**Child Migration**

**What was Child Migration?**

Child migration was the transporting of children from Britain to distant lands within the Commonwealth (countries Britain had claimed as part of the British Empire). Australia was one of the countries child migrants were sent to.

Britain is the only country in the world with a sustained history of child migration. Only Britain has used child migration as a significant part of its child care strategy over a period of four centuries (from the 1700’s) . The Child Migration scheme to Australia was only ceased in about 1970.

**How did the scheme operate?**

The scheme operated by the British Government was to remove children, some as young as three years old, from their homes, from their mothers and fathers, from all that was familiar to them, and to ship them thousands of miles away from their home country to institutions in distant lands within the Commonwealth. Many of the children removed were taken from orphanages, had single parents or had lost parents in the wars. Children were often told that their parents had died (this was not always true) as it was thought this would make moving to a new country easier for the children.

**About the CHILD MIGRATION SCHEME in Australia**

In the years following World War II, a popular immigration slogan was ‘the child, the best immigrant’. Children were thought to be a particularly attractive category of migrant because they were seen to assimilate more easily, were more adaptable, had a long working life ahead and could be cheaply housed in dormitory style accommodation.

Between 1947 and 1953 over 3200 children migrated to Australia under approved schemes. From the 1920’s to the 1960’s, 150 000 children were taken from Britain to settle in Australia and New Zealand.

There were over 30 homes approved by the Australian Government for the housing of child migrants. Most of these were run by voluntary and religious organisations. It was not government policy to provide homes specifically for migrant children; however, the government did contribute towards the capital expenditure incurred by these organisations in setting up suitable homes. Both the Federal and state governments contributed towards running costs. The governments of the United Kingdom and Malta also paid maintenance for their children who had emigrated to approved institutions in Australia.