The Rescue of a Three Year Old

I can vividly remember getting picked up from over a small fence out the front of this house by an aunty and put in the back seat of an old FE Holden. I was standing up on the back seat looking at my mother crying while hugging and kissing me. I do remember being so happy to see mum again as well as my uncle and aunty, but there was so much elation present, tears, jubilation, they were ecstatic. I was just wondering why it took so long to see mum again, and why I was at this other place for so long, with a number of other boys, not seeing my brothers or sisters (or any family for that matter) for all this time.

So myself, two brothers and two sisters were separated. One sister was firstly taken to family on the Mission (in those days) and was even rejected from there because of mum and dad's Exemption (dog tags) in those days and was taken to welfare, as was my youngest sister at the time.

I remember the smell of the leather seats in the car on that day (remembrance day for me), I remember the smell of the, some times used, soap or detergent when we were hosed down (5 or 6 of us lined up in a laundry of some type on a cold cement floor) for our so called bath. I remember the feel and texture of that hose (old grey washing machine hose) on my legs as well as seeing it put to some of the other boys, for what reason I don't know but to be told we needed it regularly.

It wasn't until nearly forty years later that I really found out what had happened. Mum had to go into hospital for a few weeks, and with five children, and dad away shearing for months at a time - to put it plainly, the five of us were spread around Adelaide in different locations. When Mum had recovered and recuperated, she endeavoured to seek her children back.

This was not as straight forward as what Mum thought. She was able to retrieve my other siblings but was not told where I was and they (some people who thought they were doing the right thing for my benefit) weren't going to tell her.

Just the thought of not knowing or not being told where one of your children were (being a father of 4 and 2 grand children now) just makes me cringe. To think, what if my aunty and uncle didn't drive by that place at that time and day and see me playing out the front, to then put into operation a child extraction team (mum, uncle and aunty). How much longer would I have been there before being whisked away to another family or another State or even another country. What could I have been, and where could I have ended up, what sort of person would I have been now or would I have still been alive, what would have happened to the rest of my family, who knows, but I'm sure glad that my uncle and aunty decided to drive down that road at that particular time, that day, otherwise, who knows.

There are a lot of what if's, but you know I consider myself as one of the lucky one's (is that possible in this LUCKY COUNTRY), being able to grow up with my family, getting an education, working all my life so far (with my family).....but you know I still think now and then ...what if.........what if.........what if?

This is why the Finding Your Own Way resource book is so valuable as it may now help me locate and understand where I was placed and removed. I remember being on the beachfront at the home and seeing the ships. I now think I am ready to find some answers.

Garth Dodd

"It's heartbreaking to see these records like this. But then again, it puts the jigsaw puzzle together, the missing link, so that there's some comfort there now, a bit of comfort to know."

Sid Graham, March 2002

An introduction to the Finding your own way guide...

Finding your own way [FYOW] is a research guide to existing records of South Australian children's homes and institutions, both government and non-government. It has been prepared in the hope that some of the documents that have survived the passage of time will help you, if you were separated from family and spent time in a home, to discover more information about yourself. Although the amount and quality of records varies greatly with each institution, and with each managing agency, it is possible that one of these documents holds the 'missing link' in your story or, at the very least, may provide another small piece of the jigsaw puzzle.

The primary aim of *FYOW* is to provide a resource for Aboriginal people seeking personal records. However, documents such as admission registers and cards from many South Australian homes rarely indicate whether a child was Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. Therefore FYOW lists and describes all the records, relating to all institutions for children which have been run in this State, that have been found.[1] This makes it a valuable resource for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who were institutionalised as children. The guide provides information about institutions over a long time period, from the first institutions into which children were placed in the 1860s through to those operating in the 1980s. It may therefore also be a useful guide for family historians and other social researchers.

Unfortunately it has been impossible to unearth every document relating to all the homes run in South Australia. In many cases records are missing. They may have been lost, destroyed or sometimes were never kept. Often there is no indication of what has happened to them. Even where no records have been found *FYOW* still lists the name of the home and provides all background information that has been discovered.

At the time of writing, the Commission of Inquiry into Children in State Care which began on 18 November 2004, under The Honourable Edward P Mullighan QC, is still operating. As part of this Inquiry many agencies are reviewing their record holdings and previously unregistered records are being discovered and listed. This process relates particularly to Government homes to which children who were made wards of the state were sent. However, other agencies are also reviewing their archival holdings and/or centralising their records. Therefore it is highly likely that further documents relating to some of the homes listed in *FYOW* will be unearthed.

Information about records can come from many sources. Therefore, *FYOW* calls on readers and users of this publication for their assistance. If you have any information about the location of 'missing' records or can shed more light on any of the homes listed in this guide, or any other homes that may have inadvertently been left out, please contact SA Link-Up. Because information about homes and their records is constantly being collected, *FYOW* has specifically been produced as a guide to which updates can and will be added.

FYOW is an ongoing project which has a long history. Andrew Wilson developed the original concept for the project in 1996. In his role as the Senior Aboriginal Project Officer at State Records of South Australia he became acutely aware of the need to gather records of children's homes in SA and make them accessible. An interagency group, independent of State Records but involving Andrew Wilson, began planning and seeking funding for the project at that time. In 2000 SA Link-Up, and its Program Co-ordinator Kay Goodman-Dodd, took up management. After two years of writing and rewriting grant

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[1] *Records located up to April 2005.*

applications funding was finally secured in 2002. The research and writing of *FYOW* was supported by the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission [ATSIC]. The generous assistance of many different organizations and individuals who have openly shared their surviving records has been crucial to the preparation of this guide. During the last months of researching and writing FYOW the project has been generously supported by the Commission of Inquiry into Children in State Care, through their employment of the writer as Research Historian for the Inquiry. This employment has allowed access to many previously unavailable government records.

About SA Link-Up

SA Link-Up was founded in December 1999 at Nunkuwarrin Yunti of South Australia Inc., the first Aboriginal medical service in this state. The establishment of services to assist with family tracing was one of the recommendations of the May 1997 report from the Bringing Them Home Inquiry. This inquiry investigated the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from their families under past policies of the Australian Government. ATSIC responded to the recommendation by funding the creation of Link-Up services in each State and Territory. In South Australia Nunkuwarrin Yunti was chosen as a suitable host organization for the Link-Up service. Bringing Them Home counsellors were appointed across the state to provide counselling and support.

The SA Link-Up Program provides a range of services to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been separated from family. Assistance is provided to members of the stolen generations; people who have been adopted, fostered or raised in institutions; and the families of people who have been separated. Some of the services include:

- Assessing personal histories;
- Researching relevant information that may establish a link;
- Making initial contact with family member/s and organising reunions;
- Providing ongoing support to clients following reunions;
- Referring clients and families to specialist counselling and other appropriate agencies if required;
- Conducting an annual camp for clients;
- Increasing awareness of, and promoting SA Link-Up throughout the state.

FYOW aims to simplify research into institutional records which may help to find a vital link for clients of SA Link-Up and other people seeking information about their past.

Record collections

FYOW has sought to locate and describe original primary source material – in other words documents written at the time the homes were operating – such as admission registers, children's files, correspondence and minute books. Although the focus of *FYOW* is original records, some useful secondary sources – that is published or unpublished books and journals – are also listed.

Surviving records of homes have been kept under various conditions. For example, with homes run by the Anglican Church, documents from various sources have been brought together into a professionally run archive, where they are boxed and listed and well cared for. Records of homes run by the government are maintained in a similar way at the state archival repository, State Records of South Australia. Some groups of records have been lodged in the Mortlock Library, the archival section of the State Library of South Australia. Other records have not been deposited into professional archives but have been maintained by the individuals and groups who previously ran the homes concerned. In such cases, there are many different sorts of records that have been kept and many different ways in which they have been managed.

Personal records

It is important to understand why personal files/records were kept for some children who were in homes and not for others. During the second half of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, children 'in need' could be taken into state care. Most of these children would appear before a court where they were 'charged' as 'neglected' or 'uncontrolled' and 'sentenced' to be placed in an institution. Other children appeared before the court because they had committed an offence. All these children became 'wards of the state', and whether they were placed in a children's home or a reformatory or were fostered out, certain government records were kept about them.

If you were a state ward you may find that the Department for Families and Communities holds a file related to you. However, there is no guarantee. Over the years many government files have been lost or destroyed. During the 1970s a large number of state children's files were disposed of and only 'sample' files were kept. For information about how to access a state ward file please go to the final section of FYOW which describes how personal records can be accessed through the Adoption and Family Information Service.

If you were not a state ward and were placed in a home by other means, which was often the case with Indigenous children, the existence of a file or other information about you depends on what records were kept by the home in which you were placed. For those who have no personal files information about you may still be located in other surviving records.

Types of Records

In conducting research for this project, the initial aim has been to find *Registers of admissions and discharges*. These books record when a child was admitted into a home and when he/she left. Registers often contain other information about a child such as date and place of birth, the names of parents, addresses, where the child was sent when they left the home and other remarks about his/her situation. This type of information can be vital to piecing together your story. Not all homes used admission registers and where they did, the style and amount of detail recorded is very different. Sometimes these details were kept in a form of card catalogue rather than a register. On rare occasions original *admission forms* have been kept. A few homes also kept individual 'files' on each child.

Other kinds of documents sometimes contain similar information. In institutions run by a management committee, meetings were held regularly and *Minute books* were kept. As well as discussing the day to day running of the homes, the committee sometimes approved the admission and discharge of children. In some cases, these children are mentioned by name. On occasion children's names are mentioned with regard to other subjects such as schooling, holidays, behaviour, transfer to other institutions or foster homes, etc. The successive departments of the government responsible for government homes also had boards, or councils, which dealt with all issues relating to state children. These Minute books contain many names and references to individual children. Sometimes references to individual children can be found in *Monthly reports* presented to the management committees of various homes by the matron or superintendent. In the absence of an admission register, minutes may provide a key to what happened to you and when it happened.

Where records have been better preserved, *correspondence* between the management committees and other people and organisations has also survived. These letters can provide more detail about particular children. For example, the children's home at Gerard Mission on the River Murray kept no admission register. However, regular correspondence between the mission superintendent and the head of the United Aborigines Mission, as well as monthly reports, provide detail about children which would otherwise have been unavailable. Correspondence files of the successive government departments in charge of state children provide a very rich source of information about many issues related to children in state care.

Apart from registers, minute books and correspondence, other sorts of documents can also provide information. *Child endowment records* list the names and details of children in the home. These were sent to the government so that the institution could claim a subsidy for each child. *Visitors' reports* were written by people who were assigned to visit and inspect homes on a monthly basis.

Photographs are also included in some collections and although many are undated and unlabelled, they may still provide information or perhaps act as a key to unlocking memory.

Oral history interviews conducted with former residents of homes and also with former staff can also provide background information about an institution, especially when no other documentary evidence exists.

A brief history of Aboriginal child welfare

In order to understand the context in which the records for each home were created, it may help to know a little more about the welfare system under which these institutions operated.

Until 1962 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children placed in institutions were primarily dealt with by separate departments of the government. Separate institutions were set up to house and 'train' Aboriginal children. The first was the Aboriginal School established by the Protector of Aborigines in Adelaide in 1845. Even though the institutionalisation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children was controlled by different laws and policies, children often ended up in the same homes.

From its beginnings in 1834 residents of the South Australian colony who were 'in need', including children, were dealt with by the Emigration Agent. This agent was responsible for supervising all new arrivals. The arrangement continued until 1842 when the government introduced a *Maintenance Bill*, sometimes called the *Destitute Relief Bill*. This act placed the burden of care first on relatives, and then in the absence of relatives, on the government. However, in the first years of the colony, the focus of such welfare was not upon orphaned or neglected children and particularly not upon Aboriginal children. (Dickey 1986, Ch. 1)

In 1844 the first legislation in South Australia which specifically governed Aboriginal children, *Ordinance No. 12*, was proclaimed by the Protector of Aborigines. This law revealed the government's preferred separation of the control of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children 'in need of care'. In this Ordinance, the Protector was recognised as:

> The legal guardian of every half-caste [sic] and other unprotected Aboriginal child whose parents are dead or unknown, or either of whose parents may signify before a Magistrate his or her willingness in this behalf, until such child attain the age of twenty one years (as quoted in Hall, 1997, p. 4)

Although the ordinance applied primarily to orphaned and destitute Aboriginal children, it was a first step towards later legislation which broadened the powers of the Protector.

A Destitute Board was set up in 1849 with the responsibility to provide assistance to the 'destitute poor'. A Destitute Asylum, providing institutionalised housing for these 'unfortunates', was set up in Adelaide. At this time, the list of people eligible for residence in the Asylum included Aboriginal people and children. (Dickey, p. 15 & 21)

From the very beginning of the Asylum, children made up some of its residents. They remained there in care until they were regarded as old enough to be placed into service under the *Children's Apprenticeship Act of 1848.* (Dickey, p. 53) In addition, a number of Aboriginal children had already been indentured as labourers and domestic workers under the 1844 Ordinance. (Hall, p. 5 & Davey, 1956, p. 106)

In September 1866 a new *Destitute Persons Bill* was introduced which dealt more specifically with orphaned and neglected children. It announced the establishment of industrial or reformatory schools into which children who were placed under the care of the government could be committed for a period of six months to seven years. (Dickey, p. 57) The Bill also gave the Destitute Board the power to 'board out' children to foster families who were paid a subsidy.

Before the main government industrial school at Magill was established in 1867, children were housed in a number of different locations in the city and suburbs. Some of these institutions continued and were maintained for a time as additional places for needy children. As space in government institutions was still limited, children were also passed into the care of homes run by other voluntary agencies, such as the St Vincent de Paul Orphanage run by the Catholic Church, initially at Walkerville and later at Goodwood. (Dickey, p. 61) This practice of passing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children into the care of other agencies continued into the twentieth century and became more strongly established.

In 1885, after a Royal Commission into the *Destitute Act* and the issue of child welfare and reformatories, a State Children's Council was established. (Dickey p. 73-76) Among other responsibilities it controlled the running of the government reformatories and the Industrial school. In 1895 the *State Children's Act* clarified the powers of this Council. These powers included the 'control' of 'state children', that is children who had been committed by a court into the care of the government, until the age of 18. The Council also had the authority to pay subsidies for children cared for in private, non-governmental institutions. (Dickey, p. 157)

When this Act was proclaimed, it related to any child charged with being neglected and made no distinction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. Initially, because Aboriginal children were not referred to specifically, the Council excluded them from the Act. However, in 1909, after some debate, the Council agreed to include Aboriginal children under their care. (Hall, p. 7) As a result of this decision, Aboriginal children who had been removed from their families could be placed under the State Children's Council and therefore into institutions controlled or subsidised by the government.

The Aborigines Act of 1911 replaced *Ordinance No. 12* and extended the power of the Protector over all Aboriginal children by making him the legal guardian of all children under the age of 21, regardless of whether their parents were living or not. Because the Act gave the Protector responsibility for the care and education of children, it was also used to remove them to institutions 'for their own good'. This Act in combination with the *State Children's Act* strengthened government powers to commit Aboriginal children into institutional care.

A further piece of legislation, the *Aborigines (Training of Children) Act*, passed in 1923, further increased these powers. It allowed for the 'control' of Aboriginal children to be transferred from the Protector to the State Children's Council without any legal proceedings. This meant that Aboriginal children could be made wards of the state without appearing before a court. This subsequently became part of the *Aborigines Act Amendment Act of 1934-1939.* This legislation also established the Aborigines Protection Board which took over the role of legal guardianship of all Aboriginal children.

The Aborigines Protection Board, until its last meeting in February 1963, controlled nearly every aspect of Aboriginal life, and had a particular focus on the institutionalised training of children. (Hall, p. 14, Hollinsworth & Craig, 2003, p. 3) In a similar manner to the provisions of the *State Children's Act*, the Protection Board financially assisted organizations such as The Salvation Army in the running of institutions for the care and training of Aboriginal children. This included the Eden Park Boys Home at Mount Barker and the Fullarton Girls Home. In other cases, it provided contributions to the cost

of maintaining children in homes, such as Colebrook Home at Eden Hills, which was run by the United Aborigines Mission. (Hall, p. 14) Aboriginal children were placed in many different homes and often transferred from one to another for various reasons, not always clear.

In 1951 the Aborigines Protection Board officially adopted the policy of 'assimilation'. Assimilation meant the absorption of Aboriginal people into white society through the process of removing children from their families, with the ultimate result being the destruction of Aboriginal culture. This policy substantially increased the activities of the Board in removing Aboriginal children, and more specifically children who were referred to at the time as 'half-caste', or 'part-Aboriginal', into institutions so that they could be 'trained' to fit into white society.

During the 1950s and into the 1960s it appears that there was some tension between the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department, which took over the work of the State Children's Council in 1927, and the Aborigines Protection Board. The conflict was over who was ultimately responsible for the care and institutionalisation of Aboriginal children. In 1956, the Protection Board argued that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children should be placed into homes in 'approximately even numbers' (GRG 52/16, Minutes of the Aborigines Protection Board, 25/1/56). The Children's Welfare Department preferred that only the neglected children of 'part-Aboriginal' people living within white society should be subject to the same court orders as white children and placed in departmental institutions. It argued that all other Aboriginal children were the responsibility of the Protection Board. (GRG 52/16, Minutes 18/5/56). During this period, Aboriginal children were institutionalised, fostered and adopted out in what has been described as an 'uncoordinated' manner. Sometimes these actions were carried out by the Protection Board, sometimes by the Children's Welfare Department and also, in cases of children removed to SA institutions from the Northern Territory, by the Department of the Interior. (Hall, p. 15) The list of institutions into which each of these departments placed children continued to grow through this period.

1962 saw changes to this situation, with the declaration of the *Aboriginal Affairs Act*. From this period onwards Aboriginal children were no longer under the guardianship of the Protection Board and instead came under the control of the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department. Correspondingly they were dealt with in the same manner as non-Aboriginal children. (Hollinsworth and Craig, p. 3, Hall, p. 16)

In 1970 the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Social Welfare Department, which had replaced the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department in 1965, amalgamated into the Department of Social Welfare and Aboriginal Affairs. Two years later the Department for Community Welfare was created and a separate department, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, was established. These administrative changes signalled new directions in the care of all children. During this time changes in the philosophy of child care meant that larger institutions were regarded as unsatisfactory. Smaller group or cottage homes were preferred as they supposedly reflected 'normal' family life. During the 1970s, many large institutions closed down or were broken up into smaller group homes. There was also more emphasis placed upon helping families to keep children within their own home environments.

These changes in policy ultimately resulted in the funding, in 1978, of the Aboriginal Child Care Agency. This agency was developed to support Indigenous children within their own families and to assist in placing children in need with other Aboriginal families. In 1983, the Department for Community Welfare adopted the *Aboriginal Child Placement Principle*. This principle, later incorporated into the *Children's Protection Act (1993-1995)*, guarantees that all efforts are made to support a child within his or her family. If this is impossible, the Aboriginal community is consulted and the child is placed with extended family or with other suitable community members. (Hollinsworth and Craig, p. 8)
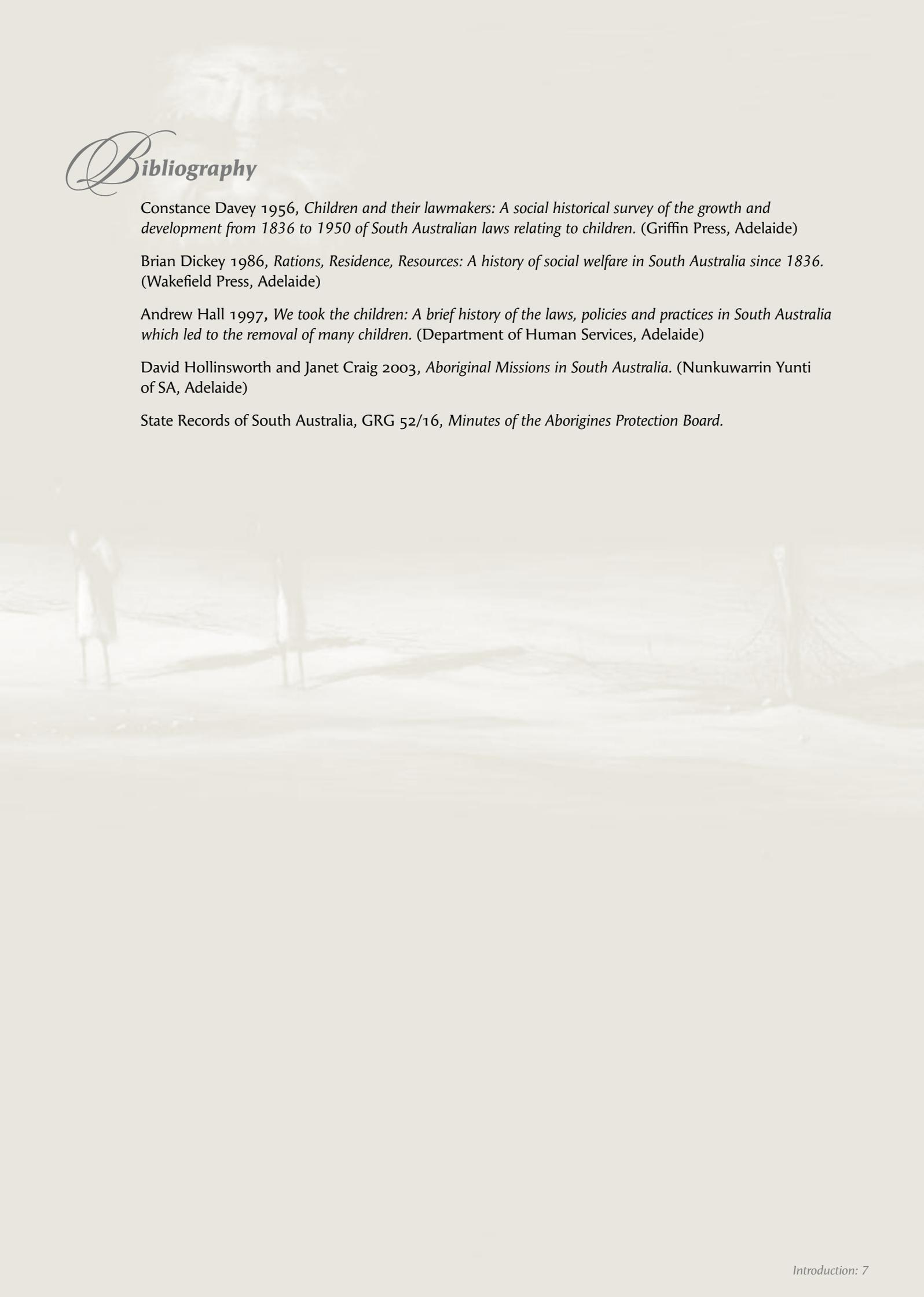
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How to use this guide

FYOW is arranged alphabetically by the governing/managing organisation, (ie Anglican Church, Catholic Church, Government etc) and homes are listed alphabetically within each agency's section. If you are seeking an entry for a particular home and do not know who ran it, please use the *Home Index* at the end of the guide. Different types of homes - including those which catered for expectant or new mothers and their babies, and hostels set up to accommodate young people who were working or studying in the City - are also listed under the managing organisations.

The entry for each institution provides a brief history of the home, historic and/or modern day photographs where available, a description of the surviving records and information about where the records can be found. In cases where very little information is known about a home, the name is still given and any basic information available is provided.

Each agency has its own particular access conditions governing research into its collections. These are listed at the end of each home entry or agency section.

The focus of *FYOW* is records of children's homes and institutions. However, the last section of the book lists other potential sources of information which will also be useful in your research. This section provides information about how to access records created by agencies such as:

- the Department for Families and Communities' Adoption and Family Information Service;
- Births, Deaths and Marriages;
- the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation and its predecessors;
- and the South Australian Museum.

If you require any assistance in using this guide, or support in finding and accessing records, please contact SA Link-Up. Some of the agencies listed in *FYOW* prefer that researchers work in conjunction with Link-Up caseworkers who can accompany clients to the archives and provide support when accessing records.

Warning

It is very important to be aware that research into some of the kinds of records kept by institutions can be very confronting and often traumatic. As most of the documents were written many years ago, the kind of language used, especially when referring to Aboriginal people, can be derogatory. Admission registers that include a 'remarks' column can sometimes contain negative commentary about a child's background, about their parents or their behaviour. Negative material and discussion of 'problem children' can also appear in minute books, reports and correspondence. Collections may include photographs of people who are now deceased.

For this reason, it is very important to arrange for support when accessing these kinds of records. Caseworkers and counsellors from SA Link-Up can provide much needed assistance and you should not hesitate to make contact at any time during your research process.

In many cases, agencies will not allow individual researchers to view original records because of privacy issues. This is because documents that contain information about you may also contain references to other members of your family or to other children who were in care with you at the same time. In most cases agencies prefer to provide photocopies of documents with references to others deleted. *FYOW* provides you with information about what records exist so that you can request that all potential material is searched for information relating to your case.