered the villain to be punished and the ex-nuptial child was generally the innocent victim (Howe & Swain, 1993). In post-war Australia, with an even greater emphasis on the traditional nuclear family, these attributions remained and were perhaps enhanced for the ex-nuptial migrant child. Their status as future citizens and the overarching belief in the migrant child as 'readily assimilate-able' and therefore the very best of 'New Australians' (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 14 August 1948, p. 19) immediately raised their welfare as an issue.[3]

Given the poor social status and economic difficulties of single mothers already apparent within Australia, it is hard to pinpoint the exact reasons for the acceptance of DP widows and unmarried mothers as part of the post-war refugee intake. While other scholars have debated Australian, and particularly Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell's motivations,[4] this paper considers how the presence of this cohort significantly challenged the three key policy foundations of the post-World War Two programme of vigorous population expansion. The policies of record were: the mandatory 2-year work contract for all refugees and assisted European immigrants; the provision of government-run hostel accommodation for newly arrived migrants; and the overarching policy of assimilation of migrants into the 'Australian way of life'.[5]

Following a short review of the background to the large scale immigration scheme that led to so many new arrivals in Australia, this paper considers how the influx of migrant widows and unmarried mothers placed stress on the key policies of the immigration system. It reflects upon the responses of the authorities at the time, in particular the Department of Immigration Social Welfare Section, and how these impacted on the migrants themselves, especially the children of unmarried or widowed women. It will be proposed that the perhaps unintended, and yet potentially foreseeable, consequences were a high incidence of migrant child placement and adoption amongst this cohort, which resulted in long lasting issues of abandonment and betrayal.

## Methodology

The migrant children (and their mothers) who are the subject of this paper fall within a much wider multi-disciplinary scholarship of adoption and child placement practices in Australia. Recent inquiries including *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record* (2001), a report on child migration and *Forgotten Australians* (2004), a report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children, and subsequent national apologies have raised public awareness and stimulated a wide variety of scholarly responses.[6] However, within the existing literature, the consideration of 'migrant children' has largely been limited to those who arrived as a consequence of the direct policy of child migration (in particular those from the United Kingdom and Malta). By contrast, this paper considers how the children of post-War European migrants became part of the wider child welfare system as a result of immigration policies mainly directed towards adult migrants, rather than the children themselves.

The research for this paper has been extracted from the extensive archival material accessed as part of a larger project examining the experiences of refugees and post-Second World War migrants who passed through government-run migrant accommodation centres.[7] This article has drawn mainly on Department of Immigration records, including departmental social worker reports. These regular reports are often statistical in nature, but also address particular individual cases as exemplars of issues facing new arrivals. The reports are naturally coloured by the individual biases and agendas of social workers, many of whom were happy to work within the government policy of assimilation, but some of whom were more questioning of the efficacy of the policy. The use of the broader Department of Immigration record set and contemporary newspaper reports also helps to situate the exemplars within the broader policy context.

## Background to Australia's post World War Two immigration boom

Australia's acceptance of over 170,000 DPs from Europe over the period 1947 to 1953 has been described by some scholars as an immigration revolution (Markus, Jupp, & McDonald, 2009), with the mass migration scheme completely altering the face of Australia. The reason for this significant change from Australia's previous stance on immigration, based on the so-called 'White Australia' policy,[8] may have had some grounding in humanitarian diplomacy, but was also certainly driven by the economic and political position of Australia at the time. Post war, in response to falling birth rates, the desire to build the economy and reacting to a perceived need for a much larger populace for reasons of defence and fear of invasion, the Australian Government had revived the phrase 'populate or perish'.[9] It proposed that the population of just over 7 million should increase by 2% per annum, 1% of which would come from immigration.

1947 proved to be a defining year in the advancement of Australia's immigration programme. Serious manpower shortages were reported. Vital industries, including coal mining, steel, timber and the producers of other building materials, reported that all labour resources had been tapped. There was insufficient labour to maintain current outputs in manufacturing, expansion was impossible (Markus, 1984), and as a result a new labour source was essential. This lack of industrial expansion and calls for a greater workforce coincided with a severe housing shortage, estimated just two years earlier to be in excess of 300,000 dwellings (Macintyre, 2015).

At the same time, on the other side of the world, Australia becoming a signatory to the constitution of the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) opened new possibilities to a government struggling to overcome the limited recruitment

of desirable immigrants (i.e. those from the United Kingdom and northern Europe). At the end of the war, there were an estimated 12 million DPs in Europe (Persian, 2015) and even by 1947 more than 1.6 million remained in over 900 camps in Germany, Austria and France (Markus, 1984).

Australian community support was considered essential for the success of the post-war immigration scheme and, alongside the careful selection of DPs, extensive publicity and 'conditioning campaigns' were instituted aimed at the Australian public (see for example NAA, A436, 1948/5/330). Initially, Australian selection officers in Europe concentrated on healthy single men and, to a lesser extent, single women because alongside the shortages of workers in industry, there were also shortages in traditional female occupations including nursing and domestic work.) However, by April 1948, as the number of available single DPs fell, and in consideration of the fact that Australia needed not only 'good and willing workers' but also 'prospective breeders' (NAA, A445, 200/1/5), family groups were included. In February 1949, Calwell extended the acceptable DP criteria to include widows, deserted wives and unmarried mothers with children.

## Work Contracts, Hostel Accommodation and the Impact on Single Mothers

While some receiving nations contracted DPs to specific companies, only those going to Australia and New Zealand were required to sign up to work contracts before departure from Europe (Kunz, 1988). These contracts stated that the migrant must remain in the employment found for them by the authorities for a period of up to two years. Furthermore, they prohibited the changing of employment without the consent of the Department of Immigration. Accepting that the future of Australia's mass migration policy rested on the success of the DP scheme, Kunz (1988) argues that Calwell used the two year work contract to prevent the growth of unfavourable attitudes towards immigrants and 'thus ensure the green light for further mass intakes' (p. 143).

History had shown that the most likely groups to oppose the importation of 'foreign labour' were the unions and the two year work contracts ensured that migrant workers could only be placed where they would not deprive an Australian of employment. Furthermore, once placed the migrant had to receive award wages and work under (union) award conditions. Migrants were also encouraged to join the union (although this was not specifically written into the contract). If a DP failed to comply with the conditions of the contract, they could be deported under Section 4 of the Immigration Restriction Act. In practice, the two year work contracts ensured that the Australian government could control the employment of DPs and therefore move them into positions of perceived need, often in arduous working conditions.

One of the major problems with the placement of DPs into work was that of accommodation. As noted above, post-war Australia was in the midst of a severe housing shortage.

Although labour was essential to the ultimate correction of this shortage, labourers had to be housed. The solution was twofold. DPs who were to be employed by government utilities or private companies were only placed where employer provided accommodation was available (NAA, D1917, D24/46 Part 2). In order to fulfil the obligations of the IRO agreement and to ensure harmony within the general population, it was specified that this accommodation 'must be at least equal to the standards which are customary for Australian workers in the particular employment concerned' and could only be provided if it was 'not likely to prejudice the accommodation needs of the general public' (NAA, MP239/7, 573/6/1). For others, Commonwealth Government migrant accommodation initially took the form of Reception and Training Centres, often utilising ex-army camps, such as Bonegilla and Bathurst. As their collective name implies, as well as providing initial accommodation, these centres also provided lessons in the English language and an introduction to Australian history, democracy, and customs and values – commonly referred to as the Australian way of life. It was from these centres that DPs were placed in employment (NAA, MP239/7, 573/6/1). Without consideration of previous employment, education or training, men were placed in primarily labouring positions, often in remote areas, with the principal aims of improving manufacturing output and providing labour for infrastructure projects. Single women, after some initial placements in administrative positions, were generally placed in domestic, cleaning and carer positions with many staffing mental institutions and tuberculosis sanatoriums.

With the arrival of family groups, and eventually widows and single mothers, a second level of accommodation for women and children not in employment became necessary and to meet this need the government established a series of Holding Centres. Like the earlier Reception and Training Centres, Holding Centres were usually established in ex-army or air force bases, provided temporary accommodation and worked on the principal of communal living with cafeteria style food delivery and communal ablutions. These centres, again as their name implies, were places where women and children waited either for their breadwinners to find accommodation for them or for them to complete their two year work contracts. For many women, and especially for women and children without breadwinners, Holding Centres often became long term residences.

DP widows, unmarried mothers and their children were sent initially to Reception and Training Centres such as Bonegilla with the expectation that they would be placed in employment and therefore fulfil their commitment under the work contract. While there is evidence that some women, mainly those with only one child, were successfully placed in mainly domestic situations, often in rural areas, the majority could not be placed and were then sent on to the Holding Centres where, even unemployed, they were expected to pay a weekly rent. Without work placements, widows and unmarried mothers could not fulfil their

contracts, they could not become self-supporting and many quickly ran up considerable debts. In November 1950 at the Woodside Centre in South Australia for example, one Lithuanian born widow, Elena, with her five children, who had arrived in April 1949 and was therefore among one of the first widows to arrive, reportedly already owed £230 (NAA, A434, 1950/3/27104).

As well as the incurring of debts, the inability to place women with dependent children into work also saw them remaining within the accommodation system for longer and longer periods of time. Aside from their failure to fulfil their work contracts, these 'long stayers' also had significant impacts on the other two key immigration policies. Since these dependent mothers and their children did not move through the accommodation system as planned, increasingly their continued presence restricted entry of new arrivals and, more importantly, prevented their progression towards assimilation into the wider community. The so-called 'problem cases' quickly became the focus of the newly-formed Department of Immigration Social Welfare Section (See for example, NAA, J25, 1966/2798).

## Government Responses

As early as 1949, Arthur Calwell, Minister for Immigration, had written to the Minister for Health and Social Services about the necessity for a co-ordinated plan for the assimilation of 'aliens', particularly former DPs. Calwell recognised that these refugees had:

> no one to break down for them the first barriers of life in a strange country with its different language and customs . . . [and] their reception, preliminary training, education in the English language, employment and accommodation are the responsibility of my Department of Immigration. All these are matters which are vital to and inseparable from their general welfare. From the beginning it has been obvious that the case-work necessary to cope with personal and family difficulties could be undertaken only by Social Workers functioning as an integral part of my Department (NAA, A438, 1949/7/1510).

The Department of Immigration Social Welfare Section was formed as a branch of the Aliens Assimilation Division in the same year (NAA, A445, 140/5/6) with the aim of employing thirty-seven, mainly female, social workers, although that target was never actually met (NAA, A438, 1949/7/1510). By job description, the role of the social workers primarily involved identifying issues causing stress and discontent amongst migrants and referring cases to an appropriate volunteer agency for assistance (NAA, A438, 1950/7/387). As Calwell explained to the Minister for Health, the 'assimilation and social welfare of the migrant is essentially a matter for every Australian citizen' so that paid staff, including social workers would not be used 'for work which will be undertaken by such bodies as the Country Women's Association, New Settlers' League, Y.W.C.A. and Y.M.C.A' (NAA, A438, 1949/7/1510). The role of the Department

of Immigration social worker was, therefore, primarily to help DPs 'become happily absorbed into the community' by working as a liaison between the voluntary organisations, the Australian public and the migrant (NAA, A438, 1950/7/387). The role was as much about educating and acclimatising the Australian public as in helping the migrant, or as their job descriptions stated to 'help cushion some of the effects upon the Australian community . . . thus bringing about a better mutual understanding' (NAA, D400, SA1959/3783).

In reality, as early reports from social workers in the accommodation centres highlight, their enormous caseloads brought them into contact with a wide range of issues including mental and other health problems, accommodation issues, financial problems and marital breakdowns. Their work also placed them in the middle of the nascent problems associated with widows and unmarried mothers. A typical approach of utilising church and other voluntary organisations as a solution to the key problems facing these women and their children is the example of an unmarried Italian woman and her two year old daughter, who with the aid of a Catholic Priest, were placed in employment with accommodation to enable them to move out of the Holding Centre and into the community whilst remaining together (NAA, A438, 1950/7/387). Another approach to dealing with the problem of single mothers was to encourage them to marry. This had the added advantage of not only resolving the issue of the support of the dependant woman and her children but also worked towards addressing the issue of the balance of the sexes among DP arrivals.[10] Hazel Dobson, Director of the Department of Immigration's Assimilation and Social Welfare Section, regularly expressed her belief that marriage was the 'only really satisfactory solution in many cases of widows with several young children'. Therefore she encouraged 'Social Workers, Church Workers and Good Neighbour Councils . . . to keep in mind the need for these women to be given opportunities to meet suitable men' (NAA, A437, 1950/6/173).

As more widows and unmarried mothers arrived the pressures placed upon the system grew. Social workers were evidently torn between their role in aiding assimilation and addressing the hardships that these women and their children were facing. Social worker reports express a wide variety of responses with some labelling their clients as 'hard core problems', non-compliants and misfits (See for example NAA, A445, 276/2/11). Others are far more sympathetic arguing that all they need is 'a bridge over which they can move from the Centre to the outer world. They need someone to help them over this bridge. They need both a push from the Centre and a pull into the community' (NAA, A446, 1962/65241). Whatever the response, the majority of social worker reports refer to these women and their children as their 'greatest challenges' (See for example NAA, A437, 1949/6/385).

A number of solutions were sought. In the first instance it was determined that:

from an assimilation aspect consideration should be given to the employment of these women on camp duties least their continued idleness ruin what slight incentive may remain to accept some responsibility for their own and their children's welfare (NAA, A434, 1950/3/27104).

However, as the number of widows and unmarried mothers in the accommodation centres increased, there was insufficient employment for them. Furthermore, as noted above, these centres were established as temporary housing; long term residents had a detrimental effect on the expected ongoing movement of people and more particularly on the policy of assimilation. Employment needed to be found within the community.

A targeted campaign to employ and/or accommodate a widow and child had some success and was seen as an ideal solution as it provided employment, accommodation and the potential for assimilation. A nationwide newspaper campaign, with a particular emphasis on rural areas, aimed to find homes for over 700 women and their children calling on Australians to 'accept the Christian and moral obligation of assisting these innocent victims of the war to find security and happiness in Australia' (See for example, *The Riverine Grazier*, 1950, p. 1). Despite the success of the campaign in placing more than 800 women in work with accommodation, still more than 700 women and many more children remained in the centres. The majority of those who had been placed in work had only one child and it was apparent to Dobson that women with more than one child would most likely remain in centres indefinitely (NAA, A445, 276/2/10).

## Impacts on Children

The 'handicap of children' placed pressure on both the Department of Immigration and migrant mothers and one of the solutions was to remove children (usually temporarily) into orphanages and other accommodation facilities. Social worker reports comment that:

> [r]equests for child placement have been numerous. In the case of widows who are unable to obtain employment with their children, it has been considered justifiable to render some assistance to the mother in arranging for separate accommodation for their children (NAA, A445, 276/2/11).

The total number of children so placed, as in the wider community (Penglase, 352), is very difficult to determine, but as an example we know that in 1949–1950 some 67 children were placed from accommodation centres in New South Wales alone (NAA, A445, 276/3/2). This number included temporary and permanent or adoption placements but there is no indication of whether the mothers were widows or single women.

Placements were most commonly made through the churches and other charitable organisations such as Salvation Army homes. A 1951 social work report from Perth gives some indication of this, outlining that, of the 51 placements made that year, Clontarf and St Joseph's Orphanages took most of the children but some were sent to the Wanslea Home for Children, to the Salvation Army Home and one to the Presbyterian Home (NAA, A445, 276/3/1).[11] Children were generally placed in homes where spaces were available with no consideration for religious or cultural beliefs. For example, two children of Greek Orthodox denomination from the Woodside Centre were placed in a Church of England and a Roman Catholic children's home, respectively (NAA, A445, 276/3/4). Little consideration was apparently given to family separation, and siblings, especially when there were large age gaps, were often placed in different institutions (NAA, A434, 1950/3/25969).

For the mothers of these children the financial burden did not end with placement. Reports indicate a great variety of charges across the different institutions. While one social worker claimed that although most institutions requested a small weekly sum for the upkeep of the child, it was 'never insisted upon and the amount is usually left to the parent to decide' (NAA, A445, 276/2/11). In Perth however, the social worker noted that the financial difficulties of placement:

> cannot be overlooked – where widows have two, three or four children, it becomes impossible for them to meet their commitments, (£1 per week for each child at least) out of their wages and in this community there are no agencies to help them, the State Department being somewhat unwilling to take on the responsibilities of helping to pay for the children in homes (NAA, A445, 276/3/1).

Therefore, the institutions were often left to cover the cost of care for these children. This caused a degree of public outcry with newspaper reports claiming that these migrant children were jamming welfare homes (see for example, *The Argus*, 1952).

For the Australian public, the placement of children was often seen as the migrant taking advantage of a system designed for the Australian born or as a sign of the inherent weakness in the migrants themselves. Sensational headlines claimed 'Migrants Rush Orphanages', quoting a Sydney Social Worker that 'many New Australians were trying to place their children in orphanages or denominational schools so that the parents could get accommodation . . . [but] in some cases they simply wanted to get rid of 'problem children'' (*The Sunday Herald*, 1951, p. 5). A report in the Adelaide *Advertiser* (1951) that migrants were 'Selling Children' was rapidly disseminated across the nation's newspapers. According to a church official, migrants were so desperate to find accommodation that they were selling some of their children and if you knew the right person you could pay 5 pound for a child in a hostel (migrant accommodation centre) because migrants were 'that desperate to decrease the number of children' (*The Advertiser*, 1951, p. 3). Furthermore, many newspapers openly blamed the problem on the arrival of unmarried or widowed mothers and their illegitimate children who had been born in DP camps in Europe (*The Sunday Herald*, 1951). Although newspapers later reported that these particular claims were

unsubstantiated, ongoing reports highlight the resentment of some sectors of the community that these women, and their children, were taking the places needed by Australians.

Calwell, and the Department of Immigration, were always aware of the potential for local resentment and Dobson warned that when dealing with the problem of dependent migrant women it was difficult to suggest schemes 'without arousing resentment because of the number of 'old' Australians, including widows, whose position is desperate' (NAA, A445, 276/2/10). In response to complaints, Calwell wrote that it had 'never been the intention that migrant children should occupy accommodation in State Institutions to the detriment of Australian children' (NAA, A434, 1949/3/24452). However, the policies that he and his Department had put in place (the two year work contract, the need to find accommodation and move out of centres and the pressure to assimilate) and which had directly led to the situation these women and their children found themselves in, remained. Calwell's successor as Minister for Immigration, Harold Holt, continued to actively pursue the placement of children saying that: 'Now that the mothers have been relieved of the responsibility of looking after their children they are free to engage in remunerative employment, in fact they are obliged to do so' (NAA, A434, 1949/3/24452).

A more permanent solution for migrant widows and unmarried mothers failing to manage under the pressures of the policies in place was the adoption of their children. Within wider Australian society of the period, adoption was generally perceived to be 'the ideal solution to the problem of ex-nuptial pregnancy' as it:

> provided the "healthy" white child with a two-parent family and legitimacy, the birth mother with an opportunity to "get on with her life" and infertile couples with a child to care for and cherish (Standing Committee on Social Issues, 2000, p. 36).

Again, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine from the available records how many migrant women might have gone down this path. While one social worker report states that 'very few are willing to even consider having the children adopted' (NAA, A434, 1950/3/25969), others report, often quite matter of factly, that '[t]wo babies have been adopted' (NAA, A445, 276/3/1) or that 'the adoption for the newborn of an unmarried mother was finalised and the child was handed over to the Child Welfare Inspector . . . A further two unmarried mothers in the centre have requested assistance with the adoption of their expected babies' (NAA, A437, 1949/6/385).

Numbers were obviously sufficient that departmental instructions were issued to outline the legal requirements and procedures required for New Australian mothers who wished to have children adopted. In the first instance, social workers and accommodation centre directors were told that migrant women may 'make private arrangements' or that the 'Centre Social worker might help'. However, if the mother could not make private arrangements then:

the Department must be concerned. The Director must obtain a witnessed and signed statement from the mother to the effect that she fully understands the adoption process and that she desires the Director to make arrangements for the adoption of her baby (NAA, K403, W59/926 Part 1).

In this and other correspondence regarding the adoption of migrant children, one is struck by the impersonal nature and lack of consideration given to these women and their children. In one report, the plight of a recently arrived unmarried mother who gave birth to a child soon after her arrival at Bathurst Migrant Camp and had the child adopted is highlighted. Following the adoption, and as required under the work contract, this woman was placed in employment in a private home caring for three children. The social worker reported that after a short time she:

> began to resent expending her love and energy on strange children when she had been forced to part with her own. Her employer felt it was not safe to leave the children in her care. She was being treated for insomnia and hives and a doctor recommended she not be employed in the care of children (NAA, A434, 1950/3/5084).

The woman was subsequently found work in a factory (NAA, A434, 1950/3/5084).

## Conclusion

It is clear that the policies put in place for the management of the post-war mass influx of DPs were severely tested by the arrival of significant numbers of widowed and single women with dependent children. Their family status was, in general, incompatible with the requirement to serve out a 2 year work contract, their inability to work caused problems with movement through and out of the hostel system, and their inability to move into the community compromised the assimilation aims of the government of the day. Even as early as November 1950, T E Heyes, of the Department of Immigration, noted that 'Widows with children are amongst our greatest employment problems' and suggested that 'all future sailings should not accept widows with more than one child unless the children are of working age' (NAA, A434, 1950/3/25969).

The establishment of the Social Welfare Section of the Department of Immigration and the deployment of social workers represented an acknowledgement of some of the issues being raised but did not really address the tragedy of the plight of the unintended victims of the policy failings, namely the children of single and unmarried or widowed migrants. The Department of Immigration records that have been used as the basis of the research for this paper do not tell us much of the long term fate of the children of women who transited through the migrant accommodation system and who were forced, by a combination of circumstances, to give them up in order to be able to undertake work. Some files certainly indicate that placement was temporary, whilst for others placement and adoption was permanent. Many of these children grew up, as one social

worker reports, in 'places where there are too many children for any one individual to receive the adequate personal attention every child needs' (NAA, A445, 276/3/1). Therefore, although their path to the wider child welfare system may have been different, their experiences of 'care' have undoubtedly cast similar long shadows as those who were part of the now notorious child migration schemes. It is important that these children of post-war refugees and migrants are recognised within the awareness and ongoing scholarship that has arisen from the inquiries into, and national apologies for, the treatment of children forced into adoption or institutional care, as, unlike some of these practices which are rooted in our history, the migration of refugee women and their children continues.[12] As Lenette (2013) highlights, over 80% of the world's estimated 15 million refugees are said to be women (many of them widowed) and children and yet as her recent work on Sudanese women in Queensland highlights:

> the impact of widowhood on the lives of lone refugee women with children in a resettlement context does not receive a lot of attention . . . It is therefore important to consider the lived experiences of widows with children as a distinct set of circumstances that determine their resettlement process (p. 404).

Australia's refugee intake, does, and will continue to, contain these women and their children.

## Endnotes

1 While the majority of widows and unmarried mothers arrived in Australia as dependants, there are also cases of DP women who, through marital breakdown, desertion, death or mental illness found themselves in the category of widowed after their arrival. Similarly, there are incidents of anti-nuptial births after arrival. There are many examples within the files including: a Yugoslavian-born DP and her three children who had arrived in 1949, remained in the Wacol Centre after the death of her husband, and was still at the centre in 1956; and a Ukrainian-born woman and her two children whose husband was admitted to a mental institution soon after arrival (NAA: J25, 1966/2798).

2 Child endowment, which had been introduced in 1941, provided for the payment of 5s per week for second and subsequent children under 16 years of age. The scheme was extended in 1950 to include the first child. See Howe and Swain, 1993.

3 The term New Australian was first coined by Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell in the late 1940s in an attempt to deter the use of the pejorative titles Balts and Reffos being applied to new arrivals. It also fitted into the wider rhetoric of the assimilationist policy of the day. The term New Australia soon took on its own derogatory implications.

4 See for example Neuman, 2004 and Persian, 2015.

5 The term 'Australian way of life' coined in the 1940s, came into regular use in the 1950s across official, public and even advertising vernacular. While never specifically defined, the term came to represent the idea of a quintessential Australian, a specific Australian spirit or character with certain ideals and values, who celebrated their links to mother England etc. For discussion on this term see White, 1981. For contemporary discussion see Stanner, 1953.

6 National apologies – Stolen Generations (2008), Forgotten Australians and former child migrants (2009), Forced adoptions (2013). Academic responses include but are not limited to the works arising out of the History of Adoption Project by Marian Quartly, Shurlee Swain and Denise Cuthbert. For further information see: https://www.google.com.au/webhp?sourceid= chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=history% 20of%20adoption%20project

7 Hostel Stories: Toward a Richer Narrative of the Lived Experiences of Migrants is an Australian Research Council Linkage funded project based at the University of Adelaide. For further information see: https://arts.adelaide.edu.au/history/hostel-stories/

8 The 'White Australia Policy' is the colloquial term used for the Australian *Immigration Restriction Act (1901)*. The Act effectively controlled the entry of unacceptable, especially non-white, migrants into Australia through the use of a Dictation Test.

9 The phrase had first been used by Billy Hughes in 1937; however, its use is more commonly associated with the immediate post war period.

10 Egon Kunz (1988, pp. 46–47) outlines that in the first 16 months of the program there were seven male DPs to every two women and less than 4% of the total arrivals were children. The problem of the balances of the sexes among DPs was evident in Department of Immigration documents which noted that '[t]he addition of single workers . . . to a population that already has an excess of males over females does help solve immediate labour problems but unless comparable numbers of females of marriageable age . . . can be added to our population no contribution to population building can be made' (Quoted in Kunek, 1989 p. 45).

11 Although these Department of Immigration files contain no further information about these children once they are placed, and therefore no direct evidence is available about their experiences, it is worth noting that at the time of writing some of these institutions are the subject of the ongoing Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sex Abuse.

12 See endnote 6 above.

## References

Aitken-Swan, J. (1962). *Widows in Australia: A survey of the economic and social condition of widows with dependent children.* Sydney: Council of Social Service of New South Wales.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives. (14 August 1948), p. 19.

Curthoys, A. (1987). Children, women and men. In A. Curthoys, A. Martin, & T. Rowse (Eds.), *Australians from 1939* (pp. 309–327). Broadway, New South Wales: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon.

Damousi, J. (2001). *Living with the aftermath: Trauma, nostalgia and grief in post-war Australia.* Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Forgotten Australians - A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children (2004). Report of Senate Inquiry: Australia. Retrieved from http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/ Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Completed_ inquiries/2004-07/inst_care/report/index

Howe, R., & Swain, S. (1993). Saving the child and punishing the mother: Single mothers and the state 1912–1942. *Journal of Australian Studies, 17*(37), 31–46.

Kunek, S. (1989). Greek female migration in the post world war II period in Australia. *Australian Studies, 2*, 36–58.

Kunz, E. F. (1988). *Displaced persons: Calwell's new Australians.* Sydney: Australian National University Press.

Lenette, C. (2013). 'I am a widow, mother and refugee': Narratives of two refugee widows resettled in Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 27*(3), 403–421.

Macintyre, S. (2015). *Australia's boldest experiment: War and reconstruction in the 1940s.* Sydney: Newsouth.

Markus, A. (1984). Labour and immigration 1946–9: The displaced persons program. *Labour History, 47*, 73–90.

Markus, A., Jupp, J., & McDonald, P. (2009). *Australia's immigration revolution.* New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.

Migrant Children Jam Welfare Homes. (1952, 25 January). *The Argus*, p. 5.

Migrants "Selling" Children. (1951, 6 August). *The Advertiser*, p. 3.

Migrants Rush Orphanages. (1951, 12 August). *The Sunday Herald*, p. 5.

Murphy, J. (2000). *Imagining the fifties: Private sentiment and political culture in Menzies' Australia.* Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.

National Archives Australia, A434, 1949/3/24452, Placement of children of displaced persons who are widows, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A434, 1950/3/25969, Placement of displaced persons - widows with children - Policy, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A434, 1950/3/27104, Widows with dependent children at immigration centres - employment and accommodation, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A434, 1950/3/5084, Accommodation at Labour and National Service Hostels for single women, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A436, 1948/5/330, Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council conditioning campaign conferences with press & radio representatives & preparation of statement for circulation to press & radio editors, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A437, 1949/6/385, Social Worker's Report, Uranquinty Centre, NSW, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A437, 1950/6/173, Social Welfare Section - social workers' reports - Benalla Centre (Victoria), Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A438, 1949/7/1510, Appointment of social workers to Department of Immigration, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A438, 1950/7/387, Conference on duties of social workers, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A445, 140/5/6, Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council Committee on Social Welfare, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A445, 200/1/5, Medical - Displaced Persons. Policy & procedure in regard to migrants & applicants, for landing permits, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A445, 276/2/10, Social Welfare. Widows and unmarried mothers with dependent children, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A445, 276/2/11, Social Welfare special problems financial, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A445, 276/3/1, Senior social workers annual reports - all states, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A445, 276/3/2, Social workers annual reports - New South Wales, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A445, 276/3/4, Social workers annual reports - South Australia, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, A446, 1962/65241, Immigration Advisory Council Committee on Hostels and Centres Part 1, Canberra.

National Archives Australia, D1917, D24/46 Part 2, Decentralisation - migrant hostels Part 2, Adelaide.

National Archives Australia, D400, SA1959/3783, Assimilation – Social Welfare Officers, Adelaide.

National Archives Australia, J25, 1966/2798, Social welfare - migrant accommodation - problem cases in Commonwealth Hostels, Queensland [Wacol and Colmslie Hostels], Brisbane.

National Archives Australia, K403, W59/926 Part 1, [Immigration Department] Instructions - migrant centres - numbers 1 - 100, Perth.

National Archives Australia, MP239/7, 573/6/1, Displaced persons - financial arrangements - policy and procedure - covering advances, fares, travel warrants and excess baggage, Melbourne.

Neumann, K. (2004). *Refuge Australia: Australia's humanitarian record.* Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.

Penglase, J. (2007). *Orphans of the living: Growing up in 'care' in twentieth-century Australia.* Fremantle: Fremantle Press.

Persian, J. (2015). 'Chifley liked them blond': DP immigrants for Australia. *History Australia, 12*(2), 80–101.

Quartly, M., Swain, S., & Cuthbert, D. (2013). *The market in babies: Stories of Australian adoption.* Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Publishing.

Report of Senate Inquiry Australia. (2001). *Lost innocents: Righting the record - report on child migration.* Retrieved from http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/1999-02/child_migrat/report/index.

Standing Committee on Social Issues. (2000). *Releasing the past: Adoption practices, 1950–1998: final report.* Sydney. Retrieved from https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/DBAssets/InquiryReport/ReportAcrobat/5540/Report.PDF

Stanner, W. E. H. (1953). The Australian way of life. In W. V. Aughterson (Ed.), *Taking stock: Aspects of mid-century life in Australia* (pp. 3–14). Melbourne: F W Cheshire.

White, R. (1981). *Inventing Australia: Images and identity 1688–1980.* Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Work and Accommodation Wanted for Migrants. (1950, 21 July), *The Riverine Grazier*, p. 1.