"This Sin and Scandal" is a study of the agitated response of some sections of the public to the sharp fall in the birth rate around 1900. Women began to take an initiative in contraception and the size of families decreased dramatically from seven children or more in 1891 to an average of four for women who began childbearing in 1911.

After 1890 the birth rate fell by 50 per cent and never recovered and net immigration dried to a trickle. This fall in population growth and the economic depression alarmed some of the established interests in Australia, not only because it affected economic prospects but also because it threatened their moral certainties. Leaders of industry and commerce, doctors and clergy, reacted as if vice were rampant and contraception was ruining the moral fibre of the nation.

This book analyses opinions about the peopling of Australia between 1890 and 1911 and assesses the so-called 'evidence' that was available, showing the small relation opinion bore to the evidence. It discusses the 1903 New South Wales Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth Rate which it shows to have been far more an ideological exercise than a rational inquiry.

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'THIS
SIN
AND
SCANDAL'
For my friends and teachers
in the Australian National University
1967–1976
The backbone of the research on which this book is based is the report and evidence of the Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-Rate in New South Wales. The Commission’s Report and the voluminous statistical evidence it received were bound in one volume, freely available to the public both in the New South Wales Parliamentary Papers and as a separate publication. The even more extensive social evidence of doctors, pharmacists, parsons, policemen and others, together with non-statistical exhibits and an index so comprehensive as to almost require an index to itself, was bound in a separate volume of which few more than one hundred copies were printed. The Commission resolved that Volume II should not be published and only two or three of the members themselves had copies. The printing file shows that a very strict control was kept over distribution with only three copies released before the file was closed in 1908; one to the Chairman, Dr Charles Mackellar, another to Mackellar on behalf of Sir William MacGregor and one to Prime Minister Deakin on behalf of the Commonwealth Statistician. Mr R.B. Joyce of Queensland University has also found Colonial Office records in London which show that four copies of Volume II were forwarded to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on 31 May 1904. Those copies can no longer be found. The remaining copies were kept under seal in the basement of the Chief Secretary’s department in Sydney until 1942, then destroyed to make way for an air raid shelter.

The few Australian scholars who were interested in the whereabouts of the missing volume did not know about the copies mentioned in the previous paragraph and it was generally assumed that Volume II was lost forever. In fact there appear to be only two references by people who have seen it, apart from the group of officials mentioned above. O.C. Beale, one of the original Royal Commissioners, wrote in 1910 ‘A copy in private hands is always available to myself’ but he did not name his source. Norman E. Himes, as usual in birth control matters, had read more than anyone else and a footnote in his Medical History of Contraception makes
it clear to anyone who has read Volume I of the Royal Commission
evidence that Himes must have been looking at Volume II. The
note evidently lay unchecked from 1936 to 1969 when an inquiry
on behalf of the author revealed that the copy Himes had seen
was still in the National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland,
U.S.A.

The most interesting feature of the American copy was a
bookplate indicating that it had at one time been in the Library
of the Prudential Assurance Company of New Jersey, Statistical
Division. The Archivist and Librarian of the Prudential were unable
to say where their company had obtained the volume but they
suggested that it could have formed part of the library of Dr
Frederick Hoffmann, who was the company's statistician for many
years and donated his collection of books on medical statistics to
the Surgeon-General's Library (now the National Library of
Medicine). Unfortunately the Prudential staff were not able to
suggest how Hoffmann might have acquired the volume. The answer
to that question turned up in family papers held in England by
Mr Austin Coghlan, whose father, Mr T.A. Coghlan, had been a
member of the Royal Commission. Among the letters and news-
paper cuttings was a letter T.A. Coghlan had written from London
in 1909 when he was Agent-General for New South Wales. It was
addressed to 'My Dear Mr. Hoffman' and began: 'I have sent you
a copy of the full report of the Birth Rate Commission in New
South Wales. Only a very few copies of the report were allowed
to get into circulation—not more than 20 in all I should say—so
the one you have is a rarity.'

The only original copies of Volume II known to exist today are
the one in the National Library of Medicine and another which
the National Library of Australia has purchased from Mr Austin
Coghlan. A microfilm of the original is in the Menzies Library of
the Australian National University and photographic reproductions
are held by the author and Professor W.D. Borrie of Canberra.

Librarians and archivists in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide,
at the National Library of Australia in Canberra and at the
Menzies Library of the Australian National University helped to
gather material for this book. A number of people in medical,
commercial and private libraries, and other individuals who are
mentioned in the text, also helped with prompt and courteous replies
to requests for information.

The people to whom the book is dedicated made valuable
suggestions and Bernice Hicks, Elisabeth Leopold and Susan Pruul
gave much help in producing it. The Australian National University has treated me generously for ten years and provided most of the opportunities for research and writing which are reflected here.

Adelaide, 30 October 1976. N.H.
# Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td><em>Australian Dictionary of Biography</em></td>
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<td>AMG</td>
<td><em>Australasian Medical Gazette</em></td>
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<td>DBR</td>
<td><em>New South Wales Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-Rate</em></td>
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<td>DT</td>
<td><em>Daily Telegraph</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>IMJA</td>
<td><em>Intercolonial Medical Journal of Australia</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>MJA</td>
<td><em>Medical Journal of Australia</em></td>
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<td>SMH</td>
<td><em>Sydney Morning Herald</em></td>
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II  The Bulletin comments on the publication of Coughlan’s Childbirth in New South Wales
III  An early portrait of Charles Kinnaird Mackellar
IV  The No More Worry Co.’s device
V  Some Medical Men recommend the daily removal of the Pessary
VI  An advertising leaf from Bessie Smyth’s Limitation of Offspring
VII  Mrs Smyth’s book offered explicit instructions to her potential customers
VIII  The Marvel Co.’s Whirling Spray
IX  Instruments like ‘the Marvel’ were common enough for cartoon comment
X  Octovius Charles Beale
During the 1890s there was a spectacular decline in the Australian birthrate. By 1903 many prominent Australians feared that the decline was evidence of national decay comparable with that in France in the 1870s and that being bruited in the United States by President Theodore Roosevelt. On 14 August 1903 the New South Wales Premier responded to the political potential of the fear by appointing a Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-Rate, under the chairmanship of Dr C. K. Mackellar, to investigate 'the causes which have contributed to the decline of the birthrate in NSW and the effects of the restriction of child-bearing upon the well-being of the community'.

This book concentrates on the debate about the peopling of Australia of which the Royal Commission was the centrepiece but readers need to know the outlines of the demographic upheaval which provoked so much comment. The statistical evidence for the decline in population growth was daunting. During the 1870s and 1880s the annual rate of population increase in Australia averaged more than 3 per cent: it fell to only 1.07 per cent in 1903 before climbing back to 3.78 per cent in 1912. Part of the fall and much of the revival were due to changes in migration. The average gain from net migration was 36,000 p.a. in the 1880s but the intake fell away rapidly after 1891 until there was a net loss of 10,000 people in 1903.

As net migration declined the rate of natural increase became the basis and arbiter of national population growth. From 1891 to 1900 there was an uninterrupted downward trend in the average rate of natural increase while the recovery after 1900 was almost as steady but much less pronounced. In natural increase, like migration, the years around the turn of the century saw a major shift away from the pattern of growth which had prevailed in the booming eighties. In the case of natural increase the boom pattern never returned.

Changing patterns of marriage, as the most obvious demographic link between age structure and fertility, provided the first area of investigation of this disturbing trend. During the 1890s there was
an increase in the proportion of the population who were women of child-bearing age but a fall in the proportion of that group who were married. After 1900 the proportion of potential child-bearers rose slightly and the proportion of them who were married rose more quickly. Limitations in marriages and a change in age distribution were thereafter responsible for some of the reduction of fertility in the 1890s. Most of the overall decline in the birth rate was, however, caused by a reduction of fertility within marriage: between 1891 and 1911 the average size of completed families fell from 7.03 to 5.25.

Changes in fertility were not constant either within or between the states. The demographic experience of the two most populous regions, NSW and Victoria, was similar to that of Australia as a whole but with differences of intensity; South Australia stood midway between them on nearly all indices. There was evidence in each state of the influence of age at marriage, duration of marriage, density of settlement, socio-economic circumstances and religious denomination on differential fertility, and these contributed also to regional variations. Ultimately more significant than the variations was the fact that, although there were substantial differentials of fertility between various groups in 1891, all groups registered declines in fertility by 1911. New South Wales, which had led the national decline in the birth rate from 1894 to 1903, actually contributed most largely to the subsequent national recovery in the decade 1901 to 1911. This situation was, however, not recognised so clearly in 1903 when the Mackellar Commission began its investigations.

What was evident to the Commissioners was the effect of the deliberate limitation of fertility being apparently practised increasingly by the women of Australia. Doctors, clergymen, politicians, publicists, editors and many others had already expressed interest in the social and moral implications of the decline in the crude birth rate. They were seriously disturbed by the decline of fertility, the slow population growth and the rapid urbanisation which appeared to be going on around them and they feared for the future of the Anglo-Saxon race in Australia.

While the appointment of the Commission was at least partly politically motivated, it was also a response to more than a decade of such publicly expressed concern about the causes and effects of declining fertility. Composed of members drawn from a limited social and economic stratum of society, medical and businessmen with a decided interest in maintaining national population growth, a number of whom had previously contributed to the population
debate, the Mackellar Commission began with firm assumptions about the evidence for and the causes of the matters into which they were inquiring, and (consciously or otherwise) directed the responses of their witnesses towards confirmation of these assumptions. The Commission’s Report, completed in 1904 after six months deliberations, reflected a conservative response to the changing social climate believed to be responsible for increased use of contraception and consequent population decline. In fact the Commissioners gathered a mass of opinion which reflected a particular moral view about the course of Anglo-Saxon civilisation but they did little to question the evidence for or the likely causes and duration of the decline.

It is clear that the movement to family limitation was more complex, of wider social incidence, and of longer duration than pronouncements by publicists at the time might indicate. The young, the poor and the city dwellers may have been the most committed practitioners of family limitation in 1903, but their elders, their social superiors and their country cousins—of whatever religious persuasion—were also involved in a movement whose extent the Royal Commissioners and publicists at large were unwilling to acknowledge. In their desire to formulate a solution to population decline by reverting to the ‘norm’ of previous decades or to an idealised moral, rural and fecund state of existence, the Commissioners missed the opportunity to comment upon and illuminate a period of major social change in Australia’s history.
The New South Wales Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-Rate was widely noticed overseas and was the centrepiece of local debate about the peopling of Australia. When the inquiry was established and after it had reported many people thought that Timothy Coghlan, the New South Wales Government Statistician, was its moving spirit. This belief was probably not justified, although Coghlan's numerous publications did prepare the ground for an inquiry. The initiative came from Dr C.K. Mackellar, who probably chose most of the Commission's members and certainly dominated its work. Political support came from the government of Sir John See, responding to pressure from the press and a burgeoning opposition movement.

Royal Commissions are usually set up to educate public opinion, to shelve a politically dangerous issue or to make a genuine inquiry into a matter on which there is no settled policy. Because the Commission can be issued only by a government there is nearly always a political element in the decision to proceed with an inquiry. Hence the natural places to seek information about the establishment of a Royal Commission are the newspapers, for evidence of public disquiet or clamour for an inquiry; the parliamentary record, for hints of political pressure moving the government to action; the personal papers of politicians and the files of government departments, for glimpses of behind-the-scenes politicking or the establishment of machinery for an inquiry. In the case of the birth rate inquiry there are no significant private papers, the government files tell little and the parliamentary record gives negligible evidence of pressure on the government. The newspapers are more fruitful but they provide information about the context of the Birth-Rate Commission, rather than detailed explanation of its origins.

In March 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt drew attention to changes taking place in the population structure and growth of the United States of America. The matter was treated in Roosevelt's customary colourful style so his views were widely publicised, not least in Australia. In quick succession the Sydney public were able to read an article in the Bulletin pointing out that the poor—who
2 'This Sin and Scandal'

had most cause—had least opportunity to restrict their families; an editorial in the Evening News which reassuringly observed that declining birth rates were not peculiar to Australia; a thoughtful editorial in the Sydney Morning Herald; and an editorial and several letters in the Daily Telegraph. Neither the Herald nor the Telegraph yet blamed the government for the prevailing slackness of population growth, which is significant in view of attitudes they were to adopt later in the year.*

The position changed radically on 13 June 1903 when the Telegraph published a review of Coghlan's pamphlet on The Decline in the Birth-Rate. Reviews in the Herald and the Evening News followed on 15 June and from then until the issue of the Royal Commission on 13 August a flood of articles, reports, editorials and letters, especially to the Telegraph, kept the population question in the vanguard of public discussion. The Herald also greeted the pamphlet with a sub-leader on migration which dwelt on the natural advantages of New South Wales and asserted that there was 'no country in the world . . . so fitted for a home for industrious and energetic people' vastly more numerous than it then housed. The failure of New South Wales to fulfil its potential was blamed partly upon drought and compulsory unionism but the Herald laid 'a very large share of the responsibility' at the feet of 'the present Administration with its disastrous nostrums'. A further sub-leader on natural increase was less critical of the government but more gloomy about the chances of improvement. Similar points, with many additions, were raised in about forty letters which the Telegraph began to publish in mid-June. Moral themes were common at first and few letters directly blamed the government but as the correspondence proceeded, letters dealing with economic conditions and job security and thus effectively criticising government policies became more common.² As the spate of letters in the Telegraph diminished in mid-July all three dailies began to increase the amount of news and editorial comment criticising the government's handling of population problems. The main topic of attention was the allegedly high level of emigration from the state, while the cause of the trouble was alleged to be the government's bias in favour of the workers. At the end of July

* Only the general trend of the newspapers' attention to population topics is considered here, the detailed examination of editorials and letters being left to Chapter 7.

The question of ownership and editorship has not been pursued because the interest here is in the general climate of press opinion, not the differences of emphasis among the several newspapers.
the newspaper comments began to wear the aspect of a political campaign, its tone set by a heavily slanted feature on the main news page of the Daily Telegraph. The heading ran

EXODUS FROM NEW SOUTH WALES
Over Sixteen Thousand Gone in Six Months

‘Something is rotten in the State of Denmark’

Letter writers to the Herald and leader writers in the Evening News agreed and the newspaper winds soon raised political waves. On 29 July the Premier told the press that the country was ‘not in the decadent position that some people would lead us to suppose’, and produced figures furnished by Coghlan to refute ‘this nonsense about the decrease of population’. The Leader of the Opposition replied immediately with Customs Department figures showing a net outflow of 275 persons from New South Wales in the eighteen months to 30 June 1903—a number somewhat fewer than the Telegraph had announced in its headline!

By the middle of 1903 Sir John See’s Progressive Party Government was the subject of newspaper attacks on its population policies as well as on its dependence upon, and deference towards, the minority Labor Party. It was also under increasing political pressure from forces marshalling behind the Leader of the Opposition, J.H. Carruthers. A Liberal and Reform Association had been formed by Carruthers towards the end of 1902 to exploit the ‘public movement against the Government’. During 1903 Carruthers gained support from the People’s Reform League and Protestant-led temperance groups and by May he claimed a membership of 70,000 people in the Association. He spent the parliamentary winter recess of 1903 touring the state to organise party branches while a bandwagon effect was created by the Sydney Morning Herald, which carried during May and June an average three columns per issue of news and correspondence about the reform movement. The variety of groups gathering under the Reform Association’s umbrella began to give the movement the features of what may be called an urban populist syndrome—a combination of the Populists’ distrust of politicians and belief in the moral superiority of rural life, the Progressives’ interest in social reform and a vaguely understood Darwinist fear of national decadence. The movement was conservative, not radical, in its political sympathies and strongly anti-Labor.

Against this background of political flux the newspapers had concentrated editorially on migration and the distribution of
population, criticising the See government's policies on each. A number of letters to the *Telegraph*, though, had been apolitical comments on moral aspects of the falling birth rate. In such a context See could well have been afraid that Carruthers and his reformers might make considerable capital out of the population question. The government could do nothing to improve immigration since loan funds were short. Attempts to increase revenue from taxation would have been impolitic. On the other hand an inquiry into the natural increase problem would entail few political risks and appear as a politically disinterested attempt at moral reform, and might effectively shelve population problems for several months.

The sequence of events in the week when the Royal Commission was announced suggests that this is at least a plausible explanation of See's readiness to allow an inquiry. Both morning papers on Saturday, 8 August 1903 carried announcements that Sir John See had decided the decreasing birth rate was a serious matter requiring investigation by a Royal Commission. The following Monday's *Herald* carried See's detailed denial that the state was losing population, together with his assertion that there was no justification for 'decrying the position of the country'. On Saturday, 15 August the *Telegraph* reported See's assertion that 'the question of politics . . . [had] never entered his head' when appointing the Royal Commission. He repeated this assertion the same afternoon in a defensive speech to an Oddfellows Lodge function in the suburb of Newtown, claiming he had 'no wish to place any political friend on the Commission'. On the contrary, he 'was guided by the desire to do the best for the community'. Hence he was certain that, because the birth rate question 'went to the root and bottom of our social fabric . . .', the inquiry 'would be productive of great good, and would prevent the deterioration of our race and the demoralization of our young people'. These professions of innocent intention were set in the context of a claim that, with the fiscal issue relegated to the federal sphere, 'the State could devote its attention to the improvement of the general condition of the people, especially in regard to its moral obligations'. See would surely have been justified in hoping that sentiments like these might appeal to the moralism of his opponents' increasing number of supporters. The *Herald*, at least, saw it that way and reported his speech under the simple heading 'State Politics'. The *Herald*'s view was shared by the opposition, who insisted that the inquiry was an unnecessary duplication of the Government Statistician's work, would simply blazon New South Wales's troubles abroad and was merely a political stunt anyway.
The establishment of a Royal Commission would have been politically impossible without the Premier's approval and there were sufficient reasons for See to find a public inquiry politically acceptable, even if not essential. In other words, the way was open for a prime mover interested in proposing an inquiry. Two candidates for the role were at hand in the persons of Coghlan and Dr C.K. Mackellar, the latter becoming President of the Commission. The case for Coghlan rests on a note in a departmental file; that for Mackellar on a letter in the same file and on the circumstantial evidence of the Commission's membership.

In September 1908 the Commonwealth Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin, asked the New South Wales Premier for a copy of Volume II of the Birth-Rate Commission's minutes of evidence. An earlier request had been refused, on the grounds that the volume had been suppressed, but the Prime Minister argued that this ban had been broken already by the issue of a copy to Coghlan. With reference to this claim the Under-Secretary reported to the Premier that he had 'ascertained that . . . the Commission was virtually appointed at the instance of Mr. Coghlan, when Government Statistician'. There were other, hearsay, claims that Coghlan's work had led to the establishment of a Commission but they add no independent weight to the case. In addition the external evidence for the Under-Secretary's note is weak. Carruthers claimed that all the additional information required about the birth rate could have been obtained simply by allowing Coghlan to continue his studies. The Sydney Morning Herald, taking a slightly jaundiced view, complained that 'with Mr. Coghlan's pamphlet on the subject of the birth rate before us . . . we surely do not stand in need of more data'. Both views had merit. Coghlan was the best informed person in New South Wales on population matters and, given the choice, he preferred not to let other people gain credit for tasks he could accomplish himself. Had he thought there was any information to be gathered which was not already in his pamphlets, it is likely he would have suggested a study by officers of his own department with the results to be published under his name. From this point of view Coghlan had little to gain from a public inquiry. His rather subdued role throughout the proceedings of the Commission suggests that was his own estimate of the situation.

The case of Charles Kinnaird Mackellar was different. Earlier interest in public health and child welfare could easily have turned his attention to the birth rate. Sir John See knew his work well enough to have been open to a Mackellar initiative, ten of the Commissioners were chosen from fields in which he was active and
his rather dogmatic character dominated the Commission's proceedings. Mackellar had a notable student career in Glasgow, returned to develop a successful physician's practice in Sydney in the late 1870s and moved into the relatively underdeveloped field of hygiene and preventive medicine in 1882 as a member and, shortly, President of the New South Wales Board of Health. According to later reports, he gave the Board a sound start before resigning in 1885 to take up a nomination to the Legislative Council. During his early years on the Council Mackellar maintained his medical practice but also began to develop extensive business interests. By 1903 he held directorships in several companies with dominant roles in Australian finance, including the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, the Mutual Life and Citizens' Assurance Company and the Bank of New South Wales, of which he became President in 1901. In 1902 he responded to a specific request by Sir John See and was appointed Chairman of the State Children's Relief Board as it assumed responsibility for the treatment of children in deprived or abnormal conditions.

Mackellar used his new post, and the Legislative Council, to build himself a reputation as an authority on problems of child and infant welfare. Although he had rarely spoken in the Council during the preceding five years he contributed extensively to debates on infant life protection and girls' protection during 1902 and 1903. In April 1903 he spoke about infant protection to the Women's Progressive Association and about the mortality of illegitimates to a meeting at the Ashfield Infants Home. His protection work was the subject of a *Sydney Morning Herald* editorial and he was publicly praised by a leading benevolent home organiser. June found him gaining the support of the *Daily Telegraph* for a 'deeply moving utterance' to the Christian Social Union, which he addressed on 'Child Life in Sydney'. Also in June he joined the letter-writers in the *Telegraph* with a warning that the threat from Asia's fertility was being ignored in the blind Australian pursuit of a more comfortable life, while July brought a speech to a Sydney conference on Public Morals. In his address on child life, as in a later pamphlet on parents' rights and responsibilities, Mackellar stressed that the parent is bound to strive for 'the protection, maintenance, and, in the broadest sense, the education of his child in such a way as will enable him to fight the battle of life with a reasonable chance of success'. He went on to say that the parent who was unable to provide this benign environment should allow the state to exercise wardship: significantly he did not allow the other alternative, that parents might limit their families to a supportable size. Mackellar
certainly had the credentials to take the initiative and was not the kind of man to have carelessly thanked See for having 'authorised'—rather than 'requested' or 'initiated'—the inquiry.10

The composition of the Commission adds further weight to the 'Mackellar theory' about its origins. Nine of the original eleven appointees were already Mackellar's colleagues in various fields, sharing a network of relationships and a conservative philosophy which would have been congenial to him. See had promised that he would appoint to the Commission men 'eminent in their professions'. In the event each appointee was 'eminent' but the range of professions was very small. Eight of the men were from Mackellar's own fields of business and medicine.

Sir Henry Normand MacLaurin must have been an automatic choice for the Commission. A close colleague and friend of Mackellar, he was also an Edinburgh graduate, a member of the Board of Health from 1882, Chairman of the Immigration Board in 1890, prominent in the government of Sydney University from 1883 and a Legislative Councillor from 1889. In 1903 he was serving with Mackellar on the boards of the Mutual Life and Citizens' Assurance Company, the Bank of New South Wales and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. These activities and the concensus of biographers tend to justify the Bulletin's description of MacLaurin as a 'high-toned, clean-handed, alert-minded Tory'.11 Thomas Hughes and Edward William Knox shared Mackellar's and MacLaurin's eminence in business, Hughes serving with them on the board of MLC Assurance and Knox serving under them as General Manager of Colonial Sugar. As Lord Mayor of Sydney, Hughes also worked with Mackellar and MacLaurin on the Board of Health. His directorships included a second insurance company, a brewery, the holding company of the Evening News and, ironically, the Sydney pharmaceutical firm W.H. Soul & Co., whose representatives were evasive witnesses when their dealings in contraceptives were being questioned by the Commission. Hughes was also in tune with the political trend of the time, having taken part in the agitation for municipal reform in Sydney during 1899 and 1900 and having been a candidate in the liberal interest at the New South Wales election of 1901. Octavius Charles Beale and George Stanley Littlejohn also had successful business careers to recommend them (and Littlejohn worked with Mackellar on the Board of Health) but each also held an official position which was more probably the reason for his appointment. Beale was twice President of both the Chamber of Manufactures and the Chamber of Commerce, holding the former post in 1903 when Littlejohn was
Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce. Neither man had previously shown any public sign of particular interest in the population question although it was to be an absorbing cause for Beale as one of the pro-natalist rump in the population debate after 1904.12

Joseph Foreman, John Brady Nash and Robert Thomson Paton were not leaders of industry or commerce but all were associated with Mackellar and MacLaurin in the medical profession. Foreman's medical qualification for a place on the Commission was quite clear. He had gone abroad in 1881 to study the treatment of 'women's complaints' at Berlin, Vienna, London and Edinburgh, returning to become the first man to specialise in obstetrics and gynaecology in Australia and lecturer in his specialty at Sydney University from 1896. He had long been aware of the problem the Royal Commission was to investigate: in 1887 he described 'the custom now so prevalent of preventing conception' as 'one of the excrescences of our social life we have least reason to be proud of', a practice 'full of danger to the health of women', for which 'many pay the penalty'.13

Nash was also a medical graduate but his specialty was urology. Like Mackellar, MacLaurin, Littlejohn and Foreman he had studied in Edinburgh. He was active in the New South Wales Branch of the British Medical Association, took a keen, and socially acceptable, interest in the volunteer militia and had the seal put on his public career in 1900 with an appointment to the Legislative Council, where he joined Mackellar and MacLaurin. Paton clearly owed his appointment to his office. He had joined the staff of the New South Wales Public Health Service in 1890 and by 1903 was government Medical Officer, heir apparent to the post of senior medical adviser to the government, and a member of the Board of Health.14

Of the three remaining members T.A. Coghlan was an obvious choice. His recent, well-publicised work on the birth rate and reputation as a statistician would have commended him to whoever might be preparing a population inquiry. As it happened he had gained Mackellar's approval less than twelve months earlier by making the actuarial bullets for Mackellar to fire during his second reading speech on an Infant Life Protection Bill.15 Edmund Walcott Fosbery shared Coghlan's record of notable public service, having been associated with the Charity Organization Society, Aborigines' Protection Board and Old Age Pensions Board (of which Coghlan was Chairman). In 1903 he was both head of the police force and a member of the Board of Health. He was regarded
as a ‘refined and educated gentleman’ and got on well with Mackellar, whom he was to join as a Legislative Councillor in 1904.16

Table 1  
Affiliations of Commission Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business leaders</th>
<th>Medical practitioners</th>
<th>Board of Health</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mackellar</td>
<td>Mackellar</td>
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<td>Beale</td>
<td>Foreman</td>
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<td>MacLaurin</td>
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<td>Coghlan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holman</td>
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Table 1 indicates the inter-relationship between the members of the Commission and their common association with Mackellar. In addition nearly all of them either made it clear that they were, or can be inferred to have been, political conservatives and social meliorists who regarded it as their public duty to improve the condition of the poorer orders. Only Coghlan, who was a special case, and William Arthur Holman stood outside the Mackellar-centred network. Holman was a Labor member of the Legislative Assembly; a political radical who regarded it as his social duty to change, not merely improve, the order of the poor. This attitude would not have endeared him to Mackellar and there is evidence that he was not included in the original list of Commissioners whom Mackellar nominated. The newspapers certainly thought that Holman was a late addition to the Commission and his name was typed onto the list of Commissioners only after the list had been signed by See and countersigned by the Governor. It may also be significant that, after the rush to get him on the Commission, Holman attended only five of its meetings and that he, alone of the thirteen Commissioners, did not sign the report.17 We can only speculate about the reasons for Holman’s late appointment. It may be that the Labor Party, whose support was increasingly vital to See’s continuance in office, told the Premier that it expected to be
represented on the Commission. An alternative, but not incompatible, theory might be that Holman, who was at this time developing the full range of his political power, simply expressed an interest in the topic and persuaded See to add his name to the Commission.

Mackellar was probably the initiator of the Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birth-Rate. He was certainly the dominant figure in its proceedings. He asked more than three-quarters of the questions put to witnesses (although some of these, of course, were the formal ones needed to identify and swear witnesses) and there was only one meeting at which his questions were less than half the total asked. When he was unavailable a meeting was postponed, rather than conducted by a vice-President, and he would intervene to stop questioning which seemed to be developing a line independent of his own. One biographer suggested that his failure to regain ministerial office after a brief tenure in 1886 may have been because, though a good administrator, he 'was not a party man'. This estimate, with its hint of inflexibility, supports the emphasis on his dominating personality. So do the evidence of the Royal Commission as a whole, of parliamentary debates about topics that interested him and of an inquiry into the working of the Children's Relief Board. All suggest that the reporter read his character accurately, if none too kindly, who wrote:

Do not suppose him an intolerant man. He is largely tolerant of views and arguments not his own, so long as they are not expressed or published. He is not a narrow-minded bigot who believes that there can only be one opinion on any subject. The position he maintains is that there is only one opinion worth stating.\(^{18}\)

In a letter to the Principal Under-Secretary soon after submitting the Commission's report, Mackellar grumbled that he had been 'much hampered' by the failure to receive a copy of the report and complete evidence, adding 'Surely this is an oversight? I cannot understand on what grounds the evidence which I myself elicited should be kept a secret from me . . . .'\(^{19}\)

The proprietorial attitude to the Commission's activities which this letter implies appeared early and continued throughout the hearings. Mackellar asked more than half the questions at meeting two, nearly two-thirds at meeting four and nine-tenths at meeting six: thereafter his average was about three-quarters of all questions asked. Among Mackellar's associates Paton, Fiaschi (a surgeon who joined the Commission after its seventh meeting), Knox and Littlejohn contributed little to the proceedings. Holman, too, was
so infrequent a participant that he can be left out of consideration. Of the remaining participants Fosbery, MacLaurin and Nash formed a recognisably dominant group, while Beale, Coghlan, Hughes and Foreman played secondary roles. The only qualification needed is to say that Coghlan's and, to a lesser extent, MacLaurin's questions were more often acute and independent of the general line taken by the Commission than were those of anyone else in the two active groups. Perhaps Mackellar allowed some licence to the expertise of the one and the friendship of the other.

The orderly progress of any inquiry requires that someone sit down before the first meeting to organise essentials of accommodation and clerical assistance and to draft a rough program of proceedings. In the case of the Birth-Rate Commission these preparatory duties were done by Mackellar. At the first meeting of the Commission, on 20 August 1903, he announced the appointment of Mr J. Garlick as Secretary to the Commission and Dr R.H. Todd as an Associate to the President, dealt with accommodation for future meetings, directed that each Commissioner receive a copy of Coghlan's *Decrease in the Birth-Rate* and "stated that he had been considering the advisability of publicly announcing by advertisement in the Press the Commission's willingness to receive evidence, but thought that the matter might be left over for future consideration. The meeting concurred'. At the same session 'a draft Syllabus which had been prepared to show the proposed course of the Commission's enquiry was... submitted, discussed and adopted by the meeting, with two additions'. It is unlikely that Garlick, who was only a public service clerk, would have prepared the syllabus. Mackellar, acting alone or with Todd, therefore seems almost certain to have been the author.

Neither the original nor the amended form of the syllabus has survived. Consequently one can only describe the course the inquiry did follow and assume that this was probably the course the amended syllabus had suggested. The first three working sessions were given over to a lengthy exposition by J.B. Trivett, the Assistant Government Statistician, of statistics on population structure and growth, much of which simply re-stated Coghlan's earlier findings.

The question of the future procedure of the Commission was then discussed. The President suggested that officers of the Customs Department should be examined as to whether preventives are largely imported; if so, by whom. The importers should then be examined as to whom they supply these articles to; and the retailers should then be called and examined as to what classes of people the articles are sold to. This was agreed to.
And carried out, at meetings five to eight. Witnesses at sessions nine and ten were questioned about the interrelated problems of abortion, infanticide and illegitimacy. Having thus strayed into the area of infantile mortality (which was of particular interest to Mackellar in connection with his Children’s Relief work) ‘the President proposed’ and the Commission, as usual, disposed to ask for an extension of the terms of reference to include a general investigation of infant mortality ‘and its relation to the prosperity of the State’. From meeting eleven to meeting seventeen the Commission was occupied with numerous doctors who gave evidence and opinions about infant mortality, midwifery, abortion and contraception. Meetings eighteen to twenty-four do not seem to have developed according to any clear plan. There was some evidence on female employment and the difficulties in the way of a pure metropolitan milk supply were discussed at length but, for the rest, witnesses were apparently called with a view to tying up loose ends from earlier stages of the inquiry. The twenty-fifth, -sixth and -seventh meetings heard the views of clerical representatives from the various denominations, meeting twenty-eight received Dr Todd’s summaries of various ‘authoritative’ works from the fields of political economy and demography, and meeting twenty-nine was devoted to Trivett’s resumé of the statistical debate. The chief business of meetings thirty to forty was the Commission’s deliberation upon the contents of its report although a few witnesses were recalled to clear up minor points.

Evidence was not restricted to oral sources and the Commission received about five hundred letters, reports and exhibits. These ranged from letters by interstate officials about legislation dealing with indecent literature; to a letter by the Secretary of the Rechabites ‘giving certain information as to the production of sterility by the use of salicylic acid and by the inhalation of tobacco smoke’; to a report by Senior-sergeant Sawtell ‘regarding (a) the immoral tendencies of dancing saloons, (b) the question whether the gathering of children at public schools tends to the spread of immorality, and (c) additional evidence regarding criminal abortion’; to a circular from the ‘No More Worry Co.’ advertising ‘A Perfect Preventive’.

Obviously the Commission could not control the kind of written evidence it received. It could, and did, try to determine the content of oral evidence. Witnesses do need to be given a rough idea of what might be required from them but if all were treated like Dr Skirving and Cardinal Moran, the Birth-Rate Commission’s witnesses had more than a ‘rough’ idea of what to expect. Skirving
prefaced his first answer thus: 'Yes: your Associate sent a little memo. of probable questions, and I jotted down, before I came, the answers I intended to make to several of them.' Skirving's 'little memo' has not survived but, if the preview sent to him and to other witnesses was at all like the one sent to Cardinal Moran, there cannot have been much room for spontaneity in their evidence. Moran received a 'Brief for Clergymen . . . Strictly Private and Confidential . . . showing the lines upon which the reverend gentlemen representing the various churches are to be examined before the Commission'. This so-called Brief was a list of thirty-six items setting out the questions the clergyman might expect to be asked, the answers he might care to give, and the necessary data for him to come to those conclusions. The Brief began with eight points each phrased 'He knows that . . . ' or 'He might be told that . . . ' (—the French birth rate has declined,—the people offer various reasons for limiting family size, and so on). Point 8 read 'He might be told that some witnesses of experience and observation have stated that the positive desire to regulate the number of children born in wedlock is more prevalent in recent years'. This point, like the preceding seven, was simply offered as a piece of information for the cleric to agree with, when the inquiry should have been trying to discover whether such points were valid. Point 18 was even more presumptuous:

He will say that he knows:—
(a) That during the last eight years the law of N.S.W. has created greater facilities for divorce.
(b) That the great number of petitions for divorce and judicial separation, which have been made to the Supreme Court during this period, indicates that serious conjugal disagreement is very prevalent——
NOTE: The ratio of divorce to marriages during the eight years 1894-1901, is one divorce or judicial separation to 35.3 marriages. The ratio of petitions for divorce to marriages during the same time is much greater . . . .

After that prolegomena it was rather superfluous to tell the prospective witness:

19 He might be asked to express his opinion as to whether the frequency of petitions for divorce and separation indicates a disordered social state.22

The Commission did not merely ask witnesses to confirm its own opinions. In a number of cases witnesses were asked specialist
questions, or allowed to give ‘information’, about areas in which they had no specialist knowledge. Thus Dr Ross, who specialised in the treatment of the insane, was questioned about the birth rate and contraception while Senior-sergeant Sawtell was not discouraged from giving his ‘specialist’ opinion, in response to Mackellar’s suggestion, that men avoid marriage because of the low wages caused by closed shop unionism and ‘that the great drawback to marriage is the unsuitability of the young women of the present day’. At least the clergyman was warned to brush up his demography and political economy! The Brief advised that he might be asked

24 Whether the problem of overpopulation is a real one so far as the centres of N.S.W. are concerned.
25 How he could account for the extent of existing poverty in a State so productive as N.S.W.
26 Whether the poverty observed in N.S.W. is due to local over-population.
27 To what extent the poverty in over-populated or thickly populated localities is due to under-population outside these localities.
28 What are the causes of and remedy for the overcrowding of towns in N.S.W.
29 Whether the unequal distribution of population in N.S.W. indicated a disordered social state.

The tendentiousness of the Brief was repeated when witnesses actually appeared. For example, Mackellar’s second substantial question to the Reverend Mr Hennessy ran to 180 words—and attracted the answer ‘Yes’! Dr C.W. Morgan, a country physician who was one of the early witnesses, was also happy to agree with the trend of questions:

1094 Question Well, from the views that you have expressed, I would gather that you consider that the use of preventives to conception is an obscene practice, and it is calculated to lower the morality and degrade the women of Australia?

Answer I distinctly say so. I have noticed from year to year that the idea of moral responsibility and maternal duty, and so forth, is very poor indeed.

1097 Question Do you think it would be an advantage to the well-being of the community generally to compel persons selling proprietary articles of that description [i.e. abortifacients] to have the prescription . . . printed upon the box?

Answer Oh, yes; I think it would be a very good thing.
If witnesses did not take their cue from Mackellar’s first question, he tried to rein them back to the path with a ‘but’ in every subsequent question, as when Dr Thring was questioned about women’s motives for limiting the number of their offspring:

3069 Question And the supposed difficulty of providing for the children is merely, in your opinion, a salve to their consciences?

Answer No; I would not say that . . .

3070 Question But it is alleged that the class in which prevention is most constantly practiced is a class which is comparatively well off?

Answer I think you will find that preventive practices go right through . . . they are certainly extensively used in the working classes . . .

And when Mr Fuss was interrogated about the customers for contraceptives from his pharmacy:

1147 Question Do single women often purchase these goods?

Answer That is very difficult to say.

1148 Question But have you any knowledge that they do?

Answer I think not. As far as I can judge from appearances married people purchase them.

1149 Question But would you say that, of the women who purchase these articles, one-third, for instance, were married women?

Answer Well, that would only be a matter of guess, to express any opinion.

1150 Question Of course, that would be a matter in which you could not state positively, but you would have your own ideas as to that? . . .

People who did not support the Mackellar line, or might be expected to argue against it, were either ignored or attacked. Early in the course of the inquiry Mr A.O. Powys, an officer in the Victorian Government Statist’s department, wrote expressing a desire to give evidence. The Commissioners discussed his request on four occasions, with Mackellar showing himself increasingly unwilling to take evidence from Powys and suggesting (despite having already conversed with Powys himself) that Powys’s usefulness should be tested by his answers to some written questions.
Mackellar finally told his colleagues that he 'did not think, in view of the exhaustive nature of Mr Trivett's evidence, that any good object would be served by incurring the expense of bringing Mr Powys to Sydney'. Mackellar's position was ostensibly reasonable (and may have been genuinely held) but it is also significant that soon after Coghlan's first birth rate booklet had appeared Powys had criticised it in the columns of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. While it may be an open question whether the Commission deliberately avoided hearing unwelcome evidence from Powys, there is no doubt in some other cases that a vigorous attempt was made to contravert the evidence of witnesses holding unpopular opinions. Watson-Munro and Worrall among the doctors suffered this fate, as did Edward Riley, the President of the Sydney Labour Council. Riley felt there was good reason for the poor to limit their offspring but his enthusiasm outran his logic and when he was caught out on a sweeping statement about New Zealand the Commission used the error to suggest that all his evidence was questionable. Even more striking was the treatment of the Reverend W.W. Rutledge, a Methodist who was by no means a doctrinaire opponent of contraception and allowed some circumstances where it would be justifiable. The Commissioners made a strong attack on his evidence and went so far as to call a more favourable Methodist witness before the hearings were concluded. Considering the treatment given to witnesses of independent views, the frequently tendentious questioning and the hint of prefabrication given by the Brief for Clergymen, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the inquiry by the Commission was rather less than an open-minded search for truth.

The Report of the Birth-Rate Commission, like its hearings, was less the work of the body of its members than of the President. In the case of the report, though, there is an unconfirmed but plausible indication that Mackellar was much assisted with the drafting by his associate, Robert Henry Todd. Todd was a graduate in arts, medicine and law, who had been Sydney City Coroner and was a much appreciated New South Wales Branch Secretary of the British Medical Association. If his conservative outlook was fairly estimated in the comment that 'the tradition of his school [Christ's Hospital] with that of his family without doubt helped to give him that attitude of mind towards accepted tradition which marked his work in Australia', then he should have found it easy to work with Mackellar and the tone of the report can be regarded as an extension of their joint attitude.

The procedure adopted in preparing the report would have
facilitated the maintenance of a strong influence by Mackellar and Todd. Meetings thirty to thirty-nine were given to the work, which began when the Commission ‘deliberated upon certain suggestions brought forward by the Hon. the President as a basis for their Report’. At the following meeting Mackellar asked his colleagues for written submissions about the direction the report should take. Although one cannot judge Mackellar’s intention it is worth pointing out that the written submission is a well-tried device for ensuring the primacy of the compiler’s, rather than the contributors’, views in the final document. When the Commissioners next met, in fact, ‘it was decided to adjourn for ten days in order to enable the President and officers to prepare a Draft Report . . .’. The ten day adjournment lengthened into three weeks until the President submitted the draft, which the members had barely three days to peruse before launching into discussion. Four meetings later the draft was adopted ‘after alteration . . . with the exception of two paragraphs’. Those paragraphs must have occasioned some difficulty because, at its last working session,

The Commission again discussed various portions of the Report, and adopted them, after partial amendment. The two paragraphs specially held over from the previous meeting were again discussed. Substitute paragraphs were submitted by Mr Knox and by the President. Eventually one was unanimously adopted, and incorporated in the evidence, the other being withdrawn.

Since Mr Knox spent most of the hearings saying nothing, it is surprising to find him taking a stand and unlikely that he was successful. He remarked in later life ‘I cannot claim to have carried much weight’ at any of the meetings of public bodies. Most of his colleagues would have been justified in coming to similar conclusions about their role in Dr Mackellar’s Commission.
There were five divisions and seventeen chapters in the report which Mackellar and his Commissioners signed on 3 March 1904, just over six months after their initial meeting. Division B reviewed the statistics of the declining birth rate, its causes and effects, and some possible remedies. Division E was a piece of rhetoric masquerading as a conclusion. The remaining sections merely recorded the mechanics of the Commission's operation, analysed the prevalence of infant mortality and discussed miscellaneous topics arising from the evidence, including the sale of poisons, registration of still-births and the effects of gynaecological surgery. The way the Commissioners analysed demographic phenomena and the form in which they wrote their conclusion force the judgment that their inquiry was less a rational pursuit of understanding than a ritual expressing moral reaction to social change.

The study of the declining birth rate began with a chapter on the statistics of the decline and of related subjects, including natural increase, marriage, fecundity and differential fertility, all presented in such a disordered fashion that it is necessary to construct a connected summary of the argument before beginning to criticise some elements of it. Setting itself three specific questions, the Commission discovered that there had been a decline in the birth rate, that it had begun about 1888 and that it was not peculiar to New South Wales. Between 1891 and 1901 not only the crude birth rate but the age-specific rates had declined, for all but the youngest ages.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement in NSW age-specific nuptial birth rates, 1891–1901</th>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage change between 1891/1901</td>
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Not content with this picture of a short-term decline the Commission struck on the similarity of the 1871 and 1881 age-specific birth rates, calculated a common rate for the two years and called it a 'standard rate', by comparison with which the decline to 1901 levels was even more remarkable.

Having satisfied themselves that there had been a 'sudden and remarkable shrinkage of the birth rate' among women of all conceptive ages, the Commissioners realised they should check whether this change was social or merely demographic. They concluded that virtually none of the decline could be explained demographically—but this conclusion was tenable only because they failed to take account of a major redistribution in the ages of married women within the child-bearing years. Although they ruled out demographic causes for the decline in fertility the Commissioners made only a cursory statistical survey of social factors. Urbanisation and industrialisation were ignored and the possible influence of fluctuation in trade or of decay in the physique of women were discounted. The Commissioners went on to report that barrenness was more common in urban than in rural areas and more common among immigrants than among native-born women. Unfortunately the time span over which barrenness was defined was not specified. There was a similar lack of definition in a paragraph reporting that the proportion of fruitful marriages had fallen between 1861 and 1897. It is also unclear how terms were defined in the statement: 'The average issue of marriages has declined during the period 1891–1900 for all ages at the time of marriage, and among all classes, compared with issue of marriages of epoch 1871–1880.'* In the circumstances it is impossible to know what value to place on the contention that

The decline in average issue is the product of four factors:
(a) postponement of marriage;
(b) decline in fecundity (proved ability to reproduce);
(c) cessation of fertility at an earlier age; and
(d) decline in fertility at all ages.

As they summed up their statistical evidence the Commissioners declared themselves satisfied that it showed a 'very marked decline' of the New South Wales birth rate, commencing some years before 1889 but becoming 'rapid and continuous' thereafter. They also

* If 'average issue' meant 'completed family size' then the figures for 1891–1900 marriages would obviously include many uncompleted families: if 'average issue' referred to 'number of children born to families', then the statement is valueless for lack of information about the age distribution of the marriages involved.
noted a rise in marriage age in the latter period sufficient to account for a small proportion of the decline in the birth rate. From this statistical basis they inferred that

the main factor in producing the decline of birth rate in New South Wales is one which is independent of:

i. variation in the age-constitution of the population;
ii. variation in the age-constitution of the women of concep-
tive age;
iii. physiological tendence towards lessened fertility;
iv. variation in marriage-rate;
v. birth-place of husbands or of wives;
vi. all other natural causes;
and is a force over which individuals themselves have control.

The Commissioners were substantially correct in deciding that demographic influences were subordinate to social ones in bringing about the decline of the birth rate. As it happens the correctness of the conclusion was largely independent of any validity in the method by which it was reached. For example crude birth rates were available for each year, reliable age-specific birth rates only for the census years, 1891 and 1901. The Commission slithered between the two, moving from a table of decline in age-specific rates, 1891–1901, to the statement 'it is thus clear that there has been a very serious decline in the birth rate since the year 1888 . . . ' . It was also invalid to argue that 'the decline in birth rate started with the younger and proceeded to the older ages'. This statement was supported by a graph in which the 'line of declension' in the age-specific birth rate between 1891 and 1901 was projected back to the point where it intersected the, so-called, standard rate (compounded from the age-specific rates for 1871 and 1881) for each cohort. The point of intersection was said to indicate the year in which the cohort concerned had begun restricting its fertility. The lack of statistical justification for the assumption of a linear relationship between the 1901 and 1891 rates, let alone a linear projection back to the 'standard', was ignored. The theory also ignored or, rather, contradicted the evidence of the preceding paragraph of the report, which could be validly interpreted as showing that the decline in the birth rate did not begin with the younger cohorts.2

In two instances the Commissioners' statistical work was shoddy, if not mischievous. Despite their comparison of age-specific fertility rates at various dates, for example, they did not go on to compare the available information about the distributions of married women
in 1881 and 1901. Had they done so they would have found that
the proportion of women aged 20–24 and 25–29 who were married
had declined by one-third and one-fifth respectively over the twenty
years—not remained stable as the Commissioners claimed. Second-
ly, the report regularly equated the adjectives 'high' and 'natural'
when they were attached to the noun 'fertility'. For example, the
concept of a 'standard rate' of age-specific birth data was not used
in the neutral sense of statistical standardisation procedures but
with the idea that the very high figures of 1871/81 represented
a normal level by comparison with which the rates for later years
were deficient. Indeed the comparative decline of the birth rate in
the 1890s was said to point to 'the existence of some unnatural
condition'. At no point in the report was it indicated that the various
indices of fertility had, in fact, been rising to a plateau in the 1880s
which was 'unnaturally' high by comparison with earlier periods
in New South Wales's history! Such little deficiencies of method
did not stop the Commissioners from passing confidently from
'Statistics of the Decline . . . ' to their chapter on 'The Immediate
Causes of the Decline of the Birth-Rate' with the sentence:

Having been led, by a careful consideration of the Statistics,
to the conclusion that the cause or causes of the Decline of
the Birth rate must be a force or forces over which the people
themselves have control, we proceeded to examine many
prominent gynaecologists, obstetricians, and physicians, with
a view to ascertain, if possible, the nature of these forces.

The distinctive treatment of statistical evidence in the first
chapter had its parallel in the second as the Commissioners
proceeded to ignore evidence contrary to their own judgment of
social morality. The reduction of fertility was reported to be due
to contraception and abortion, and 'pathological causes' consequent
upon both practices. On the widespread and growing resort to
'deliberate interference with the function of procreation' there was,
as the report claimed, 'unanimity of opinion among the medical
men'. It was also true that many of the doctors had detailed
deleterious side effects of contraception and horrendous conse-
sequences of abortion. Many—but not all. Dr Creed had refused to
agree with Mackellar that contraception had ill effects on the
nervous system of the user; Dr Thring had adopted a similar
position; and Sir James Graham (a gynaecologist) said it was
'difficult to imagine' preventives having 'prejudicial consequences'
on a patient and he thought it unlikely that tubal or ovarian
inflammation would follow their use. None of these three witnesses
was cited in the report. Indeed Sir James Graham’s view on the effects of prevention was transmuted in the index to ‘Might, now and then, produce inflammatory conditions leading to cerosis of the tubes’. The remainder of the discussion on the immediate causes of the decline of the birth rate was unexceptionable. It was reported that preventives were imported in quantity and also manufactured in New South Wales, and that the majority of pharmacists had been doing an increasing trade in the goods for ten or fifteen years. Trade in abortifacients was widespread and the number of abortionists increasing, while both abortion and preventives were widely advertised.

When the Commissioners turned to ‘The Desire to Restrict Fertility’ they began sensibly enough again, recognising that the desire was ‘not a product of modern times, nor peculiar to New South Wales’. When they concentrated on the local manifestation of the universal desire, however, there was less willingness to be open to the evidence. Inability to afford the cost of rearing numerous children was ‘almost invariably’ reported to be the popular reason for restricting procreation. However, the Commissioners, who had received very little financial information, said that the cost argument was mistaken and ignored witnesses taking the contrary view. Economic factors in the decline of fertility were also discounted, but in a curious way. The paragraph dealing with the topic began ‘We have not been able to trace the decline of the birth rate to any well-defined economic cause’. To support this view attention was directed to the unrelated movements of trade and fertility indices during the preceding fifteen years. Having made a case against economic causation, however, the Commissioners were evidently seized by some spirit of self contradiction for they went on to say that, by rendering employment and income precarious, ‘restrictive regulations of trade [by which they appear to have meant the various elements of New Protection], cannot fail to indirectly discourage the existence of large families’.

The motives for family limitation were summed up in two paragraphs of the report. Witnesses supporting the Commissioners were reported as saying that the true reasons for family limitation usually were:

i. An unwillingness to submit to the strain and worry of children;
ii. A dislike of the interference with pleasure and comfort involved in child-bearing and child-rearing;
iii. A desire to avoid the actual physical discomfort of gestation, parturition, and lactation; and
iv. A love of luxury and of social pleasures, which is increasing.

It was not pointed out that many witnesses had said these things only in response to prompting by the Commissioners. All four reasons, according to the Commissioners,

have one element in common, namely, selfishness. They are, in fact, indicative of the desire of the individual to avoid his obligations to the community; and they serve to exemplify the observation that 'the effort of the race towards its increase in numbers is in inverse ratio to the effort of the individual towards his personal development'.

Selfishness had achieved its full effect during the previous twenty years, the Commissioners said, because of the weakening of two former restraints, 'religious feeling' and ignorance of the means of accomplishing the desire for limitation. The decay of religious restraint was not elaborated but the spread of knowledge was blamed on the traffic in preventives and on neo-Malthusian propaganda. In particular

the adoption of these doctrines was unduly encouraged by the judicial sanction given to their publication . . . in the case Ex Parte Collins . . . The remarkable coincidence between the promulgation, in 1888, of . . . this judgement, and the sudden fall of the birth rate in 1889 . . . cannot, we think, be considered fortuitous.

In the Ex Parte Collins judgment Mr Justice Windeyer held that Annie Besant's The Law of Population was not obscene and that the bookseller, Collins, had been justified in selling it as 'a scientific and philosophic treatise in relation to social and political economy'. Windeyer's lengthy defence of the publication was, as the Mackellar Commission reported, 'scattered broadcast not merely in Australia but in Great Britain', by neo-Malthusian enthusiasts for family limitation.

From the discussion of motives the Commissioners turned their attention to 'The Effects of the Restriction of Child-Bearing on the Well-Being of the Community'. Three main topics were treated:

* If the Commissioners really believed that Ex Parte Collins could have affected the birth rate so radically and so quickly, they must have been disappointed that there was no corresponding rapid rise in fertility after the judgment in Potter v. Smith (1902) 'that a pamphlet which contained descriptions and illustrations of certain preventive checks . . . was of an indecent nature' had partially withdrawn the freedom allowed by Windeyer's judgment.
24 'This Sin and Scandal'

the physical and mental effects of both prevention and abortion, the impact of the practices on morality, and the effect of declining fertility on the economic growth of New South Wales. As with motives, so with effects, the Commission declared itself to have been 'much struck with the emphasis with which learned writers, whose works have been studied, and medical and other witnesses have referred to the very serious injurious effects . . . of the prevention of conception'. Once again, however, the Commission was very selective in its treatment of the evidence on the point. For example Dr Morgan's belief that prevention was 'very deleterious in its effects on the nervous system of women' was joined with Dr MacCulloch's statement that the practice 'may lead to septic inflammations of the womb and of other organs of generation'. It was not pointed out, though, that Morgan's evidence also contained an answer casting doubt on the validity of MacCulloch's statement.

In another case Dr Thring was said to confirm the opinion of other witnesses that there was an association between prevention and nervous ailments. In fact this was a direct reversal of the position he held.

After quoting nine witnesses who, justifiably or not, were said to believe that prevention produced 'affectations of the nervous system', 'hysteria', 'nerve disorders', 'mental deterioration', 'neurasthenia'—or simply that it made women 'look old'—the Commission wondered whether the rising insanity rate of New South Wales might be related to the spread of prevention. Then, somewhat equivocally, they discounted the idea. While some of the increased insanity rate might be due to 'the practices resorted to for the purpose of limiting families', the Commissioners did conclude that 'the mental strain of business worries' explained most of the rise in insanity since the financial depression of 1893. (The same depression, of course, that was not an adequate reason for family limitation!) In addition to its possible psychical effects, the Commissioners said, prevention of conception could lower the general health of women, cause diseases of the reproductive system and induce permanent sterility. They thought the results of abortion even more dire: 'Bad as are the consequences of prevention of conception, still worse is the destruction of health and life which follows the procuring of miscarriage.' (Could this be the origin of the view that prevention is better than curette?) On this occasion it was a fair summary of the evidence to report that all the medical witnesses regarded the effects of abortion as disastrous: pelvic inflammation, sepsis of the generative organs—described in extensive and colourful detail—and death. Even here the Com-
commissioners were unable to resist the temptation to overstate their case, saying that, given the observed increase of induced miscarriage, it was 'a very significant fact that the proportion of deaths of women in childbirth increased, in the period 1890–1902, by 50 per cent on the rate for 1881–1900'. Apart from the confusion of dates (which cannot be resolved from the available evidence) this observation obscures the fact, which is evident from the supporting evidence, that a significant proportion of the increased mortality was due to puerperal fever, not necessarily caused by abortion.10

The apparent failure of so many women to realise 'the wrong involved in the practices of prevention and abortion' gave the Commissioners 'grave misgivings as to the future'. Examples were multiplied of doctors, pharmacists and clergymen who had observed women possessed of considerable determination to achieve limitation of offspring and negligible concern with the morality of their action. Amorality, rather than immorality, was the attitude reported by the majority of witnesses but the Commissioners ignored the distinction and wrote of 'the perversion of morals revealed in the evidence'. Then they quoted clergy of each major denomination who were of the same mind (Stephen, who opposed prevention, being quoted and Rutledge, who allowed it, ignored as representative of Methodist opinion) before expanding on their own view of the grave immorality of prevention and still graver immorality of abortion. Although abortion was a criminal offence and prevention was not, the Commissioners regarded both as 'equally opposed to that morality upon which the welfare of the race essentially depends'. In addition both practices were declared to 'lower the standard of right-living and right-thinking in the community, create laxity of morals, debase character, and ignore the sanctity of human life'. 'Decay of family life' was next in the Commission's catalogue of catastrophes resulting from contraception. No attempt was made to argue the case and no evidence was cited in support of the flat statement that large families are a good thing. On the contrary, the Commission merely quoted the opinions of clergymen who agreed with its own opinion that

The benefits of large families to the members of those families and to the nation composed of them cannot be over-estimated . . . 'only' children and members of small families are less well-equipped for the struggle of life; they do not grow up to be morally, intellectually, or physically superior to members of large families, while their social efficiency is impaired by selfishness . . . We also recognise that the obligations of parentage are an inducement to the right use of health and
strength, and ... that the effort demanded for the support of a large family stimulates a conscientious regard for duty, and promotes good citizenship.

Restriction of families was also 'an impediment to progress and prosperity': at a time of restricted immigration declining fertility would bring a fall in the demand for manufactured goods and lead to under-utilisation of the state's natural resources. On that point the Commissioners and the Chambers of Commerce and Manufactures stood together.11

It is surprising that the Commissioners did not offer moral remedies for the low birth rate, given their strong opinion about the moral reasons for the decline. Even the remedies they did propose were not expected to counteract the perversion of human nature which they said caused people to limit the number of their offspring. The Commissioners did hope, however, that 'if ... some of the disabilities ... attached to child-bearing [were] removed or mitigated', if there were education about the side-effects of prevention and if the people were 'assisted to adopt those occupations [i.e. rural ones] in which the support of large families is easier, and in which children are a help rather than a burden', much good would follow. In what was probably the most sensible section of the whole report they went on to discuss improvements in hospital and medical practice, better control of marginal institutions and practitioners, the improvement of working conditions for women, some prohibitionist panaceas and, the most common contemporary remedy for population problems, the encouragement of rural settlement.12

The Commissioners were concerned that, although Sydney had obstetric services of 'a very high standard of excellence', maternal deaths were 'unduly numerous'. They suggested that the remedy could be juxtaposed to the need by greater provision of public maternity hospital accommodation, which should no longer be 'almost entirely devoted to the care of the unmarried women'. Extended hospital facilities would allow better training of obstetric nurses, closer control of puerperal fever and the earlier hospitalisation of women experiencing complicated pregnancies. Although the Commissioners did not make the point, a great, if incidental, benefit of extending public facilities would presumably have been a reduction in the opportunities for uncontrolled private hospitals and untrained midwives. It was recommended, however, 'that a department of the State Government be entrusted with the licensing, registration, supervision, inspection, and control of all private hospitals, lying-in-homes, and maternity homes'. The related
problem of numerous midwives being ‘uneducated, untrained, and unsuitable’ (and crypto-abortionists) was also considered and it was proposed as an interim measure that every keeper of a private lying-in-home should be a trained obstetric nurse. The most desirable course was thought to be examination and licensing of all midwives but the Commission reported that this was not possible. Inadequacy of training facilities was named as the hindrance to this plan but it is more probable that the lack of a firm recommendation reflected a division of opinion within the Commission. Dr Foreman clashed with Sir James Graham, who favoured stricter training and control, and Foreman told his fellow Commissioners that ‘the registration of nurses by the State would be . . . an unmitigated danger, fraught with very great danger to the community’ because it would give them equal status with medical practitioners. The strength of feeling Foreman exhibited makes it unlikely that a recommendation on licensing could have been included without a fight on his part.13

Recommendations about the conservation of infant and maternal life amounted to a tacit acceptance of the view (soon to become preferred to pro-natalism by most interested Australians) that, if fewer babies were born, they must be better cared for. For the rest, apart from providing some suggestions about improving women’s working conditions, the Commission’s proposals were negative or idealistic. Legislative prohibition of trade in contraceptives and abortifacients was proposed, although the Commissioners had evidence that women already knew that household commodities could be used as abortifacients and knew how to prepare their own quinine pessaries and vaginal sponges from materials readily available for other, innocuous purposes. Similarly the Commissioners recommended legislative suppression of indecent literature and advertisements, despite the evidence they had that such prohibitions could be avoided easily. They also forgot their own acknowledgment that ‘moral’ remedies were unlikely to work: the clergy were invited to inculcate religious principles in the young and to ‘devise some means of instituting a general crusade . . . to arouse the conscience of married people’.

The populist stress on the moral value of proximity to the good earth came out in the last of the Commission’s suggested remedies. Ignoring the fact that the statistics were crude and that the decline had been but little slower in rural areas, the Commissioners emphasised that the birth rate was higher in the country than in the capital and claimed that the differential reflected the higher value of familial labour in agricultural areas. Alongside the higher rural birth rate, however, they had to set the facts of under-
employment in agricultural areas and restricted opportunities for industrial employment in urban areas. To overcome all these problems at a stroke the Commissioners offered a detailed remedy.

In order (i) to check this tendency to concentration of population in towns; (ii) to provide opportunity for primary production on an extended scale, which will engage the activity of the rising generation and improve its physique; (iii) to encourage the rising generation to engage in primary productiveness; (iv) to check the idleness of youth; (v) to enable the activity of the young to be wealth-producing at an earlier age; (vi) to increase the productiveness of the State; (vii) to remove some of the excuses commonly advanced by individuals in justification of the admitted practice of limitation of families; and (viii) to counteract the tendency of the increased employment of women and girls in factories; it should, we consider, be the policy of the Government to encourage the settlement of the people on the land, especially on the land suitable for agriculture, on a scale adequate to attain those objects, and thus enlist the force of self-interest on behalf of the growth of families.

Even if it were possible to revive the level of fertility, the Commissioners realised, the increase of population would be slower than it could be until something was done about the high rate of deaths in the first year of life. The report therefore included a division on ‘Infantile Mortality’ with chapters about the statistics of infantile mortality and its causes; about child care and feeding; and about remedies for the loss of infants. There was statistical evidence that the rate of infant mortality had changed little during the last forty years of the nineteenth century and that illegitimate infants were nearly three times as likely to die as legitimates were. The evidence also revealed that while infantile mortality was slightly higher in Sydney than in the country (112 per 1000 against 108 per 1000, in 1902), the differential had been narrowing perceptibly for a decade. It was therefore straining statistics to say that ‘the figures indicate, as might be expected, the prejudicial effects of metropolitan rearing’—although the comment was probably predictable, given the Commissioners’ expressed preference for rural life.

The underlying causes of mortality were reported to depend upon the legitimacy of the infants. Among legitimates the insufficiency of public hospital care for poor mothers and sickly babies, the impurity of dairy milk and artificial foods, and ignorance of the elements of domestic hygiene were laid under the chief blame. Among illegitimates, foeticide, infanticide and baby farming conse-
quent upon 'maternal indifference and the social and economic
disabilities of the mothers' were regarded as the main causes of
mortality, together with the defective management of 'benevolent'
institutions. By way of remedy the purity of artificial foods and
milk supply should be regulated, girls should get more education
in domestic economy, lying-in-homes and babies' homes should be
controlled, and still-births and infant interments should be more
strictly policed. The still-birth problem was tackled again when the
Commissioners turned to 'Miscellaneous Matters Arising out of the
Evidence'. Non-registration of still-births simply afforded 'facilities
for the concealment of crimes against the lives of young children'.
The Commissioners therefore urged that registration of still-births
be compulsory, that midwives' records be scrutinised (to detect
undue incidence of still-births in their practices), and that under­
takers and cemeteries be supervised to reduce the number of
interments of unwanted babies whose transient existence escaped
official notice. Correction of defects in the Registration Act was
also urged with the same object, and with the aim of providing
'more completely and readily . . . the data required for the
compilation of vital statistics'. Control of poisons (to limit the sale
of abortifacients masquerading as proprietory medicines) and a
defence of gynaecological surgery were also discussed in the
miscellany.

The conclusions of the Commissioners' inquiry into the decline of
the birth rate were set out in the chapters of their report dealing
with statistics, techniques, motivations and remedies. The chapter
they called 'Conclusion' was not a conclusion, in the accepted sense
of a summary of the evidence and a statement of its necessary
implications, but the conservative's cry of concern at the advent
of a permissive society. 'We have been reluctantly, but inevitably,
driven to the conclusion', they said, 'that the people, led astray by
false and pernicious doctrine . . . are neglecting their true duty to
themselves, to their fellow countrymen, and to posterity.' The
Commissioners said that the doctrine of artificial limitation of
families was vicious because it would destroy the family as a
training ground in individual morality and as a bastion for social
morality. They worried that the deceleration of population growth
would prevent Australia from developing into a great nation and
they drew xenophobic comparisons with 'Russia and Japan, pros­
pective rivals of Australia for supremacy in the Western Pacific
. . . already seeking outlets beyond their own borders for the
energies of their ever-growing people . . .'.
It was not simply an 'engineering' concern with the contraction of population growth and ways of reversing it but a threat to their social philosophy which moved the Commissioners to write:

In whatever way the waning birth-rate of New South Wales is viewed, whether in its effects on the health, character, or social worth of individuals; on the value of the family as the basis of national life; on the quality and dignity of civic life; on the character of the people; on their social, moral, and economic progress; on their national aims and aspirations; or on their capacity to survive in the rivalry of nations; and whether it is viewed in the light of history or of science, it is seen as a grave disorder sapping the vitals of a new people, dispelling its hopes, blighting its prospects, and threatening its continuance.

'Value', 'character' and 'aspirations' were all moral words used by men in whose eyes morality and the status quo were identified. In their experience talk of family limitation was radical or socialist talk, immoral and a threat to the established order of society. Their attitude is understandable, for the years from about 1850 to 1887 —when the ill-advised prosecution of Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant for publishing contraceptive propaganda made family limitation a topic of open controversy—were the years during which the Commissioners were being educated (at least five of them in Great Britain) and were also the period when neo-Malthusianism had become closely identified with secularism. The Commissioners had grown up in an era when their class in society believed that the family lost its sanctity if the 'natural' consequences of sexual relations were questioned. And if the family were diminished, society was threatened.

It is highly significant that when Mackellar wrote to Sir John See after the report was submitted he said 'At first I feared that the investigation would prove valueless, but as the enquiry proceeded, facts of the gravest importance not only to our State, but to the whole Commonwealth were disclosed'. What Mackellar feared would be valueless, the 'first' part of the inquiry, was the real evidence, the statistics of decline, the testimony of the pharmacists and the accounts of abortionists and lying-in-homes. The 'facts of the gravest importance' to which the inquiry proceeded were the opinions of doctors and clergy, of whom the only ones quoted in the report were those who confirmed the Commissioners in the belief that vice was rife and immorality was rampant and contraception was ruining the moral fibre of the nation.

What the Commissioners called a conclusion was in fact a
premiss, widely held, which had directed their investigations and insulated them from alternative opinions. Insulated, rather than isolated: Beale was the only Commissioner to be found in the pronatalist pulpit at the end of the decade. The rest of the Commissioners, and many of the leaders of opinion, had beaten their breasts in the public inquiry, then undergone slow conversions to a new view of the population question.
The Mackellar Commission included six medical practitioners among its eventual thirteen members. Its hearings gave many other doctors the opportunity to offer evidence and air their opinions about social and individual aspects of conception, birth and infant growth. Much of the medical evidence in the Commission’s report was disjointed, even silly, and it could give the impression that the medical profession was a collection of mindless but vocal pronatalists. That judgment would be unfair because there were doctors who made extended analyses of topics related to the growth of Australia’s population—when they did not have to react to tendentious questioning. It must also be said that medical opinion, when viewed over a span of twenty years or so, was more moderate than the hearings of the Royal Commission made it appear to be in 1903 and 1904. On the other hand the profession’s relative silence about population questions during the 1890s, and the diversity of their opinions at other times, make it hard to draw a coherent picture. This chapter therefore sets out the views of the individuals who published connected summaries of their ideas before 1903 and tries to draw together the variety of opinions which were current around the time of the Royal Commission on topics related to the peopling of Australia, including abortion, the side-effects of prevention and the level of infant mortality. To give some context to the opinions they expressed, there is also a discussion of the education which doctors received and the treatments which they prescribed.

Walter Balls-Headley, Alexander Paterson, James Jamieson and Thomas Borthwick all wrote before the upsurge of interest in population questions in the early 1900s. Balls-Headley was the most colourful of the four and was earliest in the field. He received his medical education before most of the other doctors to be met in this chapter and also differed from them in having an English, not a Scottish, degree.† His work was distinctive for its attempt to provide a sociological basis for opinions on aspects of the population question. His first demographic essay was a rather loosely organised, repetitious piece which he wrote for the Melbourne Review in 1877, soon after his arrival in Melbourne. He drew attention to official
statistics which showed that the marriage rate of Victorian girls was only 71 per cent of the Australian average. This was a matter for surprise, seeing that the Victorians were wanting 'neither in beauty, form, domestic aptitude nor proportionate numbers'. It was also a matter for concern since it was evident that 'the best progress of a country is dependent upon its settled population' of married persons. The question his surprise and concern provoked was 'Why don't the men propose?' Careful analysis of relevant social characteristics of the population convinced Balls-Headley that no sufficient explanation could be found in population size or density, the levels of masculinity or urbanisation, the distribution of occupations or even the climate of the colony. The real reason, he concluded, must be the evaporation of prosperity in the years since the gold rushes of the 1850s.2

The tone of his article suggests that Balls-Headley was troubled not so much about matrimony as about the deficiency of the Victorian birth rate. The 'born Victorian', avowing the colony as his own and knowing its habits and institutions, was preferable to the immigrant on both social and economic grounds. By a remarkable series of calculations (compounding Victorian vital registrations and life expectancy, Graunt's presumption of an average four children per marriage in the 1660s, and the English Registrar-General's estimate that the value of a 25 year old Norfolk labourer was £246) he demonstrated—to his own satisfaction, at least—that the colony's loss by babies not born to brides not married since 1865 exceeded £3,456,000! Though less ready than some of his successors to proclaim solutions for the problems he divined, Balls-Headley did anticipate their ritual references to the sad effect on France of a reduced birth rate and to the likelihood that the infertile Australians would be supplanted by 'the coming race' of Chinese.

It is, perhaps, unfair to mock what Balls-Headley himself may have come to regard as juvenilia. By 1892 he was at the head of his profession, being lecturer in obstetrics and the diseases of women at Melbourne University and President of the midwifery section of the Intercolonial Medical Congress. His presidential address gave a synopsis of the arguments he would soon elaborate in a lengthy book on the evolution of disease in women. 'The object of woman's development is the propagation of the race', he began, 'but the advantage of the degree of such propagation is dependent on the environment'. Most of his contemporaries would have applauded the opening clause: some would have queried the qualification; many would have deplored his conclusion, that 'The requirements of our civilization render the propagation of many children undesirable'.3
Balls-Headley argued that, because polyandry and infanticide are 'contrary to the tenets of civilization', restriction of the number of offspring is effected by delayed marriage, the practice of prevention or the induction of abortion. He did not elaborate on prevention or abortion but said that delayed marriage led to endometritis and reduced sexual capacity. The bad working conditions to which factory girls were subjected produced similar results, while an increase of foetal head-size, producing greater difficulties at parturition, was yet another ill-effect of civilisation.

The debt to Spencer and Darwin evident in the presidential address appeared again, and was acknowledged, in *Evolution of the Diseases of Women*, Balls-Headley's *magnum opus* of 1894.*

His chapter on 'The Influences of Civilization on the Sexual Relations and on Woman' drew on the statistical publications of Hayter (the Victorian statist) and Coghlan for evidence that the rates of marriage and birth were declining in Australia, then attempted a sociological-cum-gynaecological explanation of that evidence. As Balls-Headley explained the nexus between civilisation and sexual relations,

The load of supplying the increased requirements of living has fallen chiefly on the man, so that the life of him who provides for and educates his family is one of great toil and anxiety; while the disposition of the average bachelor and, indeed, of the masses of our time, with increased knowledge, capacity and opportunity of enjoyment, is towards less work and longer periods of relaxation, whereby his personal leisure—that is, his egoism—and his sexual instinct—that is, his inclination for marriage—are in direct antagonism, and lead to almost social rupture.

But the inherent compulsion of his strongest instinct is paramount; should he thus add matrimony to his expenses, his toil must be the greater; and it is therefore found that his tendency is to delay marriage, and that prostitution is rampant. In case of marriage the tendency is to limitation or avoidance of pregnancy.

Balls-Headley cast progress in civilisation as the ultimate cause of prudential checks to procreation but he also expressed himself on proximate causes, including the economy and the level of

* The copy of this work now in the National Library, Canberra, is inscribed 'J.S. Colebrook Elkington/Melbourne University 1895'. Elkington was Professor of History and Political Economy at Melbourne but, if the description of his career in C.D.W. Goodwin, *Economic Enquiry in Australia* (Duke University Press 1966) pp. 571–74 is fair, he is unlikely to have given his students much insight into the population debate.
urbanisation: 'men have a greater tendency to marry in prosperous than in dull times' he wrote, and 'our centralization in cities diminishes the marriage rate'. The delay in marriage induced diseases that made child-bearing impossible, he said, and further loss stemmed from the difficulty of civilised women to bear children normally: 'they become ill and desire health in order to bring up what children they have borne, and the strain, toil, and expense of no more. Hence, again, limitation of families'. Two additional adverse effects of civilisation were specified in a passage which might have come straight out of Spencer's article in the Westminster Review. Balls-Headley said that modern education places physiological constraints on a young woman and, 'should she have capacity for higher mental attainments, her nervous system is apt to develop at the expense of her body'. Her descendants experience increasing difficulty in parturition, 'thus high mental culture is antagonistic to healthy sexual development and childbearing'.

Balls-Headley's other theory was less an integral part of his sociological theory of fertility than a reflection of his attitude to events in Australia's recent past. Labour strikes, he said, have a three-fold impact: on the striker himself, who acquires the habit of idleness and becomes 'unwilling to undertake the honestly toilsome work of the support of a family'; on other unionists, whose strike levies reduce their provident capacity; and on the employer, who loses his market or his profit and retrenches staff. Hence, eventually, 'all the men of the country are less capable of marrying and supporting their families' and the birth rate suffers.

If Balls-Headley's views seem idiosyncratic it should be remembered that his contemporaries gave no sign of disapproval. He was prominent in professional bodies and his book received a favourable notice in the Australasian Medical Gazette, which described it as 'characterised by an originality and philosophic breadth of view not to be found in an equal degree in any other gynaecology . . .' and praised the attribution of gynaecological disease to 'absence of seasonable marriage'.

James Jamieson was Balls-Headley's predecessor as a lecturer at Melbourne University. When he wrote about childbirth, however, Jamieson stuck more closely to his sources than Balls-Headley did. In 1882 Jamieson used the outpatient records of Melbourne Hospital as the basis for a study on conditions of childbirth. The 500 women involved reported 3113 pregnancies, 2547 of them successful. Jamieson showed that pregnancy wastage and maternal mortality were both adversely affecting the natural increase of Victoria's population, compared with other countries. The reproduc-
tive histories of the 500 women, 'all married, who had been pregnant once or oftener', revealed a ratio of abortive to natural terminations of labour of 18.1 per cent, much higher than the figure reported in European studies. In addition 52 per cent of the women had at least one abortive pregnancy. Jamieson also contributed to a debate which had raged in Europe for a generation when he used his statistics of maternal mortality to show that childbed fever was probably contagious. The local importance of that issue was emphasised when Jamieson pointed out that maternal mortality, like miscarriage, had been consistently greater in Melbourne, 'especially of late years' than it had been overseas.

In 1894 Jamieson made one of the few original attempts by an Australian doctor to manipulate population statistics.9 The methods he used to estimate Melbourne's population decline during the previous two years were of doubtful validity but he drew some interesting inferences from the results. He felt that a recent large reduction in the number of marriages might account partially, but by no means entirely, for the diminution in the number of births. He generalised that 'in times of severe depression it is quite to be expected that there should be some lowering of the birth rate, not of course very quickly produced and mainly by the previous production of a lowered marriage rate'. He rejected the idea of a correlation between death rate and financial depression and doubted whether a depression such as Victoria was then experiencing had any direct influence on public health. As a paediatrician he also noted what many people ignored: at a time of high infant mortality a reduction in the number of births indirectly reduces the general death rate.

Dr Thomas Borthwick, a Medical Officer of Health in Adelaide's eastern suburbs, shared Jamieson's scientific detachment where population questions were concerned, and his willingness to gather together the available facts and be content with straightforward explanations of their meaning. Borthwick's booklet included sections on the size of South Australia's population and its distribution by age, sex, nationality, occupation and so on, as well as birth, marriage and, especially, death rates.10 Contrary to the view to be expressed later by the Mackellar Commission in New South Wales, he did not regard recent declines of the birth rate as a fall from normal but as a variation from a rate that had 'always been high'. His explanation of the high rate that had prevailed and of its recent decline was, at least, reasonable:

The constant stream of young adult immigrants was doubtless the chief factor in causing the high birth rate, and the decrease
in recent years is in great part the result of an exodus of young adult population to the Barrier silver fields . . . and probably in part to the period of depression through which the colony has been passing.

From the perspective of present time Alexander Paterson was as important a writer as Balls-Headley, Jamieson or Borthwick. In Sydney in the 1890s, however, Paterson's work—which was as systematic as Balls-Headley's had been in Melbourne—did not enjoy the support of the medical profession, or even its attention. Although it was almost the automatic practice for Australian works to be reviewed in the local medical journals there was no notice of either Paterson's *Physical Health of Woman* or his book on *The Male Generative Function*. Sir Edward Ford, the Australian medical bibliographer, suggests that Paterson's 'public advocacy of hypnotism, which he used in obstetrics and minor surgery, brought him into professional conflict. This was intensified by his extremely free publications and lectures on the sexual functions which were many years before their time'. Paterson himself was aware of the kind of reception he might expect for his *Physical Health of Woman*, which examined scientifically and presented soberly a range of 'Useful knowledge for Maiden, Wife and Mother', including a chapter on 'Limitation of Offspring'. In his introduction he pointed out that he was going to discuss topics on which others would counsel silence; he defended the action on the grounds that 'true knowledge, if wisely presented, will never do harm, but on the contrary will tend to obviate it'. Paterson recognised that commitment to truth and frankness did not endear him to his colleagues but he was undeterred in publishing his views. He believed that science and morality should be allowed to inform each other, rather than allowing science to be forced into an unfair support of a preconceived morality, or religion, from which each suffered. The decision whether limitation of offspring was desirable was a personal one, he said, which should be the outcome of 'an impartial, scientific, and truthful investigation of the question'. In this it would differ from much unscientific and erroneous writing on the morality and means of limitation.

Contrary to the almost Manichaean view held by many doctors, Paterson claimed that sexual relationships were good in themselves, not merely the means to the good end of procreation. If nature chose to associate a function such as procreation with a pleasure

* Although *Physical Health of Woman* (published in 1890) was not reviewed it did not take long to reach the Public Library of New South Wales, which still has a copy marked '31-12—90'. 
such as sexual intercourse, then the pleasure was a natural and legitimate end of the function. Although Paterson pointed out that there was no logic in arguments that continence was harmful, he did not support hedonist, any more than Manichaean, views of intercourse. The use of preventives might lead to ‘too frequent indulgence’ but any consequent injury was due to the excess and not the means. In any case his experience was that greater ill-health and debility in married women was caused by ‘the too rapid occurrence of pregnancy’.

Paterson defended most techniques for preventing pregnancy, although he entirely disagreed with abortion and thought that prolonged lactation was injurious. He destroyed the moral arguments against coitus interruptus simply by showing their logical flaws and similarly despatched the physiological arguments about the ‘congestive’ effect of the technique on the male and female organ. He said of one doctor’s condemnation of withdrawal, ‘the whole of this graphic description of the woes to follow withdrawal is purely imaginative, and in contradiction to science and experience . . .’. As to cold or astringent solutions injected after intercourse, they had produced no ill effects in the cases of which he was aware. On the contrary, ‘If cold water were less of a “foreign” fluid to the vagina and uterus . . . the gynaecologist would have less frequent opportunity to ply his skill’. Turning to periodic abstinence, Paterson discounted the risk of ectopic pregnancy or placenta praevia but he did not recognise that the prescription of ‘safe’ days then in vogue depended on an incorrect theory of ovulation. He called male sheaths ‘the best protection of which I am aware’ and, reversing Madame de Stael’s epigram, described these ‘french letters’ as ‘bulwarks for protection and cobwebs against love’.

Apart from the essays on demography and human reproduction by Balls-Headley, Jamieson, Borthwick and Paterson there is no evidence that the peopling of Australia was a live topic for the medical profession during the 1890s. The question was not raised at intercolonial medical congresses. The medical journals in Sydney and Melbourne published estimates of vital rates occasionally as the figures were produced by the government statisticians but they rarely offered any interpretation. Towards the end of the decade, however, Sydney’s Australasian Medical Gazette did express editorial concern about the decreased birth rate in New South Wales. Figures were quoted from the 1897 issue of the official publication, Vital Statistics, which showed a decline in the birth rate of over 9 per 1000 over the previous ten years. The Gazette expressed its
concern at the decline, nominated some causes and suggested a remedy. The decline was described as alarming and unless arrested, a portent of a degenerate country which would ‘eventually emulate France in its weakened, nerveless people’. The causes were divided into the comprehensible and the contemptible. On the one hand it was allowed that ‘Many young men who were in good positions a few years ago have now insufficient means to allow them to take on the responsibilities of matrimony’. On the other hand it was asserted that there was ‘a growing disinclination on the part of young married women to become mothers . . . they do not wish to be troubled with children, and they either make use of artificial checks to conception or call in the aid of the abortionist’. Both themes were to be heard often, and with few variations, in 1903 and 1904. So was the simple remedy proposed by the Gazette. The Legislature must act. ‘Abortion must be put down, indecent advertisements must be suppressed, quack literature must be prevented from falling into the hands of our young people.’

The Gazette’s editorials provoked no discussion in Sydney and when the population question was tackled again in 1901 it was once more an individualistic, colourful Victorian, not a doctor from New South Wales, who spoke out. A cartoon of J.W. Barrett aged about 60 shows a determined face dominated by a pugnacious nose and Barrett’s career and writings are also suggestive of an independent will. In 1885 the Medical Society reprimanded him for unprofessional conduct but the Society’s minutes for succeeding years record his frequent participation in its affairs, often on topics outside the general run, and he was elected president in 1901. His presidential address began with a short, reasonably accurate summary of the Malthusian argument about the pressure of numbers on subsistence. He recognised that, although nineteenth century inventiveness might seem to belie its advent, the Malthusian crux would operate sooner or later. In the meantime there were considerable problems latent in international fertility differentials. He cited India and France as two extremes on either side of the moderate mean, made some perceptive prophecies of the problems facing India,* and drew attention to the danger that the trend of Britain’s declining fertility could take her the way of France, to diminished stature in international politics. The social Darwinism which Balls-Headley had espoused reappeared in Barrett’s recog-

* Concerning India, Barrett said that if the population grows by several millions every few years ‘it is absolutely certain that they will be relatively uneducated and untrained and that, consequently, their economic and social value will be small’.
nition that there was also a problem in the inverse relationship between intellectual development and fertility. Barrett was not committed to the support of any particular level of fertility and contented himself with the general observation that 'the sum of human progress is probably greatest with a steady moderate increase of population'.

When Barrett turned to the Australian scene he was obviously mindful of the Malthusian link between fertility and availability of material necessities. He described Australia in general, and Victoria in particular, as 'the countries in the world in which the external possibilities of happiness are most easily procured'. In the circumstances he expected to find 'a young vigorous race [delighting] in the rearing of sturdy families, [taking] a pride in the propagation of a branch of the Anglo-Saxon race . . .'. In fact he found that Australasian birth rates had fallen faster than those of almost any other European country—as, he noted, Balls-Headley had predicted they would. The tables supplied for him by J.J. Fenton, the rather pedestrian Government Statist for Victoria, confirmed the weakness of vital rates, relative to those of overseas countries, but did not show the cause of the Australasian decline. Deficiencies in the statistics, enforced separation of families by internal migration and the pressure of 'bad times' were all considered but shown to be insufficient explanations when applied to Australasia as a whole. Even allowing something for each of those possibilities, Barrett decided, there would remain a 'substantial residuum' of decline requiring other explanation.

His own 'professional and general knowledge' led Barrett to the view that the 'other explanation' was provided by Coghlan's evidence, in the 1899 edition of Wealth and Progress, that the proportion of fertile marriages and the birth rate of fertile women were both declining, and that Australasian women were less fertile than European immigrants. Barrett endorsed Coghlan's conclusions and added: 'The cosmic process of development has been followed by a gradual decline in the birth rate, and has, since 1888 or thereabouts, been supplemented in Australasia by the voluntary restriction of families on an extensive scale.' It seemed fairly clear to Barrett that newly acquired knowledge about contraceptive techniques was the immediate cause of much of the decline but the real question remained, what had motivated women to use this new knowledge? Female emancipation and the extension of women's education were major factors, he thought, with simple disinclination (undefined), the difficulty of obtaining domestic servants, pursuit of a high life style and the cost of boys' education in subsidiary
roles. It had been suggested in some quarters that problems like these could be overcome by state provision of family allowances. Barrett's rejection of the idea was characteristically forthright: 'by the time a community reaches a state of things in which fundamental instincts are regarded from that point of view, some other community less logical but more vigorous, will have cleaned the Augean stable out and stocked it with a new stud'.

Barrett's mind was not closed against prevention of conception, despite the tone of that comment and the liberal sprinkling of morally condemnatory phrases throughout his address. His understanding of Malthus was more than superficial, he had some knowledge of social Darwinist ideas and he used the statistical information that was available to him. All of this suggests that he could think about, not merely react to, social changes like the decline of fertility. Considering also his independent streak and the experimental turn of mind revealed by his papers on purely professional topics, it seems fair to interpret his occasional moralising as Barrett's way of genuflecting, without committing himself, to the conservative attitude on prevention held by many of his colleagues. His own position was more accurately indicated by his claim that the introduction of contraceptive techniques fifteen years earlier had been welcomed by many doctors as offering women relief from the incessant round of pregnancies and lactation. 'Nothing seemed to us more natural than that [the mother] should be allowed a reasonable time at all events to recover. It seemed that, on the average, by such measures better children would be reared, and there would be fewer deaths.' For Barrett it remained true that, providing it was done in moderation, family planning entailed more advantages than disadvantages.

Barrett's remarks about population growth and family size were more restrained in tone than the 1898 and 1899 editorials in the Australasian Medical Gazette had been. It may be a sign of the tide of medical opinion that when the Gazette returned to the topic in 1903 its views were close to Barrett's. In August 1903, the Gazette carried a long editorial about Coghlan's The Decline in the Birth-Rate of New South Wales at the very time when the

* By the time his memoirs appeared his ideas on the value of state action had changed greatly: 'Those of us with large families who read these words, [about the dire consequences of selfish family limitation] and congratulate ourselves righteously on the fact that they do not apply to us, only to those selfish women who refuse to bear children, are reminded, as I am, that in a properly organized community which welcomed children as an asset and bountifully dowered them with health and education . . .' Australia's lack of births could not have arisen. J.W. Barrett, Eighty Eventful Years (J.C. Stephens, Melbourne, 1945) p.98.
Sydney press was helping to make declining fertility controversial. The form of the *Gazette*’s editorial was similar to that of 1898, beginning with an expression of concern and ending with a call for action. On this occasion, however, there was more sympathy towards the motives for family limitation, more stress on the side-effects of the practice and a change in the remedy proposed. Dealing with the motives for limitation the *Gazette* recognised ‘The decline in average income, the increased cost of living, [and] the difficulty in securing efficient domestic service’ as being ‘all factors which render it increasingly difficult to rear and maintain large families . . .’. The journal probably went further than many of its readers would have gone in allowing it to be ‘an open question whether it is not better for a married couple to have two or three children whom they feel they can feed well and maintain in good health than to have seven or eight children whom they are quite unable to properly feed and clothe . . .’. It is not clear how the careful parents were expected to achieve the accepted end for the editor said that ‘all kinds of artificial methods of preventing pregnancy’ reacted on the users’ moral and physical health and he hoped that the profession would help educate public opinion accordingly.

The position taken by Barrett in Melbourne and by the *Gazette* in Sydney was also taken by Ralph Worrall, a specialist obstetrician and gynaecologist who appeared before the Mackellar Commission in November 1903. Probably because he was somewhat of an individualist, like J.W. Barrett, and even more dogmatic, Worrall was one of the few witnesses who managed to go beyond disjointed answers to leading questions and develop an extended expression of opinion. He claimed that family limitation was increasing among all social classes in both rural and urban areas, with prevention the preferred method of the higher, and abortion of the lower, classes. The determination to restrict family size would have arisen independently of neo-Malthusian propaganda because husbands and wives were agreed in the practice, chiefly out of a desire to maintain standards for their children. Among those who told him they could not afford to rear and educate their children Worrall found ‘some very nice women . . .—very conscientious women—[who] say there is no prospect for children in this country now—no opening; and therefore they think it is not right to bring them into the world’.

Worrall took the rather unusual view that the link between fertility and prosperity was a direct one, not inverse. ‘The more prosperous a State is’, he said, ‘the less [the people] fear having a family’. When pressed by Coghlan to explain the contrary example of low fertility in (so Coghlan said) prosperous France,
Worrall simply replied that this was the result of partible inheritance in a land of peasant proprietors. He also ran against the grain of the Commissioners' thinking in giving qualified support to the practice of prevention, for which he saw two lines of justification. On the one hand, people who wanted only temporary limitation could reasonably expect a successful resumption of reproduction if they had been relying on preventives. The chance of resumption would be greatly diminished if the more radical technique of abortion had been used. Secondly, Worrall had some sympathy with the motives for limitation and said they could 'all be summed up in one word—that is, poverty'. 'The people are too poor, or they think they are too poor, which comes to much the same thing, to educate and rear children, and they think that when they are reared and educated there is no opening for them'. To the suggestion that pleasure rather than poverty led the working class to prevent conception he retorted: 'Oh, they have very little pleasure; it is rare to see them robust, and they have such hard work to do. They have very little pleasure or time. It is because they have not got any money to support the children'. Worrall's prescriptions for arresting the decline of the birth rate were closely linked to his more general social views. If fertility was directly related to prosperity and it was desired to increase fertility then steps must be taken to improve prosperity. This could be done by sweeping away 'all the restrictions on trade and enterprise at present existing', of which the most onerous were the arbitration system and its dreadful offspring, closed-shop unionism. Supplementary measures would include elementary domestic education—to reduce infant mortality—and a Closer Settlement Bill—to increase the population of rural areas.

Alexander Paterson had few known supporters among the medical profession but the social Darwinism of Balls-Headley, the statistical awareness of Jamieson or Borthwick and even the ideas of Barrett and Worrall were all echoed, albeit muted or with mutations, by other doctors. There was a spectrum of opinion on why—and how the people were limiting their families, on the results of the decline in fertility and on ways of responding to it.

Most doctors were sceptical about cultural explanations for the decline of the birth rate. Few regarded propaganda about birth control as a major factor in the spread of the habit. This may not be surprising, though, as none of the doctors appearing before the Mackellar Commission indicated that he had more than a superficial acquaintance with the neo-Malthusian movement except
as highlighted by the Bradlaugh-Besant case in England or the Collins case in Sydney. Only Dr E.T. Thring thought birth control propaganda or the advertising of preventives had done much to teach the general public that family size could be controlled. Worrall, by contrast, suggested that propaganda was incidental to, not instrumental in, people's determination to limit the family. More of the doctors claimed acquaintance with women's fears and pains of parturition and discussed their role as deterrents to childbearing. Dr Murray Oram, with a turn of phrase one presumes would not have been used at the bedside, said 'a woman's mind is always on her pelvis now' but he did not think the trials of pregnancy a valid reason for avoiding it. His opinion was echoed, with varying force, by Dr Scot Skirving, who placed dislike of parturition in his category of less excusable motives for prevention, and Dr Fourness Barrington, who labelled such aversion as 'cowardice'. Dr George Armstrong and Sir James Graham both saw that a question about changes due to obstetrics required an explanation dealing with changes in obstetrics—but then gave opposing answers. Graham said that the Australian woman experienced considerable risk in labour, compared with the British woman, but Armstrong held that modern obstetric practice had removed the need to fear parturition. R.H. Marten, speaking a little earlier in Adelaide, had it both ways: 'with regard to midwifery', Marten said, 'my impression is that on the extremely hot days the poor women become exhausted sooner, but that the confinements are easier. This may be due to the relaxation from the heat'. On balance it can be said that while a number of doctors thought fear of parturition was real, few thought it justified. Fewer still found it a reasonable motive for refraining from procreation.

Doctors differed greatly about the merits of the theory—discussed at length by them, as by other members of the community—that the declining birth rate was linked with people's response to current economic circumstances and estimates of the economic future. Nearly all doctors took it for granted that economic conditions were straitened about the time of the Royal Commission on the Birth-Rate. The debate between them centred on the questions whether straitened conditions amounted to economic hardship and whether economic hardship justified family limitation. Those who did not consider current circumstances a sufficient reason to limit the family did not even argue the hardship issue since they regarded the plea of impecunity as an attempt to excuse selfishness. Dr Lane Mullins, for example, lumped together the claim that children were too expensive and the desire not to be burdened with
children, saying of people who made the claim, ‘they probably want the money for other purposes’. Oram also said that he was not satisfied in most cases by people who claimed an inability to provide for children and he accepted the suggestion that the ‘real’ reason was a desire for easier living. Many other doctors gave qualified acceptance to the plea of necessity and made some concession to people who limited their families with an eye to future economic and social prospects. This majority included Armstrong, who rejected claims by the upper class that they could not afford more children but said of men earning $2 a week ‘it must take them all their time to get along if they have more than two or three children’; Worrall, sympathetic to those lacking either money for children or alternative pleasures, and Dr J.M. Creed, who took it for granted that limited means were a bar to family expansion; Dr W.J.S. M’Kay, who allowed that people might aim for a standard of living above the minimum; Scot Skirving, who thought the restriction of the family to a size consonant with proper education was at least ‘excusable’; and Dr A. Watson-Munro, who was prepared to accept the lack of employment opportunities for boys as a reason for restricting their number. It is noteworthy that the doctors had some sympathy for just those kinds of status oriented motives which were needed to achieve and maintain their own social position.

There can be no doubt about the doctors’ attitude to abortion, so described, for they were almost unanimous in their abhorrence of the word. Some of their number, however, did procure abortion under one euphemism or another. Professional concern had been expressed at least since the mid-1880s when Dr Creed’s select committee gathered considerable evidence (not all ‘proved’ in the legal sense) that abortion was widely procured by people on the fringe of the medical profession. Part of the opposition to the practice may have been a function of the campaign by the ‘professional’ doctors to raise their status by excluding fringe practitioners but it also seems possible that many doctors simply found abortion a distasteful or objectionable business. The presidential address to the New South Wales branch of the British Medical Association in 1898 included attacks on the government for its failure to deal with newspaper advertisements ‘that most openly and unblushingly invite people to send for remedies which are “certain to remove obstruction” or promise to “remove obstructions without medicine”’. The police were criticised, too, for their failure to act against the numerous abortionists ‘well known’ to be operating in Sydney. Later in 1898 the Gazette again carried editorials alleging
that abortion was widely sought—and achieved—in Sydney. These generalised claims were given some support throughout the latter part of the decade by fairly frequent reports, in clinical papers, of the results of abortion coming to the notice of doctors.24

The most concentrated body of evidence and opinion about abortion was gathered by the Mackellar Commission. Several doctors told the Commission that they had been asked themselves to induce abortion and that they believed the practice was common—though not at the hands of doctors. Just how common they did not make clear and the few who gave figures were far from agreement. Dr Barrington estimated that he had come across the after-effects of abortion in about 150 hospital cases during a 5-year span; Dr M’Kay estimated 300 cases in 6 years and, at another point, suggested the level was 400 per annum at ‘all hospitals in Sydney’. Statistics from two Sydney hospitals (the Coast Hospital and the Prince Alfred) showed that they had treated 97 cases of abortion or miscarriage in the first nine months of 1903. Dr Arthur reported that the volume of requests had been constant for the preceding twelve years but Dr Worrall claimed abortion was increasing and Dr Armstrong said it was less common than at the end of the 1890s.25 Of course, the numbers quoted relate to hospital cases or abortions that had ‘gone wrong’ and are only a partial reflection of the number of abortions being procured. The hospital statistics may also have concealed a class bias in abortion practice, recording the ill-effects of cheap abortionists among the poor but not the more proficient procurement by doctors to the well-to-do. While doctors agreed that abortion was a factor in the limitation of families they did not agree about its incidence by social class. Dr Barrington claimed that abortion was less usual among the labouring classes than among the wealthy and Dr M’Kay said it was most commonly sought by the white collar class. The view that the poorer classes were the main users of abortion was held by the Government Medical Officer (Dr Taylor), whose experience was amongst people seeking admission to public hospitals; Dr Skirving; Dr Harris, who had lengthy experience at Newcastle; and Dr Cooley, who practised among unemployed or underpaid factory workers in the industrial suburb of Botany.26 There is an obvious problem of specification in the disagreement since those whom M’Kay, say, labelled ‘white collar’ may have seemed poor to Barrington and wealthy to Taylor. Nevertheless the evidence of Barrington seems hearsay while Taylor and, especially, Cooley and Harris were aware of the bias due to their particular clientele so it may be fair to say that induced miscarriage as a means of family
limitation found greatest acceptance among the less well-to-do.

Medical witnesses, and pharmacists, told the Mackellar Commission that a wide variety of contraceptive (or 'preventive') techniques was in use in New South Wales. The preventive strategies included *coitus interruptus* (which some doctors thought was the predominant method), zinc sulphate douches, home-made sponges and pessaries, quinine pessaries, 'french letters', prolonged lactation, and many more. The use of all the technological, as distinct from natural, strategies was said to be increasing, although all doctors claimed that there had been a recent increase in prevention generally. Creed, whose experience as Chairman of the earlier Select Committee on the practice of medicine should have given him a reliable idea of the matter, told the Mackellar Commission that the practice had been 'growing up within the last thirty years'.

No one denied this assertion and other doctors claimed that prevention had been going on throughout the fifteen or twenty years of their experience in New South Wales. Their evidence was almost unanimous in depicting the attitude of their patients toward prevention as amoral, not immoral. There was also some evidence of a class differential in the use of preventives. Dr S.H. MacCulloch did say that the practice was in the process of spreading to the lower class but only Watson-Munro and Dr Grace Russell placed much stress on working-class prevention: their evidence was probably biased, however, by the concentration of their professional work among lower class patients. Barrington said a 'middle' class, earning £300 to £600 per year, were the main users and Dr Harris, who appears to have had a varied practice in Newcastle, reported that prevention was least common in the rural and mining population and most common in the highly educated among his patients (although Harris himself was survived by five sons and four daughters).

Doctors' evidence on the side effects of prevention might have suggested that medical training is no guarantee of ability to conduct a scientific argument. Sir James Graham and E.T. Thring both refused to generalise about the physiological or psychological effects of preventive practices, but their caution was not matched by their colleagues, according to whom preventive practices were the source of almost every ill to which mind and body can be heir. Watson-Munro, for example, blamed preventives in general for 'septic diseases of the uterus and Fallopian tubes and other uterine appendages' together with 'backache and pains about the pelvis': from the use of the douche came 'irritations and congestions and
disturbances of the circulation in the organs', not to mention 'the introduction of microbes'. Watson-Munro was unique only in the range of side-effects he blamed on prevention. Nearly every ill he listed was mentioned by others and there were even some additions to his catalogue. Worrall claimed, for example, that coitus interruptus was 'liable to be followed by growths of the womb from chronic congestion', while Skirving alleged that the same practice produced neuroticism and 'functional diseases of the nervous system'. Dr C.W. Morgan supported Skirving regarding the effects of withdrawal, saying 'I have more than once seen that cause a woman to become insane'.

The most strident attack on the 'lamentable Neo-Malthusian practice' of prevention and its attendant 'unhygienic contrivances and artifices' came from Michael Ullick O'Sullivan, a prominent Victorian Catholic doctor. In an address in 1907 O'Sullivan asserted that preventive practices were most common among 'the well-to-do married', who could least justify it, and he waxed indignant concerning the cause of prevention, the nature of preventive devices and the result of their use. Of the cause he wrote

This detestable practice . . . may come from fashion, cowardice, or shiftless poverty; it comes from the aimless dilettantism of women who will not mar their beauty, or disturb their patrician pleasures with the cares of maternity; it comes from too high a standard of living, which creates many artificial wants and demands many expensive luxuries.

and, even more colourfully, of the result:

when a wife defiles the marriage bed with the devices and equipment of the brothel, and interferes with nature's mandate by cold-blooded preventives and safeguards; when she consults her almanac, and refuses to admit the approaches of her husband except at stated times; when a wife behaves in so unwifelike and unnatural a manner, can it be otherwise than that estrangements and painful suspicions of faithfulness should from time to time occur? Can a home with such an environment be a happy one? Many husbands so situated are, I fear, tempted to seek elsewhere the pleasures denied them at home. Such are nature's reprisals; such, indeed, her unfailing retributions.

Delivered at a time when Australian Catholicism was trying to identify with the Australian nation, O'Sullivan's attack on abortion and prevention was not merely moralistic but nationalistic as well. He emphasised the decline of Victorian fertility rates since 1860
and drew a parallel with the situations preceding the collapse of Greece and Rome. The message of those empires was that ‘national sins beget national woes’ and the message could apply to Australia also. O’Sullivan said that the remedy for the evils of birth control lay chiefly in education and partly in legislation. Legislative control should be possible over advertisements for abortifacients or by abortionists but the more substantial remedy lay in the educative functions of the clergy and the professions. The clergy should be able to reprove the selfishness which motivated the practice and instruct their people regarding its moral error. The medical profession could ensure that the young man knew the ‘highly probable penalty to be paid by his own body’ if he indulged in sexual irregularities, and that the young woman was aware of the ‘unnatural state produced by cohabitation coupled with the prevention of conception’.

Opinions only a little less forceful than O’Sullivan’s were common amongst Australian doctors (as amongst those in Britain and America). It therefore seems unlikely that the doctors prescribed preventives often enough to hasten directly the decline of the birth rate. Nevertheless fashions in medical practice may have contributed to the spread of birth control. Gynaecology did not develop as a separate medical discipline until well into the nineteenth century. The first scientific work on fertility and sterility did not appear in England until 1868 and up to and beyond that date a variety of suggestions were being put forward as universal explanations for gynaecological disorders. One late suggestion was that ‘uterine displacements could explain everything. The result of this . . . belief was a whole series of minor operations and major mechanical devices’. What was true of England was also true of Australia where the heroic willingness of doctors to perform all manner of operations—ovariotomy, shortening of ovarian ligaments, resiting of the uterus, introduction of pessaries—was amply attested by their conference papers and journal articles. Two of the doctors’ own anecdotes illustrate the point. Concerning the ‘minor operations’ Dr Roger Cope, Honorary Assistant Surgeon at the Lewisham Hospital for Women and Children in Sydney, wrote ‘Now that the populace is crying out about the decrease in the birth rate in New South Wales, one necessarily turns one’s thoughts to the uterus and its appendages, and asks a simple question—Why should this be?’ He decided that causes included hysterical females focusing their mind on ‘the womb and its appendages’ and excessive use of ovariotomy. ‘As an example of the terrible effect a diseased ovary has on the system’, he continued, ‘I well remember a mother
brining her son to the outpatients department of one of our Sydney hospitals, saying the lad was very ill and she thought he should have his ovaries removed.\footnote{34} As for the ‘major mechanical devices’, Worrall was pleased to report in 1902 that the pessary had gone out of fashion as a corrective for uterine displacements—but to illustrate the extent of its former use he recalled that at the 1889 Medical Congress ‘a gentleman was good enough to show me a large cabinet which he had had made solely for various kinds of pessaries’.\footnote{35} It is at least possible that zealous medical practitioners might materially have lowered women’s child-bearing capacity in the 1890s, as they were alleged to have done elsewhere.\footnote{36} It is just as likely that women who were being taught by their gynaecologists that there was no harm in introducing inert pessaries into the vagina for the treatment of ‘uterine displacement’ and other disorders might have begun to think about the use of soluble pessaries for other, preventive purposes. The overall impression one gets from the medical literature of the period (although there are few precise references on the point) is that doctors were not too assiduous in stopping the ovarirotomies and the pessaries from becoming accepted techniques for birth control among the middle class.

Few doctors, apart from Barrett, Balls-Headley and Jamieson in Victoria, and Borthwick in South Australia, paid much attention to the social aspects of demographic change. The profession therefore contributed little to discussions about social policies for improving the birth rate. Dr Harris made the sensible observation that the widely-approved panacea of closer rural settlement would work only if settlers were innocent of contraceptive knowledge before their exodus from the cities, but several other doctors told the Mackellar Commission that the new settlers would procreate vigorously to reap the value of cheap family labour. Conversely, few doctors shared the politician’s optimism about legislative solutions that led Dr Creed to propose tax concessions or baby bonuses proportionate to family size as a way of halting the decline: even Dr Skirving did not see how the law could ever touch something ‘so absolutely simple, secret, and generally sure’ as the evasion of child bearing. Disenchantment with legislative remedies was nicely illustrated by the Australasian Medical Gazette. In 1898 the Gazette said the remedy for limitation of families lay in legislative control of abortion, indecent advertising and quack literature. In 1904, however, the journal agreed with Skirving that legislation would not arrest the decline since prevention would be achieved even if preventives were banned and suppression of abortionists would merely lead to more self-induced abortion. The
journal's proposal was to make large families fashionable—apparently by making small families unfashionable.37

The medical profession had much more to say about offsetting the decline of the birth rate by improving infant welfare than they had said about arresting or reversing the decline itself. Their ideas about infant welfare were also promulgated throughout the 1890s, when there was relative silence about social aspects of fertility. Indeed concern was expressed about the high infant death rate even before the reduction of births was apparent. In an address in 1880 Dr S.J. Magarey said he was troubled by the incidence of fatal diseases of infancy and childhood, which he blamed on the intemperance of parents and the hot, dry climate.38 Other doctors placed more stress on infant feeding than on parental temperance but Magarey’s comment on the climate did have supporters. Dr P.E. Muskett, whose manual on the Feeding and Management of Australian Infants went through at least six editions between 1888 and 1903, linked the semi-tropical climate with rapid urbanisation as one of the ‘two prominent conditions’ influencing infant health. Muskett received a favourable notice from the Australasian Medical Gazette for the 1900 edition of his manual, in which he listed government assisted publicity on child care and infant feeding, extension of the mountain sanatorium system, improved milk supply, more press coverage of vital statistics and the establishment of foundling hospitals (to curb infanticide among illegitimates) as measures necessary for child conservation. When Muskett’s ‘Appeal’ for the regulation of baby farming is also taken into account it can be seen that he raised nearly all the issues of child conservation that were discussed by the medical profession in Australia.39 The call for a better milk supply was heard from the Australian Health Society in 1896 and, at considerable length, in the proceedings of the Mackellar Commission; in 1897 the President of the Melbourne Medical Society advocated the establishment of a foundling hospital and that call, too, was repeated at and by the Commission; better vital registrations were sought by Mullins in 1892 and 1903.40

It is possible that concern about infant feeding lay behind the opposition of some doctors to preventives. If preventives were reducing reliance on the—alleged—contraceptive effects of prolonged lactation, then an incidental result could have been a swing away from breast-feeding and a rise in deaths due to infant diarrhoea or other accompaniments of careless artificial feeding. The state of domestic education—which was one of the few subjects bearing on the welfare of infants that Muskett had ignored—was
raised at the Mackellar hearings by Dr Watson-Munro. He related domestic education to the provision of better pre- and post-natal hospital and nursing services, and told the Commissioners that 'the future mothers should be taught a little more about hygiene, domestic economy and dietetics in some way'. Dr Richard Arthur took a similar line in a Gazette article in 1901 and reiterated the argument for the Mackellar Commission in 1903. Arthur put the case in a form more commonly stated outside the medical profession than within it. The first premiss ran 'what with Russia, Germany and France becoming Pacific powers, and the yellow peril looming up again as a possibility of the future, a population sufficiently large to discount any thought of invasion is a vital necessity'. Second premiss: contraception can only be expected to increase as knowledge of the techniques becomes more widespread; legal control of contraceptives would be illiberal; assisted immigration is out of favour; and baby bonuses do not work. Conclusion: the problem therefore becomes one of lowering the infant death rate, by

educating the persons . . . to whose ignorance of the feeding and hygiene of the young the appalling infant mortality is due . . . The organization for giving the needful instruction already exists in the public school system of the colony. There is no reason why all the elder girls who pass through the schools should not receive thorough instruction in the care and management of infants.41

Doctors with established reputations were not regular contributors to the population debate during the 1890s—with a few exceptions, mostly in Victoria. There was a sustained interest in infant welfare but there is little evidence, apart from the flurry at the time of the Mackellar Commission, that doctors were able or prepared to help their patients with consistent advice about family planning. No more help would have been available from the young doctors who trained and began to practise between 1890 and 1910. During that period ten text books were prescribed in the University of Adelaide for courses on obstetrics, gynaecology and paediatrics. Copies of the six titles still available contain only one reference to the limitation of offspring: in a passage on ‘Criminal Abortion’ there is a statement that ‘Medical men are sometimes requested by married women to induce abortion because pregnancy is inconvenient or motherhood expensive; but for reasons so inadequate as this, the operation should not be performed’.42 The situation was hardly better at the medical school of Melbourne University. One of the texts set there, but not in Adelaide, was Balls-Headley's
on *The Evolution of the Diseases of Women*. Both the book and its author were distinctive enough for the possibility to exist that students were stimulated to think about population questions and Melbourne students should have been provoked also by the lectures of James Jamieson, with his hallmark of detached scientific observation. However, it is clear that the obstetrics and gynaecology lectures of 1903 and 1904, at least, were adding nothing to the meagre information supplied by the textbooks. An extensive manuscript record of lectures for those two years is entirely devoid of references to problems of population and its procreation.43 G. Rothwell Adam, the lecturer in 1903, summed up the situation at the end of the decade with his complaint that obstetrics and gynaecology (to a lesser extent) had Cinderella roles in the medical course:

surely a branch of medical study like obstetrics, dealing, as it undoubtedly does, with events not only of individual interest, but of national welfare, is worthy of more consideration at the hands of medical educational authorities than it now receives.

Better recognition of obstetrics and gynaecology would remove the problem that

the difficulties of giving adequate instruction in gynaecology to students are very great; in fact, so surrounded is the practical teaching of gynaecology with difficulties . . . that it is doubtful if it is wise to attempt more than that of an elementary type.44

Australian medical students received no formal teaching about family limitation before 1910 and the public statements of leading doctors suggest that they are unlikely to have prescribed preventives. There is almost no evidence of what ‘ordinary’ doctors thought about the peopling of Australia or did about the practice of prevention by their patients: of the twenty-seven doctors interviewed by the Mackellar Commission only four were general practitioners. Members of the British Medical Association in Victoria did defend one colleague who was involved in a contraceptive syndicate but this is not conclusive evidence about opinion in the profession at large because the reports suggest that the case may have been, at least in part, an occasion for settling some intra-Branch personal scores.45 British and American doctors remained reticent about offering contraceptive information to clients well into the 1960s so it is safe enough to assume that a similar attitude was common
in Australia at the beginning of the century. There is little doubt that, saving an occasional exception like Barrett, doctors did little either within their profession or outside it after about 1895 to foster an understanding of the changes that were occurring in Australian fertility patterns or reproductive practice. In addition the reception given to Paterson suggests that the open discussion of the physiology of conception (and its avoidance), and the recommendation of simple mechanical techniques of contraception for which the materials were readily available, was contrary to the professional desire to preserve the occult mysteries of medical art. The result was that doctors did nothing intentionally to contribute to the democratisation of birth control knowledge which was changing family patterns all around them.
Sexuality has always occupied a precarious place on the border of reason in Christian thought, making it difficult for Christians to accept a naturalistic estimate of sexual behaviour and its results. This certainly was true in Australia between 1890 and 1911 when spokesmen for all but one of the major Christian denominations reacted in a moralistic, rather than naturalistic, way to changes in fertility. The theological foundations of their moralising were drawn from England and, by the end of the nineteenth century, from the England of theological reaction against secularist and socialist thought. There were two main themes in the chorus of clerical responses to the decline of the birth rate, apart from a couple of attempts to interpret the demographic scene before 1900. One theme was the decline of religion, as exemplified in a weakening of the sanctity of marriage, and the other emphasised growing selfishness in ideas about the purpose of marriage. The most distinctive parts among the chorus were enunciated by the Roman Catholics, who were the most forceful conservatives, and by the Methodists, who were slightly more willing than the others to accept family limitation.

At the beginning of this century Christian ministers thought along lines that were predominantly formed overseas. Catholics looked to Rome and Ireland, Protestants to the British Isles. Seven of the eight clergymen who appeared at the Mackellar Commission were born and educated in the British Isles; church newspapers paid as much attention as did the secular press of the day to news from ‘Home’; Central Missions in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide were established by men who, through reading and personal experience, were greatly influenced by similar institutions in England; Anglicans drew their inspiration from Lambeth Conferences. The British influence on Protestant thinking was apparent in both theological and social concerns. The Forward Movement in church work* was

* The term ‘Forward Movement’ was being used in England and Australia by 1900 as a talisman for almost any new Protestant venture but originally it applied to the thought of men like Hugh Price Hughes, John Scott Lidgett and Thomas Champness, who were convinced that Methodism must both meet the demands of an industrial environment and reassert the evangelicism of the Wesleys.
fairly widely acknowledged in Australia by the end of the 1890s but the condition of Australian theology was more akin to that of England in the 1880s: 'It had not really recovered from its negative and panic-stricken reaction to Darwinism, let alone accommodated freedom of enquiry in biblical research and the philosophy of religion'.

During much of the nineteenth century there were Australian clergymen equipped and ready to follow the example of the Reverend Thomas Malthus by interesting themselves in matters of political economy. At mid-century principles of political economy were receiving wide pulpit publicity and 'clergymen were leaders among the propagandists'. In the late 1880s there were men like the Congregationalist, Thomas Roseby, who could claim familiarity with the writings of Marx, Lassalle and the Georgeites. Evolutionary and social evolutionary theory was another field, of some importance to this study, in which clergymen showed interest. A number of leaders of most South Australian denominations are said to have had some knowledge of Darwin's and Spencer's work and tried to make an assessment of it; a paper read by Roseby to a Sydney audience in 1895 indicated that he had given fairly thorough attention to Spencer; and by 1901 the Reverend John Meiklejohn of Melbourne evidently thought his audience would understand the reference when he dropped the name of Benjamin Kidd into his Moderator's Address for that year. Against these signs of intellectual vitality among the clergy it has to be noted that, by one of the few tests available—membership in the Association for the Advancement of Science—their participation in secular disciplines declined after 1891. Thus the development of a remarkable demographic situation after 1900 found a dearth of clergymen equipped to utter more than moralisms and generalisations of doubtful sociological validity.

The style of argument at the end of the clergy's participation in debates about political economy and social philosophy was exemplified by the Reverend H.T. Burgess, a South Australian Methodist. In 1888 he declared that 'the special capabilities of Australia, and inherent qualities of Australians' included a sufficient territory for a large population, climatic conditions favourable to a hardy race and 'rapidity of numerical growth, ensuring the strength of numbers'. In view of the fact that three-fifths of Australia lies within the temperate zone, he argued,
assured . . . as also is their ability to manfully hold their own against all comers.

He went on to indicate at least a general awareness of current sociological views:

Other things being equal the race that increases its numbers more rapidly than others must win in the constant competition of nations, and incessant struggle for existence . . . The law of the survival of the fittest operates in this department as elsewhere. With us 'other things' are more than equal, and hence the favourable aspect Australia presents in regard to numbers becomes a factor of the highest importance in the calculation of probabilities.

The last sentence may sound like the characteristic 'puffing' of a prize essayist but Burgess had made some attempt to justify his claim by communicating with H.H. Hayter, the Government Statist for Victoria. On Hayter's estimate of a 42 per cent decennial growth rate, which Burgess thought would probably continue, Australia could look forward to a population in excess of thirty million by 1950. The strongest support for this prophecy lay in Australia's 'peculiarly rapid natural increase', ensuring that 'it must of necessity outstrip, and eventually overtake, older, and at present more populous nations', and in the fact that Australian colonists were 'the pick of the most energetic and superior races of mankind', ensuring that 'their descendants may be expected to be in general healthy and strong'.

The demographic data available to Burgess in 1888 probably justified his optimism, while the purpose of his essay would have made gloomy reflections on the Malthusian crux seem out of place. These circumstances did not apply in 1899 when a Baptist minister, the Reverend E. Harris, read a paper which occasioned considerable discussion in Melbourne. He had noticed 'the decrease of the marriage and birth rates' in Australia and attributed this to 'the weakening of the marriage vow, the facilities for obtaining divorce' and 'the widespread unblushing impurity of life'. In the observation he was ahead of most of his clerical contemporaries but in the explanation he merely anticipated the coming flood of their moralism. Further evidence of the trend of religious reaction to demographic change came in 1901 from the Sydney Mothers' Union, whose report quoted, approvingly, the Bishop of Carpentaria's opinion that 'impurity . . . is eating out the heart and destroying the vitality of the Australian race. It is the national sin. The birth-rate is declining at an alarming rate, and the proportion of illegitimate births increasing as steadily'.
When the Report of the Mackellar Commission drew more people’s attention to the extent of family limitation, one Sydney cleric linked the findings of the report, the moral tone of Mr Harris and the contra-Malthusian optimism of Mr Burgess in a sermon more notable for passion than for homiletic craftsmanship:

What a commentary is the report of the Royal Commission upon this teaching of our Lord! Yes! we have been seeking to save our life to the vengeance, and lo! we have lost it. A decreasing birthrate, and want and woe in the homes of the multitudes, in a land, the natural resources of which, if only we were wise enough to ‘lose our life for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s’ would give us all food enough and to spare.¹²

The name of his publishers and the titles of his other works make it clear that the preacher, the Reverend Mervyn Archdall, stood firmly in the tradition of Australian low-church, evangelical Protestantism. Certainly his views were shared by others in that tradition. For example the evangelicals’ concept of sin as wrong actions, rather than wrong intention, and their anti-intellectual distrust of technology were apparent in an editorial on the Mackellar Commission’s Report by the Australian Sentinel, organ of the Loyal Orange Lodges in Victoria. To the widespread complaint that people had to limit their families through lack of income, the Sentinel’s response was:

millions of people spend all their earnings week by week. They are the improvident and thriftless, or the selfish and luxuriating of the earth . . . A huge proportion of men gamble away every week on horse-racing what would keep an additional child or two; as many more drink it. Many wives unfortunately, too, are not exempt from these costly vices.¹³

Concerning the methods by which families were limited, the paper said: ‘This country is suffering—in common with Britain, the Continent, and the United States—in a large resort by her people to a ready means which prostituted science has prepared. Chemistry is as ready to slay as to save life.’

Archdall’s sermon and the Sentinel’s editorial in 1904 represent the point at which demographic perception, as opposed to moralistic opinion, virtually disappeared from clerical utterance. Burgess, still writing for a secular audience, continued to make optimistic use of vital statistics¹⁴ but majority opinion was mirrored more accurately by the National Christian Citizens’ League, which convened a meeting in the Melbourne Town Hall in November 1904 to discuss the birth rate question. Participants included ‘ministers from
leading churches, and representatives of the medical profession, the Australian Health Society, and the Salvation Army. They were addressed by the Victorian Government Statist, William McLean, who 'agreed with the finding of the New South Wales Commission, that the birth-rate had declined; but said he was wholly at variance with the Commission as to the cause. The decrease was in every way a natural one, and was not brought about by restrictive measures . . . '. Despite the warm reception McLean's address received it does not seem to have influenced Dr Lowther Clarke, the Anglican Bishop of Melbourne, who presided over the meeting. He said flatly that the New South Wales Report was an alarming indication of deliberate race suicide, of which the cause was 'pure selfishness'. He also thought McLean's suggestion that the state should take more responsibility for the care of children as a means of reducing infant mortality was a dangerous proposal, 'likely to conduce to immorality'.

In view of their unsophisticated response to the fact of a declining birth rate the kind of explanations that clergymen offered for the decline is not surprising. In general they laid heavy stress on 'moral' interpretations and either dismissed or paid little attention to possible sociological explanations. As early as 1889 the Anglican headmaster of the exclusive King's School had seen signs of social impurity in the frequent reports of 'concealment of births, of infanticide, of artificial abortion . . . suggestive literature, acting, advertisements'. All of these sins were catalogued again in subsequent discussions of the population question. In addition many clergymen believed that public morality was decaying and that this decay, plus the liberalisation of divorce laws, was eroding the status of marriage and the family. Archbishop Smith told the Mackellar Commission that he had observed a decay of religious sentiment since reaching Sydney in 1890: 'there is a large absence of reverence and serious views', he reported, and 'I think life here is apt to be very flippant'. Archdeacon Langley was more cautious and precise than his archbishop. He thought there was, generally, as much religious feeling as there had been fifty years earlier although he could detect a 'chilling of feeling on the part of the more cultured classes', among whom higher criticism and other religious novelties produced a more secular line of thinking."

Divorce reform came before the New South Wales Parliament several times between 1886 and 1899 with the debate twice issuing in a liberalisation of the law. Reforms were also considered in Victoria where a Presbyterian committee prepared a petition against a Divorce Law Amendment Bill in 1889 and discussed the
possibility of co-operating with the Anglicans and the Wesleyans on the matter. The reason for their concern undoubtedly was that expressed to the Sydney Anglican Synod in 1895 by Archbishop Smith (and repeated by Smith and others to the Mackellar Commission): 'Divorce made easy tends to lower the value of true Marriage', by lowering the sense of responsibility, making people not think enough before marriage and stirring up strange feelings after marriage if people become incompatible. Archbishop Smith also told his Synod that they should recognise the disgrace of 'the tendency to extreme laxity in the view taken of Marriage and in the whole matter of sexual relations', while the Wesleyan Conference acted against the marriage bureaux which were developing a reputation for rather unorthodox methods of bringing ladies and gentlemen together and for having a 'Marrying Sam'—often of doubtful ecclesiastical status—on the premises to perform the ceremony. The Church of England Outlook, which appears to have been the 'Bishop's paper' of the Sydney diocese, took up the 'sanctity of marriage' slogan again at the beginning of the Mackellar Commission:

We believe that we have contributed more to the reasonable discussion of this problem than any other Australian paper because we have been expounding for the last three months what is really the secret of the whole matter, the sanctity of marriage. [Until] that important truth is hammered home we shall do nothing by Royal Commissions.

Shortly afterwards the Reverend Dill Macky, who had been a Presbyterian clergyman in New South Wales for seventeen years, told the Commissioners that there had been 'a great lowering in connection with the sanctity of marriage from what existed in our fathers' and grandfathers' days' and the Congregationalist, Hennessy, who had been living in the heart of Sydney for eight months, said that lodging-house talk showed that 'marriage is regarded by a large number of those who are unmarried in this city almost contemptuously'.

More than marriage was wrongly regarded, in the clergy's opinion. Dill Macky was surprised by the 'want of moral sensibility' about family limitation shown by a layman whom he found to be preventing conception 'without the slightest idea that he was doing what was wrong'. The Rural Dean of Richmond reported that, far from regarding prevention as immoral or obscene, laymen argued that 'it is perfectly right and perfectly moral, and that no one with any reason at all could possibly condemn them for the practices
in which they indulge'. Most clergy agreed that big families were preferable to small from the point of view of the children's social development, the parents' strength of character and the nation's well-being. Conversely there were few who disagreed either with the opinion that birth control was both immoral and conducive to immorality or with the Reverend Howell Price's statement that his attitude to abortion and prevention 'would be summed up practically in one word—murder'. Most clergymen at the Mackellar Commission hearings took it for granted that birth control had no place in moral behaviour, although generally they were not given to discussing the practice in public. Methodist social reformers in Melbourne, for example, were as concerned about sexual morality as they were about the totalisator and alcohol but thought the topic less amenable to a public campaign. There may also have been some fear among clergy that a public stand against birth control would not have been welcomed by their parishioners.

Clergymen had a fairly simple explanation for the widespread practice of birth control. They blamed selfishness in the private field and indecent publications in the public arena. In 1902 the bishop of the Victorian country diocese of Wangaratta warned the Anglican Congress that there is reason to fear that the birth of children is regarded as such a tax upon selfishness that it is being steadily discouraged. But for people to deliberately refuse parental responsibilities for no higher reason than an unwillingness to lessen the power of gratifying their own selfishness is a bad lookout for the future of our Commonwealth.

Howell Price elaborated on the elements of this selfishness. 'Wives', he told the Mackellar Commission, 'want to go with the husbands wherever the husbands go'; they therefore want to be as free as possible from home ties and, since they have found that children tie them too much to the home 'they regard maternity as martyrdom'. Hennessy, the Congregationalist, acknowledged the wife's desire to be with her husband but blamed him, not her: the man, Hennessy said,

\[\text{goes to entertainments, he goes to out-door gatherings, and the wife is left at home pregnant . . . In course of time she begins to resent that, and he agrees that if there were no children she would be free to go with him where he goes, and it may be then that if he suggests there should be a check put upon procreation in their particular case she consents.}\]

When the Commission included these condemnations of selfishness in its report it gained the support, expressed with typical terseness,
of the Presbyterian Church which said that 'a love of ease, a reluctance to personal sacrifice, and a general lowering of the ideal of marriage . . . [was] at the bottom of this sin and scandal'. Two years later Presbyterians' attitude was unchanged. In response to the Beale Commission's indictment of the use of abortifacient medicines they condemned 'The callous selfishness of . . . large sections of our population [who] evidently deliberately enter upon marriage, and then, in defiance of both God and nature, refuse the burden of parenthood.'

If the people's practice of prevention was grounded in a sinful nature, the clerics believed, then the tendency was stimulated by indecent literature and informed by birth control propaganda. In the minds of the clergymen 'indecent' literature was a term covering a fairly wide range of publications. Howell Price, for example, condemned the circulation of books by Mona Caird and 'all the leading thinkers of that school' who advocated greater freedom for women, of 'general low-class novels, French novels' and of 'newspaper literature like the Broad Arrow and of the Dead Bird type'. Hennessy was not greatly bothered by the English sex novel but thought that cheap translations of French novels which could be obtained without difficulty in Sydney did 'a deal of harm', especially in an era of increasing literacy. Archbishop Smith was not very familiar with the literature and uncertain of its effect on morality but he still considered the sex novel as 'distinctly unwholesome'—a view in which, predictably, he was supported by Dill Macky. 'Medical' advertising was another category of publication which the clergy regarded as indecent and which they often spoke about in the same connection as the novels. The Methodists attacked it in the latter half of the 1890s and they were supported by the Presbyterians, who expressed satisfaction that the government's attention was being directed to 'the great and widespread Evil to National and Social life' being wrought by the advertisements. Informative birth control literature of the type which the Malthusian Society distributed in large quantities in England was also available in Australia. Howell Price said that he had not seen any neo-Malthusian leaflets in the rural area of Richmond but had seen them 'some years ago' in Sydney. On the other hand he reported that 'Bradlaugh's books, and Mrs. Besant's books, and other books which are freely available in Sydney, are largely read in country places'. Hennessy also reported that the Sydney shops dealt in 'books which direct themselves to questions akin to those discussed in The Fruits of Philosophy—one sold at 3s 6d I take to be an outrage'. In Price's opinion a discussion in the Sydney
Sunday Times a couple of years earlier had also done a great deal of harm in making prevention more acceptable. All of this literature, Price believed, must have had 'a very large share' in spreading the knowledge of birth control and Archdeacon Langley agreed that the publication of Fruits of Philosophy had shown a way of escape for women who 'shrank from the pains and penalties of child-bearing'. Birth control knowledge was available from oral, as well as written, sources. Dill Macky said he knew that prevention was commonly advocated and gave the example of his own wife who, 'again and again, when she was child-bearing' had been advised by lady friends to take preventive measures. (The advice was evidently ignored for there were three sons and five daughters in the Macky family). Howell Price reported a similar experience of his own wife at the hands of a woman who was 'intelligent, widely read and thoughtful' but was 'a most active propagandist' for prevention throughout his parish, and a Methodist minister from the inner-Melbourne circuit of Fitzroy also reported that 'women working under the auspices of Christian organizations' were fostering the idea that it was wrong to have more children than parents could afford.

Clerical commentators on the decline of the birth rate gave heavy emphasis to individual and social sinfulness as explanatory factors, dwelling on the decadence of a society which allowed the publication of 'indecent' literature and the guilt of individuals who availed themselves of preventive techniques. The logic of their position, if they had rigorously pursued it, should surely have led them to a different conclusion. If, as orthodox Christianity has always maintained, Humanity is innately sinful, those whose opinions are discussed above should not have been saying 'people are preventing conception because they have become sinful', but asking why the sinfulness had taken this apparently new form. Even liberal theologians, rejecting the orthodox doctrine of sin, should have asked themselves why essentially good creatures, destined to become better, had taken the apparently backward step to prevention.*

 Logical or not, the attitude to prevention adopted by many Australian clergymen caused them to place social factors well below moral ones in their hierarchy of causes. This is clear from the literature of the 1890s, when some Australians suggested that economic conditions were restricting young people's chances of early

* In any case the 'backward step' was only apparent, not real, as Himes's Medical History of Contraception indicates. While some novel techniques may have become available in the late nineteenth century, there was nothing novel about the desire to control conception.
marriage. There was a relative paucity of Christian material on social conditions at that time and little recorded Christian discussion of poverty. J.M. Day, whose appearance before the Society for the Study of Christian Sociology may be presumed to indicate a rational, as opposed to a moral, approach acknowledged the economic difficulties and suggested state appropriation of rent as a means of keeping house-rent low and giving young couples a better start in the financing of their home. In contrast Henry Varley (an evangelistic moral reformer whose attitude to the neo-Malthusian movement may be inferred from the title of his pamphlet, *Mr. Bradlaugh Shown to be Utterly Unfit to Represent any English Constituency*), said financial problems were illusory and the moral dangers of delayed marriage considerable. Varley’s second point was supported by an Anglican purity society, the White Cross League, which also noted the restrictions some commercial institutions placed on the marriage of their junior staff but failed to suggest that a remedy might lie in increased salaries for the staff. A similar contrast can be made between the attitudes to poverty of two of the witnesses at the Mackellar Commission. Archdeacon Langley explained the ‘real and respectable’ poverty prevailing in Sydney by reference to unemployment caused by the heavy immigration which accompanied a high rate of investment in earlier years. Dill Macky, whose condemnation of prevention was much stronger than Langley’s, said that poverty was the result of indolence.

The remedies prescribed to halt the decline of the birth rate matched the diagnosis made of its causes. Dill Macky, who had been so sure of the immoral causes of the decline, naturally thought that the time had come when ‘the clergymen must wake up to their duty and speak upon this subject . . . the moral sensitiveness of the people must be aroused as to their duty in this respect’. Other Presbyterians agreed with him, it appears: their New South Wales Assembly thought that ‘the influence of the Church should be earnestly directed towards impressing upon the people a higher ideal of the marriage relationship . . .’ and the Presbyterian General Assembly of Australia was asked to recognise the urgency of ‘the call to the Churches and to all other associations of loyal and self-respecting men and women, to protest against the evil’. Archdeacon Langley stood in clearest contrast to the moral cause/moral remedy outlook exemplified by Dill Macky. Langley acknowledged the reality of poverty and unemployment but argued that there was plenty of land available to feed and provide for four times the unemployed population, if only measures for closer settlement were taken in hand. The Langley plan was similar to
that espoused by a number of secular commentators—albeit somewhat earlier in their case—and it was almost the only clerical proposal that amounted to more than a wringing of hands. Thus Dr Clarke, the Anglican bishop of Melbourne who had blamed the limitation of families on ‘wrong ideas and selfishness’, believed the time had come for the clergy ‘to speak with no uncertain voice’, although he thought the subject was ‘one to be handled delicately, and not to be raised in mixed congregations’. In the event the subject was not handled at all in his cathedral until 1912, when a number of talks were given on ‘The Empty Cradle’, ‘Race Suicide’, ‘The Value of a Child’, ‘The Slaughter of the Innocents’. Clarke’s brother bishop, of Riverina in New South Wales, seems to have approached the problem fortified by the belief of his colleagues in England that God was uniquely concerned with the world-wide extension of the English race. In a pastoral address he referred to the growing practice of artificial restriction of families . . . ‘In the name of all that is rational’, he said,

what is the use of waving our flags . . . and making our patriotic speeches, when we are conscious of having this rottenness at our doors? . . . What is the use of augmenting our navy, when we are undermining our true source of strength? The palmy days of Empire are numbered, and unless we mend our ways nothing can prevent us becoming an easy prey to any nation that may be told off in God’s good providence to bring us to our senses.43

In social reform in England during the 1880s and 1890s, Anglicans were, comparatively, more radical than Wesleyans. The difference may have been a function of church polity which made it easy for any group of people with a program to form a society in the Church of England (whereas such societies were possible in Wesleyanism only if a majority of the clergy supported them).44 The dispersion of parishes and limited numbers of clergy restricted the opportunities for the formation of such ‘ginger’ groups in the Church of England in Australia. Although there were individualists in the Anglican ministry in Australia there was an identifiable ‘Anglican attitude’ to the population question. Theologically that attitude was evangelical, socially it was conservative. Consequently individual selfishness was regarded as the chief cause of prevention and the declining birth rate, with moral reform and suppression of vice the most promising remedies. Presbyterians generally took a similar view but they relied more on government initiative to legislate against and suppress vicious habits. The Presbyterian Assembly in New South Wales, the General Assembly of Australia and the
Social Questions committee in Melbourne all took steps to promote stricter enforcement of existing laws or the passage of new laws where the old seemed inadequate. Compared with the Anglicans, who paid a good deal of attention to the condition of the home and family life, the Presbyterians ranked such matters below official precedence, sabbath observance, gambling and temperance in their table of social problems.

Methodists in Australia viewed social questions in broader terms than the majority of Anglicans or Presbyterians did. Annual district synods, and even the Conference, were small enough to enable real discussion at their meetings, while the Forward Movement, being the most novel element in English Methodism, was the most noticed in Australia. A third factor, in New South Wales at any rate, may have been the relationship between the Wesleyans and the Primitives, who were the only significant body of non-Wesleyan Methodists in the State. Since the two bodies were in the final stages of a successful union movement at the turn of the century, one might expect the Wesleyans to have been aware of the social interests of the Primitives, and the union to have stimulated an uncommon flexibility of mind. The social meliorism and social aspirations of small-scale entrepreneurs who were so significant a component of Methodist membership also must be considered in any discussion of Methodist attitudes. The initiative of Wesleyan employers in shortening employees' working hours and the practice of Moran & Cato (Wesleyan partners in a grocery chain) of raising the employee's salary on marriage, for example, provide a nice contrast with the attitudes of Varley and the White Cross League to the same problem. Status-oriented social thinking is characteristic of a Church, like the Wesleyan body in Melbourne, which has many influential members experiencing upward social or occupational mobility. If the theory of Banks and others is accepted, that relatively mobile people are strongly motivated to restrict their family size, then one explanation of the comparative liberalism of Methodist statements on the subject may be the pressure of leading laymen for a status-oriented ethic. Alternatively Methodism, which has traditionally elevated individual experience to the authority which Anglicans and Presbyterians give to the Church and its dogmas, is also more likely to modify its teachings to accord with its members' secular experience.

Methodist reaction to the restriction of population growth in Australia does seem to have been more flexible than that of either the Anglicans or Presbyterians. Even if Burgess's special circumstances put his writings out of account, the point can be sufficiently
supported from the church paper in Victoria and the evidence given to the Mackellar Commission by the Reverend W. Woolls Rutledge. The range of Victorian opinion was illustrated by items in the Spectator in March and April 1903. The first expressed alarm at statistical evidence of reduced family size, and at the physical deterioration or 'distressing unwillingness to accept the responsibilities of marriage' which the reduction was said to indicate. On the second occasion it was correctly pointed out that public discussion of the declining birth rate was ignoring one aspect of the problem:

Population is not the only thing a nation requires; it wants a physically strong population. It wants a wise and strong motherhood for its sons and daughters, and where physique suffers through numerical strength, it is questionable in these days of keen competition, teeming city population and struggle for existence, whether the command to be fruitful and multiply must not have a more wise interpretation than it is generally given.51

Later issues of the paper did not fail to air the common Christian response to Australia's population problems but space was also found for a range of comments rarely expressed in other denominations. In 1904, for instance, there was support for the Mackellar Commissioners' emphasis on the immorality and selfishness of family limitation—but another paragraph was added condemning the bad effect of unsatisfactory conditions in which employers forced women to work. Later in the same year the idea that marriage is a luxury was criticised but the writer added 'it is useless, also, to advise marriage without aiming at a living wage that will make marriage possible'. The editor of the Spectator also distanced himself from other Christian opinion by raising doubts about the effectiveness of pulpit appeals for reform, and defending novels by authors who advocated family limitation.

In this age people will read and largely follow the advice of good and respected authors. While such books remain in the hands of so many, the call to the churches to institute a 'general crusade' against the evil will be little heeded.52

Later again, in 1906, the Spectator recognised the threat to the Christian view of marriage from 'a certain set of Socialistic writers' —but also criticised the impact of industrialised society: 'Where families are herded together in small areas, sometimes in a single room, true family life almost ceases to be. Family life demands appropriate environment for its existence and culture.'53
In New South Wales the liberal Methodist position was articulated by the Reverend W. Woolls Rutledge. Rutledge was an Australian-born minister who had worked as a journalist and newspaper editor before entering the ministry. He was President of the first Conference of united Methodism in New South Wales, in 1902, and his successor in that office nominated him to be the Methodist witness before the Mackellar Commission. Rutledge's general social ethic, of which he was not the only supporter, was set out in his presidential address: 'The Church has a social, as well as a spiritual, work to do . . . She should never rest until . . . every man . . . shall have a home, however small, where he can live in decency with his wife and children.' Rutledge told the Commissioners that abortion was commonly regarded as immoral while prevention of conception was not, and that many upright people regarded risk to the mother or excessive family size as reasonable justification for the use of preventives. This suggestion apparently led Mackellar to suspect Rutledge of being 'soft on prevention' and a probing exchange ensued.

6420: (By the Hon. the President)

**Question** What are your own views in that regard?

**Answer** I do not know that my views are sufficiently crystallised to be very definite, but I have a tendency in this direction—that sin is sin; but the question is: What is sin?

Drunkenness is a sin, for instance, according to the Scriptures, which I, of course, accept; but I should be very sorry to say that every man who takes a glass of ale sins. It would be a sin for persons to deliberately, and by means which you have referred to, prevent the natural order of things being carried out in reference to family life; but whether a person, say, with eight or ten children, and having, perhaps, had one or two risky confinements, or where there is little possibility, from the standpoint of the parents, of their being able to rear as many children as they could procreate, would be guilty of the same amount of sin as in the case of a person who had had no risky confinements, or had either one or no children, is, to my mind, a doubtful question—I am not going to say.

6421: **Question** But would you not consider it as an exceedingly immoral thing for people to gratify a strong instinct while deliberately avoiding all the duties attached to it?

**Answer** That is putting it rather broadly, to say 'all' the duties attached to it.
6422: Question All the unpleasant duties attached to it?

Answer I mean the duties, of course, of rearing a family. I am not prepared to say that in every case people who marry should bring into the world as many children as they can. I am not prepared to go that far.

6423: Question But they all have a means of preventing the birth of children if they are unable to maintain them?

Answer They have means.

6424: Question Perfectly moral means?

Answer Of course, that is the point.

6425: Question That is to say, they can avoid sexual intercourse?

Answer I recognise the fact, Mr. President, that we have been made by the Creator, and the Creator has placed in man, who after all, is an animal, though a very superior animal, certain—if you like to call them so—passions, and these natural passions are intended to be gratified to a certain extent. There may be an intemperate gratification of them; but they are placed there by the Creator for a specific purpose, and I am not prepared to say that persons should not have intercourse except for the specific purpose of begetting children. And if that is so, then, if they are to be separated and these passions are to be restrained, the probability is that something worse will happen unless they are of very strong will.

6449: (By Mr. Coghlan)

Question There is nothing then in the act of restraining the birth of children that is wrong: it is the conditions that make it right or wrong?

Answer Quite so. There is nothing wrong in married people escaping (if conception has not taken place) the result of connection providing other conditions are satisfied, and there is no injury to the health of either party. When I say this, I do not know that I am prepared to say what means may be, or are used. I can only know from what one hears as to what means are used for the purpose of preventing conception; but I presume that there are two ways, one being the use of some drug or something of that kind which the woman uses; and another being an act of the man himself in withdrawing. So far as I have been able to make enquiries those are the principal methods of preventing conception. I am not
prepared to say that under any possible circumstances, the one or the other would be unjustifiable.

Rutledge went on to question whether the effects of preventive practice were universally degrading, in the process showing himself less willing than other witnesses had been to accept the Commissioners' interpretation of 'well-known authors on the topic'.

6432: (By the Hon. the President)

Question Many of the authorities who are best acquainted with the subject have stated that it [prevention] invariably leads to the degradation of the woman, at any rate, whether of the man or not?

Answer If continued as a practice, that might be so.

6433: Question Would you be prepared to accept that view?

Answer If my recollection serves me aright, Dr. Pomeroy [author of The Ethics of Marriage] does not quite hold that opinion without qualification.

6434: Question Under what circumstances?

Answer He does not state the circumstances; but, if I remember rightly, there is a qualification of that very general statement.

6435: Question The circumstances are those stated by Sir Normand MacLaurin? [i.e. risk to the mother's life]

Answer Yes, and others; and he hints, too, at the economic reasons. He does not state it in plain language, I think, but he hints at it.

6436: Question Do you think that . . . parents are justified in limiting the number of children born to them?

Answer . . . I can conceive circumstances where it would be justifiable.

6437: Question Do you recognise the danger of that sentiment?

Answer I do.

6438: Question As being liable to lead to a very great amount of immorality?

Answer I do; but at the same time I recognise that there are dangers of a similar kind everywhere—there is a danger of a man who takes a glass of beer with his dinner, or a glass of whisky with a friend, becoming a drunkard.
6439: *Question* I think that the circumstances are hardly parallel?

*Answer* Well, there are, perhaps, as many evidences of the danger of that as of anything else. There are certain things which, up to a certain extent are, or may be, legitimate and right, but which, beyond a certain point, become wrong, and each case must be treated on its merits.

Asked whether he agreed with the thesis, attributed to F.S. Nitti, 'voluntary prevention simply leads to the degeneration of the senses, the decadence of the race', Rutledge said 'I am not in a position to say "yes" or "no" . . . It is a question which is more in the realm of medical and physical science . . . '. In fact he could see that circumstances might arise where immoral consequences would follow from a failure to use prevention. For example it would be unreasonable to demand prolonged continence because 'there are persons who marry who may have this special passion developed in a way that they are not responsible for—it may be hereditary—and in a case like that, to use a Scriptural term, he will "burn"'.

Rutledge elaborated on his view of the 'natural passions', saying that, although maintenance of the race was one of the objects of marriage, 'the promotion of mutual enjoyment and companionship' were also legitimate objects. He would not push this view too far for, when Mackellar suggested that Rutledge regarded sexual intercourse as 'a pleasant amusement', his reply was: 'Not amusement so much; but the legitimate gratification of a passion placed there by the Creator'. In discounting the primacy of procreation Rutledge took a line eschewed by most other clergymen at the time. Dean Cowper of Sydney had said in the 1880s that 'social happiness' and 'intellectual enjoyment' had their place alongside procreation but majority opinion was more accurately indicated by Dill Macky, who thought the command 'a very plain one: “Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth”'; and by the Reverend J.S. Hart, who contrasted the secular emphasis on gratification with the Church's proclamation of procreation.

The Methodist response to changing sexual morality was more liberal than that of the other two major Protestant denominations, even when allowance is made for the Reverend P.J. Stephen, a Methodist with a background similar to Rutledge's whose response to the Commissioners was much more in the conservative Protestant main stream. There can be no doubt that Rutledge was in good standing with his fellow ministers. In March 1904, only three
months after his appearance at the Commission, they placed him second in a ballot for New South Wales representatives to the Methodist General Conference. Stephen, by contrast, was placed fifteenth, polling 94 votes against Rutledge's 166. There is some evidence that the more radical members of the Methodist ministry have tended to be the more articulate as well but it is doubtful whether this is true to the same extent in the other denominations. This observation raises the whole problem of the status of the evidence used so far in this chapter. Did the clergymen who have been quoted speak for their denomination or only for themselves? The answer must be that, although they spoke for themselves, there is a degree of homogeneity about the views expressed (at least in printed form) within each denomination. In addition there is no evidence of fierce disagreement within any denomination about the views expressed by its members, while the ecclesiastical positions held by most of the men who have been quoted indicate that they had the confidence of their co-religionists.

Among Protestants there were occasional differences of emphasis to blur the outlines of a common view about sexuality and procreation. Catholic attitudes did not display even this variety. Not every Catholic commentator expressed his opinion in the same way, of course, but there was no disagreement about basic doctrines. Unity of belief may have been partly a result of the tendency of Australian Catholics to rely on their bishops for definitive moral guidance, although laymen also took part in the discussion of population and family problems. A more weighty reason for the united approach will probably be found in the 'ready acceptance of Roman pronouncements on matters of faith and morals' and 'the degree of passivity in the face of Rome with which the young [Australian] Church was imbued' after the pontificate of Pius IX. It follows that a survey of Roman opinion offers the best introduction to Australian Catholic opinion about population, and procreation and contraception, between 1890 and 1910.

Professor Noonan's fine study of theological and canonical responses to contraception reveals a period of relative leniency lasting from the middle of the eighteenth century until well into the nineteenth. There was renewed concentration on the topic after 1872 when French requests for Roman guidance brought a papal encyclical on marriage and a number of rulings by the Sacred Penitentiary, the tribunal dealing with matters of conscience. The encyclical made no specific reference to contraception but stressed the 'holy', as opposed to the 'natural', view of marriage and the Church's responsibility to rule on marital matters. The decisions
of the Penitentiary tightened up pastoral oversight of marital practices: the grounds on which a wife might—unwillingly—co-operate in her husband’s practice of *coitus interruptus* were narrowed; ignorant practice of contraception ‘in good faith’ was no longer considered excusable; and confessors were urged to substitute active inquiry concerning conjugal practices for their previous compliant silence.

The fifty years after 1880 saw Catholic teaching on contraception steadily hardening. There is no reason to suppose that Australian Catholicism stood apart from the trend and some evidence that the clergy welcomed it. The Australian Catholic hierarchy was led by Cardinal Moran of Sydney, ‘an intimate friend and appointee of Leo XIII’ and Leo’s encyclical of 1880 was widely publicised in Catholic papers and pulps. Moran took up the encyclical’s teachings in his own pastoral of 17 April 1886, which discountenanced divorce legislation then before the New South Wales parliament on the ground that the Catholic Church did not recognise the right of the state ‘to trench upon the Christian Sacrament or to dissolve the marriage bond’. In the mid-1890s the Australian hierarchy were as concerned as the Anglican leaders by the erosion of family life and declining status of marriage. Given the high view of marriage adopted in Leo’s *Arcanum* and Moran’s Pastoral, mixed marriages were naturally seen as deleterious to its sacramental status and were vilified accordingly by a Pastoral letter in 1895.

The next major Catholic statement on marital and related matters was provoked by the conjunction of two events in 1899, and came from Archbishop Carr of Melbourne, who was in the midst of exposing a contraceptive-peddling syndicate when his ire was raised by a judgment in divorce. On 16 November 1899 the *Age* reported the case Buckley v. Buckley, heard before Mr Justice Williams. Mr Buckley deposed that his wife had deserted him after several years of marriage and the advent of eight children, ostensibly because she refused to add to the eight. Plaintiff was left bereft of family and only formally consoled by the judge for, while granting a decree *nisi* on the ground of desertion, Mr Justice Williams went on to say that ‘If the law said it was desertion for a woman to refuse to go on bearing children after having already brought nine or ten into the world, the law was an ass.’ If the law required a woman to bear successive children at her husband’s behest, he would enforce the law but with regret.

Three days after the judgment was published the Archbishop went to open a new Church of the Sacred Heart at Carlton. He
took the occasion to upbraid the learned judge. As the *Argus* reported it, the Archbishop said that

The purposes for which such churches are built are mainly to guard the faith and promote piety and the practice of morality... From true and living faith naturally spring a correct idea and strict observance of morality. Just as from abuses or weakness of faith follow such perversions of morality as we have reason to deplore in public and private life. Within the last few days many of you must have read in the papers a judicial opinion which laid down opinions concerning marriage, and the duties and responsibilities of married life, which seems to be singularly dangerous at the present time.

Dr Carr said it was not for him to debate the legal question (which was irrelevant in the Buckley case, anyway) but he claimed the right to record a strong moral protest. The judge's opinion, he said is calculated to do serious harm, by suggesting to married women that their duties and responsibilities are not for life... but for a time, to be determined by the number of children they have borne. It may also easily suggest both to husband and wife that a large family should be regarded as involving an intolerable inconvenience and that such an inconvenience should be specially avoided.

The Archbishop found the judicial statement particularly irritating because it came at a time when he was attempting to initiate an action against the purveyors of an allegedly contraceptive device. A proprietary company whose directors included 'some well-known city men' had purchased the invention of 'a well-known Collins-street doctor' and circulars, of which Dr Carr had one, had been issued to pharmacists and physicians to publicise the invention. The Archbishop's efforts to have the company and its circular suppressed by the Attorney-General were unsuccessful, although the attendant publicity, as Detective M'Manamny reported, induced the promoters to wind up the company immediately.

Three principles were implied in Dr Carr's statements. He saw morality, and marital morality in particular, as fixed in one 'correct idea'. He rejected any suggestion that considerations of convenience or marital relationship should influence the bearing of children. And he claimed, in his letter to the Attorney-General, that the spread of birth control propaganda was a threat to social and national life. This doctrine was sufficiently general to attract the support of several non-Catholics: congratulatory letters came to Carr from 'an unknown and humble individual and [his] dear wife', the
Archdeacon of Ballarat, 'a Protestant by an accident of birth' whose wife had become 'charged with the false philosophy that now prevails', the Prahran Citizens' Association and the Secretary of the Victorian Council of Churches. Even Dr Rentoul, a frequent critic of Romanism, told the Presbyterian Assembly that the Archbishop should be thanked for his 'courageous utterance' and the Roman Catholic church honoured 'for the high estimate that it had always put upon the marriage tie'.

Carr referred to the 1899 affair again in a pamphlet reprinted from the Church's journal, *Austral Light*, in 1900. On this second occasion he came much closer to proclaiming a procreationist view of marriage:

> It has been shown that an organized attempt has been made . . . to interfere with the primary end of marriage, to frustrate the principal purpose for which the Almighty instituted matrimony, and to bring down the marriage state to a condition little elevated above concubinage.

He again assumed that there is an objective morality and was critical of those medical practitioners who did not try to bring their work into conformity with morality, as well as those who supposed 'the prevention or immediate relief of pain, or the pleasure of the patient' to be their primary consideration. The latter point was worked out in an explicit condemnation of therapeutic abortion: 'induction of premature birth and the Caesarian section' were permissible alternatives, he said, but the destruction of foetal life was not permitted 'even for the purpose of saving the mother's life'.

Carr's line on therapeutic abortion was much tougher than that of the Protestants who gave priority to maternal, not foetal, life but Carr's teaching was accepted by many of his fellow Catholics. At the Catholic Congress in Sydney in 1900 Dr G.L. Mullins, who was later to appear as a medical witness before the Mackellar Commission, read a paper on 'Catholic Teaching and Medical Practice' which encapsulated the contemporary Catholic position in syllogistic form:

1. From the moment of conception the child is possessed of a separate life or soul.
2. To destroy life is contrary to the Fifth Commandment.
3. Abortion is never justifiable, nor may Craniotomy be performed upon a living child.

Caught between this theological prohibition of abortion and a humanitarian interest in preserving maternal life, Catholics who gathered for another Congress in Melbourne in 1904 found an
escape from their dilemma via the recently popularised technique of Caesarian intrusion. Dr M.U. O'Sullivan, sometime President of the Victorian Branch of the British Medical Association, restated the definitive Catholic position:

By a decree of the Holy Office, dated March, 1902, the universal rule had been made clear—that in no condition in which there is a living foetus, ectopic or otherwise, is the physician justified in doing anything which might lead directly to the death of the foetus.

This rule applied even in cases where intra-uterine Baptism had been administered. O'Sullivan was also able to report that maternal mortality from Caesarian section was now no higher than that associated with craniotomy or abortion and that improved prenatal care was also altering the situation. Archbishop Carr, more gratified than logical, said he was pleased to hear that obstetric developments were bringing the medical profession into line with the Church's teaching.

A good deal of comment at the Melbourne Congress was directed to the Mackellar Commission's Report, which had been released earlier in the year. Since the report strongly reflected what may be called the 'common Christianity' of the clerical witnesses, Catholic comments on this occasion were very similar to those of Protestants. Lieutenant-Colonel Ahearne told the Congress that the decline of the birth rate undoubtedly resulted from an increase in 'the deliberate and intentional avoidance of procreation', caused by the decay of religious feeling and the growth of preventive knowledge. Dr J.B. Nash (who had been a member of the Commission) reiterated the Commission's finding that parental selfishness was the motivating force in these developments and Dr O'Sullivan stressed the deleterious effect of 'the newspaper advertisements of abortifacients'.

As well as agreeing with mainstream Protestant opinion on these matters O'Sullivan, Ahearne and the others were in close accord with their Cardinal, P.F. Moran, who had been a witness at the Mackellar Commission himself. Moran began his evidence on that occasion with the statement that artificial restriction of marital fertility 'violates the natural law, and violates still more the religious conditions and sanctity of marriage'. There might be a few, grave, unspecified circumstances in which a couple could live as brother and sister so that no more children could be born but any restriction by interference with intercourse he considered to be 'repugnant to the natural law, and repugnant to the religious duty of the contractors'. Further, he said, 'the practice of prevention certainly
undermines the belief in the dignity of womanhood, and in the
dignity of the married state, and in the whole supernatural order
in which we, as members of a Christian community, live'.\textsuperscript{74} In the
latter opinion he was giving expression, whether consciously or not,
to those positive elements of Christian concern for the status of
the married woman which had been the occasion for the formulation
of Catholic teaching on contraception centuries before.\textsuperscript{75}

Moran thought that the causes of the practice he deplored were
both religious and social. On the religious side he repeated his 1886
criticism of the state for taking to itself the right of divesting
marriage of its religious character by legislating more liberal
grounds for divorce. He also impugned the 'great humiliation,
derogatory to the whole idea of the sacredness of the marriage state'
of recognising the administration of marriage by officers of the
Salvation Army.\textsuperscript{76} On the social side he suggested a whole cluster
of causes for the decline of the birth rate: 'the deterioration in the
moral tone of our people' was put down to the too great availability
of corrupt literature in the form of newspapers, novels (especially
those of Zola) and the Sydney \textit{Bulletin}; there was insufficient
parental control over children in the city and excessive barefaced
immorality at the beaches; a further 'source of the prevalent
immorality' was the state school system, which the Cardinal thought
to be 'really undermining the morality of the community'. The
poverty which many people regarded as a possible cause of the
decline in family size was dismissed by the Cardinal as 'factitious
poverty' produced by improvidence or indolence, or by the fact that
'nearly every class is living beyond its means'.

If the Cardinal's collection of causes was rather inchoate, his
suggested remedies for communal ills showed no more social
sophistication. The state should take some steps to curb immoral
literature and police supervision of the beaches should be increased.
Prostitution should be put down and abortion prevented. The state
should also limit the number of pharmacies or tighten police control
over their sale of preventives, perhaps to the point of prohibition,
and it would also be salutary if the medical profession were cleaned
up, as it had been in Melbourne after Archbishop Carr's exposé.

The Cardinal, Archbishop Carr and a number of their laymen
shared definite theological beliefs about marriage and the family
which had been recently re-stated with considerable force by the
highest authorities of their Church. Their theological belief that
the foetus received a soul at conception made abortion entirely
unacceptable, while their sacramental view of marriage and its
purposes excluded the possibility of any other kind of family
limitation. In 1890 Protestant teaching was hardly distinguishable from Catholic but by the early 1900s some differences had begun to appear. Protestants were as strongly opposed as Catholics to the practice of abortion (where the mother’s life was not in danger), although less explicit about the theological basis of their position. They were more equivocal about prevention of conception: some regarded it as essentially bad, others regarded it as an expression of bad motives—such as selfishness—and a few believed that the morality of the practice depended on the circumstances of the practitioners.

Australian religion has always sat uneasily on the periphery of affairs, developing neither cultural roots nor theological self-consciousness nor an intellectual tradition. The response of clergy and laity to moral questions has therefore been reflexive rather than integrated and prophetic (in the best sense of that term). Christian religion has had no roots in Australia and the clergy have suffered, in addition, from the prevailing voluntaryism. Their pronouncements on public issues have therefore been most likely to be accepted when in accord with the dominant ideology. In the case of Australia’s declining birth rate the dominant ideology and the Christian tradition were in accord, for Christians have long regarded the family as a spiritual institution. Attacks on the family have therefore been regarded as an attack on spiritual values and, thus, on religion itself. Between about 1880 and 1930, in Australia as in Europe and North America, the sacramental view of marriage and its purposes was being questioned, usually, though not exclusively, by critics who were hostile to religion as well. Whereas developments of Christian sexual thought in the past had come ‘slowly and somewhat erratically in response to internal pressures’, after 1880 rapid response was required to pressures from outside the churches. It is not surprising that the majority of Christian ministers reacted adversely to the apparent threat to the religious and spiritual concept of the family, especially when they knew that members of their flocks were actually following practices such as the critics of religion advocated. Since the threat to the spiritual concept of the family incidentally threatened the ministers’ own role as spiritual advisers, hostility to the devaluation of the family was least in the Methodist community (where the emphasis on individual experience reduces the relative importance of the institution and the minister), and greatest in the Catholic Church (where institution and minister are most highly valued), with Presbyterian and Anglicans in between.
Theoretical debate about population in Australia during the last third of the nineteenth century was less vigorous and varied than in France, Britain or—to a lesser extent—the United States of America.\(^1\) Whereas one can speak of a post-Malthusian debate overseas from about 1870, in Australia the argument continued almost entirely in Malthusian terms. More of the participants in the debate were critics than supporters of Malthus and the theories of Henry George were a significant polarising influence. Ideas from the post-Malthusian debate overseas appeared in Australia only rarely before 1900 and chiefly as slogans of popular opinion thereafter. Neo-Malthusian theory also was largely absent from Australia where the debate was as much about natural increase in particular as about total population size and growth in general.*

Theoretical debate in Australia declined in intensity during the 1890s, giving way to more popular discussion of family size and growth by migration in the late 1890s and early 1900s when businessmen in particular became concerned about the links between population size and commercial conditions.

Because population theory was discussed more extensively in Australia during the 1880s than during the 1890s, it is somewhat misleading to plunge into the debate at the beginning of the 1890s.\(^2\) However, a useful springboard exists in articles written by A.J. Ogilvy and Charles Rennick in 1891. Ogilvy was a Tasmanian landowner and a vice-president of the Land Nationalization Society of London. By the time of his death he had become a 'well-known writer on land nationalization and social questions'.\(^3\) In his article 'Malthusianism', which first appeared in the \textit{Westminster Review} of September 1891, he attacked Malthus on both empirical and theoretical grounds. The tendency of population to increase at a

* In this study Malthusianism is regarded as the doctrine that increase of population will tend to proceed faster than increases in the means of subsistence unless there is moral restraint either in the form of abstention from marriage or by abstention from sexual intercourse within marriage. Neo-Malthusianism is the doctrine that excessive unwanted births may be avoided by the prevention of conception without abstention from intercourse.
geometrical rate was disputable, Ogilvy said, because of the extent of mortality before the age for marriage, the failure of many marriageable people to enter the estate 'for various reasons that have nothing to do with subsistence', and the limited fertility of many who did marry. On this basis six children would be required of every fecund couple 'merely to keep up the population'. He also suggested that the actual annual growth rate of about 2 per cent in Australia, where subsistence was cheap and catastrophic checks unknown, was 'far from being a "geometrical" rate'. Even if mortality and celibacy did not operate, he added, geometrical increase would be prevented by the diminution of fertility as brain power was cultivated and life became more artificial and regular.

Not only did population fail to increase geometrically, Ogilvy contended, but subsistence increased more than arithmetically. He identified three stages of human development in which man simply consumed subsistence, husbanded subsistence and, finally, improved or invented subsistence. In this last, 'progressive', stage, provided there was sufficient land, the rate of increase in production would be more nearly geometrical than the increase in population. The idea that increasing population pressed upon subsistence was simply the result of confusing Diminishing Area (which would eventually be a problem) with the falsely labelled 'Law' of Diminishing Return. Following very closely after Henry George, Ogilvy said that, rather than diminishing the return from a given area, concentration of population increased the return because of the efficiencies following upon greater division of labour. Besides claiming that the Malthusian analysis was wrong in respect of both numbers and subsistence, Ogilvy protested that the Malthusian remedy of prudential restraint would aggravate any situation in which a catastrophic check to population was threatening: 'For the remedy is offered to the poorer classes where want threatens, not to the rich who are secure; and no one imagines that the whole body of the poor would adopt it at once.' In fact the effect of restraint would be dysgenic for the 'best' people would 'leave no children to transmit their excellencies' while 'the inferior' would multiply to fill the additional room.

Ogilvy's article was published in London but it was also read in Australia. The Westminster Review was taken by public and private libraries while the Melbourne Argus, which shared with other newspapers the habit of reviewing the English magazines, told its readers that Ogilvy 'exposed . . . the fallacies of the Malthusian doctrine.' One person who saw the article was Charles Rennick and he proceeded to write a refutation of it for the Melbourne...
Bankers' Magazine. He pinpointed the intellectual paternity of his adversary's ideas with the comment that Ogilvy could 'hardly be congratulated on taking Henry George for his guide, philosopher and friend' on the subject. He also shortly stated his view that Ogilvy's 'attempt to upset the Law of Population' was unsupported either 'by new knowledge, or by sound reasonings on old data'.

After two paragraphs of preliminary rhetoric Rennick settled down to the defence of Malthus. He acknowledged that strict geometrical and arithmetical ratios of increase in numbers and subsistence were 'now discarded as inaccurate' and not considered essential to the doctrine of population but he stood by the statement 'that population tends to increase faster than the means of subsistence' as the law of population. He defended Malthus's empiricism, which he contrasted with the abstract doctrines of 'the single taxers and socialists', and held it to Malthus's credit that he was supported by Darwin and by 'almost every economist of note since his own day' including Henry Sidgwick and Alfred Marshall.

Turning to Ogilvy's strictures on Malthus, Rennick pointed out that they were wrong in two particulars, the discussion of catastrophic and prudential checks and the argument about the availability of subsistence. Ogilvy had given it as Malthusian doctrine that the pressure of numbers on subsistence would necessarily issue in catastrophe: but, Ogilvy had said, the pressure would never reach that level because some people would always refrain from marriage or procreation. He did not see that the behaviour he regarded as invalidating Malthus's argument was the same behaviour which Malthus had called prudential restraint! As Rennick was quick to point out, Ogilvy had misunderstood Malthus's argument about positive and preventive checks and the attempt to refute the doctrine of increase therefore failed.

In Rennick's opinion, Ogilvy had also failed to show that scarcity of subsistence was but a remote possibility. People crowding on a given territory might gain increasing wealth by specialisation, Rennick said, but the attempt to discount the law of diminishing returns with this argument simply confused wealth with subsistence. It was clear that the increase of one did not necessarily ensure a greater supply of the other. To the argument that presently uncultivated, inferior land could be brought into cultivation to meet any population increase in the foreseeable future, Rennick replied that a price which made additional cultivation profitable to the landowner might equally well deprive the poor man of subsistence by putting it beyond his power to purchase. As an illustration that
land supply did not guarantee food supply he pointed to the contemporary coexistence in Russia of thousands of unused acres and thousands of famished peasants: 'Population may be checked not only by absolute scarcity of food, but also by inability to purchase food where there is no absolute scarcity.'

Having argued against George-ite criticism of Malthus, Rennick took his own stand on a conditional, rather than an absolute, statement of the Law of Population. The Law, he said,

asserts that the fecundity of the human race is so great that if it were not arrested by checks, population would outrun subsistence. Population never does and never can outrun subsistence, because the checks in question come into operation to prevent it.

Rennick did not draw any inferences about population policy from his theoretical considerations although one practical implication for Australia of his views was clear enough. If large supplies of unused land were no guarantee of largely increased subsistence, then the popular argument that Australia's extensive lands should be filled up with a numerous population was at least opened to debate. If one wanted to draw a policy from Ogilvy's theory, on the other hand, it could be that of attracting numerous migrants of a 'superior' type, settling them on the land, encouraging them to procreate and waiting for the increase of their wealth.

Although it has been useful to juxtapose the views of Ogilvy and Rennick, it would be wrong to give the impression that they initiated the population debate in the 1890s. Already in 1890 Malthusianism had been discussed in two papers, by Andrew Garran and H.A. Ellis, delivered to meetings of the Australian Economic Association in Sydney. Garran told the Association that Malthus had made an empirical observation that fertility varies between the animal and vegetable kingdoms, then added the non-empirical labels 'geometrical' and 'arithmetical' to give 'a form of mathematical demonstration to his argument without the reality'. Garran criticised this as an example of the tendency, which he regarded as the bane of political theorists, 'to find a single cause for a complex result' and warned his hearers against attempting simple refutations of the Malthusian position.

Garran should have been pleased with the views of H.A. Ellis. Unlike Charles Rennick, who had disparaged reliance on the doctrines of Henry George as a counter to the doctrines of Malthus, Ellis wanted to have a foot in each camp. He accepted 'the fundamental propositions of Malthus' as true but suggested that
they were sufficiently conditional to allow other conclusions than Malthus’s to flow from them. For example, he thought relief from the Malthusian crux could be sought in two directions, ‘first limiting of population, and secondly, increasing production’. Ellis regarded the former alternative as outside his province but for the latter way out of the crux he thought Henry George had supplied a mechanism: land nationalisation would do away with middlemen, get more labour onto the land and thus increase available nourishment.

In another part of his paper Ellis claimed that Malthus had held the numbers-subsistence crux to be ineluctable and that Darwin had taken this up as the motive power of the struggle for existence. Ellis argued that the amelioration of the struggle by modern social developments showed that man had the ability to modify his surroundings and evade the Malthusian dilemma. Archibald Forsyth, who was among Ellis’s audience and himself something of an economic theorist, agreed that technological change had dispelled the Malthusian spectre. For the rest, however, Forsyth dismissed Ellis’s paper as a pointless collection of contradictions about Malthus and misunderstandings of George!

Neither Forsyth nor Ellis, nor their forebears in theory, impressed Samuel Clemes, a Tasmanian schoolmaster, who presented a paper on population theory to the 1892 meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science. Clemes thought that population studies lacked a good theoretical base, notwithstanding the pioneering but partial treatment of the topic by Malthus and the investigations by Darwin and Spencer, because statistical studies had elbowed aside the possible contributions of physiology and other sciences. As an example of the deficiencies of a purely statistical approach Clemes pointed to the so-called geometrical progression of population which had raised bogies in the Australian context of high fertility. The absurdity of the geometric rate was evident if the world’s present population were extrapolated back in time: ‘This only gives us, at the most, two or three thousand years for the existence of man on the earth. Geologists would want 50,000 or 60,000 years at least.’ As well as advising Australians not to worry about geometrical progression Clemes told them not to be afraid that overpopulation would result from the prevailing rate of fertility. He may have known that the crude birth rate had, in fact, begun to fall in 1891 but his attitude nevertheless stands in marked contrast with the Mackellar Commissioners’ later insistence that the high rate should be regarded as ‘normal’. In a statement notable for its recognition of the changeable nature of demographic phenomena, Clemes said
The birth-rate is very fluctuating, and this is a much more important factor than the death-rate. There is nothing really to be alarmed at since the present rate of increase in Australia is due to many causes exceptionally favourable to increase of population. These will be gradually changed again and the rate will infallibly be lowered. The population of the world . . . has always been a variable quantity and constantly changing its location.

But there was a last word of caution: 'in any case Malthus's moral checks should still be urged on all who will listen to them'.

Theoretical debate about population diminished after 1892 as economic ruin forced most people to look to their more practical affairs. For example, the last attempt by the Australian Economic Association to dabble in population theory (before the Association drifted into limbo in 1899) was made in 1893 when a Miss Louisa MacDonald gave a paper setting out an emancipist view of the economic position of women. She called attention to prevailing concern about aspects of overpopulation. Overpopulation can lead to demand for female employment opportunities and neo-Malthusian practices. It can also free women for economic employment, though, and Miss MacDonald thought it was notable that the beginning of the 'women's movement' coincided with 'the first expression of what we call Malthusianism'. Even if Miss MacDonald did wrongly identify Malthusianism and neo-Malthusianism, she was making a serious attempt to relate contemporary events to a theoretical framework. For her troubles the pundits of the Association treated her as patronisingly as they had treated Ellis before her. Arthur Duckworth, the secretary, ignored her theoretical points and damned the 'woman movement' for causing 'serious injury to the upgrowing generation', while Professor Walter Scott, the academic lynch-pin of the Association, and the Hon. L.F. Heydon ignored her Malthusian comments and spoke of her paper as if it were merely a diversion.13

The economists could hardly have dealt so lightly with C.H. Pearson, an Oxford-trained historian, liberal politician and minister in Victoria, leader writer for the Age and 'a thoroughgoing individualist'.14 His most influential publication was certainly an individual piece of work: National Life and Character was a forecast that the 'higher races' could not expect to expand beyond Europe and the colonies of the Temperate Zone but, rather, would come under increasing pressure from the more prolific black and yellow races. The consequent concentration of European peoples would be followed by State Socialism, with increasing national
indebtedness, and by urbanisation on a scale inimical to physical stamina, genius or intellectual distinction.\textsuperscript{15}

This forecast did not amount to 'the most detailed and carefully reasoned statement of the new Australian concern with Asian overpopulation'\textsuperscript{16} but *National Life and Character* did have important echoes later. Alfred Deakin, Australia's first Attorney-General and second Prime Minister, was 'an intellectual disciple' of Pearson and there are obvious reminiscences of Pearson's book in Deakin's second reading speech on the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, the legislative confirmation of the White Australia Policy. The speech shows that Deakin, like Pearson, was free of gross racial prejudices and 'avoided crude general implications of "superiority"'.\textsuperscript{17} Pearson would have been less happy with two men from Deakin's electorate who claimed Pearson as their intellectual champion in a stridently racialist defence of the White Australia policy in 1904.\textsuperscript{18}

Pearson appears to have been familiar with Malthusian doctrine without being committed either for or against it. He certainly did not hold to any law of increase in population and agreed with Clemes that the comparison of past and present world population made the invalidity of the law plain to everyone. In fact he thought it a 'matter of extreme difficulty to predict what the rate of increase in any particular country, or at any given time', would be. On the other hand he believed that the catastrophic checks of 'Misgovernment, war, and pestilence' had perpetually foiled the natural increase of population in all centuries before his own.\textsuperscript{19} The disappearance of those checks meant that, as they became hemmed in by the more rapid increase of negro and Asian peoples, the European races would have to restrain their own increase of population. If this were done by a patient self-restraint showing itself in a limitation to late marriages—the moral restraint of classical Malthusianism—there would be material decline but no harm to national character. But if it were done by 'methods... inconsistent with morality, the very life-springs of the race [would] be tainted'.\textsuperscript{20} In his hint at the dire consequences of non-moral limitation of fertility and his rather jaundiced view of towns as consumers of men, constantly needing vigorous countrymen to rejuvenate them,\textsuperscript{21} Pearson was touching themes that were soon to have wide currency.

Pearson had a rather aloof personality and his book, too, stood a little apart from the common debate. The same could not be said of Maximillian Hirsch, political economist, single-taxer and promi-
nent publicist for free-trade in the tariff debates which raged in Victoria throughout the 1890s. His theory of population, like that of many other anti-Malthusians in Australia, owed a good deal to Henry George but he was no slavish disciple. On the law of diminishing returns, for example, he argued that increase of population does constantly tend to raise the final cost of primary products. On the other hand, he held, 'the cost of production of any manufactured commodity constantly tends to fall as population increases'. When primary losses were weighed against secondary gains Hirsch's position was the same as George's:

The final outcome of increase in population ... is a general decrease in the cost of production; ... the more numerous the population of a country becomes, the more easily and the more fully can the wants and desires of all of them be satisfied. The exertion required for the production of a given amount of wealth per head becomes less as population increases.22

These assertions countered the Malthusian view that the factors population and exertion varied directly in the production of given wealth, Hirsch claimed, and thus took away from political economy the stigma 'dismal science'.

Hirsch did not extend his theory to suggest what surely would have been appreciated in depressed Victoria, that rapid population increase would lead to quick satisfaction of wants. However, no mere theorist's bidding was needed to make Australian commercial and industrial leaders see that point! They had a good deal to say about population questions after 1890, chiefly from the aspect of the numbers and growth rate necessary to maximise business profits. Since little of their commentary proceeded from a clear conceptual framework it might be included with the account of popular opinion, were it not that it appeared in the specialist, rather than the secular, press and that it did develop some lines of thought inherent in the 'theoretical' debate.

There were a few, not very sophisticated, attempts to relate economic and demographic phenomena. In 1893, for example, W.H. Eldred, writing in the New South Wales bankers' Journal, listed among the causes of the prevailing financial crisis 'the cessation of immigration caused by the withdrawal of government aid, whereas the true policy of the country lies in encouraging population ...'.23 Shortly afterwards another correspondent of the Journal earnestly assured bankers that 'an observant student' would find that 'vital statistics afford as reliable a test of [economic] progress as can well be found'. The writer also appears to have regarded the converse as true, that economic trends are useful indicators of
With the commencement of the crisis, and trade and industrial depression, our normal rate of increase began to decline. How long this movement will continue it is next to impossible to say, but there can be no reason for doubting that, with the first symptoms of returning prosperity, our population will resume its wonted rate of increase.24

Four years later an unsigned article in the same journal implied that a relationship existed between investment policy and population growth. The writer compared the six-fold increases of both public and private borrowing with the population increase of less than 40 per cent during the 1880s and lamented that the borrowed money had not been invested in productive works. If investment had been made in production, he said, 'the demands incidental thereto upon our limited supply of labour would have been of so great a magnitude that it could not have failed to attract the attention of the European emigrant class . . .'.25 The Melbourne bankers' editor made a similar point, with additional political overtones. The departure from Victoria of 50,000 adults in three years had cancelled the natural increase of the state's population, he claimed, but there was yet hope.

Directly our people have an idea . . . that we may hope for liberal Government . . ., plus a good season or two, they will cease to leave us . . . Melbourne has had quite enough spent on her. What is wanted is the opening up of back country like the mountainous parts of Gippsland, or water conservation in the arid Mallee country.26

The central theme of the population-and-profits debate among business leaders was an attack on the Malthusian spectre of overpopulation. The businessmen mostly took the George-ite line (divested of George-ite trimmings, of course!) that Australia could support a much larger population than it was doing and indeed, should encourage immigration to achieve an increase in population as quickly as possible. Throughout the 1890s, and beyond, the call for population growth was often linked with optimistic predictions about the effect of growth on productivity. After about 1904 there was a companion call for population growth as a good-in-itself. The main variants in the latter period were an occasional suggestion that natural increase would be preferable to increase by migration and some sharp differences of opinion about the restriction of immigration to whites only.
Throughout the 1880s Victorian business leaders dwelt on the advantages of an increase in population and, thus, in the size of the market to themselves, the workers and the colony. This theme was carried on into the 1890s. An early statement linked improvement of trade with the currently fashionable schemes to relieve urban congestion by settling people on the land but as the depression of trade grew deeper the stress was simply on the therapeutic value for commerce of an increase in numbers. The point was made twice during 1894 by writers in the New South Wales bankers' Journal. One writer confined himself to the opinion that: 'The certain outlet for Australian products will be promoted by the increase in population, and all energies should be directed to aid immigration of the most desirable class.' His colleague was more extravagant:

it is monstrous to suppose Australia is to be for ever inhabited by only 4,000,000 people—and when, as assuredly will happen, we have 10,000,000 inhabitants—securities of all kinds will be greatly enhanced in value . . . With increased population our own markets will greatly expand.

The quintessential statement of the commercial view about the relationship between population and business conditions appeared in the Journal in 1897. A writer calling for increased immigration by Britishers 'of the right stamp' assured his readers that New South Wales alone was 'capable of supporting twenty times her present population at least . . .'. He urged the encouragement of immigration on the economic grounds that 'Population and revenue are seen to increase in almost equal ratios, falling and rising the one with the other'. So far as the Australian colonies were concerned, 'fresh blood and moderate capital [were] urgently needed to hasten production'.

With a healthy immigration flowing in . . . a fresh impulse would be speedily perceptible in trade, both land and house property would rise and the securities at present clogging our financial institutions would again assume a nearer approach to their old valuations.

After 1900 the profit motive for population growth remained a common topic among business leaders, its currency in New South Wales becoming nearly as wide as it had been in Victoria during the 1880s. The President of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce for 1903 deemed it necessary to have a population 'which steadily expands as commerce itself does'. In 1905 the New South Wales Chamber of Manufactures supported Prime Minister Deakin's
immigration proposals on the ground that 'Desirable immigration means more people, and more people means more capital, and the utilization of millions of acres of unused territory, and thus increasing our national wealth'. The following year the acting-President of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, obviously directing his remarks at labour leaders' fears for job security, announced it as an indubitable truth 'that an increase in population means an increase of wealth not only of the few but of the many'. The President of the Melbourne Chamber, aiming his words at similar ears in 1908, said that suitable immigrants 'would be consumers as well as producers and should therefore be welcomed by all classes'. In 1907 the General Council of Chambers of Commerce besought the government to ensure a steady stream of immigration to cope with the 'growth in industrial manufactures which will shortly exceed the volume of consumption of the present population'. The great adaptability of the population-and-profit doctrine was finally demonstrated in 1908 when it was linked with developments in fiscal policy: the President of the New South Wales Chamber of Manufactures told his members that

If they wanted to get any benefits from increased protection they must get increased payment and that could not come from their own limited populations. A wisely managed scheme of immigration would be as much the saviour of the manufacturers as anything could be.31

Some commercial men thought mere increase of population failed to provide the whole answer to their problems. There was also a good deal of interest in the way population was distributed between town and country. At the beginning of the 1890s the Australasian Trade Review reported in gratified tones that the population in the Melbourne metropolitan area had advanced by leaps and bounds since the census of 1881. By 1893, however, in the aftermath of the financial crash, a chastened Review was saying

the great problem which overshadows all is how to bring surplus labour and idle land into contact . . . It is not to tide over some temporary depression that is now the task, but to relieve Melbourne of a population of many thousands without allowing the overflow of energy to drain away to other colonies . . . Our [able-bodied, male] population has been ebbing away from us for many months past . . . In the meantime, close to our capital, thousands of acres lie idle, waiting for the application of such energy to turn them into teeming gardens.32

This theme of the need to promote the growth of rural population
was one which survived the mid-1890s. The President of the Bank of New South Wales reported in 1893 that one of the greatest evils facing the Australian colonies was 'the concentration of an unnecessarily large population in the cities and towns' while there was 'an enormous area of splendid land wasting'. His sentiments were repeated almost verbatim by his successor in 1895 and were echoed by the President of the Australian Economic Association in 1896.33 In 1904 the same theme was heard, with a variation, from the Melbourne Bankers' Magazine. The magazine reported that far too many young men were seeking scarce city office jobs with slight salaries. Consequently 'the men cannot marry, the women must work, the land is undeveloped, the population remains stationary ...'. The remedy was said to lie in a system of government loans 'to induce young men of good character and upbringing to try the experiment of open air life'.34

Virtually all the articulate members of the commercial community were united in desiring an increase of population for Australia. Most agreed that immigration was an acceptable, and probably the most effective, means of achieving the increase—particularly after the Mackellar Commission's gloomy estimate of fertility prospects. G.S. Littlejohn, who had been a member of the Commission but was speaking in 1904 as President of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, felt the baby was commercially inferior to the immigrant who was usually an adult, brought 'more or less capital, skill, knowledge already acquired' and was therefore 'of great value as a producer, direct or indirect, and as a consumer'.35 M'Pherson of Melbourne and Jeffrey Denniss of Sydney agreed that, besides lacking skills, the baby was rather too long in coming. In 1905 Denniss reported himself 'very much grieved' by a colleague who had stated that the best immigrants would be babies. 'Babies are all very well in their places', Denniss replied, 'but for us to wait for the country to be populated as fully as it ought to be by the Australian born only, would be for us to wait a very long time indeed'. Even in 1908 a speaker in the General Council of Chambers of Commerce annual debate on the Encouragement of Immigration could gain no support for his advocacy of equal emphasis on growth by natural increase and by immigration.36

Commercial men not only preferred immigration to natural increase but were, by and large, indifferent to the racial origin of migrants. The 1902 Committee of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce were critical of legislative restraints on either non-European migrants or European labourers entering Australia under contract. A possible political motivation in these attitudes was revealed a year
later when the President of the Chamber called on 'the entire commercial community of the Commonwealth' to join in 'emphatically condemning the action of the Federal Labor party in forcing an issue on the coloured labour question'. The *Insurance and Banking Record* also twice criticised the exclusion of coloured immigrants in the early months of 1904, when the white population was proving incapable of growing at a sufficient rate to people the northern regions of the continent. The problem was set in two rhetorical questions:

Are [Australians] compensating for the exclusion of others by the peopling of the country by themselves?
Are they a virile race or are they retrograding?

To which the answer was equally rhetorical:

White Australia, unfortunately, is not carrying out the Divine injunction to be fruitful, to multiply, and to replenish the earth. The minority commercial case in favour of restrictive immigration did appear in 1905 when the President of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce declared 'These aliens are useless to us. They are not consumers worthy of the name, and what they do consume they purchase from their patriots [sic] . . .'. In the same year, however, Denniss was commending an open door policy and a resolution decrying the folly of barring coloured access to tropical Australia was moved at the General Council of Chambers of Commerce. After 1905 the 'white Australia' issue seems to have dropped out of discussion in commercial circles, possibly because it was recognised that restriction had become a settled policy or because the rapid growth of non-coloured immigration in the latter half of the decade took the urgency out of the matter.

Spokesmen for the labour movement showed less interest than the employing class in every aspect of population growth except immigration. Few individuals spoke out on population questions and the labour press was almost devoid of comments. The movement was nearly unanimous, however, in its opposition to immigration. Working-class leaders made a continuing attempt to have the immigration vote removed from New South Wales budgets throughout the 1880s. Their agitation was strongest during periods of economic depression and was based chiefly on the belief that immigration cheapened labour. There was so little immigration during most of the 1890s and for much of the decade after 1900 that labour men had no occasion for comment. Opposition to the
immigrant reappeared around 1910, however, when an Adelaide Trades Hall meeting, the Port Melbourne branch of the Political Labour Council, political and industrial labour organisations in Broken Hill, and the Port Adelaide Trades and Labour Council were numbered among the protestors. Migrants were opposed because they were alleged to be found wandering about the cities in search of work (instead of settling on the land), because there was no land for them to settle or because they would ‘flood the country with cheap labour’ and destroy the workers’ ability ‘to dictate something like decent terms’.

Labour’s demand for security was opposed to Capital’s demand for labour but the divergence of interests failed to produce conflict over population theory. Labour thinkers in southern states do not appear to have seen the population question in ideological terms but there were two radical assessments of the problem in Queensland. In 1892 H.E. Boote, a Queenslander who tended to confuse Malthusian doctrine with neo-Malthusian practice, declared that Malthusianism probably had done ‘more to retard the true solution of social problems’ than any doctrine previously promulgated. Ever since its appearance Malthus’s *Essay on Population* had dispirited the rank and file by suggesting ‘that after all they were their own worst oppressors’. Boote took the contrary view, that poverty was the cause of overpopulation, on the grounds that

Where there are few opportunities for intellectual life, as in new settlements, the birth-rate is notoriously high and it is in the slums of the cities, and in the hovels of the country, that the children swarm like rabbits. Poverty is a prolific breeder . . . Extirpate poverty, and the population problem would solve itself.

Australia itself was said to confound the Malthusian theory that poverty results from overpopulation, for examples of poverty could be found even in this land of sparse population, few large families and soil offering limitless possibilities for wealth. Boote did have one good word for the followers of Malthus. Despite their error about the cause of misery, he said, their stress on the dangerous rate at which population could increase was salutary ‘at a time when the rapid reproduction of the species has been elevated to the dignity of a social virtue’.

The Brisbane *Worker*’s analysis of fertility problems was similar to Boote’s but more explicitly Marxist. The paper said that the paucity of the birth rate was
an effect whose cause is deep laid down in the very foundations upon which this rotten system of capitalistic society is based. . . . Labour-saving appliances mean reduced wages . . . By displacing workmen also they increase competition in all other branches of trade . . . This increased competition decreases wages all round and the security of employment . . . .

The reduction of employment leads to a contraction of marriage and an increase in the number of women entering an already congested labour market. Thus forced to recognise their true interests, the Worker predicted, women would range their forces in line with men who are already fighting the battle of the disinherited . . . And this is the redeeming feature about a capitalist system of society, founded on competition—it breeds within it and fosters the forces that will ultimately destroy it.44

Labour spokesmen in the south were less radical. William Maston of the New South Wales Trades and Labour Council suggested in 1891 that Australia was overpopulated or, at least, that there was a surplus of labour. He thought the causes of this situation included: ‘(1st) The natural increase of population; (2nd) the introduction of labour-saving machinery; (3rd) immigration; (4th) the breaking down of small manufacturing enterprises.’ Some largely unrelated remedies were offered but Maston did not suggest that immigration should be halted or that limitation of natural increase should be encouraged.45 The trade unionist’s fear of technological developments was reiterated in 1903 by Edward Riley, who appeared before the Mackellar Commission as President of the Sydney Labour Council.46 Riley said that there was very little discussion of the declining birth rate in trade union circles. However, his own view was that mechanisation was making employment uncertain: as a result building tradesmen were sometimes earning only thirty shillings a week, a sum on which, he thought, the upkeep of a family was hardly to be expected.

Riley’s evidence was distinctive because he emphasised the importance of people’s social expectations, whereas most discussion of socio-economic influences on the birth rate dwelt on the simple relationship between income and family size. When Mackellar pilloried the poor for trying to ape the pleasures which he was able to indulge with ease, Riley struck back:

Do not you think you make a mistake when you educate a man or woman up to a social standing when you try to deny them all the rights and social comforts that they see other
people enjoying? . . . When people's minds are educated they crave for social enjoyments . . .

the industrial classes, born into this world, and producing all the wealth of the world, have as much right to their enjoyment and pleasure as any other class. If the upper class, enjoy these things, then I hope they will have the aim and ambition to do it. If you once deprive them of that you will lower their standard of living—you just bring them down to the same condition as in the Asiatic countries and Europe.

Riley's sympathy for those who could not afford a large family did not extend to approval of family limitation and his remedy for declining fertility was the standard one for the time—promotion of closer settlement on the land.

J.E. West, President of the Trades Hall Committee and himself a master plumber, told the Mackellar Commission he agreed with Riley that employment was very uncertain in Sydney and that it would be a struggle to keep a family on prevailing wages. He also agreed that social enjoyments and a large family were incompatible but drew the opposite conclusion from Riley, saying that, in the long run, the poor man would gain no enjoyment from his small family because the means taken for limitation would destroy the health of the wife. Seeing selfishness, not necessity, as the cause of limitation, West did not bother to propose a remedy.

Apart from the widespread opposition to immigration, the labour movement continued as silent on population questions after the Mackellar Commission as it had done before. The meagre evidence of a single pamphlet suggests, as one might expect, that Labour's interest in collectivist improvement of social conditions was leading it towards the same interest in infant life conservation as was taken by those who proceeded from individualist assumptions. In 1908 the veteran union organiser and politician, W.G. Spence, amalgamated this collectivism and interest in conservation with the currently popular themes of evolution and racial decay:

We are working toward the time when the aim of our collective action will be in the direction of deliberately and consciously trying to produce the highest type of man and woman possible . . . It is only by giving opportunity for bringing out all the best qualities latent in each new-born unit that the evolutionary gain of our race will appear. Just as we work to that end will degeneracy be prevented.

Spence's proposals for the improvement of each child's opportunities included governmental supervision of housing standards, gov-
Plate 1. The myths and fantasies surrounding the Royal Commission, and the remoteness of the Commissioners, are all expressed in Alf Vincent's appraisal of the proceedings for the Bulletin (20 August 1903 p. 7).
OUR DECLINING BIRTH-RATE.

COGHLAN: "Why don't you get born more, you little beggar? You're imperilling the future of this great country."

BABY: "No, I'm on strike. You don't value me when I do get born; you seldom or never treat me properly, and until you give me a fair show I won't be born any more!"

Plate II. The Bulletin (2 December 1899 p. 5) comments on the publication of Coghlan's *Childbirth in New South Wales*. 

Plate III. An early portrait of Charles Kinnaird Mackellar when President of the Board of Health and Medical Advisor to the Government, 1882-1885, gives a hint of the dominant personality which was to be expressed during the 1903 Royal Commission.
**EXPLANATORY NOTES**

**to the**

No More Worry Co.'s Patent Pessary.

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**Fig. 1.**

*The above Illustrations are Self-Explanatory to you.*

Fig. 1 shows the shape of our Pessary, and it will be noticed that it is constructed on common-sense lines. It is made of an Alloy which is even lighter than Aluminium, and which does not oxidise. It can be sterilised by boiling in 1/2 Node Solution, thus precluding all local infection, as common with the older style.

Fig. 2 shows the instrument attached to the introducer, and

Fig. 3 illustrates clearly the position of the Pessary when properly introduced. The protection it affords is shown in the Diagram. A covers the cervix when the bulbous part B effectively closes the uterus, the silver-shaped point C firmly maintains the Pessary in position, and the point D facilitates introduction.

Users readily learn to introduce and remove the Pessary for themselves, and though it can be worn for weeks without much discomfort, it is recommended that it be removed at more frequent intervals, and after removal an enema should always be used.

The Pessary is made in four sizes, and when ordering, please mention size required:

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No More Worry Co., New York, U.S.A.

Australasian Depot: Brisbane, Queensland.

Price to Chemists and Doctors, 25s. each. Advertised Price, £2:2:-.

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Plate IV. The No More Worry Co's device could be obtained 'under plain wrapper' from Brisbane. The mode of delivery must have been common when the *Bulletin* published this cartoon on 1 June 1898.
LAMBERT'S NEW
COMBINED PESSARY AND SHEATH.

Combined Appliances are manufactured from pure Valised and Linseed Rubber, and is the latest improvement in Pessaries for pro.

In Stock now at our Shops, covered with rubber, which can be rolled up into the shape of a Spring Pessary, or used as the wife may desire, and, in its used shape be used by the husband as the most reliable Sheath yet in

So, it is simply impossible for anything to escape into the passage used in this form. If desired and used according to the instructions, the appliance may be employed with complete confidence for a certain period. This appliance is made in three sizes, the medium being the most

Complete, with Directions for use, 8d. each Post Free.

LAMBERT'S 1899* PARAGON SHEATH.

This appliance is introduced at our 1899 Paragon which has several special and important features; and we are, I trust, that it will give every satisfaction. It is similar in shape to the

Sole Australian Agent: Sir Robert Bear, 16 Park Street, Sydney.

Combined Pessary and Sheath, but at the closed extremity is provided small metal orifices necessary for the inflow and outflow of the fluid. As this important part must be known to the user, it dispenses with the care that should be taken to make the appliance a perfect fit. It has been designed in this form, and after many months. It is the only article of the kind that can be used without inconvenience to the husband. It affords a convenient check and prompt means of escape for all the passage of the woman, and should the mouth and neck of the womb. It is made to three sizes: when used as a preventive, the medium is the

Another Patent, or Female Sheath in a recent invention, and is a very useful appliance. It is made from pure rubber and medicated and can be trusted on the whole interior of the womb. No trouble is experienced in placing it in position. With

Complete Appliances, or Female Sheath in a recent invention, and is a very useful appliance. It is made from pure rubber and medicated and can be trusted on the whole interior of the womb. No trouble is experienced in placing it in position. With

SIR ROBERT BEAR'S
OLUBLE PESSARIES.

Pessaries were first introduced to the Australian public by Sir Bear early in 1898. Since that time they have been largely and successfully used as a preventive. They are simple, convenient, efficient, and being manufactured from pure ingredients, there is nothing in them to cause harm or irritation in any way. Sir Robert Bear desires to warn the public against the many imitations of his

Sole Australian Agent: Sir Robert Bear, 16 Park Street, Sydney.

THE IMPROVED MENSSINBA CHECK PESSARY,
Or New Australian Pessary.

It is very little trouble to do so.

Dr. H. A. ALBRIGHT states in his 1890; — "I prefer Lambert's Improved Vertical and Reverse Current Syringe to any other, the current is Vertical and

Sole Australian Agent: Sir Robert Bear, 16 Park Street, Sydney.

Lambert's Improved Vertical and Reverse Current SYRINGE.

This Improved Syringe is perfect in the Vertical and Reverso Section, as every part will be thoroughly cleaned by its use. The Vertical holes will current into the most remote portions of the Vagina, and the Reverse holes will current out anything which may result. It is a

H. A. ALBRIGHT, M.R.C.P., L.S.A.

Nurse Davis says "Monthly MITI "1900; — "I prefer Lambert's Vertical Syringe to any other, it is made by the same people, the current is Vertical and

H. A. ALBRIGHT, M.R.C.P., L.S.A.

Referee from "Hunt's Nursing," 1890." — "I prefer Lambert's Improved Vertical and Reverse Current Syringe to any other, its power and forward and

Lambert's Improved Vertical and Reverse Current Syringe is perfect for all vaginal infections, on account of its powerful current and forward and backward currents.

Second Quality, 1d. each, 4d. Doz.

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Continuous holes which are simply com-

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A. W. Lambert & Son.
MRS. B. SMYTH,
51 ERROL STREET, NORTH MELBOURNE,

Has always in Stock and on Sale the following—


MRS. B. SMYTH,
Practitioner of Medical Electricity.

ALL NERVOUS AFFECTIONS TREATED BY ELECTRICITY.

FOUR TREATMENTS FOR £1.

N.B.—MRS. SMYTH Delineates Character at 51 Errol Street, and gives a Chart for the small sum of 2s. 6d. Diseases and their Cures will be given. Trades and Professions pointed out.

ADAPTATION IN MARRIAGE A SPECIALTY.

Plate VI. An advertising leaf from Bessie Smyth's Limitation of Offspring (Rae Bros Melbourne 1893) suggests that 'the womb and its appendages' were mothers of considerable invention as the birth rate began to decline. La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.
12th Check—The Preventif Pessaire or Contraceptive Check. —The best, safest, and most sure Check. It has never been known to fail where instructions have been carried out.

**The French Pessaire Preventif.**

In offering this instrument to the public, a few remarks in explanation may be appropriate. There seems to be a lack of confidence in the Pessaires heretofore used, owing to the fact that they have been constructed without bearing any relation whatever to the parts with which they were to be brought into contact, consequently more injury than benefit has been caused by their use.

The French Pessaire Preventif is constructed on a common sense principle, and strictly in accordance with the anatomy of the female organisation. It is light in weight, being made of pure soft rubber, prepared expressly for the purpose; it is without stem, straps, or other cumbersome appliances; does not interfere with micturition or coition, can be easily adjusted, is not injurious in any way, and with proper care will last for years.

It affords a convenient and prompt means of cure to those afflicted with prolapsus (falling of the womb), leuchorrhœa (whites), and in the ready cure of the ulceration of the mouth and neck of the womb, so commonly the living torment of delicate women. In treatment of the cancer of the womb, it is a most admirable instrument. The ordinary treatment of female diseases by injections is uncertain, slow, tedious, disgusting, and expensive.

In the use of local medication by means of the Pessaire Preventif, the cure is directly applied to the seat of the disease, and can be retained any length of time with

Plate VII. Mrs Smyth's book offered explicit instructions to her potential customers. La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria.
"IT'S A MARVEL!"
EVERY WOMAN is interested and should know about the wonderful Marvel Whirling Spray
The new FEMALE SYRINGE
Injects and Suction. The best, safest and most convenient.
It Cleanses Instantly.

If your druggist cannot supply the MARVEL, accept no other, but write us for Illustrated Book, sent free—sealed. It gives price by mail, particularly and directions invaluable to ladies. Endorsed by Physicians.

Times Building, N.Y.

SOLE AUSTRALIAN AGENTS—
THE MARVEL CO.
OF AUSTRALIA.
Camden Building, 418 George Street,
SYDNEY, N.S.W.

LADY SPECIALIST IN ATTENDANCE.
Postal Address, Box 623, G.P.O., Sydney

Write for Booklet. Sent free, sealed.

Plate VIII. The Marvel Co.'s Whirling Spray was advertised regularly in the Bulletin between January and August 1903, its real purpose coyly understated. National Library of Australia.

A SLIGHT MISTAKE.

1. "Aw! what a deuced clever perfume bottle. I'll buy one for Miss Mabel, by Jove." 2. "I say, Gurge, wrap me up one of those bottles like a good fellow."

3. "Just a twinge, Miss Mabel." 4. "I do." Plate IX. Instruments like 'the Marvel' were common enough for cartoon comment five years before the Commission. (Bulletin 5 March 1898 p. 33). National Library of Australia.
Plate X. Octavius Charles Beale, last of the pronatalists, eighth child in his own family and father of thirteen. DBR vol. II, p. 384.
ernmental provision of lying-in-homes, district nursing services and domestic training for mothers, and the use of the arbitration system to do away with juvenile labour by making wages high enough to secure 'that standard of comfort which would enable the husband ... to provide liberally for mother and children'.

Although theoretical debate about the peopling of Australia peters out in the 1890s and degenerated into an exchange of articles of faith about migration in the early 1900s, the resources for more intelligent debate were widely distributed in Australia. Writings by Mill, Darwin and Spencer, for example, were readily available. Budding radical politicians like Hughes and Holman read Mill and Spencer. By 1903 Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*, with its strong links between production theory and Malthusian population theory, was (or had been) available from the Free Public Library of Sydney and the libraries of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, the New South Wales Institute of Bankers, the Melbourne Bankers' Institute and the Australian Economic Association. Darwin's *Origin of Species*, with its explicit Malthusian overtones, was available in the metropolitan libraries and the Mechanics' Institute of the 'frontier' town of Port Augusta. Various works by Herbert Spencer were in the public and bankers' libraries and even the village library at Saddleworth in South Australia. Nor was the circulation of these and other men's ideas limited to books. Mill and Spencer had written for the *Westminster Review*, which was taken by the South Australian and Victorian State libraries throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The *Nineteenth Century*, to which Spencer and his disciples were frequent contributors, was taken in the 1890s by libraries as diverse as those of the Sandhurst Mechanics' Institute in Victoria and the *Advertiser* newspaper in Adelaide.

Spencer's work seems to have been particularly widely known and was even the subject of two lengthy editorials in the Adelaide *Advertiser* during 1901. The first of these essays was provoked by an article in the *Saturday Review*, which questioned the desirability of the United Kingdom's prevailing growth rate. The *Advertiser* expressed surprise at this challenge to the prevailing assumption 'that mere increase in population is evidence of national strength', then proceeded with its own argument. Science has ensured means of subsistence adequate to dispel the Malthusian spectre, the editor said, but there remains 'an ever increasing struggle among the many to procure the necessaries and comforts of life'. The struggle is 'essential to the evolution of the higher types, both of individuals and nations'. For this reason
The population problem . . . will settle itself when, through a changed environment, the masses improve in morality and intelligence. And certainly, if there is anything assured amid the seeming paradoxes yielded by the operation of laws governing the multiplication of any species, it is that on which Herbert Spencer has laid so much stress. Along with development there goes a diminution of fertility . . . On the principle that 'individuation and genesis vary inversely', advancing evolution is accompanied by declining fertility, and given any change which raises the human species to a higher intellectual and moral plane, there will be a corresponding abatement of its reproductive power.

Competitive struggle is also socially desirable because 'there are a thousand potential reasons for human exertion'. Other motives than subsistence inspire the labour of many and it is from them, 'moving on the higher planes of life, those of the intellect, that the higher types are evolved'.

A later editorial in the Advertiser took up the implications of this social evolutionary theory for an age of universal education.

It is amongst the most highly educated classes that the smallest families are to be found, and this is surely a significant fact . . . Education has opened to the masses new careers, success in which is dependent upon a self-regarding prudence. Late marriages are the result, and the personal tastes which education brings with it, the love of books, music, &c., can only be gratified if the family is kept down. [Hence] the duty of replenishing the population is left to the classes below them.

As a result 'At one end of the social scale there is an artificial restriction of the higher types, and at the other, all the greater scope is afforded for the multiplication of those who carry on a more or less animal existence.' The editorial concluded with a passage which indicates that the writer's pursuit of population theory led him to conclusions very close to those which the Daily Telegraph in Sydney and Argus in Melbourne were to reach without an explicit theoretical framework. People who emphasised the better care which could be given to children of small families were said to miss the point on which Herbert Spencer lays great stress, that declining fertility may be a natural and not an artificial accompaniment of advancing civilisation . . . The restriction of population so far as it is to be accounted for on natural grounds may mean not national decadence, but better homes, a longer education period, and a more cultured life. Where
the result is brought about by artificial means, where a policy of individual selfishness is at work, the virility of a nation must suffer, and its decadence and ruin will indeed have begun.*

The Saturday editions of the Melbourne Age and other metropoli-
tan dailies frequently summarised the contents of topical articles, including those on population, from overseas magazines. Between July 1895 and October 1896, for example, the Age published notes on American Economist, St James Gazette, Cologne Gazette, Nineteenth Century, The Arena, Longmans Magazine, Cornhill Magazine, Fortnightly Review, Chambers's Journal, Pall Mall Magazine and Harper's Magazine. Many of these magazines dealt with questions related to fertility—national progress, racial decay, the 'right age to marry', the 'New Woman', and so on. The register of borrowings from the Australian Economic Association also suggests that magazines like the Westminster, Quarterly, Fortnightly, Contemporary and North American Reviews were popular. In addition there was the influential Bulletin, which was known as the bushman's bible but was also kept on file in the reading room of the New South Wales Chamber of Manufactures! The 'Bulletin Book Exchange', later called 'Literary Notes', appeared on the inside front cover of almost every weekly issue after 1894 and kept readers informed about current literature including Spencer's Study of Sociology ('the essence of the mind of the greatest living philosopher'); Havelock Ellis's Man and Woman ('an up-to-date statement of sex relations'); Kidd's Social Evolution, which was compared unfavourably with Geddes and Thompson's Evolution of Sex; J.B. Haycroft's Darwinism and Race Progress ('It insists strongly on the duty of individuals to the race . . .' ) and Nordau's Degeneration (from which the 'nugget' was quoted, 'A man cannot beget both thoughts and children'). Pearson's National Life and Character also came under notice: 'a remarkably able book . . . It is a scientific forecast . . . and well deserves the attention of thinkers'.

If their appetite was whetted by newspaper reviews or by the magazines, Australians could easily obtain copies of current books from overseas. The 'Bulletin Book Exchange' offered to supply cheaply books on 'the woman movement' (the movement was

* The Advertiser has very poor records of its early editorial management so it is not certain who wrote the editorials. However the Bulletin (4 May 1905, p.21B) and the centenary issue of the Advertiser (12 July 1958, p.38f) both suggest that Langdon Bonython, who owned the paper, was also editing it in the early years of the twentieth century. The passages quoted above are not out of keeping with Bonython's image as a striving, self-made man.
approved, the books generally panned) and works pertinent to the population debate, including Letorneau, *Evolution of Marriage*, Guyot, *Principles of Social Economy* and Leroy-Beaulieu, *The Modern State*. An even cheaper source of books was the Bankers’ Institute of Australasia which circulated boxes of books from its Melbourne library to interstate and Victorian country branches during the early 1890s. For buyers rather than borrowers, ‘Evolutionist works were available readily in bookstores throughout the colonies’.

The members of the Mackellar Commission were certainly aware of the overseas literature. Mackellar’s personal papers, for example, contain hand written notes from Toynbee’s article on ‘Malthus and the Law of Population’, Leroy-Beaulieu’s *Essai sur la répartition des richesses*... and Kidd’s *Social Evolution*. In addition Dr R.H. Todd, Mackellar’s associate, presented the Commissioners with a considerable volume of material which he said ‘would assist in supplying some historical and scientific basis’ for the consideration of declining fertility. Todd brought together the work of a variety of writers: Levasseur, Molinari, Dumont, Leroy-Beaulieu and Guyot from France; Pomeroy, L.F. Ward, Edson, Bisland and Billings from the United States of America. The method by which he presented his material, however, itself amounted to a contribution to the debate for he consistently neglected radicals and drew heavily from writers with a conservative attitude to change. Thus he began with a series of quotations from *Principles of Economics* by Alfred Marshall, who gave only very qualified approval to the practice of family limitation, but followed these immediately with two quotations from Stephen Bourne, who regarded ‘the law of increase [as] of natural and divine enactment’. Arnold Toynbee senior’s work on *The Industrial Revolution* was represented by a passage which gave some place to moral restraint but expressed strong moral repugnance towards ‘artificial’ restraints. Again, Benjamin Kidd, author of *Social Evolution*, was quoted at length on the necessity for society to evolve through stress and rivalry. Todd’s comment was ‘the importance of this book to the Commission arises from the fact that the views expressed by Kidd are diametrically opposite to the tendencies observable in New South Wales at the present time, which are socialistic, and seek to kill competition and rivalry’. In addition Todd drew out Kidd’s thesis that socialism leads to absence of competition and thence to restriction of families, suspension of selection and eventual racial degeneracy—but he failed to take account of the criticism of Kidd contained in Carr’s *Social Evolution and the Evolution of Socialism*. 
The fact that Australians had adequate opportunities to become acquainted with the steady stream of articles and books which should have kept them abreast of overseas developments in population theory naturally provokes the question, Why was the post-Malthusian debate carried on elsewhere so muted in Australia? A full answer to that question would require an intellectual history of Australia from 1870 to 1914. However, a short answer is that from the beginning of the 1890s, when the post-Malthusian debate might have begun to flower in Australia, a succession of circumstances pushed it into the background of discussion. First of all Henry George excited the Australian colonies, then the depression of trade crushed the momentum out of progressive and evolutionary social theories, federation occupied the stage at the end of the decade, and in the early 1900s the realities of Australian demography combined with the psychology of infant nationalism to form a climate inimical to detached debate.

Henry George's ideas exercised a pervasive influence in Australia, being used by pro- and anti-Malthusians alike. During the first half of 1890 George had toured in Australia where he was 'received with an enthusiasm greater than anything he had experienced before . . . He was feted and banqueted . . . he spoke every evening and sometimes twice a day'. The newspapers gave extensive coverage to his tour; T.A. Coghlan recalled that 'in South Australia, as in other colonies, he was greeted almost as a prophet, and drew adherents from every class of the community'; and W.M. Hughes, his memories of the 1890s perhaps exaggerated by the passing years, wrote that: 'This was the hour of Australia's great awakening . . . Henry George . . . captured the imagination of thousands of young and ardent spirits.' George's visit to Australia was but the climax to a decade of influence by his ideas and the last occasion for publicising a system of political economy before the bank crash turned men's minds away from discussion of theories to the hard practicalities of ruin and recovery. Where references to population questions had been common in the Report of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce during the 1880s, in the 1890s the most prominent topic was the depressed state of trade: snippets of political economy appeared less and less often in speeches at annual meetings of the South Australian Chamber after the early 1890s; in the columns of the New South Wales bankers' Journal the discussion of population questions declined in the second half of the 1890s and was non-existent after 1898, while the same was true of the Australian Economist, which itself went out of existence early in 1899. Even the appearance of Coghlan's first booklet,
Childbirth in New South Wales, in 1900 attracted little attention. His 1903 publication, *Decline of the Birth-Rate*, and the work of the Mackellar Commission in 1903–4 generated more publicity but still did not spark much theoretical debate. Coghlan's revelations about demographic trends in Australia made it appear that overpopulation was not a problem. The way was therefore opened for social and social evolutionary theories about falling fertility but that path was blocked by the Mackellar Commissioners, who began and ended their work in the fixed belief that there were moral reasons for Australia's difficulties and that other explanations were morally evasive. In that kind of intellectual climate the absence of detached theoretical debate is hardly surprising.

Soon after the Mackellar Commission had published its report, Australian growth by natural increase and by migration began to recover. Even if the emotional reaction to population problems, exemplified by the Commission itself, had not stifled theoretical discussions, the resurgence of growth probably would have caused the population question to fade from view. After 1905, in fact, only Octavius Charles Beale appears to have made a sustained attempt to keep the discussion alive and it is significant that his work received negligible support. Beale had been a moderately active member of the Mackellar Commission without evincing any consuming interest in the topics considered but in the report of his own Royal Commission on Secret Drugs, published in 1907, and his book *Racial Decay*, published in 1910, he presented a huge volume of ill-ordered material which indicated that he had become obsessed with the decline of fertility and the means by which it was achieved. The Drugs Commission grew out of Beale's request to his political friend Alfred Deakin, then Prime Minister of Australia, for 'an authoritative Commission, to obtain, at my own expense, records of Legislation passed in other countries' to control the sale of patent medicines. In July 1905 Deakin provided Beale only with a letter of introduction for use overseas. The Royal Commission was not issued until December 1906 when it became necessary to give Beale the benefit of privilege to protect him from threatened libel suits. Deakin was aware of the need for additional population but he had probably faced the fact that it would not come from natural increase for he was already concentrating on plans to encourage immigration.

Beale said that the publication of his contentious report was justified by the fact that 'interferences with the sexual function' were so common that it was necessary 'to confront them by candid truth'. The Australian pharmacists' journal, not much impressed
'Amid the Seeming Paradoxes'

by the 'candid truth' claim, described the document, not unjustly, as 'a big scrap-book with a running comment'. Racial Decay, which carries the subtitle A Compilation of Evidence from World Sources, seems to have been designed to publish all the material that could not be fitted into the Secret Drugs Report. It was a collection of quotations from writers on the population problems of England, North America, Australasia, modern Europe and ancient Rome, strung together with comments by Beale—and fully meriting the description 'Quite the oddest book ever published against contraception, in a field where competition is heavy.' The tone was set with an opening section headed 'Malthus and Manchester':

We may leave to [the Malthusians] the whole field of logic, but we are bound to deny their axioms, to expose the failure of their forecasts and to place the facts of nature opposite to their conclusions . . . The most ancient maxims and the oldest discoverable experience of mankind shall suffice. We shall take as guiding principles primordial truths and only seek to reassert unique perceptions of the relation of man to his Creator.

One hundred and ten pages of the book were devoted to the French experience, on the grounds that 'France affords us a mirror in which to see our present position, and thus supplies a prognosis of our disease'. Lest local readers should find that glass a dark one Beale made the point explicitly: 'South Australia is further under the shadow of death now, than France was in 1881.' One hundred pages were given over to 'pathological consequences' of birth control, including 'uterine inflammations, bleeding and cancer, ovarian diseases and male debility'.

The 'Conclusion' of Racial Decay contained a disordered summary of the book's 425 pages but was dominated by an attack on John Stuart Mill's private morality (indelibly besmirched, Beale believed, by the philosopher's liaison with Mrs Taylor), implying that Mill's morals destroyed the credibility of his social theories and, by association, those of the whole neo-Malthusian movement. No attempt was made to analyse the works of Mill or any other writer to whom Beale was opposed, or indeed, any of the 'authorities' with whom he agreed. Eighty-three books were listed in the bibliography and many more were quoted in the text—all ransacked for quotations to bolster Beale's 'heroes versus villains' view of the Malthusian debate. Thus Abbé Corbière, whose views Beale approved, appears as 'the unpretentious cleric' who writes with
gentleness of diction and exceeding grace of expression’ but Mill ‘labours the subject at great length in his usual cock-sure and didactic style’. Malthus is criticised for faulty grammar. In no case is the context of a quotation explained or any systematic criticism applied. The reader is left only with a dizzy head and the impression that the mass of material must have been heaped together with the sole purpose of providing a pedestal for this conclusion:

Etymologically and essentially, ‘nation’ (nascor, natus, natio) means a succession of births, generation, reproduction. A general restriction of births, as successfully preached by John Stuart Mill and his School . . . is therefore a poisoning of the nation itself. The continuous practice of interference with the life-principle—whether by mechanical and chemical destruction of the germ, by foeticide, by infanticide, or by all three—is the deadliest of all misfortunes to the nation . . .

Nature, nation, natality, are inseparably related, each meaning birth, therefore whatever strikes at Nature, strikes at the perpetuity of the nation . . . Called by any of the jocular, flattering, or apologetic names used by its advocates in a flippant press: ‘the strike of a sex, the revolt of woman, stopping the flood of babies, stemming the devastating torrent of babies, limitation of family, the American ideal, scientific prevention, scientific meliorism, neo-Malthusianism’, the end is the same—national death. It is as sure as sunset, and the only question is of acceleration.

In addition to showing that the whole range of overseas debate was accessible to any Australian who cared to seek it out, Beale’s two collections of quotations represent a natural extension of the pro-natalist views which had been espoused by many of his colleagues in business and on the Mackellar Commission. The significant fact is that he gained negligible support for his extension of the common position. No one stood to his defence when his report was under attack in the Commonwealth Parliament in 1907 and 1908. In 1910 he had to publish Racial Decay at his own expense, then hand the 1000 copies to a distributor for sale at five shillings each. ‘In 1903, since the book sold poorly, the price was reduced to one shilling a copy, and, in 1917, 635 unsold copies were returned to the author.’
Popular discussion of population questions flourished briefly in Australia in the early 1900s, a decade after the theoretical debate had begun to wane. The discussion was aired chiefly in the newspapers, which dealt with census results, the Mackellar Commission and population questions in general in editorials, and published three substantial manifestations of popular opinion in correspondence columns during 1903 and 1904. There was also a short controversy in the Daily Telegraph which neatly illustrated the spectrum of opinion in 1911. In terms of editorial content the papers can be divided into two loose groups, the Daily Telegraph, Sydney Morning Herald and Melbourne Argus expressing attitudes similar to those of the Commissioners, and the Bulletin, the Melbourne Age and Adelaide's Advertiser and Register taking a line less single-mindedly pro-natalist and moralistic.

During the 1880s 26,000 more people left South Australia than arrived in the state. Since the net outflow amounted to more than 10 per cent of the 1881 population, it is not surprising that the approach of the 1891 census attracted attention. The Adelaide Register said in its Commemoration Day editorial for 1890 that the long period of emigration seemed to be ending. The paper therefore looked forward to the 1891 census which, it patriotically asserted, would show progress to be 'the inevitable destiny of South Australia'. Early in 1891 the Register devoted two editorials to the forthcoming census—still three months ahead. It expected geographic distribution of the population to be of particular interest because of the allegedly unhealthy tendency of the South Australian population to become centralised in Adelaide. The paper pointed out that the known radicalism of urban residents would make any increase of their numbers a matter of interest to politicians, and also suggested that any indication by the census of continuing rural-urban drift would show the need for corrective land settlement legislation. At the end of January 1891 the paper returned to the question of urbanisation, queried the adequacy of proposed questions on conjugal condition, gave a lengthy description of the census form and explained what would be required from the householder.
On the day before the census further stress was laid on the importance of the information to be collected about migration and urbanisation and readers were urged to take a responsible attitude towards the completion of the schedule.

After the census the Register expressed concern about the metropolitan concentration of population, noting that 'a colony is not at its greatest point of true prosperity when its people are centralised within cannon range of Government House'. Adelaide was better placed than Melbourne and Sydney in this regard; nevertheless 'the chief lesson taught by the census' was that South Australia's aim should be 'to encourage the permanent settlement of the country and the development of all the natural industries'. Just how the population for rural settlement was to be gathered is unclear because the Register was simultaneously concerned at the decline of the South Australian birth rate and the 'excessive emigration' of adults.¹

In 1891 the Register's response to the census was echoed by Melbourne's Argus, which remarked on the relative growth of Melbourne and Sydney and on a welcome increase in the proportion of males among the Victorian population. Although the Argus thought that both cities had 'every reason to be content' with their growth, it was concerned about the imbalance in population between Melbourne and its hinterland. While the growth of great cities might be 'one of the features of the age', it was appearing in an exaggerated form in Australia where it was doubtful whether there was 'a population and a development behind the cities sufficient to justify their existence'. Not that the Argus wished to see Melbourne diminished (for that would hardly have pleased the paper's mercantile clientele). Rather was a larger rural population required and to redress the balance it was 'obviously becoming necessary to make agriculture more attractive to young men of industry and enterprise'.²

For most of the decade after 1891 only the Bulletin and the Melbourne Age paid much attention to population and related matters. Each quickly found a target in the suggestion that Australia might provide a home for lower class immigrants from Britain and the Continent. In 1891 the Salvationist General William Booth suggested that some of London's 'submerged tenth' could be settled on farm colonies in Australia. The Bulletin used both the cartoon and the editorial pen to keep up a sustained, sarcastic attack on the idea throughout 1891 and 1892. There was equal hostility towards a proposal by the London Evening Standard that surplus single females should be shipped out to Australia. 'Women
are already a drug on the market in Australia’, the Bulletin said. ‘Under present social conditions, when any country contains two women to every three men, it has as many as can be sufficiently provided for . . . There is no room in Australia for the superfluous women of England.’ Or for the Italian labourer; or, in the opinion of the Age for any English or European paupers.3

From about 1893 both papers expressed great hostility towards the idea of Asian immigration to Australia. The Age feared that Australia’s geographical position would lead to her being over-run by ‘hordes of Asiatics’, and pointed to the social implications, experienced in other countries where racial mixing had occurred.4 The Bulletin was more explicitly and blatantly racialist. In its eyes European labourers were objectionable only because they depressed wages but Asians, be they Afghans, Chinese, Indians or Japanese, both depressed wages and were unassimilable: ‘the Asiatic can’t be absorbed, and even if his presence raised the scale of wages until it was as high as Kosciusko he would remain the same old racial curse to the bitter end’. There were varieties of objectionable Asiatic, of course. The Chinese was objectionable because of his menial nature, ‘bred in the bone of him for thousands of grimy years’, the Japanese because he was an ‘apt and ingenious workman . . . as progressive as the Australian and possibly more energetic’. All varieties were unnecessary, even in the tropics, because already, the Bulletin said,

In New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and South Queensland, a new white race is . . . formed which can stand the climate of any part of Australia . . . the white Australian will swarm into the North when the South gets a little more crowded.5

Readers of the Bulletin could have been forgiven for wondering where in the south the new race was being formed. As the inauguration of the Commonwealth approached, the paper lamented the effects of a long trend to concentration of population in Australia’s capital cities. ‘In our overgrown cities health and strength are sapped; the habit of productive labour is lost; and the character of the people sensibly deteriorates . . .’6 The Bulletin urged large-scale resettlement of city people on independent homesteads in the country but this was no novel policy, for the Age had always contended that ‘the great want of modern times is the permanent withdrawal of a large section of the town population to productive areas in the country’. Throughout 1892 the Age had argued with growing enthusiasm against ‘the undue concentration of population in the towns’ and in favour of village settlement
schemes to relieve the pressure. Expressing an opinion uncommonly close to that of the *Argus*, its arch rival, the *Age* was sure everyone would admit 'that a moderate migration to the towns is necessary to keep up the stamina of the population, but no one wants to see all the best young men deserting the country'. The *Age*'s support for the village settlement method of getting men on the land continued until 1896, then lapsed, to be revived in 1899. At no stage was it suggested that resettlement would stimulate the natural increase of population.7

The interest which the *Age* and the *Bulletin* showed in the composition and distribution of Australia’s population was not matched by a similar interest in the size of the population. Even when Victoria was losing large numbers of its people by emigration in the mid-1890s the *Age* described the exodus as ‘serious enough to arrest attention’ yet ‘not so alarming as the figures would indicate’: many of the emigrés, it said, were men ‘who left their country for their country’s good’. As the depression in Victoria ground on the *Age* sympathised with ‘the woes of the women of the poorer classes . . . burdened with progeny far too numerous for their physical strength and precarious family income . . .’. Consequently it is not surprising to find the *Age* unconcerned that some women were seeking relief from their burden, even when the political implications of the decline in the birth rate began to be a matter of concern elsewhere:

there are, as yet, at any rate, no grounds for a scare. It may or may not be the case that parents are beginning to adopt what has euphemistically been termed the ‘prudential system’ in regulating the size of their family . . .

but even if they are, the situation in Australia still compares favourably with that in other countries, so

the ‘new woman’ may still continue to live, and liberal politicians to pursue their aspirations for advanced legislation, without the fear before their eyes of striking all the gentler half of the race with sterility.9

The *Age* was troubled more by the dysgenic implications of family planning, believing that the practice must lead to deterioration of the race,

inasmuch as the limitation of families would be the least practised by those who are physically and morally most unfit. It is just those who are most weedy and incapable of self-control who would multiply as does a rabbit warren . . .10
The Bulletin, by comparison, was not only unworried about Australia's population but scornful of those who were concerned. The country where population is increasing fast is supposed to be prosperous; the one where it isn't is going to the dogs. It is the business of every well-ordered community now to show a diminishing death-rate and a growing birth-rate. The provinces got this complaint so badly that at one time they piled up huge debts merely that they might buy ready made population in Europe with the money.1

The Age sympathised with those whose families outran their means and, like the Bulletin, was relatively liberal in its attitude to a number of social problems associated with family life. Others raised the spectre of rampant promiscuity if foundling homes should be established on a 'no questions asked' basis: the Bulletin and, with less conviction, the Age said that such institutions would be better than the social hypocrisy which made unwanted babies the object of abortion and infanticide. In the Bulletin's view the chief sin of the abortionist was against the attitude 'that it is the business of every nation to increase in number . . . and to expand the census returns at any cost'. Furthermore the law connived at abortion by 'allowing nostrums for the “restoration of regularity” to be openly advertised and sold, without taking any steps against either sellers or buyers'.12

The five years around 1901 marked the peak of press comment on Australia's demographic progress. The signal for other papers to rejoin the Age and Bulletin in discussing the subject was the publication of Coghlan's first birth rate study, Childbirth in New South Wales. Most papers expressed concern at the picture of incipient decline which Coghlan laid before them but there was little attempt to discuss the details of his work. The Advertiser described the contents of the pamphlet as 'highly interesting, and at the same time depressing', while the more emotional tone characteristic of the Argus was evident in its question: 'Is our confident expectation that Australia is destined to become the home of a white race, thriving and prolific, to be dissipated like the airy fabric of a dream?'13 The Sydney Morning Herald reviewed the pamphlet at length without showing undue concern at its implications. Within a month, in fact, the Herald suggested that, while the slow growth of Australia's population was striking, too much stress was laid on the declining birth rate.14

The Argus played politics with the population figures from the 1901 census, grumbling that the slow growth of Melbourne
'This Sin and Scandal' (compared with Sydney) was an indictment of Victoria's protectionist tariff, but otherwise let the census results pass without notice. In Sydney, however, much more was written. The *Daily Telegraph*, like the *Argus*, used the census results to bolster its free trade theories. Thus the first editorials drew attention to the 'great increase in the population of Sydney', whose growth had nevertheless 'been part of, and uniform with, that of the State' in a way that Melbourne's growth had not. The *Telegraph*'s logic then became a little jumbled. On the one hand it defended Sydney against the charge of parasitic growth and lauded its vitality, prophesying that fifty years on 'all the elevated country within twenty miles of Pitt Street [would] be crowned with the homes of those who inhabit one of the world's noblest cities'. On the other hand Melbourne was criticised for having long drawn too many people to itself. In a later editorial, it was noted that cities in many countries were only replenishing themselves by draining the country of population:

If the next two or three decades show a proportionate rate of city increase and that increase has to be provided for by immigration from the country a condition of affairs must arise that threatens to be seriously inimical to civilised race development.

The *Telegraph*’s later thoughts seem to have been its best considered ones. Early in June it expressed concern at the lag in Australian population growth as a whole and in its elements. The population increase of 19 per cent for the decade to 1901 was described as poor by comparison with the increases of 35 per cent in 1871–81 and 41 per cent in 1881–91. This reduced rate of growth was the more disturbing to the paper because immigration had lately slackened and there was 'no longer a possibility of doubt regarding the unsatisfactory state of the Australian birth rate'.

During the first half of 1903 most of the papers returned to the question of Australia's population size and growth. On this occasion the leader-writers were stimulated by the report of President Theodore Roosevelt's statement deploring the tendency of his own country's population to restrict reproduction. The *Argus* made the general comment that 'no young country can prosper so long as population is sparse and the birth-rate unprogressive', and added its usual local application of the generalisation—that White Australia would be a delusion if the country continued to stagnate while 'the hordes of India, China, and Japan continue to multiply with their traditional vigour'. In Adelaide the *Advertiser* stressed that
'Population, of the right kind, was Australia's crying need, and public policy . . . ought to be shaped with a view to its attraction"\textsuperscript{18} The \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} thought it surprising that the Australian birth rate was 'even lower than that of any other country except France . . . a reversal of every recognised order of things' in view of the salubrious social conditions of Australia and the predominance of people from British stock. If rapid increase from births could not be expected, then Australia's 'closed door' policy on immigration must be changed: 'No country in the world's history has become great by shutting out the brains and muscle needed.'\textsuperscript{19} The \textit{Herald} was not consistently gloomy about the country's prospects, however. In May 1903 it suggested that, given the impact of the depression in the early 1890s, the drought ever since, and the recent spate of 'injudicious legislation', the progress which had occurred in population growth was 'simply marvellous'.\textsuperscript{20}

Within six months the \textit{Herald} had ceased to marvel—not the first (or last) Australian newspaper to trim its sheets to the political breeze—and the latter half of 1903 saw both the \textit{Herald} and the \textit{Telegraph} helping to generate the conditions for the establishment of the Mackellar Commission. When the Report of the Commission was published in 1904 the \textit{Herald}, the \textit{Telegraph} and the \textit{Argus} all complimented the Commissioners, approved of their 'analysis' and supported their proposals for reversing the decline of the birth rate. The \textit{Age}, \textit{Advertiser}, \textit{Register} and \textit{Bulletin} were all more critical.

The \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} stressed the quality of the report and the reputation of the men who had signed it, saying that it represented 'the result of independent investigation by a representative body of citizens, officials, and medical men' who could 'fairly be complimented upon the admirable and exhaustive manner in which a difficult investigation [had] been carried out'. The Commissioners' conclusions were 'commended to general attention', with the proviso that they should be prefaced by 'the statement of principle that nothing can replace the influence of a trained and educated moral habit of thought among our people as a countering influence . . .'\textsuperscript{21} In the light of the summary of the report offered earlier, it can only be said that the \textit{Herald} praised the report's most glaring weaknesses.

The \textit{Daily Telegraph} gave a similar welcome to the 'exceedingly able and well-reasoned report' and also highlighted the Commission's moral emphases. The \textit{Telegraph} devoted a few sentences to the 'terrible revenge' which Nature would wreak 'for her outraged laws' on the practitioners of contraception, then gave
several column inches to the spectre of Yellow Peril invoked by Australia's lagging growth.

If the evil [of diminished fertility] is to increase much further, the dream of a great Australian nation guaranteeing the peace and progress of the Southern World must soon come to an end . . . If our population is to remain stationary while that of the over-populated countries of Asia goes on increasing at the tremendous pace which a normal birth rate amongst so many hundreds of millions implies, the maintenance of a White Australia must sooner or later become impossible. The sterility which is blighting these States does not go un-noticed amongst the cramped up but still prolific myriads of Japanese and Chinese.22

The *Argus* was as pleased as the Sydney papers with the report which it described as a 'forcible and clear spoken' treatment of a 'most serious economical and moral problem'. Mr Richard Teece's independent survey, which had appeared shortly before the Commission's findings, was also noted and attention was drawn to his emphasis on the ill-effects of increasing female employment. The *Argus* thought that the decline in fertility described by both the private and the public inquiry had important political and economic implications for Australia but it concluded that the decline could be remedied only through the exercise of moral and religious influences by a church-led crusade. The paper went on to state its own social philosophy of fertility, which was heavily dependent upon Benjamin Kidd's suitably conservative theory of social evolution. The law deduced by Kidd, the *Argus* reported, is that

each generation is controlled and governed unconsciously to itself, by profound considerations for the future of the race it belongs to. The controlling influence of the future solves, for him, all current social and political problems.

Then came the moral:

If his argument is correct, one important section of the people is evidently seeking, with an easy conscience, for an escape from the burden laid upon it. It is emancipating itself from Mr Kidd's law.23

The *Age*, the *Register*, the *Advertiser* and the *Bulletin* were each, in varying degree, more critical of the Mackellar Commission. The *Age* acknowledged that warnings about the ill-effects of continued decline were useful but thought that more could have been made of the fact that, even after fourteen years of decline, the Australian
birth rate was only down to the prevailing English level. As for
the remedies proposed in the report, the Age commented that 'the
Commission doubtless does its best, but cannot be expected to
succeed where so many philosophers and philanthropists have
dismally failed'. The utility was recognised of suggestions for the
greater protection of unborn or illegitimate children but other
schemes for reducing the level of urbanisation were dismissed as
'quite unworkable'. Immigration would not help the birth rate
either, since the newcomers 'would speedily conform to the Austral­
ian standard' in reproduction. Taken together the proposals
amounted to very little, the Age said, but this was hardly surprising
since Australia was participating in a world-wide movement of
embourgeoisement. Having dismissed the Commission's panaceas,
the paper offered one of its own: the real solution to the birth rate
problem, it claimed, lay in consistent proclamation that 'maternity
gives to women the most intense and most abundant human
felicity.'

The Adelaide Register thought that the commission had served
a useful function in publicising the problem of declining fertility
but, for the rest, took the same view as the Age.

The population problem of New South Wales is that, with
few exceptions, of every civilised community; and is coincident
with such conditions as general prosperity, universal educa­
tion, the 'new democracy' and the declining power of the
church.

Like the Age, again, the Register offered its own remedy: moral
statesmanship, moral crusade, and moral additions to modern
education. The Advertiser, Adelaide's other daily, took the occa­
sion to publicise Spencer's individuation theory, yet again, before
summarising the Commission's recommendations and stating, quite
erroneously, that the Commission had 'recognised that, after all,
economic reasons finally account for the practices which are
condemned, and ... that with better conditions the tendency to
limit families will cease ...'.

By far the most vigorous criticism came, characteristically, from
the Bulletin, which devoted nearly four column-feet to its attack
on 'Certain Tory Doctors ...'. Although the Bulletin overstated
its case, there was reason for its complaint that some of the
Commissioners and the newspapers which shared their views had
unfairly blamed Trades-Unionism and Labor Legislation for the
decline of fertility. The paper then slid on to a logical, if irrelevant,
demonstration that it was not within the trades unionists' class, but
the professional and commercial classes of the Commissioners themselves, that low fertility prevailed. The *Bulletin* showed more evidence than other papers that it understood the social realities behind the dwindling birth rate. It was also more perceptive in recognising that even if the Commissioners were authoritative on matters of medicine and statistics they did not thereby acquire authority on sociology and politics. Finally it must be said that the *Bulletin*’s criticism of the Commissioners’ Tory background had more justification than the *Herald*’s claim that they were representative citizens.27

After the flurry of comments about the appearance of the Mackellar Report the newspapers paid little attention to population questions until the 1911 census. By 1911 growth by migration and natural increase was accelerating and the tone of editorial comment on the population was correspondingly less concerned than it had been at the beginning of the century. The *Sydney Morning Herald* regarded the prevailing birth rate, much improved from 1901, as a pleasing indication of general prosperity and the rate of increase by immigration as equally satisfying.28 In the circumstances the 1911 census attracted little editorial attention and provoked less concern. The *Daily Telegraph* for example, simply used the appearance of the returns as an occasion to boast of the New South Wales contribution to Australian growth and the virtues of Sydney as ‘first city of the Commonwealth’. The *Argus* was enthusiastic and the *Register* not displeased at the figures but the *Advertiser* thought that the decade’s increase was ‘far from satisfactory’. The Adelaide papers did agree, however, that measures should be undertaken to make country life more attractive and so reduce the continuing high level of urbanisation in Australia.29 It is understandable that the newspapers should have been pleased with the results of the 1911 census but it is symptomatic of the whole course of opinion over the two decades from 1891 that the improvement of growth factors was seen as a return to high, ‘normal’ rates, rather than part of a long fluctuation, and that virtually no attempt was made to analyse the reasons for the upturn.

The *Age* and the *Bulletin* differed from the majority of Australian newspapers in their response to the social aspects of declining fertility. It could therefore be argued that they are used unfairly as evidence of popular opinion, were it not that similar views were expressed in many (but not all) of the large volume of letters published in the other newspapers. During March and April 1903 the *Argus* and the *Advertiser* published over fifty letters to the
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editor on the topic ‘Large Families or Small’; the Daily Telegraph carried an extensive correspondence on population both before the Mackellar Commission was appointed and after it had reported; and the Telegraph again received a flood of mail about ‘racial suicide’ in May 1911. In addition the Bulletin itself had occasional correspondents supporting its contentions that abortion and infanticide were social rather than moral problems, that Japanese immigrants were highly undesirable and southern Europeans hardly better, and that a scheme of land settlement plus protective tariffs would ensure the increase of population.30

On 17 March 1903 the Argus printed a report from its North American correspondent that President Theodore Roosevelt had named race suicide as his nation’s most immediate problem. The report sparked a controversy. The following day the leader-writer for the Argus pointed out that race suicide was not confined to America, that the Australasian birth rate was already behind that of most European countries and that Victoria’s record was the worst in Australasia. If it were not for an exceptionally low death rate the country ‘would already be near stagnation’. There seemed to be ‘no way of checking the evil’ of decline, which was tentatively blamed upon female emancipation. The position was serious, the Argus said, because there was no point in talking of a White Australia if the white Australians became extinct while ‘John Chinaman’ flourished.31 Only about one-tenth of the Argus’s correspondents agreed with it. Two allowed that female employment was a factor in the reduction of fertility but differed on the causal mechanism: one said that women were keeping men out of work but the other said that women had to go to work because men could not get work!32 Several correspondents said that limitation of families was immoral and unnatural and proposed legislative or moral remedies. ‘Benedict’, properly pastoral in his attitudes, declared it to be ‘an axiom that Nature avenges any infraction of her laws’ and called upon the clergy to educate young women against practices which ignored the axiom. ‘Onlooker’ agreed that the Church should act but he wanted the additional safeguard of restraints on the publication of ‘certain advertisements and pamphlets’. His desire for legislative restraint of the preventive trade was shared by ‘A Father of Five Who Cannot Afford More’ and, rather surprisingly, by two pharmacists.33 The threat which declining fertility posed to national existence was emphasised by three gentlemen who, with irony that can only have been unconscious, took a religious view of the need to populate the country and a thoroughly un-Christian view of the alternative population. One
thought that only the 'lower classes' and 'heathen and half-civilized nations' would survive the era of family limitation and another claimed that any nation which flaunted the Divine Creator by abstaining from procreation was heading for 'the inferno of obscurity and weakness'. The nicest expression of their attitude was that of 'Paterfamilias' who called on the clergy to challenge the birth controllers and added 'Surely, as has been well said, such people shall not inherit the land, and their place shall be taken by others, even the despised Chinese.'

Ranged against those who thought that limitation was immoral and extinction was in train were a larger number of correspondents who believed that the quality of child life was more important than the number of children. Their attitude was summed up by 'Mother of Four' when she said that it was 'a cruel thing to bring children into the world unless the parents know they can properly provide for them', and went on to argue that careful parenthood would preempt Malthus's catastrophic checks: 'we are told that unless there were occasionally wars and plagues to carry off the surplus population the world would become overcrowded. Well, would it not be better not to have the surplus population?' Others put the 'not quantity but quality' position more bluntly, one of them using the very phrase and arguing that 'the rearing of children should be carried on on the same plan as the rearing of other stock, balancing numbers against subsistence'. Another proponent of this view held that 'the real power of a nation for good' lay in the quality of its people, while a third upholder of the national welfare declared 'sickly, short-lived and unhealthy children will never build up a white Australia'. Other correspondents rejected all notions of corporate welfare and held that family size was a subject for private decision, not patriotism, since the happiness of the home would be 'of far more consequence than the magnitude of the State's population twenty years hence . . .'

The great majority of the Argus's correspondents believed that family limitation was caused by the prevailing low wage/high cost structure in Victoria. One or two correspondents said that lack of domestic servants was the real problem or that pleas of economic hardship were only a cover for selfishness but they were outnumbered by people who diagnosed economic causes and prescribed economic remedies for the decline. In many cases the blame for high food prices and small families was laid on the protective tariff levied in Victoria. It is not surprising that correspondents of the Argus, the free trade paper, used the lag in population as a stick to beat protection, although there was no automatic congruence of
opinion between paper and readers on other aspects of the question. Several writers proposed tax concession for parents, generally on a scale sliding according to family size, and one proponent of this idea suggested that the concessions should be financed by an imposition on bachelors. Others called for the payment of baby bonuses or child endowment, while yet another suggested that if pensions were more readily obtainable parents would take less thought for the future and be more willing to spend their income on children.*39 Two letter writers thought that a scheme of land settlement would remedy the decline and a third said that land settlement, irrigation, immigration and free trade would offset the deleterious effect on girls of modern education!40 In general, though, it is fair to say that correspondents who discerned a moral cause for declining fertility espoused a negative legislative remedy (such as a ban on the advertising or sale of preventives), whereas those who thought there was an economic cause suggested a positive legislative remedy of an economic kind.

The Argus itself was dismayed by what its correspondents wrote and, in attempting to sum up the discussion, seized on the moral cause and ignored all the remedies. ‘Statistics make it very clear’, the editor wrote, ‘even without the candid admissions by correspondents, that “race suicide” is extensively practised in Australia’. Prudence might be the reason occasionally but in most cases the motive was nothing but

the determination to indulge a desire to marry without fear of losing any of the comforts and luxuries to which young people have become accustomed. A pitiable incapacity to practise self-denial explains, in the majority of cases, the prevalence of the small family... That is not the spirit which built up the British Empire. Nor is it the spirit that is likely to convert Australia into a puissant and prosperous nation.41

The Advertiser picked up the Argus discussion and gave it a brief airing in Adelaide at the beginning of April 1903. The paper itself was much less sententious than the Argus had been but the correspondents, so far as one can generalise from a few examples,

* Limited old-age pension privileges (not rights) were introduced in Victoria in 1900 but by 1906 a Commonwealth Royal Commission on Old-Age Pensions could report of the Victorian system: ‘Owing to the stringent character of the investigations made, particularly as to the ability of children to support parents who are claimants for pensions, the number of pensioners is decreasing’. Commonwealth of Australia, Royal Commission on Old Age Pensions: Report ... (1906), pp.vii–ix, quoted in T.H. Kewley, Australia’s Welfare State (Macmillan of Australia, Melbourne, 1969), p.45.
were rather more conservative than those in Melbourne. In its opening editorial the Advertiser commented that the Melbourne correspondence was salutary because it threw some light on personal aspects of a question usually considered 'in the abstract or in its bearing upon the general interests of the State'. Noting that the Argus highlighted 'selfishness and the absence of . . . self-denial' while correspondents urged 'considerations of individual prudence', the Advertiser came down on the side of the correspondents. Australia might have 'vast territory and undeveloped resources' sufficient for a larger population, the Advertiser admitted, but nevertheless it sympathised with young men who were disinclined to marry when faced with 'industrial depression, uncertain employment and limited earning', and with married people who did not want to reduce a moderately comfortable standard of living by encumbering themselves with large families.

Some of the readers did not agree. 'A Believer in God and Nature', evidently more orthodox in ethics than faith, was in 'no doubt that nature has placed a curse upon the abuse of sexual passion. The aim of that passion is the procreation of children'. There were other, less dogmatic, supporters of this position, ranging from one who wanted more honour, praise, comfort and blessing bestowed upon the nation's mothers to others who would allow the limitation of families to a reasonable size (like seven or eight children) provided abstinence was the technique employed. Against these advocates of the moderate-to-large family only two pens were raised: one to say that the difficulty of obtaining employment showed South Australia to be overpopulated, the other to argue that Australia had come up against Malthusian parameters of a fixed food supply and fixed number of jobs, so that any increase in numbers 'must result in starvation and in an increase in the number of unemployed.'

The limited evidence of letters to the Advertiser can be supplemented from the records of one of the bodies, still flourishing in 1903, which had caused Coghlan to remark on 'the amazing energy of debate, of argument . . . of oratory' in the Adelaide of the 1890s. The Adelaide Literary Societies and their Union Parliament were dominated by professional and commercial men and their debates add another dimension to the picture of articulate opinion on population questions. When the birth rate controversy was at its height in New South Wales during September 1903, Mr C.A. Hack introduced to the Union Parliament a 'motion for arresting the decrease in the birthrate'. Like others elsewhere, he suggested a bachelor tax to mitigate the evil. In April 1904 the
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editor of the Societies' *Journal* took a more radical line, suggesting that where population was so scarce and resources so abundant as in Australia policies of restrictive immigration and racial exclusiveness were inappropriate. The familiar theme of 'The Overgrowth of Australian Cities' was sounded again in the May issue of the *Journal* and in June causes of, rather than remedies for, the hiatus in population growth were at last considered by one of the Union parliamentarians. He took up most of the points beloved of letter writers in Sydney and Melbourne: the preference in employment given to single over married men; low wages; and the prevalence of female employment which, he said, injured the females and deprived the men of work.

The Adelaide controversy was small by contrast with that in the Melbourne *Argus* but Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* matched the *Argus* for volume with a correspondence that filled its letter columns from March to July 1903. As in Melbourne, so in Sydney, the discussion was provoked by Roosevelt's remarks on race suicide. There were two groups of letters, one dealing with the morality of family limitation and a variety of alleged causes of the decline in family size, the other a smaller number of letters whose authors were obviously trying to tie their opinions to a theoretical framework. Few letters proposed any remedy for the decline, except by implication. There was no dialogue between the moralists, whose letters were simply a series of confrontations ranging from those who thought God was irrelevant to the procreative decision against those who thought Him central, and those who saw limitation as selfish against those who saw it as rational. Correspondents looking for causes of limitation found them in social, political and economic fields. The employment of females, for example, was blamed for lowering the breadwinning capacity of males (by depressing wages or glutting the labour supply) and for reducing the reproductive capacity of the women themselves. Others saw family limitation as a function of the process of civilisation—which reduced women's physiological and psychological capacity to rear children; of the Australian climate—said to have similar effects; of urbanisation; of the cost of education; and of protective, socialistic legislation. The argument that economic conditions were unfavourable to large families was put most simply by the correspondent who wrote 'I am convinced that it is the low rate of wages and the scarcity of work which are responsible for the declining birth rate.' In his view the severity of the times had hit the middle and lower classes very hard and had 'prevented hundreds of young fellows from taking upon themselves the responsibility of married life.'
A feature of the 1903 correspondence in the *Daily Telegraph* was a group of letters which may not have expressed beliefs that differed significantly from those in the *Argus* and the *Advertiser* but were distinguished by some striving after a rational framework for the belief. The writer of the first letter of this kind suggested that the fuss about the decline of fertility among native-born white Americans was unimpressive because it failed to allow for ‘relative deprivation’ and the struggle for existence. Fertility depended on the intensity with which a man was forced to struggle to raise a family ‘on a plane and in harmony with his own tastes’. Taste was a relative term, the writer suggested, ‘as a condition which would seem hopeless poverty to one would be affluence to another’. It was said to follow from these premises that, while ‘relative hard conditions and social exactions’ had caused a vast army of native-born Americans to remain unmarried, the large number of immigrants of the early 1890s, ‘mostly of decadent alien blood’, had become ‘relatively so happy as to be glad, with their chattering progeny, to furnish the standard bearers of the future’. The writer did not attempt to relate his rather complicated theory to Australian conditions but another correspondent did, neatly utilising the widely approved remedy of land settlement. This second writer agreed with the first that limited opportunities produced dysgenic differentials of fertility. Conversely, he argued, the survival of the fittest could be ensured only by the provision of equal opportunities for all. This happy situation would be simply achieved by breaking up the land monopoly to establish a ‘prosperous agricultural community’.

J.A. Hendry made a quite different contribution to the discussion with letters in both the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. At a time when the sole idea of many more notable people in the community was that Australia’s current levels of fertility were abnormally low and portentous of national calamity, Hendry produced a piece of rational economic analysis which hit at the foundations of the received demographic wisdom. In 1903, he said, Australia was suffering from ‘a plethora of population, born a generation ago, when parents were deceived by the notion that the opportunities afforded by this continent were boundless’. A generation earlier heavy borrowing of British capital, ‘the reckless auctioning of the public estate’, speculation in property and unthinking exploitation of productive resources ‘gave an altogether artificial stimulus’ to commerce which was reflected in high marriage and birth rates. Now that the boom days were over, Hendry suggested,

The national aim should be in population, not quantity but
quality. Today the standard of living is higher, sanitation allows a higher proportion of people to survive, and if the birth-rate be reduced somewhat, the result in due course will be a better equipped population . . .

The lessened birth rate . . . means self-restraint and prudence, which are signs of getting away from the condition of mere animals, whose surplus offspring have to perish. Surely this is a matter for congratulation rather than regret.

'H—A P—S', who need not have been so shy about revealing his identity, made the last of the amateur theorists' contributions to the Daily Telegraph correspondence. The ideas he collected were held separately by others but he forced them into a framework that might be labelled 'individualist variations on social capillarity', although Spencer and Dumont may not have recognised it as such!

'H—A P—S' said that the common argument whether a family of a few children was preferable to a numerous but ill-kept brood appeared to be synonymous with the question whether Australia wished to become '(a) a self-contained, mentally high cultured nation for a limited period, or (b) a less cultured, robust and prolific nation—dominant through quantity—for an unlimited period . . .'. He did not answer the question himself but the remainder of his letter suggests that he believed Australia had chosen the former alternative. After pointing out that Australia was untroubled by problems of subsistence, he suggested that the chief cause of declining fertility was

the intense egoism of the age, which compels the fiercest struggle in order to reach a higher step on the social ladder, a consummation which children would greatly hamper and often prevent. We find that in democratic countries the birth-rate is generally lower than in countries where rigid caste barriers make the wholesale transference of individuals from one stratum to another impossible . . . There is a large percentage of the educated classes for whom there might be some excuse for refraining from having children; namely, those who receive proportionally less remuneration for their work than the artisan, and yet are expected by their employers and friends to 'keep up appearances' . . .

It is only where intellectual pursuits are considered the only possible career, that a child is a serious financial consideration; therefore those who wish for numbers for the sake of military protection should discourage extreme intellectual culture for the masses, and encourage handicrafts . . .

There were elements in the 'H—A P—S' theory making it even more scrappy than appears from the extract just quoted. Never-
theless his letter and those of ‘Nemo’, ‘E.S.C.’ and Hendry in 1903 all give evidence of a groping attempt to fit pieces of experience into half-understood, but broader, themes. Taken together these letters give additional support to the suggestion that the resources for a ‘post-Malthusian’ debate were available in Australia and might have coalesced into a respectable intellectual controversy had the Mackellar Commission not supervened. It is significant that, of the twenty-five letters printed by the Daily Telegraph in the week following the publication of the Commission’s Report in 1904, not one attempted a systematic argument from theoretical premises. In addition only three of these later correspondents shared the Commission’s (and the Telegraph’s) concern with the national and moral implications of the decline in the birth rate. Two-thirds of the 1904 writers, in fact, dwelt on social and economic causes of and remedies for the decline.53

Three features of arguments about population in Australia at the turn of the century deserve further comment: the fear that failure of Caucasian (and, especially, Anglo-Saxon) fertility in Australia would see the continent invaded by hordes from more prolific races; the repeated suggestion that financial want or uncertainty of employment caused people to limit the number of their offspring; and the lack of comment on the availability of birth control literature and equipment.

‘Give the Yellow Man once firm foothold in the North and he will gradually overrun the continent’, the Bulletin warned during 1893 in a passage that was not novel—in Australia or North America.54 The theme was sufficiently dramatic and, evidently, popular to attract the attention of novelists and short story writers. In 1895 J.A. Kenneth Mackay, a member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, published The Yellow Wave, A Romance of the Asiatic Invasion of Australia, which forecast what a reviewer called ‘the future of Queensland when the colored-labor policy and the land-grant railway policy and the country-for-the-coolie syndicates policy are pushed to their probable limits . . .’. In this case the ‘probable limit’ turns out to be a Russo-Chinese invasion which sweeps the inadequate white population of Queensland to the coast. Mackay’s was not the only Australian voice prophesying war. The literary magazine Lone Hand, an offshoot of the Bulletin, specialised in articles warning of ‘the danger of allowing so rich a treasure as this vast Commonwealth to be guarded by so small a population’, and in 1913 there was even a motion picture on the Yellow Peril theme. Lone Hand ran one story in which an Asiatic squadron held Sydney to ransom—until a loose-limbed, bronzed Hero thwarted
their designs—and on another occasion it was proposed, with nice irony, that Australian and Papuan Aborigines should be given military training to defend Australia against Japan.\textsuperscript{5} The most successful piece of the kind was \textit{The Australian Crisis}, an apocalyptic account by C.H. Kirmess of a Japanese invasion of Australia. The book still makes entertaining reading, the flavour of these closing lines notwithstanding:

\begin{quote}
A truce has been cried until 1940 A.D. Till then the Commonwealth must get ready for its relentless march to the North to save the purity of the race by sweeping the brown invaders back over the coral sea. The alternative is the irremovable conquest of tropical Australia by the hordes of the Orient. In this struggle the still larger issue is bound up, whether the White or the Yellow race shall gain final supremacy. Christian civilization cannot afford the loss of this continent, FOR AUSTRALIA IS THE PRECIOUS FRONT BUCKLE IN THE WHITE GIRDLE OF POWER AND PROGRESS ENCIRCLING THE GLOBE.
\end{quote}

Kirmess said in his introduction that the book had developed from his attempt to write a magazine article about ‘the dangers to which the neighbourhood of over-crowded Asia exposes the thinly-populated Commonwealth of Australia’. At the time of starting the work, he confessed, his thoughts on the subject ‘resembled those of the Australian multitude: they were disconnected, and more in the shape of a vague fear than defined clearly’\textsuperscript{56} All the other evidence that is available suggests that his description of Australian opinion was accurate.

At least half of the people who wrote to the newspapers about the peopling of Australia made some reference to an economic cause of family limitation, usually complaining of difficulties in obtaining regular employment or of increases in the cost of living. Both the writers’ own reports and the limited amount of official evidence indicate that living conditions did become more difficult for many people around the end of the nineteenth century. During 1892, 1894 and 1899 the Melbourne \textit{Age} published numerous articles and editorials on the impact of unemployment, showing that there was a good deal of distress in the city (although the paper did not suggest at any time that unemployment was directly influencing the size of families)\textsuperscript{57} Similarly in the New South Wales Parliament, where debates on the problem of unemployment were almost an annual ritual in the 1890s, there was never a hint that lack of jobs was actually causing a reduction of family size.\textsuperscript{58} However, unemployment or, at least, underemployment, undoubted-
ly was severe, especially in New South Wales, about the time of public discussion of the birth rate question. T.A. Coghlan certainly believed that there was severe unemployment in New South Wales, Victoria and, for a shorter time, South Australia during the 1890s and there was other evidence besides that of parliamentarians and editorialists to support him. More than 10 per cent of Australian trades unionists are said to have been unemployed in the mid-1890s and over 6 per cent in 1901. Almost 5 per cent of all New South Wales male breadwinners aged 20 years and over were unemployed at the time of the 1901 Census. In 1898 the New South Wales Government Labour Bureau reported that there were ‘a large number of men who could only perhaps obtain one or two days work per week’—and that in a year when the employment situation was said to have improved. Some idea of the pressure on jobs, even at a later date, can be gathered from the Reports of the Public Service Board in New South Wales: in 1901 the Board received 5910 applications for the 462 positions it advertised, the heaviest pressure being for unskilled, non-manual jobs like storekeeper or timekeeper. In 1902 the response rose to 6101 applications for only 372 posts.

Even those who had regular work frequently earned little more than subsistence. A number of newspaper correspondents specified £2 per week as the income on which a small family could be maintained in modest comfort in 1903. Thirty-six per cent of New South Wales public servants were receiving £2 per week or less in 1902 and nearly two-thirds of the service had less than £3 per week. (In Victoria in 1894 and 1896 31 per cent of public servants were paid less than £2 and 90 per cent had less than £4 per week). In 1907 Mr Justice Higgins of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court set £2.2s. per week as a fair and reasonable wage for a group of factory workers in Victoria. Mr Higgins said, in part,

I propose to take unskilled labourers first. The standard wage . . . is 6s. per day . . . There is no constancy of employment . . . But even if the employment were constant and uninterrupted, is a wage of 36s. per week fair and reasonable, in view of the cost of living in Victoria? . . . The usual rent paid by a labourer . . . appears to be 7s.; and, taking the rent at 7s., the necessary average weekly expenditure for a labourer’s home of about five persons would seem to be about £1 12s. 5d . . . I have confined the figures to rent, groceries, bread, meat, milk, fuel, vegetables, and fruit . . . This expenditure does not cover light . . . clothes, boots, . . . tram and train fares, . . . school requisites, amusements and holidays, . . . or any expenditure for unusual contingencies . . .
£2.2s per week may have been 'fair and reasonable' throughout most of the period from 1891 to 1911 but average effective wages did fluctuate and were certainly well down in 1902 and 1903. It is difficult to get an accurate index of industrial incomes (the states' statistical registers give a range of wages for each occupation so wide as to make averages meaningless) but the Commonwealth Statistician calculated an index of 'effective wages' (1911=1000) which stood at 945 in 1901 and 940 in 1906. A more recent attempt to calculate average effective wages in manufacturing (1911=100) has produced the series 93 (1901), 87 (1902), 86 (1903), 96 (1904), 86 (1905), for New South Wales and an almost constant index for the same period in Victoria, when the approximate 'average wages paid [in Victorian manufacturing] to non-casual, manual workers for a standard working week during November of each year' were about £1.15s.4 With unemployment remaining high, the rises in food prices which are indicated in Table 3 would have made conditions uncomfortable for anyone who was unemployed or whose income failed to rise in 1902 and 1903, which were years of frequent complaint in Sydney about the cost of supporting a family.

| Table 3 |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Retail Price Index Numbers, 1901–1905**<sup>a</sup> |
| (Groceries, Dairy Produce, Meat) | |
| **Year** | 1901 | 1902 | 1903 | 1904 | 1905 | 1911 |
| Sydney | 881 | 1085 | 1013 | 804 | 896 |
| Melbourne | 969 | 1047 | 969 | 907 | 937 |
| Adelaide | 975 | 1025 | 937 | 865 | 909 |
| Weighted average for 6 State Capitals | 945 | 1068 | 1002 | 871 | 927 | 1000 |

<sup>a</sup> Derived from Commonwealth of Australia, Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Labour Reports*, No.6 (1916), p.26

Very few newspaper correspondents spoke about the advertisement or use of birth control methods, even where it is clear that they approved of the limitation of family size. Nevertheless means were available for limiting families. Leaving aside the extensive mechanical induction of miscarriage, it is clear that chemical abortifacients and a variety of contraceptive aids were publicised and procurable at least from the beginning of the 1890s. In a debate in 1889 half-a-dozen members of the New South Wales Parliament spoke of newspaper advertisements and postal pamphlets about
preventives circulating widely in the state, and one member claimed that *The Law of Population*, which had recently been cleared for publication in the *Ex Parte* Collins judgment, was "being sold throughout the country at the price of 2s 6d". The *Bulletin* regarded contraceptive advertisements, with their coy promise of despatch 'under plain brown wrapper', as sufficiently commonplace for cartoon comment while the Mackellar Commission was told that a survey of 141 New South Wales newspapers in April 1903, including some of those lamenting the fall in fertility, had counted 237 advertisements of pills for women's 'irregularities' (i.e. abortifacients), preventives and books of advice 'for the Married' or 'for Ladies and Gentlemen'. In the intervening years interested persons could have read pamphlets by Mrs Bessie Smyth (who had 'always in stock and on sale' over twenty kinds of contraceptive device) or attended her lectures, given in several parts of Melbourne, on limitation of offspring and the diseases of women. They could have bought works by Allbutt, Edward B. Foote, Annie Besant and Knowlton from Sir Robert Bear's well-stocked Sydney bookshop (Bear acquired his 'knighthood' by deed poll) or similar titles from Saunders's bookshop in Melbourne. They could even have perused Australian editions of popular overseas handbooks like Warren's *Wife's Guide* and Cowan's *Science of a New Life*. Anyone wishing to apply the knowledge thus acquired could purchase Malthus Soluble Quinine Tablets, Lambert's Improved Secret Spring Check Pessary, the 'Sanitas' Sponge, or the 'Hygena' Spray Syringe in Melbourne's main shopping area; 'Malthus' Sheaths ('guaranteed extra strong'), Lambert's Improved Vertical and Reverse Current Syringe, Rendell's Quinine Pessaries or the Marvel Whirling Spray in Sydney, even if one's pharmacist dealt with the right agents, the 'No More Worry Co's' Patent Pessary mailed from Brisbane.

There was considerable demand for contraceptive equipment. During the month of October 1903 imports to New South Wales of sheaths and pessaries alone amounted to more than 21,000 pieces. Three wholesalers questioned by the Mackellar Commission admitted sales in excess of 200,000 pieces per annum. Add to this the local output of pessaries and sponges, syringes and abortifacients not included in the 200,000 and it becomes apparent that very many attempts were made to limit the size of families.

After the Mackellar Commission's Report had been presented and discussed the peopling of Australia became a less urgent question.
There were still some opinions expressed about the decline of fertility but the main interest after 1905 was in the conservation of infant life or the development of immigration. Only Octavius Beale continued to hie verbosely after a world that was lost. The slow recovery of the birth rate and the faster growth of immigration seem to have set minds at rest. Even the 1911 census failed to attract as much attention as those which had preceded it. Then, for one week in May 1911, the Sydney Daily Telegraph provoked and publicised a controversy which gives an excellent picture of the state of opinion at the end of the two decades of upheaval.

It is not surprising that the Telegraph was the vehicle for the controversy since that paper, far more than the Sydney Morning Herald or even the Bulletin, had been the one to highlight problems of population. On 17 May 1911 the Telegraph printed an article on ‘Racial Decadence’ by Theodore Roosevelt, whose interest in the question had been revived—particularly with respect to the Australian experience—by the appearance of Beale’s Racial Decay. Roosevelt described the book as ‘not good in form but in substance I believe better worth the study of any sincere patriot . . . than any other book that has been written for years’. In Beale’s work Roosevelt found evidence that the Western world was following France in ‘that rapid decline of birth-rate which inevitably signalizes race decay and which, if unchecked, means racial death’. He went on to say that

One of the strangest and saddest things in the whole sad business is that the decline has been most marked in the very places where one would expect to see the abounding vigour of the race most strikingly displayed. In Australia and New Zealand there is no warrant whatever in economic conditions for a limitation of the birth-rate, and the course of events in these great new countries demonstrates beyond possibility of refutation that the decline in the birth-rate is not due to economic forces . . . .

Taking up two other issues which had frequently been raised in Australian discussions, Roosevelt gave the opinion that Australia was a continent which could support, without the slightest difficulty, ten-fold the present population, and at the same time raise the general standard of well-being. Yet its sparse population tends to concentrate in great cities of disproportionate size compared to the country population . . . and it increases so slowly that, even if the present rate were maintained, the population would
not double itself in the next century... If this is so, then the men who rally to the battle-cry of 'A White Australia' have indeed ground for anxiety as they think of the teeming myriads steadily increasing north of them.

Roosevelt was in line with much Australian opinion in deploring the drift to the cities, and in raising the 'populate or perish' theme, and he was not alone, either, in regarding 'disproportionate love of luxury and of comfort' as one of the causes of the decline of the birth rate. He was out of step with many of Australia's pronatalists, however, when he said 'I do not believe that, in itself, the growth of independence among women has anything to do with the trouble'. He also set his target a little lower than others in prescribing four children per family as the number needed to keep the nation's population stable.

The ex-President's article appeared on 17 May. In the following five publication days, from 18 May to 23 May, there were no less than thirty-four contributions to the discussion in the form of reported statements or letters to the editor. (There was also an advertisement by the enterprising LADIES' COLLEGE OF HEALTH which took up the theme of 'Roosevelt's Bomb' and offered its course of 'Home Treatment' as a cure for sterility!).

On the first two days after Roosevelt's article there were few letters and the Telegraph kept up interest in the topic by reporting the reactions of various Sydney notables. Most of their opinions fell into three categories which might be called moralistic, economic and preservationist.

The long-held view of most churchmen, that prevention of conception indicates serious moral sickness, was represented on this occasion by the Reverend R. Kay, Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly. Having opined that 'motherhood, properly viewed, is woman's grandest glory', he went on to blame 'the worldly butterfly' for causing 'children and the care of children to be regarded as encumbrances. A most fatal view'. Kay's concern would certainly have gained the support of Mr David Storey, leader of the Independent group in the Legislative Assembly, who felt that the 'race suicide evil' was 'more likely to be diminished by moral suasion and by a proper conception of the duties of citizenship as expounded by the Christian Churches than by any laws that can be enacted...'.

Neither Kay and Storey nor Dr Charles Mackellar seems to have felt any need to justify their opinions with evidence. Mackellar, who was interviewed a day after Kay and Storey, simply recalled the conclusions of the 1903 Commission. He supported Roosevelt's
statement that economic factors were not the root cause of the decline and said that the ostensible reasons people offered all indicated 'the desire of the individual to avoid his obligations to the community'. Such individuals had succumbed to the desire because of the weakening of religious feeling and had succeeded in avoiding their obligations because of 'a traffic in the materials used for the purpose of prevention'. Despite his involvement in children's welfare work, Mackellar had not joined the public advocates of better care of existing children as a partial compensation for the non-arrival of others.

Three commentators went beyond the blanket condemnation of all contraceptors, which had been the norm in earlier years, to concentrate on the bad example of the rich. 'A French priest of the Roman Catholic Church', apparently resident in Sydney, said there was 'more selfishness in this respect in the upper circles than among the poorer people'. W.L. Duncan, who was President of the New South Wales Labour Council and those attitude might therefore have been predicted, thought it undoubtedly true of the rich that 'the mere force of their pernicious example has assisted to some extent in reducing the birth-rate among the less favoured sections of the community'. The Acting Premier, W.A. Holman, who had also been a member of the 1903 Commission (although hardly a participant) pushed the point about the bad example of the rich a little further and gave it a slight Darwinian flavour, suggesting that the decline of the birth rate would be 'a very great menace to the State' if it were not that the selfish class 'necessarily tends to disappear as a result of its own vices'. This certainly gave a neat moral twist to the widely held opinion that differential fertility was dysgenic.

Not only the example of the rich but also the condition of the poor was given some consideration as a cause of the alleged decadence of the race. The Minister for Public Instruction, Mr Beeby, was convinced that the alleged lowering of the moral tone of the community was merely a symptom of the laissez-faire economic system. 'Given conditions in which every normal individual is guaranteed the right to work and a reasonable standard of comfort,' the Minister said, 'the birth-rate will increase.' W.L. Duncan of the Labour Council estimated that the dread of poverty was the reason animating 'at least 75 per cent of our people in their desire for small families' and the Reverend Dr Thomas Roseby of the Congregational Church said that Roosevelt was quite incorrect in ignoring economic conditions. According to Roseby the declining birth rate was 'very much a question of prospects in life,
of an assured career, of employment, cost of living and daily bread'.

In addition to the economic pressures on those already married, the difficulties of setting up a home were thought to be deterring some young men from even embarking on marriage. That was the opinion of both the politicians, Storey and Holman. Storey observed that 'Many young men today do not like to take up the responsibility and cost of married life': Holman claimed that 'Ambitious young men who have a career to make won't marry early' and the kind of jobs most were able to get prevented them from setting up a family much before the age of thirty. Sir James Graham suggested a recompense which 'could be given in the shape of a bonus; and, negatively, by a remission of taxation' to help ameliorate the financial pressure on parents. This kind of bonus could also solve some associated problems, Sir James believed, since 'a grant of land for each child might at once increase the resources of the parents, provide for the future of the child, and promote the land settlement of Australia'. Dr Arthur also gave some support to the bonus scheme but he recognised that it had little chance of affecting the birth rate since material incentives would hardly appeal to those who were most able—but already least willing—to support large families. Arthur's solution for Australia’s problems was increased immigration, in which he had taken a well-publicised interest.

The most distinct addition to the views that had been current since 1891 was the stress on preservation of existing child life as a partial compensation for the absence of new life. As the Daily Telegraph put it in the heading over one statement of this opinion,

DO NOT CRY OVER THE UNBORN
SAVE THE INFANTS WHO ARE HERE

Sir James Graham 'laid a good deal of stress on the need for reducing mortality among infants' and Mr Holman felt that: 'As there is a diminution in the birth-rate ... the great thing is to preserve the lives of the children that are born and put an end to the appalling infant mortality.' While this desire to deal with the infant death rate did mark a considerable advance on the moralistic lamentations which had formerly prevailed, its empirical foundations were hardly more solid: the infant mortality rate in Australia had, in fact, been falling rapidly since just before the turn of the century and by 1911 was little more than two-thirds the level of a decade earlier.

Most people who looked to the problem of preserving child life obviously meant to deal with more than the infant year, however.
Holman was concerned about the numbers living to five years of age and thought it

mainly a question . . . of educating young mothers . . . a question of an absolutely pure and dependable milk supply . . . a great deal can be done by a large increase in the maternity homes . . . the institution of State crèches . . . close medical inspection of all children at school . . .

Holman’s colleague, Mr Beeby, the education minister, looked to ‘Better education in domestic science, free medical inspection and treatment of poor children, and the creation of healthy surroundings’, while Sir James Graham drew attention to dispensaries and home visiting as ‘agencies in assisting the poorer classes’. The city health officer, Dr George Armstrong, hoped something might be achieved by giving mothers better education in child care, and Rose Scott, the feminist leader, thought that parents should limit their families to a size they could care for, on the grounds that ‘in every other department of life we consider quality before quantity’.

In addition to the three main groups already mentioned, the Daily Telegraph also obtained statements in which public figures ascribed racial decadence to the emancipation of women (another of Dr Arthur’s views), the physical strain of female employment (Mr Beeby), and the increasing difficulty of obtaining domestic assistance (the opinion of Archdeacon Boyce). Sir Joseph Carruthers, responding reflexly, urged legislation to cure the decadence.

With all these opinions to stimulate controversy, the Daily Telegraph naturally reaped a harvest of letters to the editor. The main categories of opinion were ‘moral’ and ‘economic’, as usual. First among the moralists was Lancelot Victor Wilkinson, who believed that ‘blindness to our obligations to humanity at large’ stemmed from an ‘increase in the power of sense gratification’ followed by ‘a decrease in the moral sense’. This was not unduly worrying because ‘all progress was wave-like in its course’ and an early return to self-renunciation could therefore be expected. In the interim people should be educated to a higher ideal of national welfare and morality.

A more personal view of the question came from ‘A Mother’, who suggested that children should be taught that parentage is a sacred right and duty—but another mother (of three) agreed only with the individualist emphasis, asking: ‘As for the “sinfulness” of limited families . . . whose word are we to take for that, against our own reasons and conscience?’ Two of the correspondents mixed their moralism with some ‘yellow peril’ alarms. ‘A White Man’ sounded the clarion with the warning that
Eight hundred millions of coloured people swarm above Australia, most of them within a few days steam of the Northern Territory. And they are arming and drilling. ‘N.S. Welshman’ shared the view that Europeans must prepare ‘to hold back the teeming and ever-multiplying Eastern peoples who will slowly, if surely, force their way in a westerly direction’. In respect of perils from the north opinion was unchanged from 1890.

As with the notables, so with the general public, the economic argument came in two forms, one concerned with the difficulty of setting up a home and the other with the difficulty of maintaining a family. A working-man claimed that ‘if young men were given more chance to settle upon the land, more chance to build up permanent homes, they would have more inducement to get married’. Another contributor complained that he was unmarried because ‘living is high, wages are low, the expenses of preparation for my life’s work heavy, and I cannot see my way clear to marry for a year or so yet’. He thought many other young people were similarly placed and, while he did agree that many delayed their marriage because of unduly grand expectations (girls in particular attracting his criticism), he believed that ‘a fair prospect at least is necessary to start married life on’. The laymen also gave hard evidence to back up the opinions of those public figures who had recognised the difficulty of raising a large family on a limited income. One example is worth quoting at length:

perhaps the opinions and experiences of an ordinary working-man earning £3/10/- per week may be worth reading by thoughtful people. My family consists of a wife and four children ... I am buying a four-bedroomed, weatherboard cottage on the weekly rental scheme at 10s. per week, which added to the following, makes up the total cost of running my home per week:—Insurance 1/6, lodge 1/3½, municipal rate 8d, music for one child 1/2, fares to work and newspaper 2/-, tobacco 6d, food, lighting and fuel for six persons £1/16/1—total £2/13/3½ per week, leaving a balance of 16/10½ for dentist, boots and clothing (two big items), breakages, renewal of such items as blankets, bedding, furniture, school books, etc., ... what inducement is there for my wife and I to bring more children into the world, when we can only decently exist on present wages?

Another correspondent spelled out the meaning of living in a cheap four-roomed cottage. It would be in a back street, he said, where the front door abuts on to the roadside, the back door on
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to a yard of meagre dimensions. For 8/- or 10/- a week the landlord provides neither copper nor bath. The mother has to perform her weekly wash in a kerosene tin or similar utensil on the kitchen fire. The children’s playground is the street, their mates are the victims of a similar environment.

In view of the earlier strong support for some form of governmental aid to the parents of large families there was surprisingly little lay interest in the topic in 1911. One lady did suggest that more créches, playgrounds and clinics should be set up but no other correspondent suggested either direct or indirect government action. The most likely explanation is that by 1911 it had come to be popularly recognised that the habit of family limitation had become widely established in Australia. Preferred family size would then be a matter of long-term intention rather than short-term reaction to economic stimuli. Economic aid on the small scale a government could provide would have only the most marginal of effects on a couple’s intended family size.

The material that has been outlined in the last few pages provides a sample of the opinions current in Sydney in 1911 concerning the growth of Australia’s population. Admittedly the opinions are drawn only from the Daily Telegraph, which was more conservative than the Bulletin and more noisy than the Sydney Morning Herald, and its letters may therefore have been somewhat unrepresentative of public opinion. Nevertheless some useful inferences can be drawn from the letters, while the statements of the public figures are particularly helpful as indices of the changes in attitude that had taken place since the 1903 Commission and even since the early 1890s. Compared with the expressions of opinion from, say, 1898 to 1904 there is a much greater acceptance of the decline in the birth rate. The decline is still lamented and people moralise on the question but in most cases they appear to have recognised that the high fertility of the 1880s has irrevocably disappeared. In 1903 many of them would have believed that the decline was but a temporary phenomenon, the accident of a lapse in public morality. Compared with those of the early 1890s, the expressions of opinion in 1911 are less self-consciously theoretical. Where the earlier statements would have referred explicitly to Malthus, Henry George or, possibly, Darwin, depending on the speaker’s predilection in social theory, by 1911 one can speak of only ‘a Darwinian twist’ of ‘a hint of eugenic theory’. The labels that had been bandied about and the theories that had formerly been thought an essential preface to any statement on the population question were taken for granted.
or assimilated into the conventional wisdom by 1911. While the discussion had become less theoretical and less urgent by 1911 it was hardly more empirical than it had been at the beginning of the century. Nearly every one of the expressions in 1911 referred to the 'declining' birth rate—even though the New South Wales birth rate had risen in four of the preceding five years.
Very little of the public reaction to population change in Australia was based on close knowledge of demographic statistics. The Mackellar Commission, for example, disregarded statistical evidence where it was inconvenient and doctors, clergymen, business leaders and newspaper editors and correspondents usually spoke and wrote in apparent ignorance of the actual course of fertility or migration. The ignorance was not due to an absence of information, however, for Australian social and demographic statistics were among the best in the world at the turn of the century. Government publications were the chief source of demographic information and government officials were the chief interpreters. Ironically, the government statisticians themselves differed in their interpretation of the changes that were occurring, and the way in which they presented their material probably contributed to the frequent absence of rationality from public discussion. The point is illustrated by the observation that statisticians in New South Wales were much more concerned about the lapse in population growth than statisticians in Victoria—where the lapse was greater.

Australians’ awareness of population statistics was largely due to the work of Henry Heylyn Hayter, Victoria’s Government Statist from 1874 to 1895, and Timothy Augustine Coghlan, who held the corresponding post in New South Wales from 1886 to 1905. Hayter was Victoria’s first Government Statist, although the virtual functions of such an officer had been performed since 1854 by W.H. Archer, ‘a self-confessed disciple of leading English and European statisticians’ who published voluminous statistics and tried unsuccessfully ‘to establish greater uniformity in statistical practice in the Australian colonies’. Hayter began work in the Registrar-General’s office, administered by Archer, in 1857 and was appointed Government Statist with charge over a separate department in 1874. With more success than Archer had enjoyed, he continued to seek uniform colonial statistics and forms of vital statistics which he had devised were used in other colonies. He took the initiative in a conference with officials of other colonies in 1875 and in 1888 he addressed the first meeting of the Australasian Association for
the Advancement of Science on the problems of official statistics. He also took on Archer’s mantle as a voluminous publisher responsible, among other things, for twenty editions of the Victorian Year Book—with which he became so closely identified between 1874 and 1893 that many people referred to the work simply as ‘Hayter’. Hayter’s report on the 1891 census, his addresses to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, his Year Books and those edited by his successors Fenton, McLean and Drake together provide the main sources for a discussion of Victorian demographic statistics.

During the 1880s, when Victoria was experiencing fluctuations in marriage rates and birth rates similar to those which were to trouble New South Wales in the following decade, Hayter gave equal attention to each topic. At an early stage he recognised that a crude marriage rate which related the year’s marriages to the total population gave a distorted view of the population’s marriage habits. He knew that the crude marriage rate was universally employed but thought it was a reliable guide ‘only when applied to countries which are in a normal state as regards age’. Applied to ‘new countries in which . . . the age conditions are subject to be disturbed by accessions of population from without’, the crude rate was apt to mislead. Hayter believed that Victoria came under the rubric of ‘new countries disturbed from without’ because of its experience in the 1850s and 1860s, when immigration heavily dominated by males had greatly increased the general population without providing the opportunity—in the form of nubile females—for many more marriages. The implications of the events of the 1860s were emphasised again in Hayter’s review of the marriage rate at the end of the 1880s. He asserted that the addition of children born to gold rush immigrants meant that the population had assumed a normal condition of age and sex structure which was the basis of rises in the marriage rate during 1887–9. The clarity of Hayter’s thinking about the relationship between marriage and migration is open to question: his 1884 argument, that the lack of large-scale, recent migration of single adult males was one reason for the low Victorian marriage rate, relative to other colonies, was contrary to his statements in 1881 and 1890, that a large number of male immigrants depressed the marriage rate. Dealing with secular factors affecting the rate of marriage, Hayter supported the popular belief that ‘a rural life tends more to the promotion of marriage than a town one’ with examples from New Zealand and South Australia. He also said there was no doubt that ‘the tendency of marriageable males to marry . . . is affected by their prosperity’
but this contention soon got him into an unfortunate crux. Since one of the Government Statist’s practical functions was that of public relations officer for Victoria, Hayter found himself arguing that the 1883 marriage rate was lower than one would expect, considering that Victoria had ‘certainly been second to none of the other colonies in point of wealth and prosperity’.

In 1881 Hayter reported that ‘the birth rate has been decreasing steadily for years past, and in 1880 was lower than it was in any year of the previous vicenniad’. The fact that birth and marriage rates were declining did not worry him because he thought in both cases that the crude rate was misleading and expected the results of the 1881 census ‘to throw light upon this as well as on many other social questions of the deepest interest’, presumably by providing the basis for calculating more accurate, age-specific rates. Although postponing any analysis of general fertility, he did notice the marked geographical differentials in the crude birth rate and drew attention to the fact that the relative levels of metropolitan, other urban and rural rates had changed quite markedly between 1873 and 1880. Taking the rural crude birth rate as 100, the metropolitan rate was 94 and the other urban rate 100 in 1873; but in 1880, taking the rural rate as 100 again, the metropolitan rate had risen to 109 and the other urban to 119. Hayter did not elaborate upon these relationships or upon the fact that the crude birth rate had fallen substantially in each region. Had he done so, and had he taken the 1873 rural rate as a base for the whole calculation, it would have been clear that the greatest decline was in the rural rate. He was not disturbed by the fact that the birth rate was still declining in 1883, when he reported it lower than in any previous year, but relied upon the fact that the ratio of births to married women under 45 years of age had not varied from 1871 to 1881. In his opinion ‘the reduction in the birth rate, calculated in the ordinary way, [was] therefore conclusively shown to be due to a deficiency in the community of married women at the fruitful period of life’. Even the fact that the average number of children born to a marriage appeared to have declined was met with a comment that ‘there are . . . many matters affecting the birth rates of infants respecting which it is not possible to obtain precise information’.

* In this study ‘fertility’ and ‘fecundity’ are used in accordance with P.R. Cox, *Demography* (5th ed. Cambridge, 1976) p.23f: “The meaning of the word “fertility” in demography, for historical reasons, attaches to the production of live-born children. Because of reproductive wastage, and other causes . . ., fertility is quite distinct from “fecundity”, the biological capacity to reproduce.”
'This Sin and Scandal'

By the second half of the 1880s Hayter was evidently much more concerned about the course of the birth rate. In 1887 he wrote that, although there had been a revival of the marriage rate during the decade, there had not been a corresponding improvement in the birth rate which had 'advanced but slightly' from the low point of 1883. By 1889–90 he was sufficiently worried about the fall in family size to be casting around for causes of the decline. In the process he made what was probably the first official reference in Victoria to the practice of contraception. 'The falling off', he decided, 'is a result which, although perhaps it cannot be proved, may be conjectured to be owing to the increasing desire on the part of married women to avoid the cares of maternity, and the steps taken by them—often, no doubt, with the concurrence of their husbands—to prevent its occurrence.' Hayter did not elaborate on this comment after 1890 and his last three Year Books simply repeated the observation on the possibility of contraception.

During the 1880s, when Hayter was at the height of his influence, the Year Book provided Victorians with a balanced account of the demographic aspects of their state's rapidly declining fertility together with a few snippets of social comment. In the mid-1890s, however, Victorians were given no official commentary on their colony's vital statistics because the Year Book became one casualty of the depression and governmental retrenchment. The next issue to appear after Hayter's 1893 edition was a composite volume covering the years 1895–8 and edited by J. J. Fenton. Fenton depended heavily on Hayter's legacy for both form and content but lacked Hayter's statistical understanding. Figures were published indicating substantial annual falls in the birth rate throughout the 1890s but Hayter's earlier warnings about the defects of crude rates now acted as a buffer against concern at the extent of the fall. The more refined ratio of births to married women under 45 years of age can only be calculated accurately in a censal year and Fenton allowed himself to be reassured in 1898 by the fact that the ratio for 1891 (already seven years out of date) was little below that of 1881 and 1871. Even Hayter's notice of declining average family size and possible contraception was dropped to be replaced by an assertion, supported by no more than a statistical coincidence, that the figures 'appear to indicate that the degree of fecundity falls off as the marriage rate increases, and vice versa'.

Fenton's first Year Book was his only one and two years elapsed before a further volume appeared under the editorship of William McLean. His publications of 1902, 1903 and 1904 were not so reliant on the Hayter volumes as Fenton's had been. His work was
not flawless and there was a rather tentative tone about the 1902 edition but he made one important technical innovation and, particularly in 1904, showed a willingness to look for new explanations of vital phenomena. An example of the early tentativeness is seen in McLean's treatment of marriage. The results of the 1901 census gave him what Hayter had always sought, an up-to-date refined marriage rate, and he duly printed a table of the 'Proportion of Marriages per 1000 Marriageable Men and Women at each Age' for each of the census years 1881, 1891 and 1901. The figures as a whole—and those relating to women, in particular—were so striking that they should have provoked a substantial analysis of trends in marriage but, apart from the comment that 'there is every evidence of a tendency amongst men to defer marriage to a later period of life', McLean did not analyse or consider the implication of his figures.

McLean did attempt a more substantial analysis when he turned to indices of fertility. He recalled that the number of births had been almost constant from 1863 to 1883, had risen sharply till 1891 and had then begun to fall again. The 1901 census had provided another opportunity to calculate a refined ratio of births to married women under 45 but this figure no longer offered its former solace for it was down from 0.302 in 1871 and 1881, and 0.297 in 1891, to only 0.229 in 1901. Some comfort was taken from the fact that the crude birth rate, a measure discounted by McLean's predecessors, was declining less rapidly in 1900–2 than it had been before 1900 and this was held to indicate that 'an improvement may be expected in the near future'. Nevertheless the evidence of the refined rate had to be faced and McLean admitted that, given the drop in the refined rate between 1891 and 1901, fluctuations in the crude rate could not be ascribed as formerly entirely to 'varying proportions of married women in the community at the fruitful period of life'. Using a standardisation technique which he appears to have developed himself, McLean calculated that nearly 9 per cent out of a drop of nearly 25 per cent in Victoria's rate of births per

* 'Marriageable' females were defined as 'unmarried women aged 15 and upwards'.

The most striking figures, which should have attracted some comment, were:

| Proportion of Marriages per 1000 Marriageable Women |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| at ages          | 1881             | 1891             | 1901             |
| 21–25            | 118.8            | 106.0            | 87.2             |
| 25–30            | 105.7            | 100.5            | 84.7             |
| 30–35            | 73.1             | 66.4             | 57.9             |

It should be pointed out that the proportions for men at each of these ages increased between 1891 and 1901.
1000 married women aged 15-45 between 1891 and 1901 was due to the changed, older distribution of those women.* Another 2 per cent of the decline was attributed to 'the larger proportion in 1901 of wives whose husbands were . . . living out of the State' at the time of the census. The remaining 14 per cent could not be rationalised and McLean met it with the rather casual remark that 'no doubt there are causes of a varied nature which operate to bring about this result'.

The 1904 Year Book gave McLean a chance to offer his explanations 'of a varied character'. In this instance his views must be seen in the context of the Mackellar Commission's opinion that there had been no deterioration in female reproductive capacity in New South Wales and of his attempt to portray J. B. Trivett, the Commission's statistical adviser, as an alarmist. McLean began with an argument, that at least had the virtue of plausibility, designed to show that part of the decline in fertility might be a result of deterioration in female physique. He reasoned that before 1891 assisted immigration had brought to Victoria women who 'were physically a selected class . . . and amongst whom a high birth rate was to be expected'. Cessation of assisted migration in the 1890s had led to a more normal proportion of frail and infirm in the population so that the average physique of women in 1904 was 'not equal to that of the earlier years'. A further argument, which probably reinforced, rather than changed, his readers' opinions, was that 'the conditions obtaining in 1891 were entirely different from those of 1901, the former being a year in a prosperous period, the latter representing the sixth year of an unprecedented drought'. That there was a connection between material conditions and the birth rate McLean did not doubt—or demonstrate. He also argued that there was a direct relationship between the level of the birth rate and the level of infant mortality because 'the death of a child before it has reached one year not only shortens the interval between child-bearing, but leaves a vacancy to be filled by another birth'.
Victorian infant mortality was declining, McLean said, and the birth rate must be expected to follow suit.\textsuperscript{19}

The relative lack of concern in Victoria about changes in the state's fertility can be understood when the output of official statistics is seen in historical perspective. Hayter's most stimulating work on population statistics was done before 1890 and Fenton's sole edition of the \textit{Year Book} did not compensate Victorians for their lack of statistical information over several years of the 1890s because he was unable to break out of the mould Hayter had set many years earlier. In the context of interstate rivalries before Federation it is also likely that Fenton saw his role, even more than Hayter had done, as that of defending Victoria and all her works. McLean's ideas were distinctive and therefore stimulated some public interest in the demographic changes that were taking place in Victoria. His debate with Trivett was conducted in the columns of the medical press and he was given a chance to air his views at a well-attended public meeting of the National Christian Citizens' League but the material he used on these occasions and in the 1904 \textit{Year Book} was prepared after the Report of the Mackellar Commission had made the course of the birth rate a public issue. In addition his habit of indulging in lengthy comparisons of Victorian statistics with those from overseas must have done more to blind than to enlighten the Victorian public as to the trend of fertility; since examples were drawn chiefly from the countries of Western Europe, which were themselves experiencing a decline in fertility, Victoria did not suffer by comparison.

Provocative statistical information certainly was not lacking in New South Wales, where Timothy Coghlan's publications on official statistics had almost the status of sacred writ. Very little biographical information about Coghlan has been published but enough is known now to show that he was probably the most capable and most famous public servant Australia has had, an able journalist, historian and administrator as well as a statistician who attracted world recognition.\textsuperscript{20} He believed it was his job to present official statistics in a form useful to public men and interesting to lay people. He was not above writing favourable newspaper reviews of his own books under an assumed name in order to get his point across and he gained valuable publicity through his long association with leading men on the \textit{Bulletin}. His name also came before the public during the intercolonial jockeying before Federation, when his calculations and opinions were often used to bolster the case of New South Wales.

Coghlan's \textit{Wealth and Progress of New South Wales}, published in thirteen editions between 1886–7 and 1900–1, represented a
deliberate attempt to publicise official statistics in a descriptive, assimilable form and may be regarded as the New South Wales equivalent of the Victorian *Year Book*. In the early issues Coghlan paid a good deal of attention to marriage patterns and the cause, extent and effects of urbanisation also held his interest. The birth rate, which was to become an important topic at the turn of the century, was first given a substantial place in the 1894 edition of *Wealth and Progress* but Coghlan did not let it overshadow marriage questions until 1898. The first issue of *Wealth and Progress*, covering 1886–7 figures, had notes on the parity of average family size in the various colonies and on the differentials between rural, suburban and city birth rates, together with an expression of concern at the high rate of infant mortality in Sydney: ‘as far as Sydney and its suburbs are concerned’, Coghlan wrote, ‘the rate at which children of tender years drop into the grave forms a pathetic comment on our civilisation’.21

Migration and religious differentials in marriage rates were given lengthier treatment. Migration was adding substantial numbers to the New South Wales population every year and Coghlan believed his colony was no exception to the ‘common tendency operating in all new countries for immigrants to locate themselves in and near the large cities’. In support of the belief he presented tables showing that the percentage of British- and foreign-born in Sydney was higher than for the colony and the percentage of native-born correspondingly lower.22 Regarding the low marriage rate among Roman Catholics, relative to their numerical distribution in the colony, Coghlan considered both delayed marriage and ‘mixed’ marriage as explanatory factors but opted for the former on the grounds that ‘the adherents of the Roman Catholic Church are amongst the poorest in the Colony; and want of means is, perhaps, the chief cause of the comparatively small number of their marriages’.23

The implicit acceptance of economic circumstances as a major determinant of marriage and birth patterns was to reappear frequently in Coghlan’s writings during the 1890s, just as the interest in urbanisation was to come out in his studies of differential fertility. Indeed the inclination to draw together these strands of his work was already apparent in his claim that ‘the factors influencing the marriage-rate are—first, and chiefly, the general prosperity of the community; secondly, the number of marriageable males [largely determined by migration], and the occupations of the people’.

Further evidence of the trend of Coghlan’s thought was given in 1888, when his survey of the marriage rate revealed that it had been declining for four years and drew the comment that ‘1887 presents a lower rate than for many years past’, and in 1890 when he said
of urbanisation in Australasia ‘it is impossible to believe that healthy progress is consistent with the wonderful growth of the metropolis at the expense of the country’. The marriage rate was discussed again in 1891 when two more examples were given of the connection between economic conditions and marriage patterns. Having said that the social condition of the working classes was less advanced in Britain than in ‘even the least forward of the Australasian colonies’, Coghlan claimed that there was therefore a strong probability of a higher marriage rate in the colonies. To support this view he pointed out that, although New South Wales had a high marriage rate, relative to the other colonies, during a period of prosperity from 1881 to 1886, ‘during some of the succeeding years the material condition of the working population of the colony has not been so satisfactory, and the marriage-rate during these years shows a marked decline’. In 1894 Coghlan repeated the comparison of English and Australian conditions but was forced to add that ‘the migratory habits of a large part of the male population often occasion a certain amount of extravagance and selfishness, and tend, therefore, to a diminution of the [marriage] rate’.

Coghlan’s statement of the link between socio-economic conditions and the rate of marriage was slightly qualified in his report on the 1891 census of New South Wales. The age of marriage being ‘greatly an affair of custom’, he warned against universal acceptance of the dictum that a community’s marriage habits are ‘a gauge of its material condition’. It was, nevertheless, axiomatic for him that depreciation of the normal marriage rate of a given community could ‘confidently be attributed to industrial causes’. The axiom was qualified on one hand ‘by a ready anticipation of good times, and on the other a reluctance to break off projected marriages, even if bad times supervene’. Coghlan believed that the interaction of marriage and economic conditions meant that the birth rate also varied with ‘the prosperity, or the reverse, enjoyed or suffered by the general community’. Since nearly half the births in his population were to parents under 30 years of age, deferment of marriage because of economic depression could obviously make a substantial difference to the birth rate. There was much less justification for Coghlan’s espousal of the corollary of this argument, that ‘a high birthrate is due . . . to prosperity’, or for his unsupported assertion that ‘where there is a demand for population, there will population increase’.

By about 1893 any constant reader of Coghlan publications should have been thoroughly conditioned to watch the movement of crude vital rates and to expect their fluctuation more or less in sympathy with economic circumstances. After 1894 the constant reader would have been aware of a new factor upsetting the relationship for in
that year two of Coghlan’s essays noticed the introduction of ‘artificial and voluntary checks to population’. The artificial checks were mentioned, very briefly, in the 1891 Census Report (published in 1894) and, at greater length, in Wealth and Progress for 1894. In the second instance it was implied that the resort to contraception was partly a consequence of the prevailing depression of the economy. Coghlan felt there could hardly be a doubt that, as well as its indirect effect on the birth rate through the postponement of marriages, the depression had led in many cases to artificial checks on procreation but he did not explain any psycho-social mechanism linking economic circumstance to personal decision.28 The blame for contraception was laid on the depression again in 1895–6 and in 1897–8, when it was further stated that ‘the birth-rate of 1887 afforded strong ground for believing that these checks were resorted to, and there is little doubt that their use has largely increased’. In these circumstances the subject of prevention of births had become one of great importance and Coghlan reported that a special investigation into the causes of the decline of the birth rate was already being started.29

The birth rate investigations took some time to complete and while they were in train an annual essay still had to be published: from 1895–6 to the last issue of Wealth and Progress in 1900–1 there was obvious concern about the movement of marriage and birth rates and a steady loss of confidence in the progress of New South Wales’s population. In 1896 Coghlan had noted a small increase in the number of marriages and hoped that, in accordance with his belief that marriage lagged behind depression and led economic recovery, the improvement would continue.30 By 1899, however, concern about the birth rate and its restriction was again dominant, evidently because some results of the promised ‘special investigation’ had become available. Having once more mentioned the post-1887 increase in the use of ‘artificial checks’, Coghlan said:

The subject of the decline in the birth-rate is one of great importance, and in the course of the [special] investigation, it was found that three conditions of affairs were prevailing; first, that for all women the proportion of fertile marriages is declining; second, that among fertile women the birth-rate is much reduced as compared with what it was twenty years ago; and third, that Australian women are less fertile than the European women who have emigrated to these shores.31

Figures for New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria showed that the decline of the birth rate had been ‘persistent and regular’ since 1881 and Coghlan viewed this very seriously ‘in a young country like Australia’, where the prospect of reduced growth by natural increase was made more worrying by the realisation that migration,
too, was adding far fewer people to the population than it had previously done. Whereas migration had been covered throughout the 1890s with the words 'Tested by the voluntary influx of population . . . the attraction which New South Wales has offered to the settler for many years is most marked', the text was changed at the end of the century to this less confident passage:

Tested by the voluntary increase of population, the States of the Commonwealth do not present so attractive an appearance to the outside world as hitherto . . . it is apparent that the tide of immigration to Australia has diminished considerably of late years, and this is especially remarkable with regard to New South Wales and Victoria.32

The first result of Coghlan's special investigation of fertility was a paper in the Journal of the Royal Statistical Society for 1898 but this was a piece of statistical analysis, not a descriptive attempt to publicise the problems he was soon to treat in booklets on Childbirth in New South Wales and The Decline in the Birth-Rate.33 Introducing the first booklet, Coghlan claimed that much of what it contained was unique and all of it applicable at least to communities similar to Australia. He recognised that the proportion of fertile marriages was probably declining in most civilised communities but was disturbed at its extent in Australasia, where fertile marriages had declined from 90 per cent to 80 per cent of all marriages during the generation to 1900, while the number of births during the 1890s was 47,000 less than it would have been had the 1890 birth rates prevailed throughout the decade. As to the basic cause of the decline, whether it was prevention of conception or natural sterility, Coghlan's statistics did not enable him to say —on page six. Twelve pages further on, however, he was writing of a growing indisposition to bear children, existing from the date of marriage and 'affecting the birth-rate at every age and stage of married life'. A few pages later he again said that the decline in natural increase throughout Australasia was 'due to the precaution taken against the birth of children', and repeated his concern that the practice should be spreading in 'new countries where population is so much desired'.34

The statistical analysis in Childbirth in New South Wales proceeded through calculations of the expectation of married life, period and duration of fertility in males and females, the proportion of fertile marriages among all marriages and birth rates according to previous issue, to an estimate of the number of children to a marriage. In calculating the latter figure Coghlan discarded the usual method of dividing legitimate births in year $X$ by marriages in year $X-6$, which he claimed was unsuited to the fluctuating marriage
and migration situation in New South Wales (but which he had used in Wealth and Progress as recently as 1896), and used both the record of their offspring on women's death certificates and a form of probability analysis similar to a life-table but based on information about childbearing. By these methods he came to the conclusion that between the mid-1860s and the mid-1890s the average number of children born to fertile wives had declined for wives of whatever age at marriage. His figures were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age at marriage</th>
<th>Earlier marriages</th>
<th>Recent marriages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The decline in average family size was said to be even greater than the table indicated if non-fertile wives were included, since their number had 'largely increased' between the 'earlier' and 'recent' dates. The booklet also contained calculations relating to the effect on fertility of the postponement of marriage, birth rate to couples of various ages, risks associated with natality and several other topics.

These detailed studies were not particularly well set out and it is doubtful whether the average—or even the intelligent—layman would have understood much beyond the introductory statements that various phenomena of child birth appeared to be changing in an alarming manner. The lay reader probably would have been affected more by Coghlan's 1903 pamphlet on The Decline in the Birth-Rate of New South Wales. Much of its content was identical with Childbirth in New South Wales but the implications were made more obvious, particularly in a section entitled 'A New Country and a Declining Birth-rate' and in the 'Conclusion'. Of the 'new country' it was said

Australia, with its large and sparsely populated territory, and with its industries in process of rapid development, might reasonably be pictured as an ideal land, wherein the people would prove fruitful and multiply. Present indications, however, give no hope of a teeming population springing from Australasian parents, for the birth-rate in all the states has declined very greatly, especially during the last fifteen years . . .

Like Hayter, Coghlan recognised that 'Ratios based on the whole population are as a rule unsatisfactory'; unlike Hayter, he could
draw no comfort from the ratio of births to married women under 45, which had fallen by almost one-third between 1886 and 1901. In the accents of an Australian nationalist, he declared that although there appeared to be

nothing incongruous in a declining birth-rate in an old civilization, especially in one afflicted with the incubus of militarism . . . the extension of the phenomenon to new countries, where population is so much desired, is novel and astonishing, and claims the deepest attention.38

Turning to causes of decline Coghlan dealt first with the trend of marriage age among females, important for its effect on fertility, and found that the average age had risen by about sixteen months between 1885 and 1900. He was not prepared to discuss the reasons, 'both ethical and economic', for this postponement but said it was greater in towns and less in small-farming and coal-mining districts than in the state as a whole, and that it was hardly affected by religious profession.39 Fertility, like marriage, showed some sensitivity to geo-cultural influences, he suggested, because the aids to the prevention of conception were 'more accessible' in urban than in rural areas. He also showed that there were slight differentials of fertility between religious groups and that marriages between persons of the same religious denomination were more fertile than religiously 'mixed' unions. To explain the latter phenomenon he put forward the rather novel hypothesis that 'the contractors of [mixed] unions speedily exhaust the passion that brought them together . . . and that the bond of religious sympathy, which might otherwise have taken its place, is entirely lacking'.40

In the 'Conclusion' of his second booklet Coghlan returned to the implications of the various statistical indications of a decline in the birth rate. He believed that the decline resulted from 'a direct reversal of the ordinary canons of morality' and said that it had occurred far too quickly for any explanation based on a theory of cerebral development to be credible.* On the contrary, he found

* Coghlan attributed the popularity of the cerebral development/reproductive decline theory to the publication 'some thirty years ago' of 'Greig's [sic] "Enigmas of Life"'. Obviously he was referring to the work of William R. Greg (1809–81), on whom see E.P. Hutchinson, The Population Debate (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1967), p.356f. Hutchinson notes that Greg was anti-Malthusian and concerned about the non-survival of the fittest: this suggests a possible source of Coghlan's remarks, that the cerebral theory 'was especially agreeable to the very large number of persons wishful to escape from the dire logic of Malthus' and that, among those not practising contraception, 'it is to be feared that by no means the smallest class comprises those who, unfit for the responsibilities of a large family, are as fertile as they are unfit'. For a more detailed discussion of the theory that intellectual activity leads to sterility see D.E.C. Eversley, Social Theories of Fertility and the Malthusian Debate (OUP 1959), pp.173–9.
the facts 'compatible with only one explanation, viz., that in the years following 1880 the art of applying artificial checks to conception was successfully learnt'. There was, moreover, no sign of the art being forgotten. Coghlan's peroration set the tone for the public debate which followed publication of the booklet and is therefore worth quoting at length:

Large as is the area of the Australian continent, it is impossible that its people will ever become truly great under the conditions affecting the increase of population which now obtain. Immigration has practically ceased to be an important factor, the maintenance and increase of population depending upon the birth-rate alone, a rate seriously diminished and still diminishing. No people has ever become great under such conditions, or, having attained greatness, has remained great for any lengthened period. The problem of the fall in the birthrate is, therefore, a national one of overwhelming importance to the Australian people, perhaps more than to any other people, and on its satisfactory solution will depend whether this country is ever to take a place among the great nations of the world.

In the late 1880s and the 1890s official statistics provoked more interest in New South Wales than in either South Australia or Victoria. South Australia had no general report on her 1891 or 1901 census, the annual 'Blue Book' statistics were embroidered with no description or analysis, and the state did not publish a Year Book until 1966. Victoria had a general report on the census and descriptive Year Books but the methods of Hayter and his successors tended to diminish, rather than raise, public concern about the course of vital events. New South Wales had Coghlan, whose concentration on crude vital rates no doubt made it easier for the public to understand his work than if he had employed Hayter's refinements. Coghlan also gave that public a magnified impression of the real decline in its marriage and fertility and reinforced its concern by special studies of the decline and pronouncements about its implications.

The establishment of the Mackellar Commission followed quickly after the publication of Coghlan's work. More than a quarter of the evidence the Commission heard—and the only part released to the public—was statistical material similar to that published in Coghlan's two booklets. The similarity is not surprising since the chief witness on statistical questions was J. B. Trivett, Government Actuary from 1891 to 1905, and Assistant Statistician from 1900 to 1903. Trivett assured the Commissioners that he was well acquainted with the collection of data for the Vital Statistics and
his first day's evidence was devoted to criticising the registration system and suggesting improvements. He did not suggest that there was any large-scale non-registration of births, however, beyond a leakage of about 6.5 per cent from births in maternity homes. At his second appearance Trivett presented tables of crude birth rates for New South Wales, other Australian states and a number of areas overseas which showed a fall of 21 per cent from the New South Wales rate of 34.6 in 1891 to 27.4 in 1900. He explained that the rate 'was nearly level from 1880 to 1888 . . . then suddenly dropped, about 1888, by 2¼ per 1000. It was then nearly level for three years . . . , until 1891, and then there was a continuous drop to 27½ in 1898'; it remained at that level for the next five years. He argued that the decline was not produced by a change in female age composition, which was now more favourable to reproduction than it had been, or by a reduction in the proportion of women who were married. The first part of this assertion was simply wrong in fact because there had been a change in female age composition and it did account for some of the decline in fertility. Nevertheless Trivett went on to claim that 'the available stock for reproduction purposes' was at least on a par with that in each census year back to 1871, and that the issue of this stock—as shown by the ratio of births to women under 45 years of age—had fallen about 30 per cent between 1886 and 1901. Dealing with the relative level of metropolitan and rural crude birth rates, Trivett said that the metropolitan rate for 1900, the lowest year under review, was only 57 per cent of that for 1884, the highest of the preceding years, while the non-metropolitan rate did not fall below 72 per cent (in 1902) of the peak rate recorded in 1880. This contrast was misleading because it ignored the sharp rise in the metropolitan rate between 1880-4. If the metropolitan and non-metropolitan rates had both been considered over the span 1880-1902 the difference between their percentage declines would have been very much less. Trivett's statement of the case suggests either that he was one of those who blamed urban life for fertility decline or that he shared the Commissioners' tendency to regard a high birth rate (such as the metropolitan rate in 1884) as the normal condition of affairs. Trivett also held strong opinions on the level of natural increase. In response to the Commissioners' questions he said that the high rate of natural increase in New South Wales, as compared with European experience, was merely a short-term effect of the state's low death rate. 'You will have your whirlwind come here in a very short time', he warned, 'because the birth-rate is decreasing, and the number of old-aged persons
in the population is increasing proportionately, which will give you
a higher death-rate eventually.46

Trivett again gave evidence based on crude rates when the
discussion turned from births to marriages. He told the Com-
missioners that the crude marriage rate had fluctuated, rising from
8.21 marriages per 1000 of population in 1881 to 8.83 in 1883,
then falling continuously to 6.25 in 1894 before making a gradual
recovery to 7.53 in 1902. Nothing was said about the trend of
average age at marriage but some questions were asked about
possible variations from the average in respect of occupation, birth-
place and religion. On differential marriage age by occupation,
Trivett said 'generally, you find that the lower down in the social
scale a man is, the earlier, on the whole, is his marriage-age', the
age increasing with the length of training required for his occupa-
tion. Average marriage age for women was shown to vary from
23.35 years for Australian-born to 26.51 for Scottish-born, and from
23.31 years for Methodist women to 24.18 for Congregationalists,
but apparent differences between metropolitan and rural marriage
ages were discounted in view of the 'sentimental motive' to have
the marriage ceremony in the metropolis.47

From marriage Trivett turned to illegitimacy, which he discussed
at length, and then to the question of fecundity. He defined
fecundity as the proven capacity of women to bear children but
he did not say what period of time he allowed for women to prove
their capacity. It is therefore difficult to judge the significance of
his estimates of barren, or infecund, marriages for the period 1891
to 1897. The difficulty is increased by the fact that the figures given
verbally to the Commission differ from the figures for the same
period provided in Trivett's written submission and that the
difference is not explained.48 Trivett claimed that his figures showed
an increase of barrenness by comparison with 1861–70 but the fact
that barrenness in women marrying at about the average age (25
years) had increased by only 6.6 per cent over a period when the
crude birth rate had gone down 33.5 per cent was consigned to
a footnote and neither investigated nor drawn to the Commissioners' 
attention. Differential analysis of infecundity showed it to be higher
in Sydney than in the rest of the state and higher amongst foreign-
born wives than amongst native-born. There was no obvious
differentiation by religious denomination.49

When he passed from the proof of women's capacity to reproduce
to the extent of their reproduction as measured by average issue,
Trivett also became more willing to offer a theory to explain what
his statistics seemed to indicate. He showed that average issue had
dropped from 5.4 children per wife in 1871–80 to 3.6 in 1891–1900:
considering marriages at the most usual ages the decline was from 6.4 to 4.4 in the issue of wives marrying between 25 and 30 years of age. He said there were four main causes for the decline:

One is postponement of marriage; the second is decline in fecundity . . .; third, cessation of fertility at an earlier period than was formerly in vogue; and fourth, a general decrease of fertility at every age. Numbers two and three . . . have an intimate connection with the use of preventives . . .

The figures presented on average issue according to husband's occupation dealt only with current differentials (ranging from 4.26 for 'Clerks, Book-keepers, Travellers, Storemen, etc.' to 6.79 for agricultural workers) and the interesting question, from the viewpoint of the historian of contraception, whether the differentials were changing was not discussed. However, Trivett did claim that the comparatively low family size of the professional and commercial classes was due to prevention of conception rather than delayed marriage—an answer slightly at variance with his earlier stress on the influence of occupational status on marriage age. (At this point Trivett fell into one of Coghlan's annoying habits and failed to specify the source of his figures or the universe to which they applied. Were they figures for completed issue according to husband's occupation?)

Trivett gave his evidence about average issue, together with some material on infant and maternal mortality, at the fourth meeting of the Commission on 3 September 1903. The Commissioners did not consider statistical questions again until their twenty-fourth meeting, when they dealt with written evidence from other states, and Trivett was only recalled for the twenty-ninth meeting on 31 December 1903. He was told that, although interstate authorities agreed that all of Australasia had experienced a fall in the crude birth rate, the suggestion had been made that a more refined index was desirable. Trivett agreed that 'To decide whether there really is a falling-off in the birth-rate no doubt the rigidly correct mode of procedure is . . . to compare the births to the number of women of conceptive age, from whom alone births can be expected'. He then presented a table of age-specific birth rates which, he claimed, showed the following percentage falls in age-specific birth rates between 1891 and 1901:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>20–25</th>
<th>25–30</th>
<th>30–35</th>
<th>35–40</th>
<th>40–45</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% decline</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

His interpretation was that 'The great characteristics of the table as a whole are that a very distinct decline in the birth-rate is most
palpable . . . The decline in the birth-rate as regards New South Wales must, in the light of all the figures which have been presented, be considered to have been unmistakably proven.' If other countries showed lower rates 'The only inference deducible . . . would be that such countries have proceeded further down the incline of national disaster than has New South Wales'.

Those two quotations give some idea of the defensive tone of the evidence Trivett gave after the Commission had received advice from other states. Further evidence that he was on the defensive can be seen in his exchanges with Commissioner Sir Normand MacLaurin on the mortality of legitimate and illegitimate infants and on the age distribution of New South Wales women. The point to be made in extenuation of his attitude and, indeed, in explanation of the line of evidence which he presented, is that as Government Actuary and Assistant Statist he was immediately subordinate to Coghlan. In both capacities he must have helped with the preparation of Coghlan's booklets on the birth rate and now, as witness, he was being asked to give evidence before a Commission for which the booklets had provided an impetus and of which Coghlan himself was a member. It is not surprising that he tried to defend the statistical position which Coghlan had set out both in the booklets and, many times, in Wealth and Progress.

The statisticians of the other states were under no personal or hierarchical constraints when they provided the evidence against which Trivett was reacting. In fact G. H. Ayliffe, the Registrar-General of vital events for South Australia, hardly had any statistical position to defend. Commenting on the range of information sought by the Commission, he said 'as far as between forty and fifty of the questions in the list are concerned, our records do not contain the detailed information necessary to enable us to answer them'. He was able to report that 1886 was the year when South Australian births began to fall off 'both in number and rate', the trend thereafter having been steadily downward. Four causes of the decline were suggested, including a reduction in the number of marriages celebrated, a rise in the average age at marriage and the considerable number of husbands absent at Broken Hill or in Western Australia for much of each year since 1886. It may be significant of the lack of statistical sophistication in South Australia that there was no reference to a crude, let alone refined, rate of marriage. On the other hand Ayliffe was more circumspect than many of his contemporaries when he wrote 'I believe, though I cannot offer any undoubted proof on the point, that in recent years some of our married people have preferred not to have any children,
and have, in consequence, had recourse to various means to restrict
the number of their offspring.55

Easily the most detailed response to the Commission’s interstate
inquiries came from William McLean in Victoria. The probable
direction of his evidence was clear from the covering memorandum
he addressed to the President of the Commission. He reported
himself as ‘quite satisfied that restrictive measures are at present
adopted’—but parted company with the received wisdom by adding
‘the practice has not been confined to the last twenty or thirty years
only’. On the contrary, in his opinion, ‘natural causes are, for the
most part, responsible for the declining birth-rate and the effects
of any artificial measures which are adopted are not, as yet, very
pronounced’. He added that the chief impressions he had gained
from his inquiries were that a high crude birth rate did not
necessarily bring economic benefit to a society and that it was
dangerous to theorise from results in demographically unstable
communities. As a closing gesture he placed a charge at the
Commission’s very foundation with the remark that he saw ‘no solid
reason for alarm in respect to the birth-rate in Australia’.56

The statistical basis of McLean’s opinions (or the statistical
product of his preconceptions?) was immediately demonstrated in
his discussion of natural increase. On the basis of figures going back
to 1840–4, he claimed, it was difficult to tell when natural increase
had first begun to decline in Victoria because the decline had been
almost uninterrupted.57 There was a substantial flaw in McLean’s
figures—the fact that Victoria had no separate administration and,
hence, no official vital statistics until 1850: it is probable, therefore,
that he was relying on an earlier, uncertainly based, set of figures
prepared by Archer. Nevertheless his willingness to accept demo­
graphic fluctuations as natural was a more justifiable attitude than
that of the New South Wales officials who tended to equate a year
of high increase, say 1884, with normalcy and to see anything less
than the high figure as an index of decline.

Not all the praise should go to McLean, for he was inclined to
offer opinions even on topics like the effect on marriage age of
birthplace or religion about which he had first to report ‘No
Victorian statistics available’.58 He was also less equipped than
Coghlan and Trivett to investigate the subtleties of vital events: on
the topics of fecundity and average issue, which were significant
in Coghlan and Trivett’s argument, McLean was simply devoid of
statistics, though not of suggestions! He did point out, however,
that there was no guarantee of accuracy in estimates of average
issue from death registration, which was one of the bases of
Coghlan’s estimation.59
At the end of his submission McLean argued again for a natural, or demographic, as distinct from an artificial, or technological, explanation of the decline in the birth rate. Among the natural causes he included changes in the age constitution of married women at reproductive ages, an increase in the age of marriage, decreased infant mortality and a decay in the physique of married women. To round off his argument that reactions to the apparent decline of fertility were unduly agitated McLean used two sets of figures from Coghlan’s own *Vital Statistics of New South Wales* for 1901. One set showed that Budapest, with a crude birth rate 13 per 1000 above New South Wales’s and so high that ‘no suspicion of adoption of preventive measures’ could be entertained, had lower age-specific birth rates—at all ages—than New South Wales. The second set of figures showed that ‘women who, for by far the most part, had completed their families before the knowledge of scientific preventive measures’ had average issue ‘about equal to that of women of 45 living at the time of the census’ in 1901. The unavoidable conclusion, in McLean’s view, was that

if restrictive measures have been adopted during the last twenty years, then either the practice could not have been as extensive or effective as is popularly believed, or that women of previous generations were equally well acquainted with measures to attain the same end, though doubtless of a less scientific character.60

The Mackellar Commissioners read McLean’s evidence on 14 December 1903. They recalled Trivett to hear it on 31 December and, as a result, sent four further questions to McLean. He was given a table of age-specific legitimate birth rates for New South Wales in 1891 and 1901, which showed a decline in the rate for every age group, and asked if he had any reason to doubt the reality of the decline. McLean replied that although he did not doubt the accuracy of the figures, they did not modify his opinion ‘that the various causes contributing to a general decline—i.e., change of age constitution, increased age at marriage, decrease of infantile mortality and change of physique—operate within the groups as over the whole’. He was formally correct in saying that changed age constitution could have brought about lower age-specific rates: the point the Commissioners—and Trivett—were pressing would have been conclusive only if they had standardised the rates for age distribution. On the other hand it would require such a radical rise in age distribution to bring about the reported change in the age-specific rates that McLean’s answer also looks rather strained.61 McLean slid further away from the point of the Commission’s
inquiry by adding that he regarded the decline as temporary, resulting from ‘motives of commendable prudence’ in the ‘extreme circumstances’ of the mid-1890s drought. Taken with his comments on age-specific fertility this answer, which the Commission received on 14 January 1904, can be seen as the product of different assumptions about the morality of family size—or as part of an interstate polemic, rather than an earnest search after statistical truth.

Trivett was duly recalled, yet again, on 21 January and duly reiterated his belief that there was ‘a most unmistakable moral’ in the decline of 1891 age-specific rates compared with what he called the ‘standard’ rate of 1871–81. On the question of age distribution he produced figures for a comparison of 1871 and 1891 but not for the crucial comparison of 1891–1901. Trivett’s calculation of the 1871–81 ‘standard’ was referred for comment to McLean, who responded with a denial that the mean of the age-specific rates in those two years had any validity as a ‘local normal standard’. On the contrary those abnormally high rates resulted from the arrival of numerous migrants ‘of a vigorous type’—whose presence, as McLean very pertinently pointed out, had first been noticed by Coghlan! Asked whether, and why, he disagreed with Trivett’s interpretation of the decline as ‘indubitable proof of the practices of artificial restriction’, McLean repeated his belief that there were a number of factors in the decline. He agreed that prevention was being practised but said that more or less effective pursuit of the same goal had a long history and could not be the sole cause of the contemporary reduction of fertility. Far from agreeing with Trivett, he wrote, ‘I have failed to find any evidence in support of his views. I have, on the contrary, . . . arrived at the conclusion that the decline in the birth-rate of the Australian States and New Zealand is not a cause for alarm . . . ’. He then noted the overseas association of high birth rate and high infant mortality, the high rate of natural increase in Australia, and the probability that natural increase would double Australia’s population every forty-seven years, and concluded:

In view of all these facts it might reasonably be asked what are the advantages of a high birth-rate when it is accompanied, as seems to be invariably the case in a normal population, by a high infantile mortality rate. Clearly it is no satisfaction for any community to have a high birth-rate to achieve in a few years results which are accomplished by communities with a low birth-rate at no such sacrifice of human life.

Trivett’s reaction was to say that the high fertility rate of 1871–81
was not abnormal, that the influence of immigrant females had been overstated and that McLean was guilty of misquotation from Coghlan's booklet. He adduced no new statistical evidence of substance but virtually accused McLean of professional incompetence on the ground that the latter's lack of alarm at the demographic outlook betokened either a distinctly different reading of the signs of the times to that exhibited by the numerous witnesses examined by the Commission, or else his existence in a much serener and purer plane of humanity than that occupied by such witnesses, or possibly an absence of observation of many facts which are patent to the thoughtful student of statistics.

The Mackellar Commission finished its work soon after Trivett had made his attack on McLean's competence but the two statisticians quickly transferred their debate to a new forum in the *Intercolonial Medical Journal of Australasia*. Much of the exchange was a repetition of what had been brought to the Commission but McLean's new material gave him the more impressive case. In addition he had the advantage in the *Journal*, as compared with the Commission, that he was free to form his own case rather than merely react to the case being argued by Trivett. On the statistical side he used standardised age-specific birth rates to show that, although New South Wales and Victoria had both suffered a decline in fertility since 1871, the decline was less severe than appeared if 1891 were taken as the standard. He also suggested that the number of children surviving their fifth year was a better index than the crude birth rate of natural increase of population and showed that, on that basis, Australia's progress compared favourably with that of countries overseas.

Trivett's article in the *Journal* contained no statistical novelty but certainly stepped up the attack on McLean. Statistical matters were touched long enough to show that the association of high birth rate with high infant mortality was not universal, as McLean had contended, and to make the valid criticism that even if a relationship were demonstrated McLean would still have to distinguish cause from effect. Trivett then begged one of the questions at issue—by using his appearance before the Mackellar Commission as a guarantee of his authority—and damned McLean for commending what was criticised by 'more enlightened' men. He also attacked him for applying too severe a strain to public credulity by offering a laboured theoretical explanation of a condition of affairs in our social economy which highly skilled medical authorities
have pronounced to be due to... artificial prevention of conception.

For a writer in the medical journal this may have been a skilful appeal to Caesar but it was surely a little unfair for a statistician debating a statistical question to decry his opponent's 'theoretical explanation'. Even more unfairly, Trivett caricatured McLean's position as an advocacy of 'absolute murder of infant life at the viable stage of pregnancy, and of the crime against the State of avoidance of conception'.

McLean had the last say, possibly because he had more to say. In a 'rejoinder' he drew attention to Trivett's misinterpretation of his own New South Wales statistics and mispresentation of the McLean case. A couple of months later McLean reported that a circular questionnaire to doctors in Victoria had revealed that attempted contraception was common and even that families were being 'unduly limited', but that the question whether this was a recent innovation remained unresolved. On one issue he was firm: 'if the declining birthrate is of so grave a character as we are asked to believe... then it is incumbent upon the State or the community to take steps... to preserve infantile life'. The pro-natalists held that the child was an asset to the state. McLean contended it was only a potential asset unless it reached maturity. His prescription, therefore, was simple: further efforts were needed to preserve infant life, not greater efforts to produce it, for 'An increased preservation of infantile life is practicable; the increase of births, either by law or moral teaching cannot but be regarded as extremely doubtful'.

The debate between the statisticians showed the stage that had been reached in the statistical study of Australia's population by the beginning of this century. Hayter had demonstrated the importance of refining vital rates and shown a willingness to expect fluctuations in population growth. Coghlan had stressed the need to relate vital phenomena to economic and social categories but had been much less willing than Hayter to accept the demographic changes going on around him. The difference between their outlooks was neatly summarised in a comment Hayter made on Coghlan's projections of Australia's population and food supply:

Mr. Coghlan starts with the assumption that the population of Australia is increasing at the rate of 4 per cent per annum. This, it may be observed, is a faster rate than that at which the population of any country, starting with a population as large as that Australia contains at the present time, has ever been known to increase for long together... It is true that
since 1881 the population . . . has apparently increased at the annual rate of rather over 4 per cent, but this estimate, if correct, which is doubtful, must be looked upon as quite exceptional and impossible to be sustained.\textsuperscript{67}

It might be said in defence of Coghlan's less flexible reaction to change that he had to deal with the slackening of natural increase in New South Wales at a time when the comfort of supplementary growth by immigration was fast disappearing, whereas Hayter was dealing with the decline of natural increase in the 1880s while Victoria was still benefiting from an influx of migrants. From the point of view of technical analysis there can be little doubt that Hayter and McLean, with their refinements and standardisations of fertility measures, contributed more to Australian demography than Coghlan and Trivett. From the viewpoint of influence on public discussion about population, however, there is even less doubt that Coghlan made the major contribution. Much as one might hope for technical detachment in statistical discussion, it was absent in Australia and by 1903–4 Trivett and McLean represented the conservative and progressive strands of contemporary opinion about population. Trivett epitomised the view that a national tragedy was in train unless a high birth rate was restored: McLean stood with those who were beginning to stress the quality, rather than the quantity, of infant life. Both showed that population debates could be just as contentious, and as much a reflection of social philosophy, among statisticians as among the lay public who occasionally reacted to their statistics.
Conclusion

In the generation to 1911 Australia went through a demographic revolution. A woman who began her childbearing in 1911 would probably have four children or less. Her mother would have had five children and her grandmother, completing her childbearing in 1891, would have had at least seven. This very substantial fall in fertility was accompanied, in the 1890s, by a virtual cessation of immigration. In some states there was even a net loss of population. The Government Statisticians and the newspapers ensured that these changes were well-publicised and in New South Wales the published statistics made the fall in fertility appear even greater than it was in reality.

In the context of severe economic depression and the virtual disappearance of the stimulus of immigration and overseas capital, the speed and wide extent of the decline in the birth rate produced a loss of confidence in national vitality. Confidence was a precious commodity in the early years of this century. Federation was a recent achievement and Australia was seeking her identity at a time of political instability around the Pacific. The outside world was seen through anxious eyes, as the first Commonwealth Parliament showed during long hours of debate on a Bill to prohibit the immigration of Asians. With the future uncertain the loudest voices were those of men with a grip on the past. The Mackellar Commission provided a forum which some of them used in a manner inimical to the discovery of evidence or insights running counter to their own conservative social and political opinions. They heard nothing to shake their rooted belief that the decline of fertility was the fault of the lower orders, the result of moral degeneracy and the harbinger of national decay. Their Report produced no theoretical illumination, offered few effective remedies and made little contribution to public understanding of reasons for the decline of the birth rate. Their political conservatism was reinforced by the professional conservatism of most doctors and clergymen, while the views of all three groups converged with those of leaders in commerce and industry who saw a growing population as the precondition of their prosperity. However, most of the public
commentators, being either secure or affluent, were largely out of touch with the circumstances leading a large proportion of the population to limit the size of their families and the criteria by which they made their judgments were moral rather than rational. It followed that when many Australian couples began to please themselves, for the first time, about the results of their sexual behaviour the novel freedom of choice was unwelcome to those who were accustomed to see themselves as moral exemplars.

Between 1925 and 1935 Australian fertility fell again, absolutely less but proportionately as much as it had in the 1890s. Once again there was official concern, public expression of disquiet and invocation of the twin spectres of physical decline and national powerlessness. For most of the three decades since World War II the long-term trend of fertility has continued slowly downwards, with a sharp drop—again provoking public comment—in 1961.

In the 1980s the lost births of 1961 will have a depressing effect, at one generation's remove, on an Australian population structure which will already be causing concern. An ageing population, reliant on technology purchased from overseas, is not the basis for economic vitality. The flow of immigrant labour, as distinct from ex-colonial and other political refugees, is therefore likely to be less vigorous than it was in the 1960s. Even if family sizes remain constant the ageing of the population will produce a declining crude birth rate and a stagnant economy may see the size of families restricted even more than at present. If that scenario transpires there is every prospect that the ghosts of Mackellar and his supporters will be heard again within the next ten years. The Mackellar-ites clothed their economic and political concerns in the rhetoric of Christian moralism. With that value system moribund, the next pronatalist campaign may be more strident and the measures taken more vicious than was the case between 1880 and 1911.
Figure 1 shows that total population growth was higher in New South Wales than in Victoria or South Australia for every year from 1890 to 1907, although growth did fluctuate in each of the three states. Figure 2 shows the changes in population structure which accompanied fluctuating growth. Looking down the three pyramids one can see the effect of declining fertility in shortening of the pyramid base, and the impact of migration in the disturbance to the middle levels—especially on the male side.

The change in population structure was due to variations in both migration and natural increase. Figure 3 indicates that the reduction of natural increase was similar in each of the three states: but note that South Australia and, especially, Victoria already had lower rates of natural increase than New South Wales when the decline began. Also the revival in New South Wales was quicker and greater than in Victoria, but slower and smaller than in South Australia.

Figure 4 demonstrates the two forces on which natural increase depended. Crude birth rates were always higher in New South Wales than the other states and crude death rates were always higher in Victoria than elsewhere.
Fig. 1  Total population growth in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, 1891–1910
Fig. 2  Proportions of male and female population at various ages in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, 1891, 1901, 1911
Fig. 3 Reduction of natural increase in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, 1890–1915
Fig. 4  Crude birth and death rates in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, 1891–1910
Notes


2 The probable average issue of women aged 45–49 years at the 1891 census was 7.03 children. At the census of 1911 the figure was 5.25 children. For families begun in 1911 the eventual completed size was just over four children.

3 For the statistical record of South Australia's experience see Hicks, 'Evidence and Contemporary Opinion About the Peopling of Australia, 1891–1911' (Ph.D. thesis, ANU, 1971), Chs I and II.

4 See T.A. Coghlan, Childbirth in New South Wales. A study in statistics (NSW Government Printer, Sydney, 1900) and Coghlan, The Decline in the Birth-Rate of New South Wales and other phenomena of childbirth (NSW Government Printer, Sydney, 1903); Coghlan features largely in Chs I and VII. below.

5 Norman E. Himes, Medical History of Contraception (Gamut Press, New York, 1936/1963), supporting his comment with tables from clinics in Baltimore and Cleveland.

6 Kingsley Davis, 'The Theory of Change and Response in Modern Demographic History', in Population Index, XXIX:4 (October 1963), pp. 345–65 puts forward a theory of 'multi-phasic response' to explain this kind of variation in fertility transition.

Chapter 1

1 Bulletin, 7 March 1903, p. 8C; Evening News, 18 March, p. 4A; SMH, 21 March, p. 10C; DT, 28 March, p. 8E.


5 *DT*, 8 August 1903, p. 8G, 10 August, p. 4E, 14 August, p. 8D, 15 August, p. 8F and 17 August, p. 7F; *SMH*, 8 August, p. 1A, 10 August, p. 9E, 14 August, p. 6C and 17 August, pp. 6F and 7D; *NSW Parliamentary Debates* (Assembly), 13 August 1903, cols. 1499–503.


7 The estimate of Coghlan’s character which underlies this paragraph is supported by the research already done for the full length biography of Coghlan which I am preparing.


9 Mackellar’s parliamentary activity can be followed in *NSW Parliamentary Debates* (Council), 22 October 1902, pp. 3643–76, 29 October, pp. 3902–14, 30 June 1903, pp. 1149–63, 5 August, p. 1266 and 13 August, pp. 1483–90. See also *DT*, 21 April 1903, p. 5F (address to Women’s Progressive Association) and *SMH*, 22 April, p. 6D ‘Dr. Mackellar and Infant Protection’, *SMH*, 27 April, p. 3H (letter from G.E. Ardill) and *Evening News*, 28 April, p. 3E (introducing women’s deputation on neglected children). For June doings see *DT*, 20 June, p. 13F (address to the Christian Social Union), 22 June, p. 4E (editorial on his CSU address) and 27 June, p. 11F (Mackellar’s letter). *DT*, 8 July, p. 5H has a summary of Mackellar’s report on the State Children’s Relief Board and p. 6G reports the conference on Public Morals.

The quotation about the upbringing of children is from Mackellar’s ‘Address on Parental Right and parental responsibility viewed in relation to the right of the community’ (Sydney, 1905), p. 2.

10 NSW Archives accession No. 6792 (Chief Secretary’s Inward Letters 04/8352), Mackellar to See, dated 8 April 1904. ‘I doubt not that you have seen the [Report] and I trust that you will consider that the manner in which the subjects have been treated . . . are such as fully justify you in having authorised the enquiry . . . .’


12 On Beale, see *ADB*, Vol. VII, article by N. Hicks and E. Lea-Scarlett, and family papers held by Mrs A. Jones, 4 Ainslie Close, St Ives, NSW. On Littlejohn see *Commerce* (1 December 1919), p. 358f.


15 Mackellar refers to Coghlan’s special computations in NSW *Parliamentary Debates* (Council), 4 December 1902, pp. 5081ff.

16 *ADB*, Vol. IV and *DT*, 2 February 1904, p. 5G.

17 The proof of Holman’s late-coming is fascinating but detailed; it is given in Hicks, ‘Evidence . . .’, p. 316.

18 *Smith’s Weekly* (Sydney), 11 December 1920, p. 2C. Mackellar’s rather prickly debating style is revealed in, for example, NSW *Parliamentary Debates* (Council), 22 October, 29 October, 4 December 1902 and 30 July 1903. On Mackellar’s role in the State Children’s Relief Department see Dickey, ‘Charity in NSW’ and ‘Report of a Select Committee on . . . the State Children’s Relief Act’ in NSW *Parliamentary Papers* (1916), Vol. II, pp. 1011–66.

19 NSW Archives, Accession no. 7095 (CSIL 04/17814) Mackellar to Gibson, Principal Under-Secretary, dated 30 August 1904. The emphasis is in the original.

20 *DBR*, Vol. I, Minutes of Meetings, p. 120 (First Meeting). The report and statistical evidence were bound as Vol I. Non-statistical evidence, exhibits and an index were bound as Vol. II. Coghlan’s *Decline in the Birth-Rate* was obviously the pamphlet involved but it appeared in the Minutes as ‘Decrease . . .’. Garlick had previously acted as Secretary to a Commission inquiring into a disaster at the Mt Kembla coal mine, south of Sydney.


22 I am grateful to Mr Tony Cahill of Sydney University for supplying copies of both the Brief and Garlick’s covering letter to the Cardinal’s secretary which he discovered in the archives of St Mary’s Cathedral, Sydney.


25 See *SMH*, 3 November 1899, p. 7G for Powys’s rather ineffectual criticism of *Childbirth in New South Wales*. In *SMH*, 27 April 1904, p. 12F, Powys returned to the attack with a longer, more telling criticism of Coghlan’s *Decline in the Birth-Rate*. He also disagreed ‘not only with the conclusions of the Commission but the unscientific reasons in support thereof’ in the course of his long, statistically sophisticated paper ‘On Fertility, Duration of Life and Reproductive Selection’ in *Biometrika*, IV:3 (November 1905), pp. 233–85.

26 The estimate of Todd’s outlook is given in an obituary in *MJA* (March 1932), p. 379, where it is also stated that ‘In 1904 Todd acted as Associate to the President, the late Charles Mackellar, of a Royal Commission on the decline of the birth-rate in New South Wales. He was largely responsible for the drawing up of the Report’. There is a lengthy collection of tributes to Todd in ibid., pp. 381–7.
Chapter 2

25 E.W. Knox, Auto-biographical Notes (Mitchell Library accession No. B1438), p. 2. Looking back on his membership of sundry public bodies Knox lamented that his (sound) intuitive judgments usually went unaccepted and he lacked the debating dexterity to push his point.

Chapter 2

2 Paragraph 24 had figures for the percentage decline in age-specific birth rates from the 'standard' (1871/81) rate to the actual rates of 1891 and 1901. From these may be calculated the 1881–91 and 1891–1901 declines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>(Period A)</th>
<th>(Period B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Standard-1891</td>
<td>Standard-1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transferring the figures of the last two columns to graphic form it can be seen that the greatest decline in each period was in the 30–39 age groups, not the younger ones.
3 The percentages married of all women in the age-groups shown were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>in 1881</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>Movement 1881-1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>-21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>-11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>-6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NSW Census Report, 1891 and 1901.


6 New Protection and its place in early federal politics are discussed in J.A. La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin* (Melbourne University Press, 1965), Vol. II, pp. 410ff. O.C. Beale should have found himself in difficulty supporting Mackellar and his colleagues on this point; Beale was a friend and supporter of Deakin and, for a time, an active member of the National Protection League.

7 The two summaries are from *DBR* Report, paras 83 and 84. The ‘observation’ quoted is by Herbert Spencer who was a favoured source among Australian population theorists (see p. 95f).


13 For Sir James Graham’s evidence see *DBR*, Vol. II, Qq. 3527–51, 3593–650 and for Dr Foreman’s appearance before his colleagues, Qq. 6470–84, 6500–21.


18 NSW Archives shelf no. 6792 (Chief Secretary’s Inward Letters 04/8352, Mackellar to See, dated 8 April 1904.

Chapter 3


3 W. Balls-Headley, President’s Address to the Section of Midwifery in Intercolonial Medical Congress of Australasia, *Transactions*, Session III (1892), p. 512.
Notes Chapter 3


5 Spencer’s views were set out in ‘A theory of population, deduced from the general law of animal fertility’ in *Westminster Review*, New Series, I:2 (April 1852), pp. 468–501, and contained the postulate that ‘the degree of fertility varies inversely as the development of the nervous system’ (p. 493).


7 A table of teachers of obstetrics and gynaecology at Melbourne University, with the dates of their tenure, is provided by Forster, ‘One hundred years . . .’, pp. 109, 166. Jamieson was Lecturer in Obstetric Medicine and Diseases of Women and Children from 1879 until 1888 (when he became Professor of Medicine) and was succeeded by Balls-Headley (1888–1900). G.R. Adam held the successive posts of Lecturer in Obstetrics and Diseases of Women (1900–6) and Lecturer in Obstetrics and Gynaecology (1906–14).


11 Sir Edward Ford, personal communication.


14 Medical Society of Victoria, *Minutes of Council Meetings*, passim. The reprimand, for public correspondence in the *Herald* newspaper, was discussed at the meetings of 29 January and 26 February 1885. The cartoon of Barrett is in the office of Professor K.F. Russell, Associate Professor of Anatomy at Melbourne University.


16 *Wealth and Progress of New South Wales* was a collection of descriptive statistics prepared by Coghlan in the Government Statistician’s Department and published annually by the Government Printer from 1886/7 to 1900/1.

17 *AMG*, XXII:8 (August 1903), p. 360f.


20 *DBR*, Vol. II, Qq. 5132, 5136 (Oram); 3166 (Skirving); 3394 (Barrington); 3558 (Graham) and 3279f. (Armstrong). Cf. R.H. Marten, *The Effects of Migration from the Northern to the Southern Hemisphere* (Scrymgour, Adelaide, 1900), p. 17.
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21 DBR, Vol. II, Qq. 2336–9 (Mullins) and 5133ff. (Oram).

22 Ibid., Qq. 3274ff. (Armstrong); 3014–16 (Worrall); 4238 (Creed); 3354–8 (M’Kay); 3170f. (Scot Skirving) and 2703ff. (Watson-Munro).


25 DBR, Vol. II, Qq. 3382 (Barrington), 3326 and 3332 (M’Kay). Cf. Qq. 5264 (Dr S. Jamieson) on ratio of revealed to procured abortion, 5126f. (Oram) and 5256 (Jamieson) on requests for abortion. Also Qq. 5249 (Arthur), 2939 (Worrall) and 3240–58 (Armstrong). On the hospital data see Exhibits 55 and 66.

26 Ibid., Qq. 3401–3 (Barrington); 3324f., 3328f. (M’Kay); 3654–70 (Taylor); 3183–5 (Skirving); 3856f. (Harris) and 3497–508 and 3513–19 (Cooley).

27 Ibid., Qq. 4226–31.

28 DBR, Vol. II, Qq. 2667–77 (Watson-Munro); 3482 (Russell); 2483–5 (Mac-Culloch); 3400 (Barrington); 3856f. and 3883–8 (Harris). Harris’s own evidence on the extent of his practice is given some confirmation by obituary reference (which seems more than ritual) to his ‘large and extra-ordinarily successful practice’. MJA (May 1923), p. 540.

29 DBR, Vol. II, Qq. 3585 (Graham); 3076f. (Thring); 2687–700 (Watson-Munro); 2934 (Worrall); 3155ff. (Skirving); 1076 (Morgan).


35 Ralph Worrall, ‘The Progress of Gynaecology since the First Interstate Medical
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Congress . . . ' in Australasian Medical Congress, Transactions, VI (1902), p. 367.

See Joseph J. Spengler, 'Notes on Abortion, Birth Control, and Medical and Sociological Interpretations of the Decline of the Birth Rate in Nineteenth Century America' in Marriage Hygiene, II (1935–6), p. 168 n. 45: In a letter to Henry Holden of London, England, February 21, 1910, Dr F.L. Hoffman (statistician of the Prudential Assurance Company and a correspondent with T.A. Coghlan) expressed the opinion that 'a considerable proportion of ovarian operations and other operations are for the direct object of preventing child birth and that the practice is enormously on the increase to prevent conception by every possible method, criminal or otherwise'. Holden had previously expressed the opinion that 'over ten millions of ovariotomies' had been carried out in white countries since the 'introduction of pelvic and abdominal surgery fifty years ago', that over two millions had been performed in France, and that the decline of the American birth rate was in part attributable to the physiological and pathological sterility of modern woman . . .

AMG, XVII:11 (November 1898), p. 503 and XXIII:3 (March 1904), p. 120. Harris's comments are found at DBR, Vol. II, Qq. 3891 and 3903, Creed's at ibid., Q. 4238.

S.J. Magarey, Infant Mortality and the fatal diseases of infancy and childhood (Webb, Vardon & Pritchard, Adelaide, 1880), 'A Paper read at the Adelaide City Mission Hall, 1 July 1880'. Magarey was Honorary Medical Officer to the Adelaide Children's Hospital. Speaking in midwinter at an institution having the professed aim of evangelising the 'neglected classes', he might be said to have been preaching to the unconverted!


Mary C. De Garis, MS. notes of lectures by Dr Rothwell Adam on Obstetrics and Diseases of Women in Fourth Year Medicine Course at Melbourne University, 1st and 2nd terms 1903 (and 1st term, 1904). (Two volumes held in the Library of the Australian Medical Association, Victorian Branch.)

G. Rothwell Adam, 'Presidential Address' to the Section of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Australasian Medical Congress, Transactions, IX (1911), pp. 325, 327.

For the case of Dr H.M. O'Hara, see AMG (April–October 1900) passim. When the Branch executive tried to expel O'Hara the general membership (who numbered only one-third of Victorian doctors) defended him.

Mary J. Cornish et al., Doctors and Family Planning (National Committee
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(1963) found wide variations in doctors' willingness to proffer family planning information. Ann Cartwright, 'England and Wales: General Practitioners and Family Planning' in *Studies in Family Planning* (The Population Council, New York, June 1968), p. 15 found that 'Less than a quarter [of the GPs in her sample] would raise the questions of family planning with a married woman with three children and no social or health problems, or a woman just getting married.'

Chapter 4


6. At a time when 'science' was a carry-all term for nearly every academic discipline, clerical membership of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science fell from 4 per cent of the total membership in 1891 to 2.8 per cent in 1900 and only 1.8 per cent in 1911. The change was not due to an increase in the total membership.


8. Hayter himself soon came to doubt this estimate of growth and question its likely continuance. In fact the population of Australia in 1930 was about eight and one-quarter million.

9. Rev. E. Harris, paper on 'Australian Morals and Homes', delivered at a meeting of the Baptist Union and reported in *Age* (15 November 1899), p. 8D. Harris was President of the interdenominational Council of Churches in Victoria in 1902.

10. Mothers' Union of the Diocese of Sydney, *Annual Report* (1901), p. 8. Interest in child numbers was not confined to the diocesan leaders: the Hunter's Hill branch reported in 1903 that 'at the last meeting an article from the *Sydney*
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Morning Herald on the decreasing birth rate and great mortality among infant children was read and discussed'. Ibid. (1903), p. 18.

12 Rev. Mervyn Archdall, Murder and the Birthrate. A sermon preached in St Mary's, Balmain and in St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney on 10 April 1904 (Protestant Church of England Union, Sydney, 1904). Mr Archdall had his say on a wide range of matters: under his name the Mitchell Library lists pamphlets on Higher Criticism, Darwinism ('an exploded theory'), Ritualism and Romanism.

13 Australian Sentinel (Melbourne), 31 March 1904, p. 8B.


15 The meeting was reported in Argus, 11 November 1904, p.9A and Christian Citizen, 18 November, p.4f.

16 Rev. Edward Harris, paper on Social Purity in (Church of England, New South Wales), Papers Read at the Church Congress (Joseph Cook & Co., Sydney, 1889), p.76.

17 DBR Vol. II, Qq.6364 (Smith) and 6385f. (Langley).

18 Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Committee on Public Questions, Minute Book, entry for 21 November 1889.


20 Church of England in New South Wales, Proceedings of the Provincial Synod (1895), p.18 and DBR, Vol.II, Qq.6360 (Smith); 5941f. (Macky) and 6391f. (Langley).

21 See Church of England in New South Wales, Proceedings of the Provincial Synod (1895), p.18, 'Address of the Metropolitan' (i.e. W.S. Smith), and New South Wales (Wesleyan) Methodist Conference, Minutes (1895), p.85. The bureaux came under fire again in 1908 when the Social Questions Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Victoria was asked by the Melbourne North Presbytery 'to take steps to prevent the scandals associated with matrimonial agencies, etc.' See Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Committee on Public Questions, Minute Book (1889–1913), entry for 18 March 1908.

22 DBR, Vol.II, Qq.5956, 598f. Macky's opinion was, characteristically, based on hearsay; his direct knowledge of attitudes to marriage in 'grandfather's days' can hardly have been extensive!

23 Ibid., Qq.5957f. (Macky) and 6087f. (Howell-Price).

24 Most clergy simply accepted Mackellar's suggestion that this view was their own, although Macky and Smith gave more extended answers. (DBR, Vol.II, Qq.5933, 5035–9, 6352–8). The slogan 'The larger the family the greater the opportunity' was still being used by the Archbishop in 1910—see Mothers' Union of the Diocese of Sydney, Annual Report (1910), p.7.


27 Howell Price, for example, claimed that the 'pressure of the purse' exerted by voluntarist parishioners and fear of ridicule in 'the illustrated papers' could inhibit clergy from preaching against prevention.

*DBR*, Vol.II, Qq.6128, 6082–5 (Price) and 6024 (Hennessy).


*DBR*, Vol.II, Qq.6178, 6130–2 and 6161–4. *The Dead Bird* and *The Arrow* were two of various names of a sporting news-sheet which had occasional topical paragraphs. Its only substantial reference to family limitation (24 May 1902, p.4) was opposed to the practice. S.J. Kunitz (ed.), *British Authors of the Nineteenth Century* (Wilson, New York, 1936), p.108 provides the following comment on Mrs Caird's work: 'Mrs Caird was an early advocate of “women's rights”. Her book *Is Marriage a Failure?* had a sensational success and aroused much controversy . . . She is chiefly known for her novels, which were didactic, sometimes sentimental, and frequently sensational, but which in their time were very popular.' Martha Rutledge, 'Sir Alfred Stephen and divorce law reform . . . ' pp.176, 187, 229 provides evidence confirming Price's view that Mrs Caird's work was well-known in Sydney. *Is Marriage a Failure?* caused particular agitation.


Ibid., Q.6096–9, 5099, 6401.

Ibid., Q.5964.


A letter from the secretary of the White Cross League to the Mackellar Commission, drawing attention to the salary bars against marriage, is summarised in *DBR*, Vol.II, Minutes of Meetings, p.125, No. 181.

At the Christian Citizens' conference in Melbourne in 1904 the Rev. Jas Gibson again raised the question of salary bars: so far as one can gather from a brief report, he was against the practice (see *Christian Citizen*, 18 November 1904, p.5).


*DBR*, Vol.II, Qq.6399f.

Diocese, Social Questions Committee, 'Social Sins'. Talks given in St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, during Lent 1912.


So K.S. Inglis, 'English Nonconformity and Social Reform, 1880–1900' in Past and Present, XIII (April 1958), p.73.

The membership of the Sydney District Synod in 1900 was 48 and that of the whole Ministerial Conference in New South Wales only 162, including supernumeraries and missionaries in the field.

87,000 Wesleyans and 20,000 Primitives were counted in the New South Wales Census of 1891. There were only c. 2000 'other' Methodists. The Primitive Methodist tradition of social activism in England is described in H.B. Kendall, The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church (E. Dalton, London, n.d.), Vol.II, Ch. VIII. A tradition of social activism is not, of course, a guarantee of a liberal attitude to birth control in New South Wales but the Primitive Methodist Minute Books which might settle that difficulty are no longer available.


There is some evidence that Nonconformists also took a more liberal view of birth control than others in England—see F. Campbell, 'Birth Control and the Christian Churches' in Population Studies, XIV:2 (November 1960), p.133f.

Spectator, 27 March 1903, p.463 and 10 April 1903, p.548.


Rutledge's career is outlined in an article by his son-in-law, F.H. McGown, 'The Rev W. Woolls Rutledge' in Australasian Methodist Historical Society, Journal and Proceedings, VI:3 (April 1938). Rutledge's social views are set out in his Official Address to the New South Wales Methodist Conference (Epworth, Sydney, n.d. [1903]) pp.11ff.; For evidence that Rutledge was not alone in his attitude, see the address of his predecessor in Methodist Church of Australasia, Souvenir of the Official Year of the Rev W.H. Beale (Epworth, Sydney, 1901), especially pp.8–10. On his nomination to give evidence to the Commission see DBR, Vol.II, Minutes of Meetings, p.129 (meeting of 16 November), where the Rev. Rainsford Bavin, who nominated Rutledge, is wrongly designated as President of General Conference, instead of New South Wales Conference.

*DBR*, Vol.II, Qq.6794–827. Mackellar tacitly acknowledged that Stephen was called because Rutledge's viewpoint was unacceptable to the Commissioners. SMH, 3 March 1904, p.3E.


In fact other evidence (accepted by the judge) showed that Mrs Buckley's affections had fallen upon another gentleman. *Age*, 16 November 1899, p.7C. The judge elaborated on his statement a few days later (*Age* and *Argus*, both 23 November 1899, p.6E) but, as the *Age* editorial writer said, his explanation left the matter 'very much where it was' (*Age*, 23 November 1899, p.4G.)

*Argus*, 20 November 1899, p.5B.

The Archbishop's first account of the syndicate was reported in *Age*, 20 November 1899, p.6C and *Argus*, 21 November 1899, p.5C. A slightly embellished version was given in his written submission to the New South Wales Royal Commission—*DBR*, Vol.II, Exhibit n.71. The Archbishop's letter to the Attorney-General appeared in *Age*, 23 November 1899, p.6E and the report of Detective M'Manamny's investigation in *Argus*, 22 November 1899, p.4D. Originals of the letters to the Archbishop (all written within a few days of his statement) are held by Father J. Keeney of 33 Howard Street, West Melbourne. The Rev. Dr Rentoul's views were reported in *Age* (24 November 1899), p.6A.


George Lane Mullins, MA., MD., 'Catholic Teaching and Medical Practice' in First Australasian Catholic Congress, *Proceedings* (Sydney, 1900), p.241. A tacit premiss, which would appear between (b) and (c), is that the Commandment is universal in its force. For Mullin's appearance at the Birth-Rate Commission see *DBR*, Vol.II, Qq.2312–64.
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72 See Discussion in Second Australasian Catholic Congress, Proceedings (Medical Section) (Melbourne, 1905), p.44f. O'Sullivan's statement was supported by Co­adjutor Archbishop Kelly of Sydney, who noted that 'The Catechism for Priests denounced abortion as a conspiracy to murder'.

73 Second Australasian Catholic Congress, Proceedings p.30f. (Ahearne); 41f. (Nash); 45 (O'Sullivan). Dr Nash was himself a member of the Birth-Rate Commission. 

74 DBR, Vol.II, Qq.6031, 6034. As with Protestant witnesses, so with the Cardinal, only developed answers have been used and brief responses to leading questions have been ignored.

75 Noonan, Contraception, Chs. III, IV and VI, on the Gnostic, Manichaean and Cathar heresies, describes the Christian reaction to these attempts to devalue sexual life.

76 There was a certain lack of tolerance about the Cardinal’s views on these topics: for example he also said that Sir Alfred Stephen, who was the 'father' of divorce legislation in New South Wales, 'was insane on the matter of divorce'.


Chapter 5


2 Goodwin, Economic enquiry, Ch. 12 provides a comprehensive bibliographic survey of population studies in Australia.

3 Daily Post (Hobart), 2 July 1914 and The Land Nationaliser (London), September 1914, p.130. The British Museum catalogue lists seven titles under Ogilvy’s name. See also the excellent summary of his activities in ADB, Vol. 5, p.359f.

4 A.J. Ogilvy, The Third Factor of Production (Swan Sonnenschein & Co., London, 1898), pp.157–60. This work includes the Westminster Review article of September 1891.

5 George elaborates the division of labour argument in his Progress and Poverty, Book IV, Ch. II.

6 Argus, 17 October 1891, p.4D.


8 Rennick described Sidgwick and Marshall as 'the two most eminent living economists'.

9 A. Garran, 'A Criticism of Malthus' doctrine' in Australian Economist, II:6 (August 1890), p.61f. Garran had a distinguished career in journalism and public affairs. In 1890 he was a member of the New South Wales Legislative Council. He has been described as 'steeped in the political, social and economic principles of leading British liberal writers'—so ADB, Vol.4, p.233.

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16 So described by Goodwin, Economic enquiry . . . , p.418.


18 O.P. Law and W.T. Gill, ‘A White Australia: what it means’ in Nineteenth Century, LV (1904), p.146. Pearson would certainly not have accepted responsibility for sentences like these: ‘Her position and climate render Australia particularly liable to be made the resort of coloured people of low morality and social development . . . ’; ‘Speaking generally, the coloured aliens are inferior to the whites in physique and morals and low in the social scale’ (p.149). Law and Gill came from the Victorian provincial centre of Ballarat: a fairly safe guess would be that their paper was first aired at the strong local branch of the Australian Natives Association.

19 Pearson, National life and Character . . . , p.71f.

20 Ibid., p.137.

21 Ibid., pp.161–73.


23 W.H. Eldred, ‘The Financial Crisis’ in Journal of the Bankers’ Institute of N.S.W., II:7 (July 1893), p.227. Eldred was a former bank director acting in 1893 as Consul-General for Chile in Sydney. The article was part of a consular report.


25 Editor’s note: ‘Victoria’s Loss’ in Bankers’ Magazine . . . XI:8 (March 1898), p.648. Similar sentiments were repeated in the following issue, p.677f.

26 Thus Australasian Trade Review (Melbourne), XIV:13 (December 1884), p.760: ‘No greater piece of absurdity could have been practised than when Victoria, adopting protection, abandoned immigration . . . there must be a large outlet for manufactures.’ Cf. Melbourne Chamber of Commerce, Report of the Committee (1883), p.29; ibid. (1884), President’s Address, p.44: (‘every pair
of hands added to the country means increased lodging requirements, increased demand for food, clothing, etc., and thereby increasing the wealth of the country'); ibid. (1888), President's Address, p.35f.


30 Ibid., VI:10 (October 1897), p.394f, note on 'Imperialism and Immigration'.


34 Editor's notes in Bankers' Magazine . . ., XVII:8 (March 1904), p. 332.

35 G.S. Littlejohn, 'President's Address' in Sydney Chamber of Commerce, Annual Report (1904), p. 31f.

36 W.M. M'Pherson, Speech on Encouragement of Immigration, in General Council of Chambers of Commerce', Report (1905), p. 49; Jeffrey Denniss 'President's Address' in NSW Chamber of Manufactures, Annual Report (1905), p. 12. J. Blakiston, Speech on Encouragement of Immigration, in General Council of Chambers of Commerce, Report (1908), p. 130. The General Council's annual debate on Encouragement of Immigration was a somewhat ritual affair and might therefore be discounted as a mirror of opinion. But notice that the sentiments expressed in the 1905 debate were supported elsewhere, and that Blakiston's opponents in 1908 were echoed in F.E. Winchcombe, 'President's Address' in Sydney Chamber of Commerce, Annual Report (1908), p. 39f.


40 In 1906 New South Wales received 680 assisted settlers, the first to come for seven years. Assisted arrivals then climbed to 2845 (1907); 2896 (1908); 4308 (1909); 5058 (1910) and 9922 (1911). See Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Immigration, Australian Immigration, No. 1 (Canberra 1966), p. 12.
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42 Argus, 27 June 1910, p. 8C (Adelaide Trades Hall); 13 September, p. 8D (Port Melbourne Political Labour Council); 22 September, p. 4D (Amalgamated Miners’ Association, Broken Hill); 24 May 1911, p. 5B (Barrier District Parliamentary Labor League, Broken Hill) and 20 October, p. 9F (Port Adelaide Trades and Labour Council). The Argus had a strongly conservative political bias but there is no reason to doubt that it accurately reported the facts of these meetings, even if it did make unfair editorial use of the reports (e.g. 8 March 1910, p. 6D and 15 August, p. 6C).

43 H.E.B., The Catholicity of Socialism (Queensland Social-Democratic Federation, Brisbane, n.d.). Ferguson, op. cit., item 7274B, suggests that the author’s initials stand for Henry Ernest Boote and that the publication date was late 1892.

44 Worker (Brisbane), 6 May 1899, p. 5B.

45 William Maston, 'The Surplus Labour Problem' in Australian Economist, II:20 (November 1891), p. 169. Maston received no support from the members of the Australian Economic Association to whom he read his paper. The remedies he suggested were a labour bureau, medical advice for weak workers, and labour settlements, to be financed by the state and run by the Trades and Labour Council.


47 Ibid., Qq.5782–816. West was member of the House of Representatives for East Sydney from 1910–31. His own family numbered 2 sons and 7 daughters.


50 See Catalogue of the Free Public Library, Sydney (1869–87) and Supplementary Catalogue of the Public Library of N.S.W. (1896–1900); Sydney Chamber of Commerce Annual Report (1893), p. 49f.; Journal of the Bankers’ Institute . . ., II:3 (March 1893), pp. 97ff.; Bankers’ Magazine . . ., VI:12 (1893), p. 1481. Details of holdings by and borrowings from the library of the Australian Economic Association are contained in a notebook of the Association held by Professor S.J. Butlin of Sydney University, who kindly allowed me to see it. The register of borrowings began in January 1888 and was last used in August 1891.

51 The Catalogue of the Port Augusta Institute (1885) is in Pamphlet box Z018 + a (Library and Booksellers’ Catalogues) at the State Library of South Australia.

52 The stamp of each of these libraries appears on different copies of Nineteenth Century during the 1890s in the file now held by the National Library of Australia, Canberra.

53 Advertiser, 1 July 1901, p. 4D.

54 Ibid., 18 September 1901, p. 4D.

55 The selections quoted are from issues of the Bulletin on 15, 22 and 29 September 1894, 23 March and 21 December 1895.

So Goodwin, *Economic enquiry*... p. 328, who quotes *Australasian Critic* (1 October 1890), p. ix to the effect that 'Petherick bookstores in Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney in 1890 stocked fourteen different titles by Darwin and eleven by Spencer'.

Mackellar's notes are held by the author.

For the method by which Todd claimed to have approached his task see DBR, Vol. II, Q.6532.

Bourne is best known as the author of *Trade, Population, and Food* (1890), from which Todd took the greater part of his quotation.


See *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates* (Representatives), Vol. XLV, p.10309 and 'Correspondence relating to the appointment of Mr. O.C. Beale as a Royal Commission to inquire into the legislation and administration of laws to check and prevent the sale of secret drugs, etc.' in *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers* (1907), Vol. II, p.1333. Cf. numerous items of Prime Minister's Department inward correspondence in the Commonwealth Archives Office, Canberra, accession numbers A48 (2), (3), (4) and Department of External Affairs inward correspondence, number A31 (4). Deakin's Liberal Protectionist Party was poorly organised in New South Wales and Beale tried hard to remedy the lack. He conducted a considerable correspondence with Deakin between 1904 and 1911, usually on political matters but occasionally on a personal plane as well. Some of the letters are held by the National Library of Australia, accession numbers MS2281 (Beale Correspondence) and MS1540/17 (Deakin Papers). The bulk of Deakin's letters to Beale are held by Mrs A. Jones, 4 Ainslie Close, St Ives, NSW (photocopies held by the author).


Secret Drugs Report, paras 1, 2.

Chemist, Druggist and Pharmacist, XXII:9 (September 1907), p.245.

Fryer, *The Birth Controllers*, p.360. Fryer's darts are not always accurate but this one fixes Beale's work precisely.

*Racial Decay*, para 56. (Paras 1–53 were really a Preface, although Beale labelled the section 'Introduction'.)

Ibid., paras 106 and 108, 282, and 160. Cf. para 384: 'We can hardly find stronger contrast than between the inspired grandeur of Baruch de Spinoza,
insignis per honestum, and the unspiritual debasement of Mill, Bradlaugh and their unsexed associates, notabiles dedecore. On the one hand, the clear, exacting Hebrew intellect directing man to the contemplation of his glorious and eternal essence. On the other hand, the apostles of a godless and mammonistic hedonism turning man's thoughts and his natural functions to distorted sensuality . . .

Ibid., paras 1879, 1880.

Miss Beatrice Davis of Angus & Robertson Ltd kindly supplied the distribution history of Racial Decay. Julia E. Johnsen, Selected Articles on Birth Control (Wilson, New York, 1925), p.LXXV gives publication details for Racial Decay as '(A.C. Fifield London 1911)' but there is no way of telling how many copies were sold in London or whether they were additional to the 365 disposed of by Angus & Robertson.


Chapter 6

1 Register, 29 December 1890, p.4E, 7 January 1891, p.4E, 30 January, 4 April, 2 and 16 May, 5 June (all p.4F) and 6 June, p.4G.

2 Argus, 30 April 1891, p.4F, 1 May, p.4E and 5 May, p.4E.

3 Bulletin, 27 February 1892, p.7, on the Booth plan; 12 March, p.6, on the superfluous women; 8 August 1891, p.7 and 12 March 1892, p.7, on 'The Cheap ItalianLabourer'. Age, 30 December 1892, p.4F.

4 Age, 13 September 1893, p.4G, 11 February 1895, p.4G, 26 September 1896, p.6F.


6 Bulletin, 8 December 1900, 'Red Page'.


8 Age, 16 January 1896, p.5B, 13 October, p.5G, 22 January 1898, p.9A.

9 Age, 13 September 1899, p.8G.

10 Age, 9 December 1899, p.8G.


13 Advertiser, 21 September 1899, p.5A; Argus, 16 September, p.12F.

14 SMH, 10 October 1899, p.6E.

15 Argus, 24 April 1901, p.4G and 3 May, p.4G.

16 DT, 23 April 1901, p.4E, 25 April, p.4D, 7 May, p.6D and 25 May, p.8D.
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17 Ibid., 3 June 1901, p.4E.
18 Argus, 26 March 1903, p.4F and 31 March, p.4G; Advertiser, 25 April, p.6C and 29 April, p.4B.
19 SMH, 21 March 1903, p.10C and 22 April, p.6E.
20 Ibid., 4 May 1903, p.6B.
21 SMH, 15 March 1904, pp.10D and 10F.
22 DT, 5 March 1904, p.8C.
23 Argus, 8 March 1904, p.4F. Richard Teece was general manager of the Australian Mutual Provident Society; his survey for the Society was reported in DT, 3 March 1904, p.3D and SMH, 4 March, p.6D.
24 Age, 12 March 1904, p.10C.
25 Register, 8 March 1904, p.4C.
26 Advertiser, 11 March 1904, p.4C.
28 SMH, 24 February 1911, p.6C.
29 Ibid., 4 May 1911, p.6E, 6 May, p.12F, 9 May, p.6F, 15 June, p.8E; Argus, 1 April, p.191 and 2 May, p.7C; Register, 13 May, p.4D; Advertiser, 22 June, p.8D and 23 June, p.6D.
31 Argus, 17 March 1903, p.5D, 18 March, p.5A.
32 Argus, 27 March, p.6F, letter from William A. Quick (a supernumerary Methodist minister), and 19 March, p.5E from 'M'. 'M' thought that mothers 'enforced absence from their natural duties' might also be a factor in 'the appalling mortality among young children'.
34 Argus, 19 March, p.5E, 'Paterfamilias'; 20 March, p.5B 'C'; 26 March, p.7B 'For God and Country'.
35 Argus, 19 March, p.5E, 'Mother of Four'.
36 Argus, 23 March, p.5E, 'Father of Two'; 24 March, p.5C Frederick F. Smith; 21 March, p.15D, 'Australian Mother of Two'.
37 Argus, 28 March, p.16C, 'Commonsense' and 'Workman's Wife'; 21 March, p.15D, 'Father of Three'; 25 March, p.5B, 'Mother of Five'.
38 Argus, 20 March, p.5B, 'Mutterchen'; and 24 March, p.5C, 'Mother of Three Young Victorians'. Also 19 March, p.5E, 'Fiat Lux', decrying 'A policy which sends foodstuffs to abnormal prices', and 'Parent', suggesting that family limitation is not surprising when 'everything a family eats, drinks and wears is so heavily taxed'; 20 March, p.5, 'Mother of Two' complaining that 'even the babies' shoes are taxed'. Cf. 21 March, p.15D, '£2 Per Week'; and 27 March, p.6F, 'Mother of Thirteen'.

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41 *Argus*, 26 March, p.4F.
42 *Advertiser*, 2 April 1903, p.4B.
43 *Advertiser*, 6 April, p.7E ‘A Believer in God and Nature’, H.M. Addison, and ‘One of a Happy Family of 10’; 11 April, p.10E, ‘Sea Breeze’. Cf. 7 April, p.61 ‘Bachelor’; and 9 April, p.61 H.W. Clancey. A strong statement of the difficulties involved in maintaining a large family on low wages and uncertain employment appeared in a letter by ‘Asparagus’ published on 14 July 1903, p.7F.
44 Coghlan, *Labour & Industry*, Vol.IV, p.1914. According to the *Literary Societies’ Journal* (Adelaide), 10 November 1904, p.5, membership of the various societies making up the Union had been as high as 2000 in 1893 and as low as 913 in 1897; in 1903 there were 1288 members, of whom an average of 617 attended weekly meetings. The names of 133 members appeared in the *Journal* between October 1903 and July 1904. Of the 88 who can be identified in the *South Australian Directory*, 51 were professional men, 19 were engaged in commerce, 8 were women and there were 10 ‘others’. There is undoubtedly some bias due to the fact that the *Directory* was primarily compiled for commercial use.
45 *Literary Societies’ Journal*, October 1903, p.10 for Mr Hack’s motion; May 1904, p.10, Stirling Smeaton on ‘The Overgrowth of Australian Cities; its cause and cure’; July 1904, p.10, report of the June meeting of the Union Parliament. The disadvantages of restrictive immigration and racial exclusiveness (i.e. the White Australia policy) were rehearsed at length in the issue of the *Journal* for November 1904 (p.4) and in August 1907, when assisted immigration was becoming a live topic in all states, that subject, too, was duly raised in the Union Parliament (*Literary Societies Journal* September 1907, p.6, report of the August meeting).
49 *DT*, 14 March 1903, p.13D, letter from ‘Nemo’. G.D. Mitchell (ed.), *A Dictionary of Sociology* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1968) p.145, claims that the concept of relative deprivation was only ‘introduced’ in 1949 and ‘formalized’ in 1961—but it is clear that ‘Nemo’ had a very similar concept in mind and came close to using the term 46 years earlier.
50 *DT*, 23 March, p.3F, letter from ‘E.S.C.’.
51 *DT*, 31 March 1903, p.3E and *SMH*, 22 June 1903, p.5G. Note the similarity between Hendry’s analysis of the effects of the boom and the analysis put to the Mackellar Commission by Archdeacon Langley later in the year (see p.64 above).
52 *DT*, 19 June 1903, p.8D.
Notes Chapter 6

'Socialism', 'Father of Eight', 'Critic', 'Parabax', 'Old Physician' and 'Kurri Kurri'; 12 March, p.12C, D, A.M. Hall, 'Mother of Four', Lavinia Mann, and 'Hopeful'; 14 March, p.3D, 'A Suburban Woman', 'A Willoughby Mother' and 'One of Eight'. Bligh, 'Parabax' and Lavinia Mann were the three who shared the Commissioners' views.


C.H. Kirmess, The Australian Crisis (Lothian, Melbourne, 1909), p.5. An identical text was serialised as 'The Commonwealth Crisis' in Lone Hand between November 1908 and April 1909.

Age, 22, 23, 24 June 1892, pp.5H, 5H, 6A, respectively, 28 March 1894, p.5D, 2 April, p.5G, 3 April, p.4E, April–May 1899 passim, and 23 August, p.8A.

New South Wales Parliamentary Debates (Assembly), 16 November 1893, 21 December 1894, 14 November 1895, 15 June 1897, 12 July 1900, 28 July 1903.

Coghlan, Labour and Industry, Vol.IV, pp.2018–45 (on New South Wales); 2047–57 (Victoria); and 2067–74 (South Australia).

The trade union figures are from C. Forster, 'Australian Unemployment, 1900–1940' in Economic Record, XLI:95 (September 1965), pp.426–50. The breadwinners figure is calculated from the Census figures for 1901: in 1891 5.3 per cent of breadwinners were unemployed, in 1901 4.95 per cent and in 1911 2.7 per cent.


NSW Parliamentary Debates (Assembly), 12 July 1889, debate on the Publication of Obscene Evidence Prevention Bill. Speeches of Messrs O'Sullivan, Edmunds, Melville, Molesworth, Seaver and Hutchinson.


Mrs B. Smyth, Limitation of Offspring . . . (Rae Bros, Melbourne, 1893), which has notes of her appearances in the suburbs at pp. 30–8, and Diseases Incidental to Women (S.H. Prender, Melbourne, 1895). Marcus Lafayette Byrn, The Book
of Nature . . . (Modern Medical Publishing Co., Sydney, n.d.) carried Bear’s stocklist on the endpapers. There was also a Melbourne ‘edition’ of this title which, according to Sir Edward Ford, attributes authorship to Thomas Faulkner M.D. Saunders & Co.’s list appears in ‘Oxoniensis’, Early Marriage and Late Parentage; or was Malthus wrong? (Saunders, Melbourne, 1900). Australian editions of the Wife’s Guide were published in 1893, 1898 and 1912 by Will Andrade, the Melbourne freethought publisher. Cowan, Science of a New Life was published in Melbourne by Fergusson & Mitchell (1882) and E.W. Cole (after 1900). Cowan’s book had been available for some time. A copy of an American edition now in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, is endorsed ‘Wilfred Hodgson June 15th ’74’. Himes, Medical History . . ., p.266f. comments ‘Cowan is best described as a popularizer and pot-boiler. His account of contraceptive technique, though unimpressive, must have played some role . . in popularizing contraceptive knowledge.’

The first group of items was advertised by Will Andrade, 201 Bourke Street, Melbourne; the second group were advertised by Bear, 16 Park Street, Sydney. The Marvel Co. of Australia, 418 George Street, Sydney who advertised in the Bulletin (e.g. 2 March 1903, p.5) and informed customers ‘Lady Specialist in attendance’, or many of the pharmacists who told the Mackellar Commission that Rendell’s Pessaries were a popular line. The ‘patent pessary’ handbills were reproduced in DBR, Vol.II, Exhibit 165.

DBR, Vol.II, Exhibit 76. According to the Collector of Customs at Sydney (ibid., Exhibit 72), imports in September 1903 were only 13,000 pieces. It may be that the higher figure simply represents fulfilment of precautionary orders placed by importers when the inquiry was mooted in August. On wholesale turnovers see DBR, Vol.II, Qq.717f., 750; 841-4, 858; 905–15.

DT, 17 May 1911, p.7A. The article was reprinted from Outlook, 8 April 1911.
DT, 20 May, p.7G.
DT, 18 May, p.10F, G.
DT, 19 May, p.11A.
DT, 18 May, p.10E, F, G.
DT, 19 May, p.11A.
DT, 19 May, p.11B.
DT, 18 May, p.11E. The headline related to the opinions of Mrs K. Dwyer, President of the Women Workers’ Union. See DT., 19 May, p.12A.
See figure p.4.
DT, 18 May, p.10G (Armstrong) and 19 May, p.11G (Scott).
DT, 18 May, p.10F (Boyce) and 19 May, p.11G (Carruthers). Archdeacon Francis Boyce was well-known as a Church of England social worker and agitator for slum clearance.
DT, 19 May, p.12A.
DT, 22 May, p.3F.
DT, 23 May, p.3F, ‘N.S. Welshman’ and 20 May, p.6D, ‘A White Man’. Although there is no concrete evidence to support the guess, it seems possible that ‘White Man’ was a Daily Telegraph staff writer. The style is that of the paper rather than a layman and the lack of letters on the same day suggests the controversy may have seemed in need of further stirring.
DT, 19 May, p.12A, ‘A.E.B.’ (the waiting bachelor); and 22 May, p.3G, R.R. Alley (the working-man).
Notes Chapter 7

Both the letters on living costs appeared in DT, 23 May, p.3F. The first was from 'N.S. Welshman' and the second from 'G.J.B.'

Chapter 7


1 Victoria Year Book (1880–1), p.199f.
6 Ibid. (1880–1), p.216.
7 Ibid. (1880–1), p.221. The crude birth rates were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metropolitan</th>
<th>Other Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>34.36</td>
<td>40.18</td>
<td>36.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>31.19</td>
<td>34.21</td>
<td>28.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taking the rural rate for 1873 as a base for that year and the rural rate for 1880 as a base for 1880, the relative levels were (Hayter calculation):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metropolitan</th>
<th>Other Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But taking the rural rate for 1873 as a base for both years, the levels were (Hicks calculation):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metropolitan</th>
<th>Other Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly the rural birth rate suffered the greatest decline.
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Ibid (1883–4), pp.209f. and 223f. (on the number of children per marriage, which was given as 5.19 in 1874 and 4.16 in 1883).


Ibid. (1902), p.158f.

Op. cit., p.166. These figures reflect the real trend against which Fenton's complacency in 1898 must be set.


Op. cit., p.365. McLean's theories on the association between birth rate and infant mortality were quoted from 'Mr. F.S. Crum, the assistant statistician of the Prudential Assurance Company of New York, who has conducted investigations into and written upon the association for some years past'. Given Coghlan's contact with the Prudential through F.L. Hoffmann, it would be of some interest to know the chronological sequence of possible links between Coghlan, Hoffmann, McLean and Crum.

E.C. Fry, 'Labour and Industry in Australia', a Review Article in Historical Studies, XIV:55 (October 1970), p.430 and Fry, 'T.A. Coghlan as an Historian' (Paper presented to Section E of ANZAAS Congress, 1965) sets Coghlan in his context, making liberal use of information from Joan M. Cordell, 'T.A. Coghlan, Government Statist of New South Wales 1886–1905' (unpublished typescript, Sydney, 1960). Cordell's is a useful compilation of the biographical material, provided it is used with care. The estimate of Coghlan's capacity as a public servant does not ignore G.H. Knibbs, the first Commonwealth Statistician. Knibbs was the more able statistician in the technical sense but Coghlan successfully participated in a wider range of public administration.


Cordell, 'T.A. Coghlan . . .', p.82 n.64 reports that J. Bertillon 'examined Coghlan's work very carefully' in Le Journal de la Société de Statistique de Paris, VIII (July 1904), pp.244–5. She comments that Bertillon's observations 'were a tribute to the authority of Coghlan's investigations'. In 1897, during his first visit overseas, Coghlan was guest in the home of the internationally-known statistician M.G. Mulhall and in 1893 he was elected an honorary Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society. Between 1905 and 1926, when he lived in London, he was a member of the Society's executive committee.


Op. cit., p.153f. Both Cordell and Fry suggest that Coghlan continued in the Catholic faith in which he was raised and both appear to think that his religious affiliations may have been significant for his views on marriage and fertility. In fact there is little evidence either for or against his later theological commitment to Catholicism and no peculiarly 'Catholic' passage in his demographic writing. (Coghlan himself married at 42 years of age.)
Notes Chapter 7

25 Ibid. (1887–8), p.332f., and 1889–90, p.409. Much later Coghlan recognised
that, besides the settlement of overseas migrants, the drift of unemployed men
to the city had also been a factor in urban growth relative to the country. See
his Labour and Industry . . . e.g. pp.1446–9.
27 General Report on the Eleventh Census of New South Wales (NSW Govern-
ment Printer, Sydney, 1894), p.154. Coghlan continued to believe that there
was a close relationship between demographic and economic phenomena. In
evidence to a Royal Commission inquiring into Proposed Sites for a Federal
Capital (in April 1903) he said:
Victoria is at the present time suffering from economic causes which prevent
an increase of population. During the last twelve years Victoria has lost
something like 120,000 persons by immigration [sic] alone. That cannot go on
very much longer. Perhaps those economic causes might be removed at any time
and the population flow back again.
Commonwealth of Australia: Parliamentary Papers (Representatives) 1903,
Miscellaneous Papers, p.238, Q.3196.
29 Ibid. (1897–8), p.679. In the 1895–6 edition the topic was treated on p.530f.
30 Ibid. (1895–6), pp.512ff.
32 Ibid. (1900–1), p.937f.
33 Coghlan, ‘Deaths in Child-Birth in New South Wales’ in Journal of the Royal
Statistical Society, LXI:3 (September 1898), pp.518–28; Coghlan, Childbirth
in New South Wales. A Study in Statistics (NSW Government Printer, Sydney,
1900); Coghlan, The Decline in the Birth-Rate of New South Wales and Other
Phenomena of Childbirth. An Essay in Statistics. (NSW Government Printer,
Sydney, 1903).
34 Childbirth in NSW, pp.18, 25.
35 Ibid., pp.13–21, 22 and Appendix G, p.64. For Coghlan’s use of the older
36 Childbirth in NSW, p.23. ‘Earlier’ marriages related to married women who
died during 1893–8 and were married ‘about thirty-one years ago’; ‘Recent’
marriges were not specified.
37 Some of the repeated passages were 1900, p.18/1903, p.29; 1900 p.22/1903,
p.35; 1900, p.47/1903, p.59.
38 Decline of the Birth-Rate, p.3f.
39 Ibid., p.5f.
40 Ibid., pp.16f (‘Geographical Distribution of Fecundity’) and 20f., 43 (religious
belief and fecundity). Clearly Coghlan meant ‘fertility’, not ‘fecundity’ when
he was comparing the religious groups. Coghlan had offered his ‘mixed’ marriage
theory several years earlier in his report on the 1891 Census, op. cit., p.175.
41 Ibid., p.69. Cf. Coghlan’s evidence to the Federal Capital inquiry in 1903
(Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 1903, Miscellaneous Papers, p.238,
Q.3194): ‘our rate of increase I think is below what we have a right to expect.
We are practically dependent upon the increase of excess of births over deaths;
the birth rate is extremely low, and the death rate also. It is ridiculous to think
that a great continent like this depended for its ultimate settlement on so small
a factor as that.’
42 DBR. Vol.I, Qq.286–313.
43 Ibid., Qq.315–22 and Exhibits 1–3.
Ibid., Qq.324-9, 333f. and Exhibit 4.
Ibid., Q.330f. and Exhibit 5.
Ibid., Q.335-46.
Ibid., Q.350-62 and Exhibits 7 and 9.
Ibid., Q.450 and Exhibit 19.
Ibid., Q.440-56 and Exhibit 19.
Ibid., Q.511 and Exhibit 34.
Ibid., Q.513.
Ibid., Q.6618, 6698.
Ibid., Q.6659-75 and 6691-703.
Ibid., Q.6258f. The scope of the Commission's inquiry is indicated in the reply furnished by J. Hughes, Registrar-General for Queensland, who listed the seventy-four questions involved and tartly estimated that 'to fully answer all the questions would occupy, in addition to the supervision, the time of six men for five months, and ... an expenditure of at least £700' (ibid., Q.6181).
Ibid., Q.5845.
Ibid., Q.5850f.
See, for example, ibid., Qq.5857-9. In response to Q.5858, 'Is the marriage age affected by birth-place', he wrote 'No Victorian statistics available. It is probable, however, that warmer climates are conducive to earlier development, and, consequently, to earlier marriage. It is also probable that the reproductive period closes at an earlier age, and thus any economic advantages arising from the earlier marriage (due to climate) are neutralized.' This is an interesting speculation but McLean gave no evidence about the relationship between climate and sexual development or about the relationship between sexual development and age at marriage.
Ibid., Qq.5878-89 (fecundity) and 5897-905 (average issue).
Ibid., Q.5919.
Ibid., Q.6745-7. McLean was supplied with age-specific birth rates as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>20-25</th>
<th>25-30</th>
<th>30-35</th>
<th>35-40</th>
<th>40-45</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>41.63</td>
<td>35.37</td>
<td>29.22</td>
<td>23.63</td>
<td>11.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>39.70</td>
<td>29.87</td>
<td>22.68</td>
<td>17.25</td>
<td>8.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ibid., Qq.6779-93. The 1871-91 figures in fact showed the rise in age distribution that McLean had suggested.
Ibid., Q.6846f. McLean quoted from Coghlan's *Decline of the Birthrate*, p.36. 'There can be no question but that the women who came to Australia between 1850 and 1870, and who form a large proportion of the older married women now living, were of a type likely to be prolific in children.'
Ibid., Q.6854.
Notes Chapter 7

Hayter, 'Our meat supply' in Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science Proceedings, II (1890), p.175. Cf. Australasian (Melbourne), XLVIII:1241 (11 January 1890), p.81B.
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