





# "Scars from the Past"

**It was a day which held the promise of holidays with families down in the south west of WA during a glorious summer break away from school.**

**T**he Clontarf bus was packed with 53 youngsters eager for new adventures.

Two of the boys required double amputations, while another three boys each lost a leg.

It was 8.15 am as the bus headed towards a narrow bridge over a culvert along the South-West Highway. Simultaneously, a five tonne tip truck was approaching from the other end.

According to newspaper articles at the time, the Federal Minister for Immigration filed writs for negligence by both drivers claiming that both had driven at excessive speed, partly on the wrong side of the road, failed to properly look out for other vehicles on the road and failed to take proper steps to avoid a collision.

In the collision that ensued, the steel tray of the approaching truck cut through the side of the bus causing devastating injuries to those within.

But despite the claims as to whoever and whatever blame may be attributed, our enduring tribute is to those who have lived through the trauma of the Clontarf bus accident and come out the other side with such dignity and determination.

Seven year old Michael Bowman lost his life and a further 18 boys suffered severe injuries including fractures so bad that amputation was the only option.

## We Welcome Our New C-BERS Counsellor

Hello. I am the new counsellor at CBERS - my given name is Philippa, but I like to be called Pip.

migrants, the problems associated with institutional care, and the damage that was caused to those children who were abused.

I think CBERS provides a positive way forward - to recognize the harm caused in the past, to help people reconnect with their families of origin, and to provide support and assistance to the men who are ex-

My contact with CBERS first began in June last year when I worked on the Senate Inquiry Submission into Children in Institutional Care. Since preparing the submission, and now that I have joined CBERSS as a counsellor, I have some inkling of what life might have been like for the young children who were placed in institutions in Australia.



residents of institutional child care and/or former child migrants.

At present, I am here at CBERS on Wednesdays. I am currently on 'the home stretch' of my doctorate in social work and social policy at UWA, and I also work as a consultant and researcher for other

organizations.

As a social worker and researcher I have worked with many different groups of people, but never specifically with former child migrants or adults who had been in child care institutions. I feel it is really important for us all to recognize the huge difficulties that were faced by child

I feel privileged to join the CBERS group, and have been made to feel very welcome by my co-workers and by all the people who have I have met and spoken to so far. I look forward to meeting many more of you in the future.

**And Farewell Michael Anderson...** after six years service as a counsellor at C-BERS, Michael left us in December to enjoy some retirement and explore fresh fields of endeavour. We join the many clients who contacted us to say "Goodbye and Thank You" to Michael and to wish him well in his future.

### WE'RE OPEN FOR BUSINESS

between 8.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. Monday to Friday

### ON STAFF

**Administration**  
**Manager— Mary Kearns**  
(Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays)

**Clinical Supervisor**  
**Dr Mark Sachmann**  
(Wednesdays)

**Counsellors**  
**Sjoukje Tarbox**  
(Mondays and Thursdays)  
**Pip White**  
(Wednesdays)

**Administration**  
**Lorraine Hipkins**  
(Mondays, Tuesdays)  
**Sue Fullerton**  
(Wednesdays and Fridays)

### MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**Dr Maria Harries**  
(Chairperson)  
**Dr Debra Rosser**  
**George Horton**

### CONTACT

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## Literacy Honour for Castledare/Clontarf “Old Boy”...

# Toddy McLaughlin Proves it's NEVER too Late to Learn

**Former resident of Castledare and Clontarf, Donald McLaughlin-Todd (Toddy) has won an *Outstanding Older Learner Award* based on his success in the Read-Write-Now Literacy Program run by Midland Swan TAFE.**

**T**oddy was presented with his Award at a recent ceremony at State Parliament As well as a certificate and medallion (which Toddy proudly displays in the photo at right) he also received a voucher for a course of his choosing through the University Of Western Australia's Extension Courses which was the Category sponsor.

It's been a long journey to literacy for Toddy, who as a toddler aged three was placed in Nazareth House orphanage in Carlisle and then at the tender age of five sent to far away Australia on board the *Asturias* arriving in Fremantle on 10 December 1947.

Toddy spent the next five years at Castledare and a further five at Clontarf.

However, in his early years at school Toddy's eyesight was not up to the task of seeing what was written on the black board, greatly impeding his learning and dampening his confidence.

It was only in his final three months of schooling that Toddy's eyes were finally tested and glasses prescribed.

Toddy left school at 15 and went to work on a poultry farm, then as an apprentice jockey, after that he had a spell in the Army and finally worked as a Truck Driver for many years.

But his poor reading and writing skills meant that jobs with better prospects for advancement continued to elude him.

Toddy is now retired from the workforce and at 62 is glad he took the first steps to improve his reading and writing skills. These days he reads and understands books and newspapers with ease. He's also benefited from computer tuition enabling him to access the world wide web and to communicate with confidence via email.

Toddy is presently studying the rules of lawn bowls with the aim of qualifying as an umpire!



*Above: At the Awards ceremony Toddy is pictured with Wayne Smith, Director of TAFE*

## Dealing with Loss and Grief

### **WHEN COUNSELLING CAN HELP**

The feelings of sadness that accompany the losses we experience in life are natural and healthy. The expression of our sadness helps us to heal. Sometimes, the healing process gets blocked and professional help may be needed. The following list may be helpful in deciding if professional advice may be helpful or necessary:

- ◆ When you are unable, or are becoming unable, to function effectively at home, work or socially.
- ◆ You have questions about what is normal and you may have concerns like "am I crazy?"
- ◆ You have thoughts and feelings that you are not able to share with loved ones.
- ◆ The grief process triggers big emotional issues, perhaps from the past, that you feel as though you need help to deal with.

If you feel that you may be having difficulty with a grief related issue then please consider contacting C-BERS and one of our counsellors will be able to assist you.

## **WOULD YOU LIKE HELP TO IMPROVE YOUR READING, WRITING AND COMPUTER SKILLS?**

Competency at reading and writing can open up so many other opportunities in your life.

Contact C-BERS if you'd like to improve your skills in these areas or in using a computer.

We can arrange for you to take part in a course that best suits your needs.

## Child Migrant Memorial in Fremantle

The establishment of a memorial to honour former child migrants who were sent to Western Australia from the UK and Malta is moving closer to reality with the approval of a site at the Fremantle History Museum on land overlooking the Wharf.

The Fremantle History Museum, on the corner of Ord and Finnerty Streets, was built by convicts in the 1860s and is reputedly one of Fremantle's most significant landmarks. The museum includes major displays that showcase the social history and heritage of Fremantle and the rest of Western Australia—a fitting context for the Child Migrant Memorial.

Now that the site has been decided, the WA Department for Community Development intends to organise a meeting of former Child Migrants to plan the next stage of bringing the memorial into being.

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## After All These Years ...

**Maureen Briggs-Trewin  
writes of her joy  
in renewing contact  
with a long lost  
childhood friend**

One Monday morning in February a message came through that a Monica Blendell wanted to make contact with me.

I was beside myself with joy ... I had honestly never thought I would see or hear from my childhood friend again.

I recalled the last time I saw her. We had been together working at Mt Henry Hospital when an official arrived and took Monica away. I yelled "Where are you taking her? What has she done?" Monica was then 18 years of age and still a Ward of State. Despite all my inquiries I never ever heard what happened to Monica or where she went.

As little girls, Monica and I had been friends together in Nazareth House, Hammersmith, London. In 1953 the two of us were sent to Australia, to Nazareth House, Geraldton. We were there until we reached the age of 16.

Then we were sent off to work,

sadly in different directions and we only met up again when Monica arrived at Mt Henry Hospital where I was already working.

When Monica phoned that Monday evening - we spoke for ages trying to fill in the experiences of the last 43 years, so many questions, talking over each other in our eagerness to bridge the gap of so many years. Monica and I are both in emotional turmoil with so many memories yielding feelings of hurt, pain, excitement and happiness at having reconnected after all this time. It is like finding a long-lost sister and we can't wait to meet again face to face.

Monica was never forgotten by her child migrant friends, her name came up at all our gatherings. We had thought she had been deported back to England, when in fact it was Monica's mother who demanded that the Immigration Department send Monica back to the UK which they eventually did.

Maureen says Monica wants to connect with other child migrant friends (especially those on the netball team) particularly anyone going to England in the near future.

See Notice Board on page 6 for contact details.

## Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care

**The reporting date for the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care has been extended following an overwhelming response to the call for public submissions.**

The Inquiry was originally to have reported by December 2003.

At 5 February 2004, 298 written submissions had been received (including one from C-BERS and from the Congregation of Christian Brothers WA and SA). The submissions are available on the Inquiry web-site.

Public hearings have also been held in Perth (in December) as well as in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and most recently in Brisbane. C-BERS Chairperson Maria Harries and Clinical Coordinator Mark Sachmann made a presentation to the Senate Committee at its Perth hearings.

### **Maria Harries writes ...**

Mark and I were asked to talk to the CBERS submission, respond to questions and make additional comments. We found the process respectful and most skilfully managed. CLAN members who were at the meeting gave a great positive energy to the event.

The end point is that we have been asked to send some additional information to the Senate Inquiry to give some idea about two things:

- ◆ How our current knowledge and the experiences of CBERS might influence future policy on the care of children
- ◆ What further information should be sought from adults who were previously in institutional care so that we can all help policy makers to make better decisions about the care of children today and in the future?

What we will need to do now is to talk to anyone who would like to help us to think about these matters. Please let us know if you can help. *(More information next page).*

# Good Grief... It's Only Natural

Many C-BERS clients have had to deal with significant losses in their lives.

In this article Clinical Supervisor Dr Mark Sachmann provides some reassurance on the healing qualities of grief as well as providing some tips on how best to deal with grief, or to support someone who is grieving, and when professional support may be helpful or necessary.

**G**rief is very normal and natural reaction to a loss. Sometimes the loss may be the death of a partner, friend, or family member for others it may be the loss of a pet or even the ability to do something. Grieving is not a sign of failure or not being a man, in fact grieving is a very important process. All of us at some time has experienced the pain of losing something very dear to us. Sometimes the pain associated with a loss can be so overwhelming that we may find it difficult to get through the day.

Each individual's reactions to loss are unique and as such there is no such thing as the 'right way to grieve'. Some individuals become increasingly emotionally withdrawn whilst others become angry and may even lash out at those around them. Grieving is influenced by things like the person's

age, sex, culture, religious beliefs and personality. Grieving takes time, it will not be done overnight. We may feel the need to rush it because the emotions and thoughts are painful, but unfortunately this is not possible or desirable.

The person going through a grieving process usually requires time and support from others to work through both the painful emotions and thoughts that accompany grieving. The grieving person will usually experience many types of thoughts and sometimes feels these may appear contradictory and very confusing.

To work successfully through our grieving we need to have some understanding of what to expect. We need to make sure that whilst we are grieving we are attempting to understand how and why we feel the

way we do. We need to listen to and be gentle with ourselves.

We need to recognise that the support of our friends and relatives is very important in the grieving process (if relatives or friends are unavailable then consider joining a support group or seeing a counsellor). Sharing our thoughts and emotions can help us understand them as well as taking some of the pressures off ourselves. However, the helper does need to be a good non-judgemental listener. Advice like, "You need to just get on with your life" or "you have had long enough to feel sad, come on snap out of it" may be said with the best of intentions is rarely helpful and frequently makes the grieving person feel inadequate because they can't stop feeling sad.

The obstacles to successful healing from a grief process are many. Our own reactions to loss may be a very big obstacle to grieving. We may say "I don't need to feel these thoughts, I'm OK". Because of the painful emotions often accompanying grief we may decide that not feeling emotions is a better option. However, these decisions usually delay the grieving process and may even negatively affect our lives by making it more difficult to concentrate, to get along with the important people in our lives and to function at work. Unresolved grief can lead to depression, which in turn may require professional help.

However, sometimes seeing a counsellor may make people feel like they are not good enough to work through the process themselves. Or perhaps seeing a counsellor may be frightening. What will the counsellor think? What will they say? But the question remains, when might you consider seeing a counsellor? The check list on the adjoining page may be helpful in deciding if professional advice may be helpful or necessary.

Grieving is about being human and having to deal with one of life's most difficult journeys: loss. If you are dealing with grief, remember you are in very good company for we have all gone through it.

## **Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care**

Public hearings of the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care have now concluded. The hearings began in Adelaide and Melbourne in mid November. After visiting Perth on 8-9 December, hearings were also held in Sydney in early February and finally in Brisbane on 12 March 2004.

A transcript of submissions and interviews can be accessed on the Senate website: [www.aph.gov.au/senate](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate)

### **Contacting CLAN**

As the principal voice speaking on behalf of children placed in care in Australia, **Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN)** is there to support those who share a history of institutional childhood. CLAN can be contacted as follows:

**Telephone** (02) 9709 4520 or Mobile: 0425 204 747  
**Email:** [careleavers@hotmail.com](mailto:careleavers@hotmail.com)  
**Website:** [www.clan.org.au](http://www.clan.org.au)

It is expected that the Senate Report and its recommendations to Parliament will now not be available until closer to the end of this year.



## THANK YOU

### Celebrating the Life of Michael Bowman

To Paul Irvine and all who were involved in the restoration of Michael Bowman's grave and celebration of his life a very big thank-you. Special thanks are extended to Brother Kevin Ryan (who supported the restoration and presided over the ceremony), Michael's niece Gail Watkins (who spoke and laid flowers at the ceremony), Michael Carrol and Dennis McInerney (who gave readings) Peter Bent and Richell Maron (who are putting together a video of the ceremony) D McLaughlin-Todd (who supplied the photos of the day that are featured on the front page of this newsletter)

## OBITUARY

We note with sadness the recent passing of old friend and former Child Migrant Charles Ticehurst and extend our deepest sympathy to his daughter Carmella.

### Charles (Charlie) Christopher Ticehurst: born 7 August 1940 at St Vennera, Malta died 4 December 2003.



Charles with his dog Chucky

Amongst the first group of Child Migrants from Malta, Charles was nine when he was sent to Australia on board the *Ocean Triumph* on 22 April 1950.

Charles was placed at Bindoon and spoke to family friend Leslie Wilkie of the suffering he experienced there.

Charles' brother Brian was also placed in Bindoon when he arrived in 1953, returning to Malta in 1958 when he left.

Charles' happiest time in life was with his wife before she died of cancer. Charles raised their daughter Carmella from the age of four months on his own.

When he left Bindoon, Charles was already experienced in the building trade and for many years was very happy working as a skilled tradesman and supervisor until his own health failed. In 1993 Charles had coronary bypass surgery and he also suffered from diabetes.

Charles enjoyed darts, bowling and golf and won many trophies. He was a generous, fun loving and happy man and made the most of the time he spent with family and friends and always laughed and smiled.

To Leslie Wilkie and her family, Charles was not only a neighbour of 12 years standing but their very dearest friend and honorary grandfather to their daughter Rochelle. He went with them to soccer and football functions, mouse racing nights, family celebrations and was "one of the gang!"

Leslie says "It was an absolute honour to have known such a gentle man and our memories of him will always be treasured".

## WANTING CONTACT

### Monica Blendell

(formerly of Nazareth House, now Monica Crane and living in England) wants to connect with other child migrant friends (especially those who were on the netball team)

To get in touch with Monica, contact Maureen Briggs-Trewin on 08-9298 9254 or through C-BERS.

## TARDUN OLD BOYS

### Half Yearly Reunion 24-25 July 2004

The Tardun Old Boys Association (TOBA) will hold their half yearly reunion at Moore River on the weekend of 24-25 July. Further details will be sent to members closer to the date. For more information contact Keith Spencer at home on 9276 7073 or during working hours on 9330 9121

## Child Migrant Friendship Society Celebrates with "SAUSAGES and SONGS"

More than 100 former Child Migrants gathered on the site of the original St Joseph's Orphanage in Wembley (now McAuley Hall) to celebrate Christmas 2003 with a sausage sizzle, champagne, lots of fun and the traditional Christmas sing-a-long!

Maureen Colgan reports that the girls outsang the boys, although John Hawkins was in fine voice!

The AGM welcomed new Committee Members: Maureen Briggs-Trewin, Judy Pavia and Irela De Bono. Maureen Colgan says "We are thrilled to have them aboard but would also like to have a few men join us. Anyone interested??"

The Committee will be planning future gatherings later this year and would welcome suggestions on location, theme, etc.

Any inquiries about the Friendship Society, please contact Maureen Colgan on (08) 9317 2753.

Edited and Produced by Deirdre Croft